[page 89]

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, KOREA BRANCH

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL, April 1957—August 1958

The society is now well into its third year of revived activity, and is supporting a full and varied programme with a membership list that has trebled during the past twelve months. The payment of dues and the sale of the Transactions are maintaining the already sound financial condition of the branch.

The election of the council took place at the annual general meeting, which preceded the regular monthly meeting in the University Club rooms on 4 December 1957.

The monthly meetings, generally held on the first Wednesday evening of the month, have all been well attended. On several occasions the accommodation provided was not sufficient for the comfort of our guests.

In April 1957 the society heard a paper from Dr Richard Brown on Ceremonial Drinking in the Far East. Dr Brown had his very varied collection of oriental drinking vessels on display after the paper. In May, Dr Paul Crane gave a paper on Korean Postage Stamps and their history, which he illustrated with excellent coloured slides of his collection. In June Mr Hwang Su-yong read a paper on Korean Pagodas. All these meetings were held in the USIS Theatre at the American Embassy.

No meetings were held during the three summer months. The series re-opened in October with a paper on Korean Surnames by Mr Carl Miller, which was given at the Choson Hotel.

After this, meetings were held regularly in the University Club rooms at the Sogong Building. In November Mr Edward Wagner read a paper on Political Factionalism in the Yi Dynasty. In December, Father Richard Rutt gave a talk on Sijo poetry, which is printed in this volume. In January Mr Yi Kwang-in read a paper on Hop’ae (name tags used in census taking); and in February Dr Kim Ha-t’ae spoke on the Transmission of Neo-confucianism to Japan by Kang Hang, a prisoner of war in the Hideyoshi invasions. [page 90]

For the March meeting, members and guests were invited to the main studio of the Korean Broadcasting Station on Namsan, where Dr Yi Hye-gu gave an Outline of Korean Music, illustrated by many recordings. Afterwards the KBS collection of musical instruments was on view to those present.

The April meeting heard a paper from Dr Richard A Gard on Buddhism; the May meeting had a talk on Korean Medicine from Dr Paul Crane. These two meetings were held in the University Club, but the June meeting at which Father Rutt spoke on Rural Chinese Studies, was held in the Seoul Chamber of Commerce. After this the monthly lecture meetings were discontinued for the summer recess.

During the summer the society arranged and sponsored three field trips. In May a three day excursion visited Pulkuksa and Kyongju. In June a four day trip was made in South Cholla province, and in July another four day trip went to the Soraksan area on the East Coast. All these trips were arranged with the cooperation of the Ministry of Transportation and the response from members and friends was more than gratifying.

When Mr Scherbacher left Korea in June of this year, the council coopted his successor at the USIS, Mr Gregory Henderson (who is a member of long standing), to fill his post as librarian of the society. Mr Henderson is actively engaged in efforts to reconstitute the library.

We are glad that it is once again possible, after a lapse of some twenty years, to have the Transactions printed in Korea, and we hope in the near future to be able to reprint some of the back numbers, which are now practically unobtainable.

In view of the high degree of interest shown in the society's activities, both inside and outside Korea, the council feels confident that the society can maintain the standard of its work, and even hopes, with the cooperation of its members, to expand and improve on what has been achieved in the past.