

# In Focus

The Center for Khmer Studies

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# Mission Statement

The Center for Khmer Studies is an international non-governmental not-for-profit institution dedicated to the study, teaching and research on Khmer civilization and the cultures of the Mekong. It is a member of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

The Center's mission is to support scholarship on Cambodia and to raise awareness of the value and importance of Cambodian cultural heritage.

The Center supports in-country individual and team-based research projects in the humanities and the social sciences, involving international scholars in collaborative undertakings whose objective is to train a new generation of young Cambodian scholars.

In addition to research and training programs, CKS offers fellowships, conducts academic workshops and conferences, supports a publishing program and maintains the only public library outside of Phnom Penh.

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# Welcome to the Center for Khmer Studies

The Center for Khmer Studies has just celebrated its fourth birthday. In anticipation of that landmark of our success, we were invited to a personal audience with His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk in the Audience Hall at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. Founding Director Philippe Peycam, Trustee Dr. Rethy Chhem and I arrived bearing flowers that are the traditional gift to the King. We also brought an album of photographs of the Center's restored buildings at Wat Damnak and many of our events over the past three years.

Welcoming us warmly, King Sihanouk shared gifts with us to mark the festive occasion of our visit. He had received from our Cambodian Board member, Prof. Chhem, a series of documents describing the mission and program of the Center, and made it clear in our hour-long conversation that he had read them carefully, understood and deeply appreciated what CKS was doing to help Cambodia recover mastery of its own rich cultural traditions, after years of tragedy in which its memory itself had been lost. We spoke easily with the King. As, one after another, we described our hopes for the Center, he repeated many times, "I am deeply grateful for what you do for my country". King Sihanouk knows Siem Reap and Wat Damnak well. He maintains a Royal residence across the park from the Grand Hotel.

As we finished our conversation, in an atmosphere of great warmth, King Sihanouk turned to us, lowered his voice, and, commending us for bringing to Cambodia scholars from universities around the world, asked us please not to forget to include young Cambodians in our programs and to try to help them become scholars of their own heritage, to take their rightful place around our table. It was a deeply moving message.

The Center for Khmer Studies was founded in 1999. Our facilities are located at Wat Damnak, a central Buddhist pagoda— a traditional place of learning. 'Khmer studies' addresses all aspects of the civilization of Cambodia. Our

mission is in the service of higher education, which is slowly being reconstructed. Cambodian students today can complete a B.A. degree at one of the two universities in Phnom Penh, but further study is not yet available. With our CKS projects, we bring together teams of Western-trained scholars to lead and work with groups of young Cambodian students, teaching them both the substance and the technical skills of scholarship and project management. Over 600 students have passed through our programs in 3 years. An in-country Junior Fellowship Program trains 15 young Cambodians each year in field research. When they master sufficient English, CKS assists with scholarships for graduate study abroad.

Our welcoming Library is open to all. It is a heart-warming sight daily to find in our Library, seated alongside the scholars, local high school students eagerly exploring the world of books, which, in Buddhist tradition, they treat as treasures.

CKS was created as an initiative of the World Monuments Fund, an international NGO in the field of preservation. Its initial inspiration was to assist the young Cambodians working in WMF projects at Angkor to qualify for education abroad. CKS quickly grew far beyond its initial expectations. In July 2002, WMF ended, as planned, its custodial role, and CKS became fully autonomous. At the same time, we added a group of outstanding international scholars to our Board. In February 2003, we were honored with election to membership in the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, a prestigious grouping of major U.S. research centers abroad. We continue our mission to serve as a bridge and a cross-road, a wide forum for the exploration of Cambodian civilization. We hope you will join in supporting our mission. Welcome to CKS!

