



ELTE

FACULTY OF
HUMANITIES

Korean studies and the Korean Collection at ELTE

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2025 KF - ENKRS Network Workshop

Korean studies in Hungary

□ overall picture

- Korean studies is a relatively new field of study in Hungary
- Its formal framework was established in the 2000s
- Currently, it is one of the most popular fields within the humanities, with two universities offering Korean studies.

Korean studies in Hungary – short history 1.

- first cultural and political contacts at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries
- travellers' accounts and photo collections of cultural and historical value
 - Vay Péter (1863–1948)
 - Baráthosi Balogh Benedek (1871–1957)
 - Bozóky Dezső (1871–1957)



Dezső Bozóky: View of Seoul with three men in the foreground 1908
Hand-colored glass slide 8×8 cm. HFA_F2004.654 © Museum of Fine Arts

Korean studies in Hungary – short history 2.

- establishment of diplomatic relations with the DPRK in 1948
- during and after the Korean War:
 - hospital and factory buildings
 - medical teams and engineers working in North Korea
 - North Korean orphans and students arrive in Hungary
 - literary translation begins, Korean language book and Hungarian-Korean dictionary are produced
- work of Aladár Sövény (1914–1980)

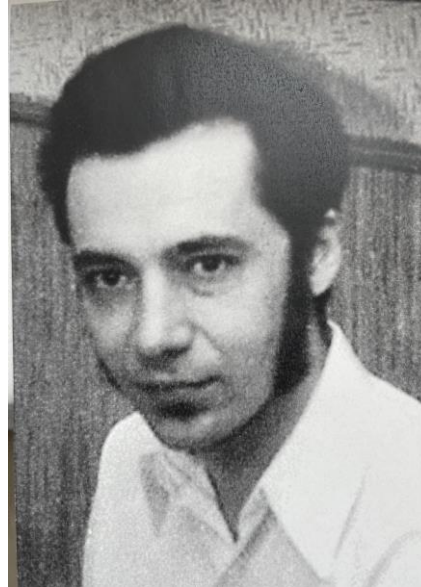


Aladár Sövény with his Korean and Hungarian students in front of Petőfi Sándor Middle School (1953?) © Bequest of Aladár Sövény

Korean studies in Hungary – short history 3.

beginning of the 1970s: easing of diplomatic relations with North Korea

- book donations to the university
- exchange of scholarship students
 - Mártonfi Ferenc (1945–1991) linguist, sinologist
 - Osváth Gábor (1946–) linguist, translator
- 1970s: Korean language courses at ELTE



Ferenc Mártonfi © Mártonfi family



Gábor Osváth ©Wikipedia

Korean studies at ELTE

- 1970s: Korean language courses
- 1997: 2-year Korean program supervised by Ágnes Birtalan (head of the Dept. of Inner Asian Studies); book donations of Korea Foundation
- middle of 2000's: Korean minor program
- 2008: establishment of the Korean Department (BA program)
- 2013: Korean studies MA program
- 2018: Korean studies doctoral programme
- ❖ number of newly admitted students : slight upward trend year by year until 2020; a sharp increase from 2020 onwards

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
60	133	157	151	150

The Korean Collection: Introduction

❑ Overview

The Korean Collection is part of the Institute of East Asian Studies Library at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), integrated within the ELTE Library Network (EKSZ). <https://eltekonyvtarak.elte.hu/en/university-library-service>

❑ Importance

Although not an independent institution, it plays a crucial role in supporting Korean Studies at the Faculty of Humanities of ELTE.

Institute of East Asian Studies Library: composition and challenges

- **Holdings:** cca. 50,000 volumes
- **Multi-collection Structure:** The library includes Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Southeast Asian, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Buddhist collections, spread across four rooms in two buildings.
- **Challenges:** The dispersed nature and lack of resources (money, space, staff) complicate the management and development of these collections

<https://konyvtar.btk.elte.hu/institute-of-east-asian-studies-library>



The Korean Collection

❑ Historical Background

- The collection began with 200–300 volumes donated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the 1970s
- from the late 1990s: donation of the Korea Foundation
- 2008: the collection includes cca. 1200 volumes
- 2019: Window on Korea Project (WOK)
- May 2025: renewal of WOK MOU

❑ Current Status

- Today the Korean collection holds 5,470 documents

Window on Korea (WOK) Project

The first WOK project has been implemented between 2019-2024 with the broad collaboration of teachers, students and the librarian.

- Documents selected by faculty members
- Accessioning and shelving involving student volunteers
- Cataloguing by student workers (2020-2022)



Window on Korea (WOK) Project

□ Results

- library expanded with new premise and furnishings
- collection multiplied (1200→5470 volumes)
- the entire Korean collection retrospectively catalogued by the end of 2023
- increase of the number of loans of Korean materials
- special course on the documents of WOK collection

<https://konyvtar.btk.elte.hu/wok-library>



Other projects and plans

- ☐ Digital collection access

Partnerships with the National Library of Korea and the National Assembly Library provide access to their extensive digital collections.

- ☐ Annotated list of online resources on Korea

A curated list of freely accessible Korean and foreign online databases related to Korea, updated annually, published on the library's website

<https://konyvtar.btk.elte.hu/dstore/document/9605/.pdf>

- ☐ Window on Korea Cultural Event

Cultural programs co-organized with the Korean Cultural Center in Budapest (supported by NLK)

- ☐ Consortium for accessing DBpia and KRpia?



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Thank you for your attention!

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