

Unificationist Professor Philippe Thiebault Leaves Behind Legacy of Philosophical Translations

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Philippe Thiebault

A respected Unificationist translator and thinker has ascended in Korea: Dr. Philippe Thiebault passed away in Seoul on Jan. 13, 2012.

Thiebault, who studied Korean philosophy in Korea for the past three decades, died of pneumonia and other complications on Saturday. He was 67.

According to the *Korea Herald*, Thiebault was a visiting professor at Seoul's Sejong University and is especially recognized for translating *Mongmin Simseo* — written by Jeong Yak-yong (1762-1836), one of the leading scholars in the late Joseon Dynasty — into French in 2007.

The book, whose title means “Admonitions on Governing the People,” describes the fundamental principles a governor should observe.

“Philippe and I came to Korea at about the same time and for the same mission,” said Tim Elder, who works in the Administrative Support Office of the Tongil Foundation and did interfaith work with Thiebault. “In 1978, Father and Mother Moon called six brothers from six countries to Korea to do interfaith work here. Philippe came from France, and I from the United States. Bernhard Quandt, now known as Lee Cham, president of the Korea National Tourism Organization, came from Germany. William Chassaud came from United Kingdom, Ettore Calistri from Italy and Pablo de la Pena from Spain. The six of us lived together in an apartment in Jamsil for about three years.

“Philippe taught Korean philosophy to Korean university students, first at Konkuk University and later at Hanyang University. Most recently, he taught Oriental philosophy at Sejong University. His original publications were: *La pensée coréenne : Aux sources de l'Esprit-Cœur, Autres Temps*, (2006) and *Confucius et le devenir-homme, Presses Universitaires de Louvain*, (2007). He also translated a number of books from Korean to French.”

According to *The Korea Herald*, “Thiebault visited Korea in 1982 to study Chinese characters, and soon became fascinated by Korean philosophers Yi Hwang, Yi I and others. Staying in Korea since then, the scholar received a Ph.D. in Asian philosophy at Sungkyunkwan University in 1994.

“Along with *Mongmin Simseo*, Thiebault also translated into French a novel based on Jeong Yak-yong's life and Yi I's *Seonghak Jibyo* [The Essentials of the Studies of the Sages]. He received the 11th Yulgok award for the translation of the latter series.

“Also lecturing at Konkuk University and Hanyang University, the scholar taught Asian philosophy at the Sejong University Graduate School from 2007. He suffered from Parkinson's disease for years.

“Thiebault continued his effort to introduce Korean philosophy in his mother tongue until the end, translating Yi Hwang's *Jaseongrok* [Book of Self-examination].

“Thiebault is survived by his wife and two adopted daughters. His body is to be flown back to France.”