# 2020 Annual Report

**OF THE**

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY Korea

*President’s Report for 2020*

2020 was a year all will remember but few will celebrate, I think. For that reason, this issue of Transactions bears the date 2021, the year of its publication, rather than 2020, the date which tradition required us to use, as if the contents had been composed the previous year. This report, too, is being written in April 2021, and we all hope that this will be the year in which the virus was finally defeated. So, welcome to Transactions 2021!

2020 began quietly enough, until early February when the full scale of the pandemic struck and everything stopped, just after the Feb. 11 lecture, which we did not realize would be the last physical lecture for a very long time. Fortunately, 2020 was (from my own perspective) to be my last as RAS president and I was already looking forward to being able to hand over to the Rev. Steven Shields, who had been helping as one of our two vice presidents since the previous year. It was thanks to Steve, together with our excellent programs coordinator Joanne Hong, that we began to discover the online possibilities offered by Zoom.

While I remained helpless, they did what it took to enable our members and friends to sit at home and watch our first-ever online lecture on April 7, fittingly enough about Samsung. This was followed by a lecture about Korean archery on April 21, then in May our Korean Literature Club followed suit and went online. August was left blank, as usual. There were days when the infection figures for Korea were so low that we began to wonder whether we might soon be able to return to the Somerset Lounge. That was not to be, however, and we have continued since then to rely on Zoom. Our monthly Business & Culture Club has from time to time tried to venture out physically, carefully observing social distancing. Obviously, our other excursions have ceased entirely.

This has meant, of course, a great loss for the many members who valued our lecture evenings above all for the chance to meet friends and interesting new people, as well as drinking makgeolli afterward. Moreover, not everyone feels at ease with Zoom, although millions are now graduating from the world’s universities and school entirely thanks to it and similar platforms. But we cannot help noticing that the audience for our Zoom events is not the same as for our previous Somerset events.

As the months passed, we have missed seeing the names of some of our most faithful members among those signing on, while an entirely new and unexpected benefit of Zoom has meant our audiences include members and friends from all over the world. True, the time difference with the Americas makes it hard for people there to watch something starting at 7:30 pm in Korea. But we have welcomed participants from Australia and New Zealand, Europe, and even Texas, to say nothing of some who have got up very early in the morning to give a lecture. RAS Korea has never been too international and it would be a great loss to simply go back to things as they were. We owe Zoom a great deal, I think!

As host for our Zoom lectures, Steve Shields has developed an ardent appeal for those who are not paid-up members to send a donation corresponding to what used to go into the glass jar in Somerset. But we fear that members in Korea not willing to launch into Zoom might not be too eager to pay their annual dues, especially when the annual Garden Party no longer serves as an extra incentive. RAS Korea has continued to pay its rent and its hard-working staff so far thanks to accumulated funds and the very generous support received from the Asia Development Foundation. But as the prospects for renewed physical activities remain poor for the rest of 2021, we are naturally anxious.

At the end of 2020, I was glad to learn that our Council had agreed that Steve Shields should take over as RAS Korea president, and I quietly faded into the sunset. I want to end this little report by thanking most sincerely all who have helped and supported the activities of RAS Korea over the past 10 years, since I became president in 2011. Especially, I would like to thank those who have worked in our office, the officers, those who have served on our Council and its committees, and all who have been faithful members of the society. These have been richly rewarding years for me, thanks to so much kindness everyone has shown.

I wish Steve Shields and the officers all the best as they face the challenges that lie ahead. Like everyone, I hope that the day will come when we can gather and greet each other, and drink makgeolli as in the old days. Please, hold on until that comes, pay your annual membership dues, even if you get little for them. The continued existence of RAS Korea depends on you!

Thank you all, very much!

Brother Anthony, President Emeritus (Thank you for that wonderful title, too!)

# Thinking about the Hoped-for End of the Pandemic

**A Message from Cho Nam-chul**

Executive Director of Asia Development Foundation and Former President of Korea National Open University

It is May 2021 as I write this. The mountain streams are bright with a blue-green hue. But this year, May is no longer “the queen of the seasons.” There is no comfort. Every day we are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, with no end in sight. And in Korea, the yellow dust clogs the air every day this season.