Lois de Menil, Ph.D.  
President and Chairman of the Board



*The Center's program portfolio is presented to His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk.*

# Director's Note

In 2003, the Center for Khmer Studies was elected to membership in CAORC<sup>1</sup>, and was thereby recognized as a full-fledged participant in the U.S. academic network— the first institution of its kind in the whole of Southeast Asia. CKS will, nonetheless, preserve its founding vision— its international network of member institutions and scholars, and its commitment to supporting Cambodian students, scholars and artists, providing them with the opportunity to take part in its activities. In its mission of developing the field of Khmer Studies after decades of political strife, CKS seeks to transcend disciplinary, cultural, national, and academic artificial boundaries.

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The Prayer Hall at Wat Damnak

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The CKS Conference Hall

## Fellowships

Key to rebuilding the academic field is a diversified fellowship program. CKS now offers a growing range of fellowships and training opportunities, both for Cambodian and international scholars. These include Senior Fellowships for U.S. doctoral and post-doctoral fellows; Junior Fellowships targeting U.S. undergraduates, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation; as well as Toyota-funded Junior Fellowships (training) for Cambodian students wishing to pursue graduate studies overseas. In collaboration with the well-known Paris-based "Langues 'O'", we are now developing a parallel program for French Junior and Senior Fellows, with funding from the Florence Gould Foundation— acknowledging the essential tradition of French scholarship in the field.

There is still no graduate-level teaching at Cambodian universities, and Cambodian higher education is not yet accredited— the result of its destruction by the Khmer Rouge regime. Through its programs, CKS is striving to bridge the gap between Cambodians and their international counterparts, while also affording opportunities for established international scholars to pursue their research.

## Collaborative Research Projects

Research projects are an important catalyst for the development of Khmer Studies. From the outset, CKS has sought to make an asset of its relatively limited resources by concentrating on 'seed investment' in areas less covered by others, encouraging a multiplier effect by fostering the collaborative involvement of institutions and scholars who share the same goals. This is quite a new way of operating in the Khmer Studies context, but it is working well.

Cambodian scholars selected to lead some of these multinational projects are certainly the first beneficiaries. The Rockefeller Foundation has pioneered this original method of supporting research, providing funding for three theme-based collaborative research and training projects: vernacular architecture; pre-Angkorian archaeology— acknowledging the central importance of this early period in shaping the 'classical' Khmer civilization; and the third, in social anthropology, addressing the difficult and yet crucial question of Cambodia's youth culture.

These projects have given rise to the active collaboration of many local and international institutions, including especially the National University of Singapore, the University of Hawaii, the Royal University of Fine Arts, and the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient. Exhibitions, training courses, workshops and seminars have also taken place within this program framework.

## Dedication to Public Service:

### The CKS Library

CKS operates the largest public Library outside Phnom Penh, in a society where access to books is almost non-existent. We extend our mandate to offer research facilities to scholars with a commitment to open our facilities as a service to Cambodian society. Located in a former Buddhist school build-

<sup>1</sup> CAORC: Council of American Overseas Research Centers



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Open Society Institute, we are now developing a strategic plan for an Academic Publishing Program, which, we hope, will lead to the translation and publication in Khmer of dozens of titles in future years.

ing within the Wat Damnak Pagoda, the Library has seen its collection grow from a few hundred titles to over 3,000 books. It owes its development in great part to the generosity of individual donors. We continue to seek support of all kinds to build this very important facility.

### **Communications Outreach**

A generous gift from the Amanresorts Group has enabled CKS to engage in an expanded effort of communication. The Center's tri-lingual bulletin, *Siksacakr* ('the Wheel of Knowledge'), provides Cambodian scholars with an indispensable link to international scholarship. It will soon also be available on our Website ([www.khmerstudies.org](http://www.khmerstudies.org)). The Website's ambition is to serve as the main source of information and exchange in the field.

CKS also sponsors Conferences and Workshops on various themes. The most recent included a workshop/conference on Publishing in Cambodia, and a conference of Asian Artists, in collaboration with the Asian Cultural Council of New York.

