

Intercultural Finesse:

Learning from the Educational
Perspective of
Lillias Horton Underwood, M.D.

Presented by Arnold Fallon

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Lillias Sterling Horton Underwood (1851-1921)



Lillias came to Korea in March, 1888; Joseon Dynasty (Korea) in the late 19th century

- 1) Korea was in the midst of upheavals between China and Japan.**
- 2) Korea was very poor.**
- 3) Korea just began to open to Western countries in 1882.**
- 4) Koreans followed Confucianism strongly and women were devalued because of male-domination.**
- 5) Protestant missionaries found it difficult to evangelize.**

Lillias' mission works in Korea

- Medical doctor
- Evangelist
- Christian Educator

What attitude and skills did Lillias cultivate effective listening and help bridge gaps in cultural and national identity?

Having Love

(Seoul, April 1, 1888)

“This is par excellence in a heathen land. Everything in manners and customs being outlandish and primitive. I am beginning however to like the people because they are mine” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 458).

(Seoul, June, 11th 1888)

“I like Koreans very much” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 267).

“I, who love them (Korean women) as much as anyone ever did, who look upon them as own sisters, must confess this. Sorrow, hopelessness, hard labor, sickness, lovelessness, ignorance, often, too often, shame, have dulled their eyes, and hardened, and scarred their faces” (Underwood, 1908, p. 11).

Positive

(1889, no date, Japan)

“Dear fathers and brethren that you will not listen to glooming reports. Korea is one of the most promising fields in the whole world” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 561).

(Seoul, May 29, 1890)

“How happy we are to return to Seoul, and all looks bright. Of course we know that the same people are there and yet we are sure they now feel kindly; and we hope that the government” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 593).

(June 11th 1888)

“They (Koreans) are very curious about foreigners and numbers of Korean women came here to Dr. Heron’s to “Kugyong.” (meaning peering) and we always welcome them, and do all that we can to entertain and please them, knowing that work depends on our making them our friends (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 467).

Courageous

(Seoul, Nov. 17th 1888)

“No foreign lady has ever traveled in the country, and I hope to reach many of the women, and do more good than I could by remaining here” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 486).

(May 26th, 1889)

“I have now seen nearly 600 patients, given away a great many books and told the gospel story (by the aid of pictures – a little book especially prepared –and John 3:16) to a good many women, and shall probably see a great many more when we return” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 527).

Responding for Needs

“(I) undertook Sunday school service with little boys, using a catechism which I could not yet translate, but (knowing the sounds) could hear the boys recite. Soon after I have been holding a Bible class with a few women with the aid of a little native boy who learned English and a sorceress who could read the Chinese Scriptures. This woman would read the chapter, we all united in the Lord’s Prayer and in singing the few hymns then translated, and I talked to the women through the medium of my little interpreter. I struggled and stumbled” (Underwood, 1908, p. 201).

(Seoul, Jan, 3rd, 1890)

“I want to lay one matter before you, and that is our orphanage. It weighs heavily in my head. It is a great grand work. We who are in the field are convinced there is nothing as sure as the work among the children. But the orphanage is a difficult and serious undertaking. It needs the chief thought and care of some experienced, consecrated man” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 571).

Asking for guidance by the Holy Spirit

- (March, 8, 1889)

“we have consulted together and with this, we have prayed over it, and we are waiting to be led; we shall only take the step first ahead, and hope the Lord will put obstacles in the way if He doesn't want us to go, And if He doesn't present us, I think we shall go” (Yi & Oak, 2005, p. 507).

- “In that hour the divine presence seems to be the most imminent, or more fully realized and eternity and the spirit world close around us” (Underwood, 1908, p. 258).

Contributions for women

- Women were valuable: this was the self-perception of women themselves and society's perception. Through women's schools and Bible studies, these advances were made.
- Bringing upper and lower caste girls together in education.
- Women participate in society in various ways- education, medicine, social welfare, national independence, and evangelism.

Intercultural Finesse

- Struggles
- Initiative
- Teaching Methodologies
- Relationships – Sensitivity
- Public Face
- Personal Relationships
- Balance of Power – She served everyone!
- Interpreting.
- Respect Culture
- Adapt
- Bring Gospel
- PR-oriented
- Long Term Vision
- Women
- Institutional

Institutional

- Choson Christian College, now Yonsei University
- The Church
- Hospitals
- The Palace

Educational Perspective

Albany Academy for Girls

Founded 1814



- Progressive Education
- Confident Women
- Academic
- Far Reaching Vision
- Not Complacent

LONG TERM VISION

Adapt

**Lillias served the
most powerful
woman in Korea.**

Empress Myeongseong

1851-1895



PR Oriented

- She was conscious of her every move.
- Missionaries need direction
- Kindness and Love

Respect Culture

- Bring Gospel
- Love People
- Constantly Interpret and Reinterpret
- Maintain and Preserve Relationships

Characteristic Values of Lillias

- Relationships
- Sensitivity
- Public Face

Listening

Listening is responding!

References

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