There is an old Korean term that goes “*chun-nae-bul-sa-chun*” (春來不似春). It means that although spring has come, it is not like spring yet. During this spring season, flowers are blooming and trees are overflowing with green, but our daily lives and hearts remain in the cold winter. People around the world are having “a spring season that is not like spring even when spring is just in front of us.” In particular, since the outbreak of COVID-19, we have been facing a tremendous crisis. However, from a more objective point of view, COVID-19 is just one of the many challenges that humanity has faced throughout history. Many plagues and viruses, which once terrorized humanity, have been confronted with vaccines and promising medical treatments. The vaccines for COVID-19 offer promise and hope for the world, even though many countries continue to struggle against the virus.

Nevertheless, as Yuval Harari, a professor in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, pointed out, the biggest dangers are the economic and political crises caused by COVID-19, rather than the virus itself. Harari stressed, “I’m much more afraid of the inner demons of humanity, hatred and greed and ignorance.” He was concerned about externalizing dangers by, for instance, blaming minorities and foreigners for the spread of the virus and raising entry barriers between countries.

The dream of a world where we embrace variety and differences and grow and live together, which the joint efforts of humanity have been working toward over a long time, is facing serious challenges. Barriers for entry between countries will be higher and the shameful bare face of

racism has been revealed time and time again. However, just as humanity has overcome historical challenges so far and enabled today’s global era, we will also overcome the challenges of COVID-19 to protect a world where everyone dreams together and grows together.

The Royal Asiatic Society was founded in 1824 in the United Kingdom to investigate “subjects connected with and for the encouragement of science, literature and the arts in relation to Asia.” RAS Korea was founded on June 16, 1900, by diplomats, scholars, and missionaries—including Horace N. Allen, Henry Gerhard Appenzeller, Homer Hulbert, Horace G. Underwood, and James Scarth Gale—at a meeting held in the Reading Room of the Seoul Union Club. Today RAS Korea has accumulated more than 120 years of history. The purpose of the organization’s establishment is “to help people around the world understand Korean culture and history by promoting research on Korea and interest in Korea.” It is remarkable that 120 years ago, they had affection and curiosity about the culture and history of a then-unknown country, Joseon, located at the eastern end of Asia.

The Asia Development Foundation is a non-profit public interest corporation established in February 2016 under the banner “Great Asia!” with the private funds of Chairman Kim Joon-il. It has a goal of coexistence and co-prosperity by sharing the achievements of Korea, a newly independent country that emerged from the ruins of the Korean War, with other neighboring Asian countries. Its major projects include scholarship programs to foster talented human resources, medical support projects, and multicultural support projects in Korea.

In this respect, both RAS Korea and the Asia Development Foundation seem to share the same dreams and goals, which stem from an open attitude to acknowledge and respect one anothers’ distinguishing characteristics, trying to be together. An open attitude to others is probably the most useful vaccine to beat COVID-19. This is the reason why we can dream of a generous field in autumn even though it is still a time when “spring is not like spring.”

## RAS Korea Librarian’s Report 2021

I am pleased to report that, as of February 2021, the RAS Korea Library currently has close to 4,000 items (including duplicate items). Since most of our volumes have been donated to the RAS Library, we have many books on Korean history, religion in Korea, Korean literature, and Korean culture.

Once again I would like to thank Professor David A. Mason for donating part of his extensive collection of books on shamanism, Buddhism, and mountain gods. There were so many books donated that they have kept us busy in the past year with labelling the books and adding them to our library.

We have also updated the RAS Library Catalogue for the year. The library catalogue can be found at [www.tinyurl.com/RASKB-Library.](http://www.tinyurl.com/RASKB-Library)

If you plan to visit the library, please contact our office manager at [royalasiatickorea@gmail.com](mailto:royalasiatickorea@gmail.com) in advance to arrange an appointment.

We welcome any additional contributions from our members to help our collection grow. If you have any books of interest that you would like to donate to RAS Korea Library, please contact me at the address below or contact our office manager.

Michael T. Welles Librarian

Royal Asiatic Society Korea [mtwelles@gmail.com](mailto:mtwelles@gmail.com)

## RAS Korea Lectures 2020

Jan. 7: Hungarian Ambassador Mozes Csoma, North Korean students in the Hungarian revolution and freedom fight in 1956, Summerset Palace

Jan. 21: Yi Song-mi, Art and Culture during the reign of King Sejong (r. 1418- 1450) of the Joseon Dynasty, Summerset Palace

Feb. 11: James D. Hillmer, Punishing the traitor, producing the citizen': South Korean prison reform 1945-61, Summerset Palace