### **Initiating Cambodia's First Academic Publishing Program**

CKS's active engagement in rebuilding creative intellectual activity in Cambodia has also sparked broader interventions. We collaborated with the Ministry of Education and the World Bank in organizing a national conference on the improvement of higher education. Cambodia faces a dramatic structural deficiency in the almost total absence of quality published material in the Cambodian language, Khmer. Students have no access to textbooks in history, anthropology, etc. Almost all material is in foreign languages<sup>2</sup>. CKS is currently translating David Chandler's classic *A History of Cambodia* into Khmer. In partnership with the Soros Foundation -

### **New Directions**

In collaboration with our consortium member, the University of Chicago, CKS is about to engage in a major multi-disciplinary research project on the Tonle Sap Lake and its importance for the history of human development surrounding it, including the ancient Angkor urban complex. CKS will bring together a network of universities and scholars to collaborate actively with other teams already working at Angkor.

A pioneering project in epigraphy— translating/interpreting the ancient Khmer and Sanskrit inscriptions— is another new direction of research activity, intended to train young Cambodian students before the few elderly scholars remaining disappear, along with their knowledge.

### **First Steps into Angkor**

CKS plays an essential role in Cambodia today. We have been invited to membership in the UNESCO International Coordinating Committee for Angkor, the supervisory agency for the Angkor historical complex, thus making the link between Angkor and Cambodia, past and present.

With its recent CAORC membership and its admission to the UNESCO ICC panel, CKS has taken a bold step forward. We could not have accomplished this without the dedication of individuals and institutions that have believed in the quasi-utopian vision once laid out at a workshop, in 1999. It would not have happened at all without the commitment of individual, corporate and institutional supporters and donors, who have, from the beginning, believed in the enterprise. It is with this note of gratitude that I end this report. With your support, CKS will carry forward its ambitious mission.

Philippe Peycam, Ph.D.

<sup>2</sup> Over 90% of academic published material related to Cambodia is in foreign languages, mainly in English, French, Japanese and Thai.

# Members & Benefactors

Cambodia, a country whose past was shaped by one of the world's most dazzling cultures, now lacks not only most of the normal attributes of culture, but even the memory of its glorious past. In spite of that, however, much has survived: not just the great monuments of Angkor, but also the will to learn. It is the purpose of the Center for Khmer Studies to help make this happen in a variety of ways.

The Center has established a rich and varied fellowship program to bring young and established scholars from abroad to conduct research, teach or carry out public service activities relating to the Khmer heritage. In collaboration with U.S. and other universities, it will make it possible for Cambodian graduate students to work abroad toward an advanced degree. They could not do this in Cambodia: education now ends with the B.A. degree. To this, the Center has added a local research program that helps bring together institutions and individuals in Cambodia and abroad, and includes education and field training.

In Cambodia itself, the Center sponsors publications, collaborative research, resource-sharing and short-term courses for university students in partnership with local universities. Information on CKS programs is posted to our Website: [www.khmerstudies.org](http://www.khmerstudies.org).

All these activities must, of course, be funded. Many of our programs are funded by grants from prestigious international institutions and foundations. But still, the Center's running expenses must be covered. For this, we depend entirely on the generosity of our friends. Without them, there can be no Center.

It is my ardent hope that, as you read through this newsletter, you will agree that money given to the Center will be money well spent—especially since, in Cambodia, modest sums go a long way. And as you help us, you will also make an important contribution to world culture.

Olivier Bernier  
Vice-Chairman

## How to Help CKS

### Supporting the Library at Wat Damnak

#### Facilities, book acquisitions, training of librarians

Donations to support the Library and its expansion will be acknowledged with a named seat. Also, bookplates bearing the name of the donor are affixed to books given directly to the Library or purchased with funds specially provided for that purpose.

### Supporting Cambodian Junior Fellows

CKS would like to expand its scholarship programs for students who have graduated from Cambodian universities in Phnom Penh. Our current Junior Fellowship Training Program consists of in-country courses in research methodology, writing skills, academic English (TOEFL exam) and orientation courses preparing students to undertake graduate studies overseas. CKS will name the Junior Fellowship with reference to the donor/sponsor.

