**2013 Annual Report**

**OF THE**

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

**KOREA BRANCH**

*President’s Report for 2013*

I am happy to say that 2013 was, in very many ways, a good year for our Society. Membership has continued to grow and our activities have on the whole continued to attract good numbers, with our lectures drawing especially large crowds when the topic is related to North Korea. Attendance at lectures then rises to something like 120 and people are standing at the back of the room. Even with more demanding topics, it is almost unknown for the figure to be much below 50. We are extremely grateful to the management of Somerset Palace for allowing us to use their Residents’ Lounge for our lectures, year after year, without payment.

In many ways, the most important new development of 2013 was the appointment of Ms. Yonjoo Hong to be our new Office Manager at the start of the year. With the retirement of Sue Bae at the end of 2011, we entered uncharted waters and for a while it seemed most unlikely that anyone would be prepared to take up the torch after her. There was an urgent need for all our operations to be computerized, and the office was in great need of refurbishing and modernization. In addition to possessing effective computer skills for administration and account-keeping, our Manager has to be able to answer the phone and field questions patiently at any moment about our many activities, in English and Korean. The work of our office involves updating membership records, replying to emails, keeping track of the numbers of those signing-up for excursions and making reservations of buses and hotels accordingly, booking the room for lectures, dealing with orders for books, and maintaining accurate financial records of everything, among other things. That Yonjoo Hong does all these things so effectively is a constant source of gratitude.

Equally wonderful is the transformation of the office itself. It now houses the entire stock of books for sale, those published by us in past decades as well as books from other publishers. It also houses the RAS Library, with the most fragile and ancient volumes in secured shelving. Michael Welles, our Librarian, has been working tirelessly to bring into the computerized catalogue a large number of books donated recently by various members. The Library now contains nearly 3,000 volumes, all shelved in order with labels on the spine showing the shelf-marks. One interesting discovery was that a number of old volumes contain labels showing that they were in our Library in the 1930s. We are most grateful to those who have donated books and would like to encourage members to continue to send us any books in English about Korea that they think our Library should have.

Throughout 2013 we have continued to offer a variety of special activities in addition to our traditional lectures and excursions. The Reading Club led by Patrick Bourgo meets once a month in the Library of the Jongno District Office to discuss a Korean short story the members have read in advance. We are very grateful to the Library staff members that remain at their post so that we can use the room. The staff of the National Museum of Korea has also worked very hard to provide our members with a monthly guided tour in English of one small section of the Museum, often beginning with an in-depth lecture, and we are very grateful to them.

The only area in which we are faced with a challenge is that of our Excursions. In past decades, travel in Korea was difficult and there were no guidebooks; in addition, there was not much to do on weekends in Seoul, so large numbers of people took advantage of our program. Times have changed! It is easy to travel now, and Seoul has become a vibrant international city with a lot to do on weekends. We are no longer sure of having enough people for any of our excursions, even those that in times past were the most popular. This in turn has an impact on our finances, since we have always added a small percentage to the cost of tours to cover administrative expenses. One solution has been to offer more walking excursions within Seoul. These do not require us to rent a bus, they can start later and end earlier and there is no long wait in weekend traffic.

Toward the end of 2013, we began to organize a Colloquium in Korean Studies, designed as a service for the many people from across the world engaged professionally in Korean Studies, now living in Seoul as students, teaching faculty, and researchers, working in English. Here, presentations of ongoing research can be given and discussed informally, without the constraints of a formal academic conference and before an audience composed uniquely of people with similar interests. This takes us back to the original purpose of the Royal Asiatic Society and our own Korea Branch. Until the Pacific War, our only activity was the presentation and discussion by members of scholarly papers that were then revised and published in *Transactions*. The change to lectures introducing some aspect of Korea to a more general public came when the RAS was re-founded after the Korean War.

We are extremely grateful to our Sponsors, without whose support it would be hard to continue. In particular, I must express our deep gratitude to Seoul Cyber University for providing a very generous monthly financial grant in recognition of the educational value of our activities. Samsung Fire and Marine Insurance and PCA Life have also provided financial support as sponsorship. We continue to hope for additional sponsors and have also decided to institute a form of Corporate Membership by which companies and organizations are able to send any five members of their staff to participate in our activities.

The main event in our social calendar was once again the Garden Party. We were kindly welcomed by the British Ambassador, Scott Wightman and his wife, and many members enjoyed a wonderful afternoon, with a performance of traditional Korean dance. We are very grateful to the Kooksoondang Brewery for having generously provided refreshments, including a large quantity of a new kind of *makgeolli*.

Finally, I must express my deep gratitude to the officers and Council. During the year, Betsy-Gay Kraft replaced Jennifer Flinn as Secretary while Jun Byung Geun took over from Jacco Zwetsloot as Treasurer. The Council has continued to grow and with nearly thirty members provides essential support and encouragement. All together, we feel that our Society, despite, or perhaps because of, its very limited financial resources, is going from strength to strength and re-inventing itself for the task of bringing a deeper understanding of Korea to an increasing body of members in the 21st century.

Respectfully submitted

Brother Anthony of Taizé

President, RAS Korea.

