

RASHK President's Report 2022-23

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of RASHK

Good evening to you all and a warm welcome to all those attending this 63rd AGM of RASHK. This is the first time for 3 years that our AGM has been held in person. Thank you for attending. It is a pleasure to see you all here and not wearing masks. Apologies to those overseas members who had hoped for a hybrid zoom event but that was not possible this year. In delivering this report I speak to you not only as President but also Chair of the Activities Committee.

I would first like to express my sincere thanks to our Council Members for their support, not only over the past year but for the whole recent challenging period of the pandemic. Thanks to those present this evening include Connie Carmichael for providing financial and timely advice, Roy Delbyck for his ideas and helpful advice, Bob Bunker for supportive help and this evening's arrangements, Davina Lee for wise advice, technical and website support, Tony Banham for arranging our high quality Journal to go out to our members on time and within budget, Dr Kwong Chi Man, Yip Chi Man for their support, and Dr Patrick Hase, former President, who is chairing our meeting this evening. For many of us here this is the first time we have had the opportunity to meet each other in person. We also thank Council members David McKellar, Vivian So and Don Gasper who could not be present this evening and have sent their apologies. I would also like to thank members of our Activities Committee for their support, advice and suggestions in preparing our programme of events. I take this evening's opportunity to thank our Honorary Auditor, as well the invaluable support provided by our Part Time Administrators, Sally Lui who provides capable administrative support and Jace Au, now recently succeeded by Vonnie Fung. Both Jace and Vonnie are present this evening. We have benefited greatly from Jace's ideas and network in expanding our Activities programme and wish her well in her future career. Ieuan Harding, our former Administrator, now provides occasional technical support for hybrid meetings if needed.

I would like to mention members who have sadly passed away in the past year. For those members whom we know have passed, their obituaries will appear in our JRASHK. Anne Marden's obituary has already appeared in RASHK Volume 62, but this year we recognise the recent passing of Valery Garrett after a long period of illness. She was a very active member of RASHK, distinguished author and served as our Activities Coordinator for many years. At her husband's request, RASHK will be hosting a 'Celebration of Valery's Life' to be held on 16 May at this venue. Members with memories of Valery are most welcome to register their attendance.

Like many similar societies here we have a steady trickle of members leaving Hong Kong for various reasons, but I am happy to report that we have also had a steady trickle of new members, so that our membership remains more than 500. Connie reports a deficit for the past year, mainly because most of our activities in the recent 3 years have been delivered via zoom and a Council decision not to charge attendees for zoom events. As in person events resume this year our income should improve. We remain financially sound as an organization.

Our RASHK office in Ngau Tau Kok is now mainly used for the storage of books and former journals. We thank member Rocky Dang for his support in making this space available to us. Administrative work patterns have changed significantly, partially in response and speeded up following Covid-19 related constraints. Our Administrators' operational work is now performed anywhere via laptop, in managing emails, website, WhatsApp and e-blasts. We plan to actively review the need for storage / office space in future. On review of materials stored there, apart from copies of former Journals, some unexpected

treasures were found which may be of value and appreciated by our members – a few hundred hard copies of former academic seminars and monographs covering nearly 40 topics, some dating back to 1960s, written by expert RASHK members of the time. These were members who carefully observed, recorded and shared what they saw and heard, regarding many aspects of life here in Hong Kong at the time. I have summarized these titles as you can see on the screen, and as a first step will make these available for purchase to our membership @\$100/ copy, providing some income for our society. One of our local antiquarian books store is also interested in selling these documents, but our members will be given first choice to purchase directly from us if they wish.

We have a steady stream of book donations to our RASHK Library, some from authors invited to deliver a talk, some related to Ride Fund related publications, and some from local personal libraries following downsizing decisions. One significant recent donation is > 200 books from the estate of former Hong Kong journalist, Noel Parrott, who lived on Cheung Chau. All these will be catalogued and sent to our RASHK collection held at the Hong Kong Central Library in Causeway Bay. Member Robin Bridge has also donated a set of Chinnery related beautifully illustrated annual catalogues dating back to 1980s. These too will be catalogued and sent to our RASHK collection. I would also like to express my thanks to Roy Delbyck and our Honorary Librarian Vivian So. The three of us recently paid a Saturday morning visit to the RASHK Library Collection and with the help of the Librarians there took a critical look at all the titles held. We found that a certain proportion of these books and journals would be better allocated, because of their age and value, to the safety of our Special Collection there. Access for RASHK members to these collections is with a RASHK membership card.

Hong Kong Studies Series of publications which is supported by the Ride Fund has now produced an impressive > 35 books since the Trust was set up in 2003. Many of these books would not have been published without support from the Fund's Trustees. This must be a source of pride for past and present Trustees. I am also happy to report that the Ride Fund has recently received a sizable donation from one of our RASHK members departing Hong Kong which will help us continue the work of the Fund. Preparations for the publication of JRASHK Volume 63 are well in hand by our Honorary Editor Tony Banham, with work on Volume 64 started. Today is an opportunity to thank members of the Editorial Board for their valuable contributions as well as the support of the International Editorial Advisory Committee. It is encouraging to note that our Honorary Librarian reports significant access to our past Journals via JSTOR. They hold an important position in the documentation of Hong Kong's history and narrative.

For events and activities organized in 2022, we arranged 24 talks, 13 local visits and 1 AGM. Some were possible to arrange in person and others of necessity via zoom/ hybrid. Overseas based authors were often very willing to introduce us to their latest publication with a zoom talk. For some in person events numbers of attendees were often capped. It is interesting to note that for our free zoom events, of those who register their interest, perhaps only 60-70% actually attend. During this recent period of less travel and more isolation, from feedback received, our events were very much welcomed both locally and by our overseas members. We are fortunate also to have access to on-line events organised by both local societies or sister RAS Societies in Beijing, Shanghai and UK, with reciprocal arrangements for their members to our own on-line events. Despite all the Covid – 19 related constraints over the last 3 years our relationships with sister RAS groups has in fact strengthened. Around Chinese New Year we welcomed visitors from both RASBeijing and FRASHK at one of our in person events. From contacts with RAS UK, I recently met with a representative from newly constituted RASGeorgia who was very

interested to hear details of our local RASHK set up and activities. For such exchanges our RASHK Journals, regular Newsletter and website are fruitful sources of information.

Please consult the appendix linked to the Activities Report for more details of events held in 2022 and YTD 2023. After 3 years of very limited travel, it is hoped that plans for RASHK overseas trips can be reactivated later this year - possibly including the trip to Vietnam which was cancelled in 2020

I also must report that following digitisation of Hong Kong Governments IRD's list of charitable organisations with tax exemption, RASHK is in the process, since last year, of reapplication for this status. I regret the delay in dealing with this situation. It is hoped that this can be achieved within the next 3 months and any future donation should be delayed until after our charitable organisation's exemption from tax status is reinstated.

My appreciative thanks again to all those who have supported me in my roles as President and Activities Committee Chair. Both are challenging and interesting. Succession planning however is important, so please let us know if you would like to help in future. Younger members are very welcome.

This concludes my report. Thanks and best wishes to you all.

Questions and comments are welcome.

Helen Tinsley

President RASHK

April 2023