### Sponsoring Translation of Essential Literature in Khmer

In the absence of fundamental academic materials in the Cambodian language, Khmer, CKS is actively involved in translation projects. CKS welcomes sponsorship to translate books selected by our Academic Committee as being essential to education in Cambodia. We also encourage support for our tri-lingual (Khmer-English-French) bulletin, *Siksacackr*.

### Supporting the Center's Facilities in Phnom Penh

CKS seeks support to rent and operate a large house in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, to serve both as a residence and a gathering place for its fellows from Cambodia and overseas, and for occasional use by members of its programs.

We thank you for your contribution!

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The Center for Khmer Studies is recognized in the U.S.  
as a tax-exempt institution under article 501 (c) 3  
of the Internal Revenue Code.  
All contributions are tax-deductible.

## How to become a CKS Member

The Center for Khmer Studies invites you to participate in our growth and development by becoming a member. Membership categories include Members (\$1,000 to \$4,999 per year); Patrons (\$5,000 to \$9,999 per year), and Sponsors (\$10,000 or more per year).

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### Institutional Funding

The Asian Cultural Council, New York  
The Florence Gould Foundation, New York  
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The Rockefeller Foundation, New York, Bangkok  
The Sainsbury Charitable Trust, London  
The Soros Foundation/Open Society Institute  
New York, Budapest  
The Toyota Foundation, Tokyo  
The Van Waveren Foundation, New York  
The World Monuments Fund, New York



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## The CKS Library

The CKS Library is the largest public academic library in Cambodia outside the capital Phnom Penh. It provides the essential service of ensuring access to materials on Cambodian history and culture. Its large book collection serves as an invaluable information resource to local and foreign readers, including scholars and researchers in Khmer and Southeast Asian Studies.

In order to encourage reading activity in the Cambodian community, the Library is open to everyone, free of charge, from Monday through Saturday. The majority of Cambodian visitors are high school teachers and students, researchers, Buddhist monks and professional tour-guides. International scholars work regularly at our library. Young Cambodians drop by daily and sit down to read alongside senior scholars.

In just two years, the Library has developed a large collection of documents: over 3000 volumes and titles, and more than 20 journals, such as *Kampuja Suriya Newsletter*, *Bulletin de l'EFEO*, *Aséanie*, *Asian Perspectives* and journals of SPAFA and Siam Society. The collection also contains unique out-of-print publications from local and overseas

libraries, a wide selection of M.A. and Ph.D. dissertations from overseas universities and research papers by Cambodian students at the Universities of Phnom Penh. The collection focuses on Cambodia and the Southeast Asia region in the fields of history, archaeology, arts, linguistics, religion, literature, and politics. Dictionaries, encyclopedias, bibliographies, directories, maps and guidebooks, as well as 3 national newspapers (in English, French and Khmer languages) are also available for reference.

The CKS Library has been elected as a member of the Consortium on Research Material on Southeast Asia in the United States and is the first library in Southeast Asia elected to membership in the Council of American Overseas Research Centers. The CKS Library is in the process of building up an extensive on-line catalogue soon to be accessible.

Plans for the future include expanding the collection to include photos, maps, tapes, VCD's and videos. We hope to serve increasingly better our scholarly constituency and the Cambodian community.

