

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY HONG KONG BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

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7th December, 2004

Council members 2004-2005

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Dr. Elizabeth Sinn, Vice President	Rev. Carl Smith, Hon. Vice President
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Mr. Robert Horsnell, Co-opted Member	Dr. Betty Wei, Co-opted Member
Miss Josephine Wong, Co-opted Member	

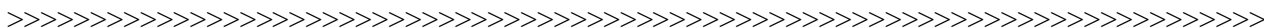
It was SRO – Standing Room Only – for our Vice President, Dr. Elizabeth Sinn, on 29th October when she delivered a lecture at Hong Kong Central Library entitled “Women at Work: Women Brothel Keepers in 19th Century Hong Kong”. For women in the 19th Century, and especially Chinese women, brothel keeping was a rare opportunity for them to find a new role, a sort of dream really. Very few women achieved their dream, but some did in Hong Kong, as Dr. Sinn explained.

The formation of Hong Kong as a British colony brought new ideas and practices to China, according to Dr Sinn. Chinese of all classes were needed in the colony, and until the mid-20th Century, Hong Kong was predominantly male. Not surprisingly, there was an acute demand for sex workers. In 1857, a contagious disease ordinance was passed, even before such a law was passed in Britain. Brothels had to be registered, licensed and were confined to certain districts. There were two classifications of brothels by race – one for Chinese and one for non-Chinese, and for unknown reasons, all the brothel keepers were women. These women had to be highly skilled at management and public relations. A lively question and answer period followed this most interesting lecture.

On 15th October Professor Kirti Narain, suitably dressed in a fine sari, gave an interesting and wide-ranging introduction to the many contributions made by the Indian community to development of Hong Kong and the co-prosperity that their involvement had created. She identified several of the key Indian communities and the reasons they had come, stayed, or in some cases left Hong Kong. Notable were the Parsees, including the Ruttonjees and the Shroff families, both from Mumbai and both known for their philanthropy. Another Parsee, Hormusjee Nowrojee Mody, helped found the Hong Kong University and the Kowloon Cricket Club. The Bohra Muslims included Abdoolally Ebrahim, who established the forerunner company

other startling discoveries will be identified and explored, a number of them being illustrated by special images to be shared that evening.

Lauren Pfister is an Associate Professor in the Religion and Philosophy Department at Hong Kong Baptist University. He has lived in Hong Kong since 1987 and has served as Associate Editor for the Journal of Chinese Philosophy since 1997. In June this year, he published a two-volume biography of James Legge, and copies of this may be ordered from Professor Pfister after the lecture.



Local Visit

Saturday, 29th January

Visit to Sai Kung and Yim Tin Tsai

Participants: Members and Non-Members travelling with and as the guests of Members

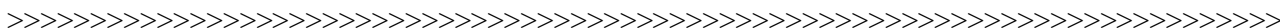
Meeting Time and Place: Middle Road, Tsimshatsui, behind YMCA, 10.00 a.m.

Cost: \$275 for Members, \$325 for Non-Members (including spouses of members unless the spouse is a Member in their own right, or where there is a Family Membership). Cost includes lunch and transport.

Booking: A Booking Form is at the end of this Newsletter. Please return it to arrive not later than 8th January.

Sai Kung Market was traditionally the market for the villages of Sai Kung, and for the fisher-people of the adjacent seas. It was first founded, probably, in the early eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century the town expanded greatly, onto land reclaimed from the adjacent bays. This expansion and reclamation continued into the 1920s and 1930s. In recent years the town has seen further major expansion with the old harbour being almost entirely reclaimed for development. In 1863 Catholic Missionaries arrived at Sai Kung, and received a very positive welcome. A church was established in the market and over the next thirty years many of the villages in the area were converted. Each such converted village built a small church for the villagers to worship in: today there are about 20 such tiny churches dotted around the hills of the district. The oldest of these village churches is the church of St Joseph at Yim Tin Tsai (1878-9), and this church, recently restored, is the oldest surviving Catholic church in Hong Kong today. All the villagers of Yim Tin Tsai (they were all of the Chan surname) became Catholic in the early 1870s. It was blessed by Bd Joseph Freinandementz, who was for a short period the priest-in-charge of Sai Kung, but who later went on to work in North China, and who has recently been declared “Blessed” (the first step towards Canonisation) for his labours in China. The Yim Tin Tsai church is today seen as a shrine to Bd Joseph Freinandementz. The village was important as a salt-working area (the salt from here was all sold in Sai Kung). It is today deserted, but all the Chans come back from round the world to celebrate Mass in the church on the Sunday closest to St Joseph’s Day (May 1st): the R.A.S. attended one of these annual Masses some years ago.

