

CBF

JM

EFD

CG

files	OUT 11 1949	
JUN 13 1949		

June 10, 1949

900
P+p
Area Studiescopy filed
205 F
Univ. of California
Latin American Studiesx cds
RF - P+p - Area Studies
H - P+p - Area Studies
Fahs, Charles Burton

AREA STUDIES — Definition

x ref.
911
P+p
The Eastern Studies

MAY 22 1963

The basic concept of area studies is the application of many or all of the social science and humanistic disciplines, sometimes also natural science disciplines, toward a better understanding of a single region, well defined in both geography and time, preferably through attention to specific problems. An area program is thus a focus for the practical application of methods and concepts in the established disciplines, not a substitute or alternative to those disciplines. In this application of several disciplines to specific human problems, area studies are similar to the utilization of all branches of medical knowledge in the study of the specific ailments of patients in a medical clinic. Area studies provide a method of bringing both students and scholars down to earth from elaboration of theoretical and abstract principles to the study of real life in its practical complexities. They are one of the best means of demonstrating the inter-relationships between the various methods of studying man. It is because of practicality and escape from the limitations of single disciplines that area studies are particularly useful for better international understanding; either for war or for peace.

From this point of view, studies of regions both in the United States and in foreign countries can be considered "area studies." In fact, both are necessary and should be considered together. Comparison is essential. Our own problems cannot be understood without the perspective which study of a different culture provides. On the other hand, study of a foreign culture will be without insight if it is not based on practical knowledge of one's own. The student needs broad understanding of the American base and of at least one foreign area, in addition to the usual disciplines. This is a heavy requirement, however, which can hardly be met without a major reexamination and reformulation of curriculum, both courses and content. How to fuse these elements into some new viable educational pattern is the major problem of assimilation of the new area approach by the universities.

The American studies program of the Foundation has already achieved some success in encouraging interest in regional literature and regional research. As yet, however, neither of these developments has been effectively related to the normal educational programs of the universities or colleges. The recent grant to Occidental

AREA STUDIES - 2
June 10, 1949

College in southern California is one attempt to achieve such integration, which should be increasingly an objective of any further assistance from the Humanities to American studies programs.

If one considers only the study of foreign areas at institutions in the United States, the RF program has had even more marked success. Work on the Far East, Latin America, and the USSR is now well established at a number of institutions, each. These programs, many of which owe their initiation to RF assistance, paved the way for the army area studies programs during the war and the increasingly wide acceptance of the area study concept. More recently, this development has brought new support on a considerable scale from the Carnegie Corporation. There are also now government funds available for research along area lines.

The general fields of Far Eastern, Latin American, and Slavic studies are now not only past the pioneering stage, but may have nearly reached the limit of the amount of graduate training which can be justified until new outlets for the Ph.D.'s so trained are developed. Humanities should, therefore, in the United States refrain from general support to new graduate programs in these three fields and should taper off fairly rapidly our support to existing programs.

There remain, however, four major lines of development in foreign area studies which should still be considered.

The first is the extension of the area studies principle to the remaining important, neglected areas of the world. Some of these neglected areas fall within the general scope of the programs already developed. There is, for example, inadequate work on Korea, despite the general programs of study on the Far East. For other major areas, notably the Near East, India, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, the programs now in operation in the United States are quite inadequate to meet national needs. Finally, there are areas of considerable importance such as Africa and Australasia on which there is no single center of coordinated study at any institution in the country.

Second, as has been suggested above, a major obstacle to the production of a larger number of scholars for an area field is the lack of teaching openings through which they can be supported. This in turn is due to the fact that no effective place for area work in undergraduate general education programs has yet been found. The program at Occidental College already mentioned is a promising experiment in this direction, as is also the general education course on Far Eastern civilization which is to be developed at Columbia University under a Carnegie grant. The University of Hawaii would seem to be an unusually promising place for experimentation in this direction, if the proper leadership should develop there. The possibility should not be ruled out of further RF assistance to one or more promising experiments in this direction.

A third major opportunity is for introduction of materials on the unusual areas into the established disciplines. The last ten years has seen some, but distressingly little, progress in this direction. On the whole, comparative government continues to pay attention to Europe alone, comparative literature continues to ignore

AREA STUDIES - 3
June 10, 1949

both the Near and the Far East, our philosophers are too little acquainted with other schools of thought than those of the West. This is the pattern into which several of the smaller Humanities projects fit; for example, the aid to Dr. Hightower at Harvard for a handbook of Chinese literature, the bibliography of translations from the Chinese being prepared under the auspices of the ACLS, the work of Ragini Devi on Indian dances. The major projects on Russian translations, Near Eastern translations, and the East-West Philosophers' Conference at Honolulu belong in this pattern as well. Much further work is needed in this field, which is the logical next step beyond our more general support to Slavic, Latin American, and Far Eastern studies. Here area studies merge with other phases of the Humanities program.

The fourth major line of further advance is the development of similar patterns of area studies at institutions in other countries. If the United States needs studies of the Far East, the Near East, Russia, etc., Japan also needs studies of the major areas of the world which impinge upon her economically or culturally. Humanities has recently secured appropriations to the University of Toronto and to the University of British Columbia for Slavic studies, to Tokyo University, the University of Stockholm, and the University of Leiden for Chinese studies, and to the University of Bordeaux for Latin American studies. Further developments in this direction are contemplated.

These are four new lines in which the RF can pioneer with profit. If they are pursued, they will keep budget needs in the field of area studies near the present level for some years, even if every effort is made to have as much of the burden as possible carried by other sources of funds such as the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, the U. S. Government in the United States, or the University Grants Commission in Great Britain.

CBF:am