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# Regional Collaboration in Physics within the Asia Pacific Region

S.P. CHIA

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
50603 KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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Since the 1970's, physicists in the Asia Pacific region have considered the possibility of strengthening regional collaborations. These discussions were focused on three areas of collaboration: 1) holding regional physics conferences; 2) establishing a regional physical society and; 3) creating a regional research institute.

Prof. K.K. Phua took the initiative in organizing the First Asia Pacific Physics Conference (AAPC) in Singapore, which was held from June 12-18, 1983. The 1<sup>st</sup> APPC was a big success, attracting some 340 participants from countries in the Asia and Pacific region, as well as America and Europe. The plenary sessions included talks by Y. Wada, P.Y. Chou, H. Sato, Y. Kaneko, C.N. Yang, C. Rubbia, A.G. Clark, S.C.C. Ting, S. Ozaki, N.P. Chang, H. Feshbach, A. Arima and H. Morinaga.

It was in this conference that both the UA1 and the UA2 experiments at CERN's Super Proton Synchrotron announced the discovery of the W-boson. As remarked by the editors in the conference proceedings: *"Judging from the roster of the invited speakers, the quality of this conference was as good as any other international physics conference."*

As was demonstrated later, the APPC series had a strong impact on the development of collaborative research in the Asia Pacific region. The success of the 1<sup>st</sup> APPC led to the general consensus that the APPC series should be continued. The 2<sup>nd</sup> APPC was held in February 1986 at Bangalore, India.

In 1985, the 14<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium on Group Theoretical Methods in Physics (ICGTMP) was held in Seoul, Korea from August 26-30. *"The Seoul Colloquium had a special significance because it was the first ICGTMP meeting ever held in the Asia-Pacific region."*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> APPC was held in Hong Kong on June 20-24, 1988. The keynote paper in the conference was delivered by Prof. Charles K. Kao, then vice chancellor of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, with a talk entitled, 'Fulfilling the Promise of Optical Fibre Communication'. This APPC was a milestone conference. It was at this APPC that the decision was made, in a meeting chaired by Prof. C.N. Yang, for the formation of the Association of Asia Pacific Physical Societies (AAPPS). The meeting also entrusted Prof. Ken Young with writing the constitution of AAPPS, and with the registration of the association in Hong Kong.

The AAPPS was formally established on October 15, 1989, as an umbrella organization of the physical societies in the Asia Pacific region. As written in the constitution, the main objective of AAPPS is, "to promote the advancement of knowledge in physics in the Asia Pacific region, including research, application and teaching, especially through international collaboration in these activities in this region".

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> APPC, in the meeting to decide the venue of the next APPC, Malaysia, Australia and Korea put up their respective bids to organize the 4<sup>th</sup> APPC. Korea requested to have priority to organize the 4<sup>th</sup> APPC. In the spirit of cooperation, this request was granted, and it was agreed that Malaysia and Australia would organize the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> APPC respectively.

Shortly afterwards, in November 1989, the idea of establishing a theoretical center in the Asia Pacific region was conceived at KEK, Tsukuba, Japan. The First General Meeting of AAPPS was held at Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea on August 10, 1990, where C.N. Yang, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Formation of AAPPS, declared the formal inauguration of AAPPS. Council

members were elected, and the next day the first council meeting was held. C. N. Yang was elected as the first president of AAPPS.

The 4<sup>th</sup> APPC was held 2 days later, from August 13-17, at Yonsei University. This conference can be considered to be the inaugural conference for the AAPPS.

The 5<sup>th</sup> APPC was held in Malaysia on August 10-15, 1992, at the scenic hill resort of Genting Highlands, near the capitol city of Kuala Lumpur. It was at the 5<sup>th</sup> APPC that the idea of the Pacific Winter School was conceived among the theoretical physicists present, to promote research in theoretical physics and to ensure cooperation between the theoretical physicists in the Asia Pacific region. It was generally agreed that the request to organize APPC should be accompanied by a formal proposal to be presented in advance to the council meeting of AAPPS. This was deemed necessary to make the overall process of APPC organization more formal.

The First Pacific Winter School was held on February 22 – 26, 1993 at the scenic Sorak Mountain resort in Korea. Aside from the main purpose of the school, which was to discuss the recent developments in theoretical physics, “another important purpose was to discuss the establishment of the “Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics”, a truly international center of highest quality, which could also promote the cooperation among theoretical physicists in the Asia Pacific region.” At this school, the International Planning Committee (IPC) for the establishment of the Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics (PCTP) was formed. The main proponent of the Winter School, and the driving force behind the proposed ‘PCTP’ was Prof. Y.M. Cho of Seoul National University, Korea.

The IPC met several times between 1993 and 1996, mostly at Seoul National University. During the first meeting, held on March 25, 1993, Korea, Japan, China and Taiwan were recommended as being countries with possible suitable sites for the proposed center. The AAPPS was formally involved with the formation of PCTP when the president of the Korean Science and Engineering Foundation, Jin Ho Park, and the president of the Federation of Basic Science Institutes of Korean Universities, Jewan Kim, jointly wrote a letter to AAPPS on March 2, 1994, which expressed Korean interest in contributing their financial share to the proposed center, and requested AAPPS’s help in convincing colleagues

that Korea was indeed the best choice. The IPC of PCTP, at its meeting on May 1-2, 1994, made the recommendation for ‘PCTP’ to be established in Korea.

The AAPPS Council, at its meeting held on July 2, 1994 at Brisbane, Australia, discussed the joint letter from Jin Ho Park and Jewan Kim, together with the recommendation issued by the IPC of ‘PCTP’. After a lengthy discussion, the AAPPS Council passed the following motions:

AAPPS endorses the proposal to establish the PCTP in Korea.

AAPPS suggests to the IPC of PCTP to change the name of PCTP from “the Pacific Center” to “the Asia Pacific Center”.

The suggestion of the change in name to the Asia Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics was adopted by the IPC.

In November 1994, the Association for Science Cooperation in Asia (ASCA) in Manila endorsed, on the proposal from Vietnam, seconded by Malaysia, the establishment of APCTP in Korea. The IPC, in its meeting held during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Winter School at Sorak Mountain Resort on January 19–24, 1995, decided to launch the APCTP in Seoul, Korea in 1996. Prof. CN Yang was appointed as the founding president of APCTP.

APCTP was formally launched with an inaugural conference held in Seoul, Korea from June 4 – 10, 1996; the rest is history. The above is an account, mostly of my personal involvement in APPC, APCTP and AAPPS.

There is no doubt that Malaysia recognizes the importance of regional cooperation in physics research. But more importantly, Malaysia also takes note of the fact that the development of physics in South-East Asia has not been uniform. This is fundamentally the reason why I have been stressing the importance of training young researchers in the Asia Pacific region.



**Swee Ping Chia** was formerly the president of the Malaysian Institute of Physics, a professor of physics at the University of Malaya, and the vice president of academic affairs at INTI International University. He received his BSc(Hons) from the University of Malaya, and his MS and PhD from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research field is theoretical particle physics.