Dr Patrick Hase, our President, will lead a tour to Sai Kung Market and Yim Tin Tsai on Saturday 29th January. We will travel by bus to Sai Kung Market, and will walk through the old market, looking at the evidence for the various episodes of reclamation. Dr Hase will talk about the economy and life of the town in the nineteenth century. The town temple, to Tin Hau, will also be visited. Lunch will be taken in the old market. After lunch we will travel by boat across to Yim Tin Tsai, to visit the church of St Joseph there. The opportunity will also be taken of visiting the old salt-works on the island. After returning to Sai Kung, the party will return to Tsimshatsui by coach, arriving back there about 5.00-6.00 p.m. This visit will be an excellent opportunity to visit a traditional market town, and our earliest Catholic church.



Visit to Sabah: The Land Below the Wind

Several expressions of interest have been received for the forthcoming April 2005 trip to Sabah. A full and detailed itinerary follows below.

The trip will be jointly organized and led by the Reverend Hans Lutz of the Basel Mission, whose experience of Sabah goes back to the late 1960s, and Council Member Jason Wordie, who has traveled extensively in Sabah on a number of occasions since 1986.

In Kota Kinabalu we will be based at the Hotel Jesselton, a conveniently located, comfortable old hotel in the town centre. It is hoped that on one evening we will meet for dinner with members of the Sabah Society, a scholarly organization established in 1960, which shares similar aims and objectives to the HKBRAS in relation to the study and appreciation of the history and culture of Sabah. The visit will take us to Kota Belud, Kudat, Kundasan, the Padas Gorge and Tenom, Sandakan, Sepilok, Gomantong and the Kinabatangan River.

Cost for what promises to be a very interesting and varied trip, including airfares, accommodation, all transport and most meals, will be **HK\$8900** per person for RAS Members, and **\$9500** for non-members. To guarantee a place it is necessary to pay a non-refundable deposit of \$1000 at this stage, and firm confirmation, accompanied by final payment, will be needed in January. Numbers are limited to 25, so please make your booking as soon as possible. (Please use the booking form at the end of this newsletter.)

A more detailed itinerary, and a full reading list, will be provided to all confirmed participants in due course.

N.B. It should be noted that while the risk of terrorist activity is not high, both the US State Department and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Offices have issued travel advisory warnings against Sabah for their nationals. It is felt that Members should be aware of this situation when making a decision on whether or not to travel to Sabah, as the Society cannot be held responsible for any consequences of the wider political situation.

Proposed Itinerary

Friday, 22nd April

Depart Hong Kong by Malaysian Airlines at 15:30hrs, and arrive at Kota Kinabalu 18:25hrs.
Arrival and transfer to Hotel Jesselton.
Evening at leisure.

Saturday, 23rd April

In the morning we will have an orientation bus trip around Kota Kinabalu, which will include a visit to Bukit Bendera, (Flagstaff Hill) with views out over the town, and the theological seminary. Lunch will be in town followed by an afternoon guided tour through the Sabah Museum.
Evening: Seafood dinner with local dances.

Sunday, 24th April

Visit to Pulau Gaya, one of the offshore islands in the Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park.

Monday, 25th April

Depart Kota Kinabalu by coach for Kudat. Enroute we will stop in Kota Belud, an area mainly populated by the Bajau, a Muslim population living in Kota Belud.
Lunch in Kota Belud (this will be a very simple Chinese meal).
Continue to Kudat, a scenic small town at the northern tip of Sabah, where we will stay at Kudat Golf and Marina Resort.

RAS BUSINESS

The late Ian Diamond MBE, Honorary Fellow RASHKB

The turnover of people working in Hong Kong has increased considerably in recent years. For that reason there are few RASHKB members who remember Ian Diamond and it is left to me to see that he is not forgotten.

