[page76]

**ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY KOREA BRANCH REPORT OF THE COUNCIL,**

**September 1958—May 1959**

The Society has now entered its fourth year of revived activity, and its membership continues to increase. At the end of April 1959, there were a total of 310 members, the largest in the Society's history. Payment of 1959 dues by almost all members, and the sale of the Transactions, are maintaining the sound financial condition of the Society.

The election of the Council for 1959 took place at the annual general meeting which preceded the regular monthly meeting at Korea House on 3 December 1958. Mr. J. K, Blackwell, former Vice-President, was reelected a Councillor, but left Korea in April this yean His vacancy has not yet been filled.

The monthly meetings, which have been held regularly on the first Wednesday in each month, have attracted a constantly increasing attendance. From October onwards the meetings have been held at Korea House, with the exception of the February meeting which was held at the American Embassy Residence, by kind invitation of Mrs. Walter C Dowling.

Meetings were resumed in September after the summer recess, the series beginning with the paper on “The American Role in Opening Korea to the West, 1850~1895,” by Mr. Donald S. MacDonald, which appears in this volume. In the absence of the author, who had already returned to the United States, his paper was read for him. This meeting was held in the Seoul Chamber of Commerce building.

In October Mr. Wever Gim spoke on "Some Aspects of the Prejudice Against Cholla People.” The November meeting heard a talk by Mrs. George Munson on Korean shells, during which she displayed examples from her collection. [page 77]

In December Professor Rho Joon-hi, of Songgyun-gwan University, spoke on Korean trees; after this talk Mr. Lee Yong-no, of the College of Pharmacy, Ewha Womens’ University, showed his collections of slides of Korean trees and flora.

The first meeting of 1959 was on 7th January, at Korea House, and on this occasion Dr. Lee Young-ha, of Seoul National University, spoke on “The State of Korean Literature at the Present Time.”

In February Mr. Gregory Henderson presented his paper, printed in this volume, on “The History of the Chŏng Dong Area and the American Embassy Compound.” The interest of this paper was greatly enhanced by being read in the American Embassy residence itself, and the meeting attracted a record attendance of over two hundred.

The March meeting again reverted to Korea House, and heard two talks. First, Dr. and Mrs. Esson M. Gale spoke on “The early foreign community in Seoul, and their residences.” This was illustrated by original photograph projections. Mr. William E. Henthorn then read a paper on “The Rebellion of the Sam Pyŏl Cho,” an incident of the Koryo period at the time of the Mongol invasion.

In April, Mr. Wilbur D. Bacon, author of the paper on the Royal Tombs of the Yi Dynasty published in Volume XXXIII of the Transactions, read a paper on “Fortresses of Kyonggi Do.” This was illustrated by coloured slides.

The May meeting heard Mrs. Ellen Conant speak on “Modern Oriental Painting.” Her talk also was illustrated by excellent slides.

The Society is most grateful to the management of Korea House for their invaluable co-operation in providing us with most admirable facilities for our meetings, including the use of projectors and screen.

A welcome innovation has been the provision of tea and coffee during meetings.

The Society sponsored four more field-trips during [page 78] September-November 1958, and three have already been held in 1959. In September a three day trip was undertaken to Yosu and the islands off the South Coast of the Peninsula. Among the islands visited were Oenaro Do, Namhae Do and Hansan Do, the last two being places associated with the Korean national hero, Admiral Yi Sun Sin. On the last day of the tour a visit was made to Sonam Sa, an important temple in Cholla Namdo, staffed by nuns. In October, another three-day trip was made to the famous temples of Haein Sa and Pusok Sa. Later in October a trip was made to Mt. Chiri, visiting Ssanggye-sa, Yongok-sa and Hwaom-sa (temples), spending the night at Hwaom-sa, The following day the group visited Kwanghal-lu at Namwon followed by a trip to Dilsang-sa (temple).

The series was concluded in November by a four-day trip to Cheju Island, for which sea transportation was provided in a destroyer-escort of the Republic of Korea Navy.

The first tour of 1959 was in April, to Chinhae and Chinju. This was followed by a visit to Sudok-sa, in Chungchong Namdo, and to the tomb and shrine of Admiral Yi Sun-sin near Onyang. Early in May a one day trip was made to Yongmun-sa, on the thickly forested slopes of Yongmun Mountain, in Kyonggi-do.

All these tours have been well supported and have been most successful. The Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Korea have co-operated to the maximum extent, and provincial and other local Government officials have invariably extended every help and courtesy. These field-trips have undoubtedly helped to make Korea better known to Westerners and have enabled our members, and others who participated, to visit many cultural sites not otherwise easily accessible.

The Society's library was of course largely destroyed or looted during the Communist invasion of Seoul in 1950; however, the volumes which survived have now. been reassembled, through the good offices of Mr. Robert E. Kinney, a former corresponding secretary, and are now installed in the library of the Korean Research Institute, where they are separately shelved in the Koreana section. The director of the Centre, Dr. Dong Chon, has kindly [page 79] reciprocated by granting honorary membership, with library privileges, to all members of the Society. During the period under review the Society has obtained for members and their friends a quantity of copies of “Masterpieces of Korean Art,” the finely produced illustrated catalogue of the exhibition of Korean art treasures which was shown in certain cities of the United States in 1958 and 1959, also serials 38 and 39 of the “Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin,”with special articles on Korean ceramics. These publications were sold at cost prices, and the Society did not benefit financially.

On 2nd May the Council of the Society organized a tea party in the Queens private garden (Naksan-je) of the Changdok Palace, at which the Court orchestra gave a performance of classical and modern Korean music. This was followed by a tour of the Chong Myo, where the spirit tablets of the monarchs of the Yi dynasty are kept. This event was well-attended and was an outstanding success.

At the suggestion of Mr. Wilbur D. Bacon, who has contributed 100,000 hwan for the purpose, the Council of the Society has agreed to oponsor a scholarship fund in memory of Mr. Choi Byung Woo, former editor of the "Korea Times”, a very active member of the Society, who was lost at sea off Quemoy in September last year. The aim of the fund, which has the approval of Mrs. Choi, is to establish a scholarship for the benefit of a Korean student of Korean history, preferably an individual carrying out post-graduate or even more advanced studies. The full details have not been decided and the scope of the scholarship will of course depend on the amount of the capital sum which is eventually raised The Council believes that the object of the fund is one that would have commended itself to Mr. Choi, one of whose favorite subjects was Korean history. It is hoped that members and others who either knew Mr. Choi or are in sympathy with the aim of the proposed scholarship, will contribute to the fund. Donations, however small, may be sent to Mr. Carl Miller, our Treasurer, at the Bank of Korea, Seoul, or to Colonel A. E. E. Mercer, the Corresponding Secretary, at the British Embassy, Seoul

To conclude, the support and interest for the Society`s [page 80] activities have been most encouraging, and the Council feels sure that, with the co-operation of its members, the Society will continue to make a significant contribution to the comprehension of Korean culture.