Visit of Student Representatives from Delft University of Technology to Kyoto University

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On February 8, 1999, a facsimile message arrived from the Student Representative Council (ORAS: Organization of Rational Students) of Delft University of Technology (TUDelft). It announced a wish to honor the 400-year relationship between the Netherlands and Japan, and to do so, a delegation of seven students would visit Japan. Their goal was to learn about student life in Japan and to establish an active student exchange between TUDelft and representative universities in Japan. Since Kyoto University has a relationship with TUDelft, the Dutch students wanted to visit the School of Engineering and to make contact with the local student community. This Dutch student council is authorized and financially supported by the university. A letter from the Senior Policy Advisor on Internationalization (Marietta Y.M. Spiekerman-Middelplaats) was attached. My introduction to this group was through an old friend of mine, Prof. de Swaan Arons of the Faculty of Chemical Technology and Materials Science, TUDelft.

The delegates were in Japan between April 21-May 1, and in addition to Kyoto University, they enthusiastically visited University of Tokyo, Osaka University, and Kyushu University to meet with respective students groups. They were in Kyoto between April 28-30.

With the consultation to Prof. Kenjiro Suzuki of the Dept. of Mechanical Engineering, the chairman of the Committee for International Academic Exchange of Kyoto University, and Prof. Takeshi Tamura of the Dept. of Civil Engineering, the acting chairman of the Committee for International Academic Exchange of School of Engineering, a group of student volunteers as representatives to meet with the students delegates of TUDelft was organized: Mr. Shinsuke Nagamine (Dept. of Chemical Engineering), Mr. Kazuya Tatsumi (Dept. of Mechanical Engineering), Miss Sayuri Kimoto (Dept. of Civil Engineering), Mr. Fumitsugu Kojima, Miss Yoko Kamimoto (IAESTE), Mr. Ken Kurata (KIXS). These student representatives enthusiastically met the visiting students at Kyoto Station in the evening of April 28, arranged a sight-seeing trip on April 29, and held a discussion and party on April 30 with the help of about thirty volunteer students.

Fourteen Japanese students joined the sight-seeing trip of April 29. The excursion between Ginkakuji temple to Kiyomizu temple was basically on foot and everyone seemed to have had a good time. The excursion and the party that followed allowed everyone to get to know each other.

On April 30, the TUDelft delegates were invited to Kyoto University to visit the Center for Student Exchange, and the labs of Prof. Suzuki, Prof. Tamura, and myself in the morning. The formal meeting took place in the discussion room in the Dept. of Chemical Engineering from 14:00 to 17:30. After the introduction of Kyoto University (especially the School of Engineering) by myself and the presentation by the TUDelft students, active discussions were carried on into the party, and continued until 10:00pm. It was a pleasant surprise to the staff members who attended the meeting to see how vigorously our students engaged in the discussion. Both sides learned that each other's university is of a high level and both groups agreed to use this occasion to extend the mutual student-level relationship.

The education system in the Netherlands requires 5 to 6 years of study to obtain a Diploma. This corresponds to the combination of Bachelor and Master courses for us. Though the percentage of the foreign students at TUDelft is currently 8%, the university is hoping to increase it to 25% in the near future. To meet this objective, many departments have started to offer "Master of Science Program", in which all lectures are given in English and graduates are awarded a MS degree. Student financial support is arranged in a variety of ways. Other information brought about by TUDelft students was their plans to hold a “JAPANESE WEEK” at TUDelft in the year of 2000 to commemorate the 400 year-relationship between Japan and the Netherlands. They hope student representatives from Kyoto University can join them for this occasion.

Kyoto University has agreements on exchange programs with approximately 40 foreign universities at the university level and many on the School of Engineering and Departmental levels. Efforts are needed to increase student exchange, especially to help our students to study abroad. An authorized and financially supported student organization like ORAS would be helpful to encourage further student exchange with foreign universities.
Memories of Student Life in KAIST

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Every male Korean must serve in the military for twenty-six months. Consequently, my university life began with the agonizing decision: serve now or later. Half of my colleagues discontinued their studies and joined the army after sophomore year; the rest continued on to graduate school. After getting a Master’s, a man will be exempted from the draft if he is selected to continue as the researcher at an approved domestic research center. The required length of time to work in the research center is five years, however for graduates of KAIST (Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology), it is only three years since two years as a student in KAIST is regarded as service in the military. KAIST students are treated specially compared to those in ordinary colleges. These facts form part of the background of KAIST.

In the 60s, Korea was a poor country just starting to develop industrially. At that time, the government realized the importance of science and technology. Their response was to establish KIST (Korea Institute of Science and Technology), to which they invited Korean scientists and engineers from foreign countries. In order to nurture highly qualified scientists and engineers, a graduate school, KAIS (Korea Advanced Institute of Science), was founded in 1971. Its name was changed to KAIST in 1981. Unlike all the other Ministry of Education-governed universities, KAIST was established by and remains under the Ministry of Science and Technology, and it is research-oriented university. Therefore three-year obligatory term in its research center is required of KAIST graduates in place of military service. (I was extremely unlucky however. Just after I entered KAIST, that privilege was rescinded! Alas!)