*Chheng Pharin, Library Director*

## Vernacular Architecture Exhibition

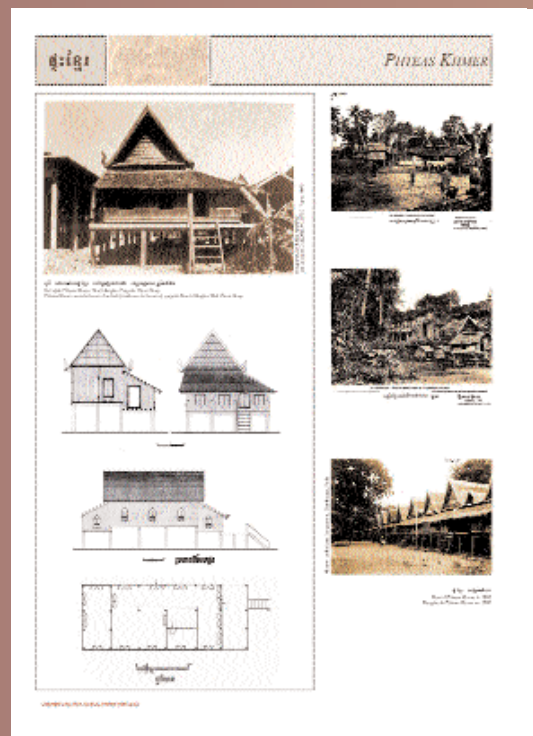
Siem Reap, June 2002 – Phnom Penh, January 2003

*Displayed at CKS's conference hall in Siem Reap, and later traveling to Phnom Penh, "Vernacular Architecture" was the first exhibition of its kind in the field of architecture in Cambodia.*

Curated by Deputy Director, François Tainturier, with the assistance of Madeleine Giteau, an art historian from the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, and the Honorable Eang Soeung, known for his typology of traditional wooden houses in the 1960s, this well received exhibition displayed and interpreted photographs of houses from different parts of Cambodia. Hok Sokol, an outstanding young Khmer architect, played a key role in the exhibition, contributing detailed architectural drawings as well as computer-generated graphic design.

Khmer vernacular architecture refers to the wooden structures used in daily and domestic life by villagers and monks throughout Cambodia. Prominent structures include monastery buildings, such as the *vihear*, the prayer hall; the *sala*, the common room (where monks eat and study); the *kuti*, the monks' residence; the *kdoueng*, mills for rice; and others. Often decorated with rich ornamentation, these beautiful structures demonstrate remarkable skills in carpentry and styles that vary from one province to another. Construction techniques also incorporate beliefs, rituals, and traditions that Cambodian people have respected for generations.

Like many aspects of Khmer culture, these traditions are mainly orally transmitted, and have weathered both major historical tragedy and rapid socio-economic change. The perpetuation



of these orally transmitted vernacular traditions is being seriously challenged, threatening a significant part of Cambodia's cultural and built heritage. Old traditional wooden houses are increasingly being dismantled and their timber structures sold for their resale value; while pagodas are torn down and replaced by concrete structures that have far less distinctive style.

This popular exhibition sought to raise awareness of the unique significance of Cambodia's built heritage, and to pay tribute to the traditional vernacular buildings and building techniques remaining throughout Cambodia in order to encourage their preservation.

## Performing Arts Conference

*In its mission to strengthen the relationship between the humanities and the arts, CKS serves as an ideal meeting ground for facilitating exchanges between local and international artists and researchers.*

CKS hosted the Second Asian Forum on Culture and Arts in the Mekong Region, in February

2003, in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, the aim of the conference was to develop a strategy for future partnerships among individuals and institutions involved in the domain of the performing and visual arts in the Mekong region. A particular focus was the context of the performing and



visual arts in Cambodia. The Forum involved over 50 participants, including cultural institute directors, individual artists and scholars, donors and former Asian Cultural Council grantees involved in Southeast Asian arts and culture.

CKS's spacious conference hall in Siem Reap enabled local and international artists to present and discuss the development of their work through videos, tapes, slide presentations and live performances.

