

## **Reflections on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of SOFOKS (A Fable)**

Once there was a good-hearted but poor tenant farmer who, after years of famine, found it difficult to feed his family and was on the verge of having to place his third child, a malnourished infant daughter, in a foster family.

He did not want to lose his two older sons because the first son was helping him till the field and harvest the crops and the second son was commuting to a nearby town to work as a hired hand to feed himself and managed occasionally to bring home a bit of pocket money left over after his day's needs.

His wife tended a patch of garden and half-a-dozen chickens to occasionally supplement bowls of gruel with vegetables and eggs and went to the hill behind the village to gather firewood and dead leaves and twigs in the fall as fuel.

Agonizing over the prospect of losing custody of their frail infant daughter, the farming couple decided to plead with the village neighbors to help tide them over for a period until the girl reached adulthood.

As poor as they were, the family was highly regarded by their neighbors because of their hard work, their high ethical and moral standards, and the love within the family. There were no rich men in the village, and the neighbors were not much better off than this couple, but they decided to become a sharing community.

The girl stayed in the family and is now an attractive young lady, though perhaps not as physically robust as one who since early childhood had been well fed. When she, the daughter of the village, ultimately becomes a self-supporting member of an established family, the villagers who chipped in with a little help will feel well rewarded.

This is the story of twenty-five years of SOFOKS. Indiana University and the East Asian Studies Center as parents deserve all the credit and praise for having kept their faith and confidence in restoring the health of the Korean Studies program, which has grown slowly but steadily since that time twenty-five years ago when it was on the verge of leaving the family. SOFOKS is grateful for having had the opportunity to become a sharing community to the family.

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On the occasion of the SOFOKS 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration dinner on October 10, 2008  
Bloomington, Indiana

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