Ian came to Hong Kong in 1971 from the Western Pacific High Commission in Fiji, to fill the post of Hong Kong Government Archivist. With his experience and background it was not long before he was made a Council Member of the RASHKB and later he filled the exacting post of Honorary Secretary and later became Vice-President. He gave lectures to our Branch and his papers are in our Journal for all to read. One such is titled "The Paper Chase – Archives and the Public Records office" (JHKBRAS, Vol 14, 1974). After establishing the Public Records Ordinance and setting up the Public Records Office in 1976, where he has been quoted as being something of an inspiration to his staff, Ian retired to his native Australia in 1985.

The last time several of us RAS members saw him was when I, as President, invited Council members to a lunch in 1997. Ian and his wife Ishbel were back in Hong Kong on a visit. Buildings must have got taller over the years because at the restaurant where the lunch was held on the 38th floor, Ian remarked, "I have never been up so high before!"

May you rest in peace, Ian.

Dan Waters, Immediate Past President

Central Police Station – learn from past experience

The lovely old Marine Police Headquarters at Kowloon Point, completed in 1884, used pigeons right up until World War One to send messages back from police boats on patrol. From then on, until the premises were vacated by the Royal Hong Kong Police in 1996, the birds were kept "on strength" and looked upon with affection. Then, when the Police moved out, the descendants of the original carrier pigeons also were forced to leave. Those that have not ended up in the cooking pot, today are flying somewhere around Tsim Sha Tsui. Heritage is enriched by history, legend and the intangible. That is the sort of thing many tourists as well as locals will expect to learn about at the old Central Police Station which is to be turned into a monument. Socio-cultural elements make the physical environment come alive.

The old colonial Marine Police Headquarters, together with the "Shot Tower" where a large copper ball was dropped every midday so ships in the harbour could adjust their clocks, were sited on a well-wooded knoll. These Headquarters had many redeeming features, one of which was a rather splendid bar. In the good old days before reclamation when sea captains moored their ships close by, many enjoyed the camaraderie of this "watering hole." How did "old salts" repay police hospitality? On voyages to exotic lands they acquired cuttings of trees, shrubs and plants. These were delivered back to what used to be called the Hong Kong "Water Police" Headquarters where a member of staff with "green fingers" planted and tended them with loving care. While the police still occupied the station more than 40 items of flora flourished there which could not be found anywhere else in Hong Kong.

With conversion work almost completed at Marine Police Headquarters, in keeping with much of the territory where barely a blade of grass is to be seen, little flora remains today, apart from a few trees. So much for Hong Kong's heralded programme of sustainable development. For many of us it's all rather sad.

We need to examine carefully the Marine Police Headquarters and other heritage projects to learn from past mistakes. Such a post-mortem is vital at the present time with the Central Police Station/Victoria Prison/Central Magistracy project on the drawing board.

Dan Waters, Immediate Past-President

Exhibit at Museum of Coastal Defence

To mark the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Hong Kong Volunteers, the Museum of Coastal Defence is holding a special exhibit, "Serving Hong Kong: the Hong Kong Volunteers". The Hong Kong Regiment, also known as the Volunteers, was essentially a part-time volunteer force. Since its establishment in 1854, the Volunteers served the Hong Kong community continually until its disbandment in 1995. The Volunteers, at first temporary in nature, subsequently developed into a highly mobilized unit with advanced light weapons. Since the 1960s, the job nature of the Volunteers shifted from defence against foreign enemies to maintaining order at home and carrying out surveillance at the border. The Volunteers Association, jointly with the Museum of Coastal Defence, prepared this exhibition, which runs until 31st May 2005.

Venue: Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, 175 Tung Hei Road, Shau Kei Wan, Hong Kong

Opening Hours: 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. daily. Closed on Thursdays (except public holidays) and the first two days of the Lunar New Year

Enquiries: Tel: 2569 1500.

100 Years of Architecture in Hong Kong Exhibition 2004

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects is organizing an exhibition of Hong Kong architecture with the theme, translated from Chinese, "What you see in the morning will be gone in the evening", or, "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow". The exhibit will feature photographs, sketches, models and reproduced sites and will cover topics such as Victoria City, Hong Kong Tenement Houses and Hong Kong Chinese Architecture. The Royal Asiatic Society has loaned photographs for this exhibition, which can be seen at Central MTR station until mid-December.

"Authors' Evening" at Bloomsbury Books

Bloomsbury Books have invited half a dozen local historians to speak about an individual who has contributed in one way or another to the well-being of HK but who has not received the recognition they deserved. The discussion is called "Hong Kong's Unsung Heroes".