## Publishing in Cambodia

*The main objective of the Publishing in Cambodia Project was to understand the reasons for the quasi absence of a "culture of literacy" in Cambodia, where reading materials are scarce and 'reading' is associated with textbooks.*

In May 2002, a team of Cambodian and international researchers began a comprehensive survey, through interviews with writers, publishers and printers in eleven selected provinces, to take stock of the state of the publishing sector in Cambodia as a whole, and to detail the areas of Writers and Writing, Book Production, Marketing and Distribution, and Readers and Reading. In February 2003, a workshop at CKS's Conference Hall gathered representatives of all sectors to

## Upcoming Events

From September 20th to December 15th, 2003, a silk exhibition entitled *A blending of Two Esthetics: The Khmer and Cham*, will present the art of *Hol*, a Cambodian textile tradition. Organised in collaboration with the Institute of Khmer Traditional Textiles, the exhibition will take place at the CKS Conference Hall in Wat Damnak. On December 12th, 2003, a seminar will feature guest speakers presenting papers on silk production, its culture and environment.

David Chandler's classic, *A History of Cambodia*, has been translated into the Khmer language and will be sold at a price making it accessible to the wider Cambodian public. The project is funded by the Van Waveren foundation, New York and the US Embassy in Phnom Penh.

In early January, 2004, the Center will host three 2-day Workshops. A Bio-Archaeology Workshop, in collaboration with the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, will update impor-

tant breakthroughs in research on bones. *'New Trends in Khmer Studies'* will present the findings of our own major Research and Training Projects, drawing together their respective teams of scholars and student participants. A Workshop on Ancient Khmer Epigraphy, *'Training Future Sanskritists in Cambodia'*, will explore developing a project in this field. Epigraphy is the study of ancient inscriptions. The few scholars in Cambodian Sanskrit are elderly, and the field has been destroyed.

Performing arts is a dynamic field in Khmer studies whose multidisciplinary study affords a deeper understanding of Khmer culture. Emphasizing the importance of preserving traditional arts forms in counterpart to, and alongside promoting new expressions of creativity, the Forum highlighted in its conclusions the need for well-researched documentation and increased outreach for the performing arts to serve as an educational, cultural expression of the Cambodian community, both locally and internationally.

finalize a set of recommendations. The workshop also helped in establishing Cambodia's first Book Sector Association, which will lobby government and NGO policymakers on issues such as literacy campaigns, creation of libraries nationwide, promotion of creative writing in school curriculums, and improvement of publishing from printing to distribution. The project was conducted in collaboration with Reyum Institute and funded by the Toyota Foundation. Additionally, CKS is currently cooperating with the Soros Foundation/Open Society Institute in Budapest to develop a Cambodian Academic Publishing and Translation program in order to publish more book titles in the Khmer language.

A part of CKS's publishing/ translation mission, the sixth issue of *Siksacacr*— our tri-lingual Academic Bulletin— will appear in March, 2004. *Siksacacr* contains articles by Khmer scholars, and translations into Khmer of important scholarly articles in English and French. It has recently received support from the Soros Foundation/OSI (New York) to expand its translations into Khmer. *Siksacacr* is, to date, the only independent academic Bulletin in Khmer Studies, and is edited by the prominent French/Khmer scholar, Michel Rethy Antelme.

## Cultural Resource Management Project

Dr. Beng H.S. Khemro, Project Coordinator

THE CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT project, funded by the Sainsbury Trust (London), provides for a series of courses at the Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh. The first introductory course was taught by Dr. Kyle Latinis, and attracted almost 400 participants—far beyond the number anticipated.

Cultural resource management is an area of particular importance in Cambodia. With cultural and heritage tourism as a thriving industry in contemporary Southeast Asia, managing tourism assets properly and sustainably is essential. In recent years, the number of tourists visiting Angkor has grown from a few thousand to over 600,000 per year. At the current rate of growth, tourism at Angkor will soon reach a million visitors annually. Topics covered in the course range from preservation of historic buildings and archaeological sites to dance, music, puppetry and literature.

The high number of participants in the program highlights the strong demand from all sectors for CRM training. Cultural resource management does not hold out the promise of great wealth, but the strong interest in the subject indicates that for many Cambodians, preserving their culture and managing it properly for sustainable returns is more important than simply making quick money from rapid tourism development, resulting in negative effects. Participants came from a wide range of backgrounds,

including government and the private sector as well as education.

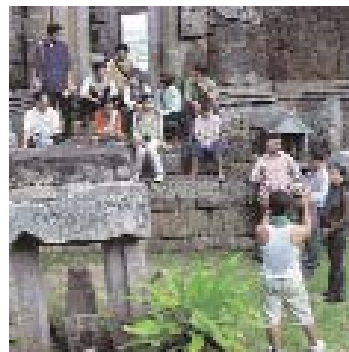
A main focus of the program is how to merge a growing tourism industry with the protection and preservation of cultural resources, while respecting religious, cultural, and educational concerns.

The course comprises classroom lectures, discussion groups and class field trips to historic and archaeological sites, museums, traditional craft villages and households, and traditional performances. Participants also have hands-on interactive experience, conducting interviews and acting as tour guides and lecturers at many sites.

Four introductory courses have been conducted thus far, in addition to one second-level and one third-level course in June 2003. Students who have completed all levels are evaluated, and potential candidates identified to attend universities abroad for graduate study in related fields.

CRM training will undoubtedly have an important impact on Cambodia's future as tourism grows. With an emphasis on sensible and practical goals, it will ensure the future of Cambodia's past—that its rich cultural assets will gracefully endure to benefit both Cambodian and non-Cambodian cultures.

*From left to right: a presentation at Savanna Phum Theatre (Phnom Penh); Field trip at Phnom Chisor (Takeo province); Field trip at a weaving village in Wat Svay Krout, Kandal Province.*



### Social Anthropology

Kim Sedara, Director

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY IS A RELATIVELY NEW DISCIPLINE in the Cambodian higher education system. Until recently, there were no social anthropology departments or courses offered at the university level. The CKS Social Anthropology Program provides training in theory, applied ethnographic research methodology, and reporting in anthropology and sociology. Conducted at the Faculty of Archaeology of the Royal University of Fine Arts, the program aims to train Cambodian cultural anthropology students to be qualified researchers and lecturers in the field.

Led by Kim Sedara and three assistant student researchers, the Project's subject is *Youth Culture and Higher Education*, focusing on university-level education in Cambodia. The project's ambition is to understand and improve the situation of students at institutions of higher learning. To examine how socio-economic conditions affect youth and education today, and how the curriculum of these institutions can better address students' needs and expectations, the CKS social anthropology team conducted its research in five public institutions in Phnom Penh.

The *Youth Culture* project is based on the premise that higher education in Cambodia should play a vital part in the development of a functional civil society through the promotion of equal opportunities, life-long learning, and encouragement of participation in political and social life. The study will result in specific policy recommendations,

such as the development of new forms of educational management, methods of quality assurance, gender equality, the mutual recognition of diplomas, and curriculum development.

This capacity-building project has also given CKS's social anthropology team the opportunity to collaborate with international universities in scholar-exchange programs. In February 2003, anthropologists in a scholarly exchange with the University of Bern, Switzerland, conducted fieldwork in Cambodia for one month. In June 2003, the team paired together with seven students from Northern Illinois University in a joint-cultural anthropology program at the Department of Archaeology in Phnom Penh. This project aims to train these young cultural anthropology researchers to be effective team leaders for future projects, with the ability to run their own independent research programs.

In September 2003, two of the young CKS-trained researchers were selected to present papers at the Third International Convention of Asia Scholars, in Singapore. The first paper, by Ms. Heng Chhun Oeurn, addressed "Women in Higher Education"; and the second, by Ms. Hak Siphirath, presented "Student and Non-Formal Education in Cambodia".

### Vernacular Architecture

François Tainturier and Hok Sokol, Architects, Directors

ALTHOUGH EXTENSIVE WORK HAS BEEN DONE on Khmer monumental architecture for more than a century, the field of vernacular architecture has hardly received any sustained attention with few studies on the topic. Responding to this need, the CKS-Rockefeller Foundation research program is the first comprehensive project on vernacular architecture/urban studies in Cambodia. It aims to catalogue, preserve, and raise awareness of this important part of Khmer culture.

