

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY HONG KONG BRANCH
NEWSLETTER

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20th October, 2004

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Miss Josephine Wong, Co-opted Member	

On 1st October, RAS Council Member Jason Wordie took over as Hon. Activities Co-ordinator from Janet Lee Scott, who stepped down in June this year. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking Janet for all her hard work in organizing such a varied and interesting programme of lectures and visits during her tenure and to welcome Jason as our new Co-ordinator of Activities.

On Friday September 24th a full house of members and guests enjoyed a fascinating talk at City Hall, by internationally known collector of Chinese arts, Mr Humphrey Hui. On this occasion Mr Hui spoke of his great grandfather, Xu Yingguai, a first rank official in the Qing dynasty during the 19thC. This senior mandarin held many high ranking positions in the Chinese government, including being co-signatory, along with Claude Macdonald and Li Hongzhang, to the Extension of the Peking Convention, granting the lease of the New Territories to Britain in 1898.

Xu Yingguai was born in Guangzhou in 1832, the grandson of a government official, and a salt merchant who hailed from Suzhou. Xu was an exceptionally clever boy who passed the imperial civil service examinations at the young age of 15, becoming a graduate of the highest examinations by the age of 18, and a member of the prestigious Hanlin Academy in Beijing a year later.

Subsequently he held many high-ranking positions, including Minister of Works, Minister of Rites, and Grand Minister of the Office of Foreign Affairs. After signing the New Territories lease in Beijing, he was appointed Governor General of Fujian and Zhejiang provinces. In 1902 he established the island of Gulangyu,

The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith with Dr. Susan Whitfield

In conjunction with the University of Hong Kong Museum Society, we are delighted to welcome Dr. Susan Whitworth, a world expert on the Silk Road, to talk to us about the wonderful exhibition she curated at the British Library this summer.

The Silk Road is often presented as a link between continents of civilisation – the west and the east. Narratives abound of the Silk Road: myths both ancient and medieval, historical annals, religious narratives, and tales of conquerors, monks, merchants and diplomats. Dr. Susan Whitfield recently curated an exhibition: *The Silk Road - Trade, Travel, War and Faith* at the British Library. The exhibition covers the period when pre-modern China was most receptive to outside influences – the first millennium A.D. The exhibition shows a wide range of beautiful, striking, original paintings and artifacts. They all contribute to the telling of the stories of the Silk Road – lives touched by religious movement, war and its toll on life; lives dictated by the mundane – how to pay off debts, shame at getting drunk, how to stop mice eating the stock of grain. Based on ancient religious and everyday arts, manuscripts, letters, sales contracts, even humble utensils and tools, Susan will illustrate in this lecture lives in the oasis communities from Sogdiana to Dunhuang.

The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith was the most successful exhibition ever held at the British Library, with 155,000 visitors, over 1,200 a day for four months. The exhibition was a chance to display rarely-seen material, most of which has never before been brought together. It offered the visitor a journey through some of the many kingdoms and cultures of the eastern Silk Road - Sogdian Samarkand, Khotan, Kroraina, Tibetan Miran, Chinese Dunhuang and Uighur Gaochang. Yet the 400 items on display are a tiny proportion of the tens of thousands of artefacts found over the past century in this region and now in libraries and museums worldwide. The exhibition was part of a longer-term scholarly and educational initiative, both to conserve this material and to make it better known worldwide.

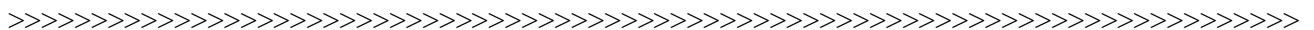
Dr. Susan Whitfield has been working on the Stein and Dunhuang materials held in the British Library and institutions worldwide for over a decade and she is founder and director of the International Dunhuang Project. She publishes and lectures widely throughout Europe, America and Asia. Her book “Life along the Silk Road” (John Murray and University of California) is used as a course book in several North American universities.

Venue: The Garden Room, The Helena May, Garden Road, Central.

Time: Drinks 6:30 – 7 p.m. Lecture 7 – 8.30 p.m.

Cost: \$180 for members, \$230 non members, which includes drinks and canapés. This event is open to Members, Members’ Guests and Others.

Booking: A booking form is at the end of this newsletter. Please return it to arrive not later than 1st December.