There are other distinctive features in KAIST: the number of graduate students is twice that of undergraduates. In ordinary colleges, fourth-year undergraduate students are called ‘seniors’ since they are older and have a higher standing than other students. But in KAIST, these ‘seniors’ are just fourth-year undergraduates, neither older nor of a higher rank. Another distinction is that all KAIST students are given a stipend for living allowances, and not required to pay tuition. Also, if they wish, they can live in a KAIST dormitory free. Regarding dorm life, student lifestyles are divided into followers of Apollo and Dionysus. Consequently, there were those who rose early to work and those that preferred to sleep late and work late into the night. In the free and lively dorm atmosphere, most students adhered the Dionysian lifestyle. In fact, I’m sure ninety percent of them did as I did. Once, when I was a first year student in KAIST, I slept only five hours over three days time, struggling to do homework by myself. After that exhausting experience, I changed my mind and did my homework with friends, even though it still took a lot of time. For my first year in KAIST, I was almost buried alive under homework and class load.

After completing all that hard course work, we did research. The presentation of a Master thesis is usually started around Christmas day, and sometimes, if the result is not good enough, graduation will be postponed by one or two semesters. That unfortunately, happened to my roommate. At the defense, he failed to satisfy the faculty, meaning that his graduation would be put off. A few days later, he disappeared leaving only a message, “Send my books and baggage to my hometown.” It shocked and worried us very much because we feared that he might try to kill himself on Mt. Seolak. After a few days, we found out that he had no intention of committing suicide, but just wanted to climb that mountain. Thanks to him, I had a terrible Christmas, but at the same time, that adventure came to represent for me the tough life of students at KAIST. One irony is that this friend continued his studies and successfully received a Ph.D. this year; whereas, I, who was anxious about him, have just started my Ph.D. studies. Such is life.

After studying all night, even now I remember the bright and beautiful sun rising in the dawn sky, bathing in the Yuseong spa, then sleeping peacefully afterward through the remainder of the morning. These memories of student life at KAIST will never leave me.

Staying Longer

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In 1996 I made my first experiences about living and working in Japan when I spent two weeks in the framework of JSPS-DFG collaboration at the Mesoscopic Materials Research Center, Faculty of Engineering, Kyoto University. Two years later, I got the opportunity for a longer stay as a researcher in the same laboratory. It was not difficult to catch the chance because of the very good experiences I have made. My wife and I could imagine living in Kyoto as well. Our departure from Germany was shifted from April to July, because our son Robert was born in May. Nevertheless we were looking forward to live in Kyoto as a small family in an international student house, which is guided by Swiss and Japanese house parents. When we arrived in July (Robert was six weeks old) we first had to stand the high temperature and humidity. We are from Hamburg (in northern Germany) where the temperatures in summer are around 24° and agree with a little wind for about six weeks and the other time there are often rainy days and lower temperature. Shortly we got accustomed to Japanese summer and air-condition became an object of value for us.
Making Friends (Ryoanji Temple)
中華人民共和国の上海交通大学（Shanghai Jiaotong University）は、1896年に南洋公学の校名で設立された中国でも最も伝統のある技術系大学である。南洋公学は清末期の特殊な社会情勢の下、西欧の科学技術を吸収するため、広告メディア、政治と鉄道、経済統制の指導者養成、電動機械、造船、航海の専門家育成等を目的に開校し、その後辛亥革命や日中戦争等の動乱の中で組織は南洋大学、交通大学上海学校、交通大学重慶分校等と幾度か変改されたが、1959年には各地に分設していた交通大学（分校）が、北部地域は西安交通大学に、南部地域は上海交通大学に統合され、現在に至っている。

この間一貫して鉄道、船舶運輸に関する研究に優れた業績を残し、一方で世界的に先端科学技術を学ぶため日、米、英をはじめ先進国の大学や研究機関に多くの学生を派遣して自らの水準の向上に努め、現在では中国東南地域において最も高い評価を有し、科学と文化に関する知識を広める先駆けの役割を果たしている。現在、4つの学院と27の専攻、41の研究センターと研究所を有し、教員数は2570名、学生の総数は13020名で、このうち大学院生は1384名である。世界各国から約100名の留学生を受け入れ、欧米、アジア、日本等に約200名を留学させている。

江沢民総書記の母校でもある上海交通大学は、1984年に中国政府の国家重点プロジェクトとして承認され、上海市の全面協力により近郊に新キャンパス地が提供され、現在は14専攻が直轄し、1995年に設立された計画では、応用科学、電動工学、電子情報工学、人間・社会科学、マネジメント、材料科学、材料工学、造船学、海洋工学の7つの学院に再構成し、両キャンパスを併せて2万人を抱える大学となる予定で、新しい歴史を刻み始めている。

学術交流協定の締結に関して、平成9年に上海交通大学を訪問した折り、Shen Huanye（盛焕烊）副学長から打診を受けたのがきっかけとなった。偶然にも研究テーマも近く、協定を結んだ後に実質的な交流を始めることができると考え、工学部国際交流委員会代理の田村武先生や研究協力掛の方々にご苦労をおかけしながら準備を進めた。その結果、平成11年1月に、上海交通大学と工学部・工学研究科及び情報学研究科並びに関エネルギー科学研究科の4部局が連名で締結し協定が発足した。

研究室では具体的な交流を始めている。都市の情報化を考える「デジタルシティ」を研究テーマに掲げ、本年度9月から博士課程学生を短期で定期的に受け入れる。学生の相互交流を基礎に、大学間の共同研究を模索していきたい。上海と京都という異なる文化を背景に、新しい発想を必要とするデジタルシティの開発を通じて、両国の将来を担う若い世代の相互理解に寄与できればと思う。