April 7: Geoffrey Cain, Samsung Rising, Zoom

April 21: Cho In-souk, Practicing Korean Traditional Archery, Zoom May 12: Paul Courtright, Witnessing Gwangju, Zoom

May 26: Henny Savenije, Hendrick Hamel: how I became interested and did the research on the crew who stayed 13 years in Korea in the 17th century, Zoom

June 9: Jocelyn Clark, The Aesthetics of Korean Traditional Music, Zoom

June 23: Cedarbough T. Saeji, The Rise of the K-pop Adjacent Industries, Zoom July 7: Joey Rositano, Jeju Island's Haenyeo, Zoom

July 14: Joseph Juhn, Exploring Korean Diaspora through Korean Cubans, Zoom Sept. 8: Taewoong Lee, Finding common ground: Reconstructing contemporary

Korean history with archival footage, Zoom

Sept. 22: Simon Cockerell, Tourism and Engagement in North Korea: How It Works, Zoom

Oct. 13: Dale Quarrington, Korean Temples: The Weird and Wonderful, Zoom Oct. 27: Robert Neff, Ghosts of Seoul, Zoom

Nov. 10: Sanko Lewis, Movement Characteristics of Korean Traditional Dance and Martial Arts, Zoom

Nov. 24: Mark E. Caprio, Willis Bird Flies into Seoul, Zoom

Dec. 8: Brother Anthony, 2011-2020: The President Is a Prolific Translator, Zoom

## Business & Culture Club 2020

May 19: Deoksu Palace, Jacco Zwetsloot

June 16: War Memorial & Museum, Jacco Zwetsloot

July 14: Jogye Temple, Hierarchies of Korean Traditional Bldg, Jun YK Shin Sept. 29: Original Cheondogyo Church in Insadong, Suk JiHoon

Oct. 27: Jungmyeongjeon exhibit on "Life and Works of Russian Architect Afanasy Seredin-Sabatin," Jacco Zwetsloot

## Excursions 2020

Oct. 24: Heritage Walk in Seoul: Palatial residences in DongGwol (East Palace) (Cho In-souk)

## Korean Literature Club 2020

Jan. 16: “Farmer’s Dance” by poet Shin Kyong-nim, translated by Brother Anthony; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, North Terrace Cafe

Feb. 12: “Nine Cloud Dream” by Kim Man-jung, trans. by Heinz Insu Fenkl; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, North Terrace Cafe

March 12: “Romantic Tales from Old Korea” compiled by Brother Anthony; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, North Terrace Cafe

April 29: “Sanch'onch'omok”; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, Zoom

May 28: “Romantic Tales from Old Korea” compiled by Brother Anthony; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, Zoom

June 25: “That Boy's House,” by Park Wan-suh, translated by Brother Anthony; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, Zoom

July 29: “Festival of Ashes” by Park Chan Soon; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, Zoom

Sept. 4: “Mildawon Days” by Kim Dong-ni: Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, Zoom

Oct. 29: “Eerie Tales from Old Korea” compiled by Brother Anthony; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, Zoom

Dec. 3: “Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982” by Cho Nam-joo; Yonjoo Hong & Brother Anthony, Zoom

## Special Events in 2020

Feb. 19: RAS with National Museum of Korean Contemporary History, Jason Bechervaise

Nov. 7: RAS Book Sale, Korea Christian Building Lobby



**In Memoriam**

Peter E. Bartholomew (1945-2021) died at home in his sleep in the early morning hours of May 12, 2021. His unexpected departure saddens his friends, business colleagues, and his RAS Korea partners. Peter was born in the United States and grew up there and in Canada. He came to Korea in 1968 as a member of the Peace Corps. During his more than 50 years living in Korea, Peter came to love and respect the Korean people and their rich cultural heritage. He was an almost-native speaker of the Korean language. He was noteworthy for his tireless campaign to save his neighborhood in northeastern Seoul—a neighborhood of traditional- style Korean (*hanok*) houses—from the destruction of so-called “redevelopment.” He became known widely as the “Protector of *Hanok*,” and gave countless interviews including dozens of television interviews, and helped his neighborhood win a landmark lawsuit against the Seoul city government. Peter owned and lived in two adjacent houses that were about 100 years old. He was an avid collector of antique Korean chests and artwork. He gave tirelessly to the ROK Navy in service and education assistance to more than 100 young navy men who came to Seoul to attend university. Peter was a life member of RAS Korea, an organization he served for decades as a council member and three years as president.

Peter, we will miss you. Rest in peace, dear friend.