2013 RAS Lectures

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| --- | --- |
| January 15  January 22  February 12  February 26  March 12  March 26  April 9  April 23  May 14  May 28  June 11  June 18  June 25  July 16  September 10  September 24  October 8  October 22  November 12  November 28  December 10  December 17 | Robert Neff  Letters From Joseon: 19th Century Korea through the Eyes of an American Ambassador's Wife  Sheen Dae-Cheol  Calm and Dynamic: Two Differing Aesthetic Aspects of Korean Traditional Music  Kim Dong-jin  Crusader for Korea: Homer B. Hulbert  Jacco Sweetsloot  The Long-Forgotten World War 2 Prisoner of War Camps in Korea  Peter Bartholomew  The Catastrophic Losses of Korea’s Architectural Heritage from 1910 and Continuing Today  Br Anthony  Travellers’ Tales : How the West First Learned about Korea  Andrei Lankov  The female face of North Korean capitalism: North Korean gender relations in the post-famine era  Emanuel Pastreich  Scholars of the World Discuss Korea's Future  Kenneth Robinson  Pirates and Traders, and Fake Japanese, too: Korean-Japanese Relations from 1392 to 1592  David Mason  The Distinctive Characteristics of Korean Buddhism  Dr. Tatiana Gabroussenko  Yǒngye kunin and North Korean national identity  Jaroslav Olsa jr.  Han Hŭng-su: a multi-talented but forgotten Korean scholar in Europe  Wayne Patterson  Christianity, American Missionaries, and Korean Immigration to the United States, 1903-1915  Alex Švamberk  Czechoslovak participation in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission from 1953-58.  Boudewijn C. A. Walraven  Familiar Faces: the personal nature of shamanic paintings  Brian Myers  Red Herring: North Korea's Juche Myth  Michael Kim  Imagining the Dual City in Colonial Korea (1910-1945)  Kathryn Weathersby  The Decision to Prolong the Korean War: The Roles of Stalin, Mao and Kim Il Sung  Robert Fouser  Early Western Learners of Korean: What Can They Teach Us?  Darcy Paquet  Evaluating Korean Cinema’s Commercial Success  Yang Jong-sung  Introduction to Korean Shamanism  Jocelyn Clark and friends  Musical evening |

Monthly Visits to the National Museum: 2013

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| --- | --- |
| February 13 | History in Glass |
| March 20 | Buddhist Sculpture Galleries |
| April 17 | The Peranakan World |
| May 15 | Calligraphy of Korean Zen Masters |
| June 19 | Buddhist Guardian Paintings of Late Joseon Period |
| September 25 | Silk Road Luxuries from Early Korea |
| October 16 | Silla, A Brilliant Country of Gold |
| November 20 | Musical Instruments of Joseon in America |
| December 18 | Korean Ceramics and Maritime Silk Road |

We are most grateful to the members of the Museum’s staff who prepare the monthly guided tour in English for RAS members.

The RAS Reading Club: 2013

Each month members meet to discuss a Korean short story in English translation. Among the works discussed in 2013 were:

April: Ku Hyo-sŏ. *A Bale of Salt*

June: Lee Oyoung. *The General’s Beard*

July: Park Min-Gyu. *Korean Standards*

August: Kim Young-ha. *The Man Who Sold His Shadow*

September: Yi Tae-jun. *Crows*

October: Yi Chong-jun: *Footprints in the Snow*

November: Ch’oe Illam. *Ballad*

December: Yi Munyol. *Garuda*

The Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch

wishes to thank these sponsors for their generous support:

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*Books for Sale from the RAS Korea*

The home page of the RASKB includes an RAS Book Store with lists of the many Korea-related titles available for sale from our office.

Click on http://www.raskb.com

Go to **RAS Book Store**

Anyone wishing to purchase books should send an email to the RAS Korea office: royalasiatickorea@gmail.com indicating the exact title and author of the books desired, together with the full name and complete mailing address to which they should be mailed. Please also indicate if books should be sent by airmail to an overseas address, otherwise books for overseas destinations will be sent by surface mail. Alternatively, those living in Korea may collect the books from our office. The RAS office will then calculate the total cost, including packing and mailing, and reply by email.

Current members of the RASKB are entitled to a significant discount on the price of books purchased. Payment can be made by Paypal (in US dollars etc, not Korean Won), by bank transfer, or by check. Credit card payments can be made at the RAS office. If you need the total price to be quoted in a currency other than Korean won, please tell us.

The books are divided into the following categories:

RAS Publications

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Children

Culture

Folk Tales

Food & Clothing

History, Economics, Politics

Korean Language

Korean Literature

Korean Studies, Korean War, North Korea

Philosophy & Religion

Society

Travel, Guides, Geography, Photography

The RAS Korea E-Book Library

In addition to its library of printed books, RAS Korea also offers members and friends access to a wide variety of electronic editions of books about Korea through links in its home page.

Click on http://www.raskb.com

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The page offers links to the different resources composing our e-Book library.

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•Monthly issues of the *Korea Review*, 1901-1905

•Links to many Korea-related e-Book available freely elsewhere on the Internet

•PDF files of the collection of 373 books and magazines belonging to former UK Ambassador to Korea Martin Uden, scanned during his term in Korea.

Our home page also contains a **Blog** section where **video recordings of lectures** are available as well as other echoes of our activities.

Please encourage others to become members of the Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch.