



1. The beginnings of the exchange program a half-century ago

Every early summer at the beginning of June, the annual Sophia University-Nanzan University General Sports Festival is scheduled to take place. The 50th Exchange took place in 2009. Why does Sophia University have these specially scheduled competitive matches in so many sports with Nanzan University? What are some of the factors in the background of this Exchange? What happened at the beginning of this long history?

The first competitive matches were held at Nanzan over two days, June 25th and June 26th, in 1960. Before that, some official sports teams of the two universities, for example the rugby teams, had participated in friendly matches for the sake of fostering friendship and good human relations between the student players of the two universities. According to a statement by then Sophia President Oizumi Takeshi, these friendly matches were the origin of the competitive matches and the exchanges between the university-wide sports associations. Edition 151 of the Sophia University newspaper included the following explanation of the purpose of the annual competition. "Sophia University and Nanzan University are both Catholic universities. The founding spirits of both universities are based on Catholicism. This spirit can appear in student activities in sports teams and in clubs devoted to cultural activities. The students can encourage each other and the exchanges can use the Catholic foundations as bases to build up the personalities of the student participants, so they can become more suitable adults for the future growth of Japanese society."

Eight sports held competitions in 1960: baseball, soccer, table tennis, judo, basketball,



This picture shows one of the ceremonies at the Sophia-Nanzan Exchange held in 1963. This ceremony took place on the Sophia University playing fields.



This picture shows the Sophia cheerleaders performing at Nanzan University during the 1988 exchange.

tennis, volleyball, and ice hockey. There were also some exchanges involving students from cultural clubs. The competition results found victories in five sports for Nanzan teams and victories in three sports for Sophia teams. Appropriate officials decided that this general sports competition should be held annually as a designated university event. Such official events started with the second Sports Exchange in 1961. These events were held in April, under the joint management of the Sports Section of Nanzan University and the League of Sports Teams of Sophia University. These two committees had signed a document of agreement to cosponsor this competition annually. The official name was slightly lengthened to include more clearly the idea of a collection of many competitive sports. This second general sports event was held on facilities available to Sophia students. The number of sports contested was increased to eleven. Sophia teams won seven of these eleven contested sports.

Following the pattern set during the first sports exchange, cultural clubs from Nanzan came to Sophia for exchanges as well. Seven Nanzan clubs, including their male choir and their English Speaking Society (ESS) came up to Tokyo, bringing 157 students. Ten sports were contested in the third annual exchange, with Sophia teams winning seven of the ten. The exchanges of cultural clubs found 76 students from Sophia's Deutsche Ringe and the Sophia ESS visiting Nanzan. However, the cultural club association did



Nanzan Crusader defenders tackle a Golden Eagle receiver.

not support this exchange officially, to the considerable disappointment of the Nanzan students, as reported in an article in the Sophia University newspaper. During the 4th exchange, 660 students came to Tokyo: 160 from cultural clubs and 500 from the Sports Section. Year by year, the number of participants was growing.

2. Lagging Participation by the Organization of Cultural Clubs at Sophia

Beginning with the 5th exchange in 1964, however, the association of sports teams and the organization of cultural clubs took very different stances toward this annual event. Behind this difference was a lack of interest in exchanges among many cultural clubs, who lacked enthusiasm for anything connected with Nagoya. Moreover, from the 14th exchange in 1974, the universities gave careful consideration to the financial burdens on the student participants imposed by the exchange; thus, the annual event started to be an event sponsored in some ways by the universities.

This caused some doubts to develop four years later when an article in the Sophia newspaper introduced the exchange meeting of the ESS clubs of the two universities in an article entitled “Another Form of Sophia-Nanzan Exchange.” This article highlighted the fact that participation by cultural clubs was by no means widespread, and questioned the fairness of giving university sponsorship to an event with limited student participation. The critical comment started to surface from 1983 that this event should not be called a university-wide event, but rather an event for the benefit only of the students in formally sanctioned sports clubs. The Sophia newspaper reported that only a minority of ordinary students were much interested in these exchanges. Further, since the participation of the cultural clubs remained rather minor, some suggested that the time had come to rethink the entire concept of the Sophia-Nanzan exchange. The student chairperson for the overall committee in charge of the 1984 exchange, Taguchi Junichiro, frankly admitted that it was quite difficult to claim participation and interest in the exchange on the part of most clubs that belonged to the association of cultural clubs. He said that there was little or no positive response from these groups regarding the exchange. On another note, some persons at Nanzan University put forward the positive opinion that faculty members of the two institutions should widen the exchange from just the sports teams to include joint research efforts. Overall, however, though the exchange may seem to involve only sports played by teams that are members of the Association of Athletic Clubs, actually there are impressive annual exchanges



This picture shows the exchange between circles for law department students at the 50th exchange in 2009.

continuing between some clubs in the Cultural Clubs Association and some clubs in the Association of Music Clubs. One can name the orchestras, the comic story telling clubs, the broadcasting clubs, and the English Speaking Societies.

In 2009, the exchange was able to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Many events including the opening ceremony were held off-campus at the Second national Gymnasium in Yoyogi, where Sophia teams won a majority of the contested sports. Among the cultural clubs that participated in this 50th exchange were the photography clubs, the clubs devoted to Folk Songs, and a law department circle called the Seiho Association.



This picture is also from the 50th exchange. It shows athletic representatives from the two universities promising fair play during the opening ceremony, which was held at the Second Yoyogi National Gymnasium.

3. An exchange that is rooted in the Roman Catholic spirit of the two universities

The Catholic men's religious order known as the Jesuits was the group that founded Sophia University. Ignatius of Loyola founded this order in 1540, with the dual aim of working for the spiritual advancement of its members and working for the salvation of others. The Catholic men's religious order known as the Divine Word Missionaries was the group that founded Nanzan University. Arnold Janssen started this order in 1875. Their aim was to develop academic research that would help to spread the seeds of the word of God among people who live in various cultures and who practice various religious traditions. The SVD organizational structure under one leader called the General and their attempts to form an international unity among members that overcomes different national origins and places of birth both resemble the Jesuit order. Such spiritual friendship based on Catholic principles is deep in the roots of these exchanges between Nanzan University and Sophia University. Indeed, the exchanges between the universities started from the very year of the foundation of Nanzan University in 1949. An article in the Sophia University newspaper at that time explained as follows in an article headlined "The close association with Nanzan University". The exchanges between the two universities offer opportunities for concrete expression of friendly relationships on the levels of cultural and academic achievement. We at Sophia have seen that the sports association students from Nanzan University could come to our school events. This is a welcome exchange between the two Catholic universities in Japan that have many male students. We expect that these events will continue on an annual basis from next year. We look forward to visits next year in May to the Nanzan University festival by Sophia students presenting plays, contesting sports events, and sharing newspaper production experiences. The visit will involve the various athletic teams working together for the first time in an off-campus activity.

Thus, what we now call the Sophia-Nanzan Exchange started with the annual opportunity of sports teams to compete against each other and for cultural clubs to share specialized skills and participate in joint events.