Proposed Visit to Sabah: April 23rd - May 1st, 2005

Expression of Interest

The Society is considering an eight-day trip to Sabah in late April next year. The trip will be led by Rev. Hans Lutz, who has many decades of direct experience with Sabah. As well as visiting Kota Kinabalu, it will visit parts of Sabah not usually visited by tourists. The tour itinerary will thus include a stop to visit a Pujau community (ex Sea Gypsies), a day on a Kampong (Sabahnese village) at Kudat in the far north, a visit to the Orang-Utan Sanctuary, a trip to Sandakan in the east, staying the night in a wildlife sanctuary outside the town, but including also a visit to the town, and a train trip to the Tenom Gorges. At the moment the cost of

Tai Yam Neung

Does any member have any information please about the Hoklo Goddess *Tai Yam Neung* (Supreme Shade Woman or Wife). Her one day festival is held on the 15th day of the Eighth Moon in George Lane, off Staunton Street, in Sheung Wan. I am told she can also be found on Tsing Yi and in Tsz Wan Shan. Anyone know where? I assume George Street was named after Mr George? Who was he? Any information would be gratefully received.

Dan Waters

RASHKB Volunteers

RAS Council Member Bob Horsnell is now producing a comprehensive monthly newsletter on Volunteers activities. If you would like a copy, please contact Mary Painter on 2813 7500 and you will be sent one. If you think you may be interested in joining the Volunteers, please contact Bob on 2721 2015 or email argyho@netvigator.com for information. The Friends of Heritage are still looking for recruits (see April newsletter). For information call Ada Yau of the Antiquities & Monuments Office on 2721 1193.

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

Hong Kong Museum of History Exhibition

The Hong Kong Museum of History will hold a special exhibition called *Hunting and Rituals – Treasures from the Ancient Dian Kingdom of Yunnan* from 10th November 2004 – 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>

OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

Department of Anthropology, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Friday Seminars Programme for Autumn 2004

October 29th. Chief Curator of the Hong Kong Museum of History and RAS Council Member Dr. Joseph Ting will talk on *Museums in Hong Kong: Past and Present*.

November 5th. Prof. Jing Jun, Dept. of Sociology, Tsinghua University, Beijing will talk on *The Downside of China's Fast Development: The Case of Public Health*.

November 12th. Dr. Tracey Lu, Dept. of Anthropology, CUHK, will talk on *Cultural Heritage Management in Mainland China*.

November 26th. Dr. Lynne Nakano, Dept. of Japanese Studies, CUHK, will talk on *Single Women in Tokyo and Hong Kong*.

All seminars take place at 12:30 – 2 p.m. in room 401, Humanities Building, New Asia College, CUHK. Welcome to bring your own lunchbox to eat during the talk.

The Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong

Dr. Maisie Meyer, author of the book *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: A Century of Sephardi Jewish Life in Shanghai*, will give a lecture on her book on Sunday 24th October at 7:30 p.m. at the Jewish Community Centre, 70 Robinson Road, Mid Levels. Enquiries to 2801 5440.

The Textile Society of Hong Kong

The TSHK will be holding their Annual Bazaar at the Fringe Club on Saturday, 6th November from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Full details from Dorothy Berry 2867 2819 or Email to dsilkstone@cr.gov.hk.

Heritage Conservation: Opportunities and Challenges

A conference on the above subject, jointly organized by the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (Building Division & Structural Division) and the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, will take place on Saturday 23rd October, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at the JW Marriott Hotel. For information please call Ms. Katherine Chow at 2372 0480 or email kat@creativegp.com.

Christina Noble Children's Foundation

A sponsored family Halloween Walk on Saturday 30th October on Lantau Island, meeting at the Discovery Bay Ferry Pier on Lantau at 12 noon. Sponsorship forms are available from 2832 2186. Money raised will go to help street children in Mongolia.

RAS member Mark Bayuk has very kindly sent the following information which may interest members:-

U.S. State Department Office of the Historian

If given the name of a historical Foreign Service Officer, the U.S. State Department will respond with information on the career postings of the officer and his date and place of birth and other biographical data. I have contacted them when I have old books with inscriptions by persons that appeared to be attached to the

U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong or the American Legation in Peking, both in the early 1900's. The Office of the Historian consults a Foreign Service Officer Register and provides postings and date and place of birth or death. Go to <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/c4293.htm>.

U.S. Marine Corps History Center

The Marine Corps History Center is the better historical site for China Marine related questions, but it is not email accessible. In the 1920's and 1930's one quarter of the entire Marine Corps manpower was stationed in China at any one time. So there is a lot of China history associated with the U.S. Marines. If one is trying to find out about a so-called China Marine or a unit stationed in China during that time, he or the unit was most likely to have been in Shanghai or Peking. The history center can answer such questions. I think Marine historical documents are actually more accessible than those of any of the other U.S. military services. A web access site is: http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/HD/Home_Page.htm.