Speakers signed up so far include RAS members Dr. Elizabeth Sinn and Jason Wordie, plus Dr. Cindy Chu, Lorette Roberts, Philip Snow and Dr. Steve Tsang. They will speak for 5-10 minutes each and members of the audience will be invited to participate with their favourite personalities in HK history afterwards. This will be a very informal discussion, with wine and cheese.

Bloomsbury Books have suggested that RAS members might like to participate in what is expected to be a fun evening. The event will run from 5.00 to 8.00pm on Thursday, December 16th at Bloomsbury Books, 2/F Club Lusitano Building, Duddell Street, Central (entrance also via 16 Ice House Street).

Sources for East Asia

Members may find Adam Matthew Publications of interest. The website is www.ampltd.co.uk

OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

Hong Kong Museum of History Exhibition

The Hong Kong Museum of History is currently holding a special exhibition called *Hunting and Rituals – Treasures from the Ancient Dian Kingdom of Yunnan*, which will run until 21st February 2005.

The ancient Dian Kingdom was established in the Dianchi area of Yunnan and reached its peak of development from the Warring States Period to the Western Han Dynasty. Apart from a very short narrative in Shiji ('Record of Historians'), written in about 100 BC by the Han historian, Sima Qian, we know very little about the Dian people. However, the surveys and excavations of the Dian burial sites conducted in 1955 and afterwards have led to a series of important discoveries, including the gold seal of the Dian king. This has enabled the reconstruction of the archaeological past of the Dian culture. So far more than 30 sites of the Dian Kingdom have been excavated.

Three sites, namely Shizhanishan, Lijiashan and Yangfutou, are the largest in scale and have the greatest number of cultural remains discovered. Bronze objects such as cowrie containers and other artifacts decorated with human and animal figurines are the most spectacular masterpieces of the Dian culture. This exhibition will lead the visitors to explore the mysterious culture of the Dian Kingdom and further enhance their understanding of the material culture, everyday life, military and religious activities, and arts and crafts of the Dian people.

For more information and visual images, please visit the Museum website at: <http://hk.history.museum>

University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Collection

Scholars engaged in Hong Kong and China studies may be interested in the Hung On-To Memorial Library which is located in the Special Collections of the University of Hong Kong. This collection contains comprehensive and unique materials relating to Hong Kong including books, pamphlets, periodicals, newspaper clippings, audiovisual materials and CD-ROMs dealing with almost every aspect of Hong Kong history and life.

Materials of the Hung On-To Memorial Library must be used in the Special Collections area and may not be borrowed. To facilitate efficient information access, some of the Hong Kong related materials have been digitized and are available through the HKUL Digital Initiatives on the University Libraries' homepage (<http://www.lib.hku.hk/>).

Interested users may contact Ms. Iris Chan, Special Collections Librarian at email: irischan@hkucc.hku.hk

New members

As a form of community service our lectures, most of which are held at the City Hall, are open to the general public free of charge. With a total membership in Hong Kong of over 500 and non-members attending as well, we are sorry we are not always able to recognize all new members. They are therefore requested when they attend functions to please make themselves known to Council members, who now wear name badges. As new members of our branch may we extend an especially warm welcome to every one of you! We hope you will find our activities interesting and that you become involved.

The Hong Kong Natural History Society

Membership of the Hong Kong Natural History Society is open to anyone with an interest in the Hong Kong countryside. The Society organises monthly outings, which consist of hikes in the winter months and boat trips to the remoter islands during the summer months. Most outings take place on a Sunday and have leaders who will guide the party and point out items of interest. Memoirs are published from time to time, which are available to members, and there is a small library of natural history books that members can access. Membership is only \$100 for a year for an individual or \$150 for a couple. Further details may be obtained by writing to the Hon. Secretary, The Hong Kong Natural History Society, GPO Box 4369, Hong Kong or Email to johnjones@netvigator.com.

The Hong Kong Gardening Society

A friendly group that shares a love of gardening, whether it is with pots on a balcony, houseplants or a garden. They don't all have 'green thumbs', but they share tips and advice from a monthly newsletter and coffee mornings and arrange visits to gardens and places of horticultural interest. For information email membership@gardeningshk.com or call 2719 4870, or go to www.gardeningshk.com.