The project focuses on Khmer built and urban heritage in three medium-size Cambodian cities— Battambang, Kratie,

and Kampong Cham. The project deals with the identification, monitoring, and analysis of dynamics in the built environment. It provides training in the development of a Geographic Information System (GIS) database, planning tools (design of master plans) and conservation tools (methodology for the listing of heritage buildings) for young Cambodian architects. Mapping vernacular structures in the selected provinces, the database will serve as a monitoring tool for built heritage and its varying conditions, for local authorities, scholars and students involved in heritage protection.

(See *Events' section for exhibition on Vernacular Architecture*)

## Pre-Angkor Archaeology

### Banteay Meanchey Archaeological Research Project (BMAP)

Dr. Dougald O'Reilly and Thuy Chanthoun, Directors



*Cambodia is famed for its magnificent jungle-clad temples, but little is known of the rise of the State that created these architectural masterpieces. In the quest to understand this question, the site of Phum Snay may be one of the most important in Cambodia.*

The material found during these excavations include bronze and iron spearheads, swords, bangles, bells, earrings, finger and toe rings, projectile points, spindle whorls, glass, carnelian and agate beads and complete pots. Some of the dead are reported to have been wearing bronze helmets. The wealth of these burials is staggering. The apparent proliferation of military paraphernalia at a site so much closer to the later Angkorian capital is of great interest. This may indicate increased competition over resources, which may have driven the development of strongly hierarchical societies.

THE RECENT CONSTRUCTION OF A ROAD in Banteay Meanchey Province in northwestern Cambodia revealed the remains of a Pre-Angkorian settlement. Villagers discovered rich burials sites with the head oriented to the west. Unfortunately this discovery sparked an episode of looting, which led to the near destruction of the site. While the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts has made valiant efforts to discourage looting, it is a difficult task. Gaping holes spot the landscape with piles of human bone and broken pottery, discarded as valueless in the spoil heaps. The looters sell their wares to middle people who then sell them across the border in Thailand. Villagers also reported that one foreigner has made two trips from Thailand to buy looted antiquities.

In an effort to salvage some scientific information from the looted site, the Banteay Meanchey Archaeological Research Project has excavated the cemetery at Phum Snay. With the assistance of five lecturers and twelve archaeology students from the Faculty of Archaeology at the Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh, it is hoped that some of Cambodia's crucial cultural heritage will be preserved through these efforts.

*Up left: Phum Snay, a late prehistoric burial site. Data from this site will shed light on a little-known period in Khmer prehistory, when bronze was apparently used for a wide range of objects.*

## East Cambodia Archaeological Survey (ECAS)

Dr. Bert Davis and Dr. Bong Sovath, Directors

IN THE NORTHEAST, a group of experts working under the aegis of the NAGA Research Group and the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts have begun conducting surveys aimed at discovering new sites. From December 2002 to May 2003, the survey team documented eighty-four sites dating from late prehistoric to classical Angkorian times in the Mekong River provinces of Kampong Cham, Kratie and Stung Treng.



### Breakthrough Findings:

-December 2002: Five pre-Angkorian sites in and around Stung Treng town were found, including six pre-Angkorian and Angkorian sites in the Kratie/Sambor area, and eight sites spanning the late-prehistoric through classical Angkorian times in Kampong Cham Province.

*Prasat Andaet, the surviving central tower in a group of three Angkorian-period prasat foundations in Phum Andaet, Krek District, Kampong Cham Province.*

## ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION: BUILDING INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY

- February 2003: Forty-four new sites in Stung Treng were discovered along with another twenty-one new sites in the Chamcar Andong Rubber Plantation in Kampong Cham. These included standing *prasat* (temple) foundations, *trapeang* (reservoirs), and what appear to be remnants of an ancient checkerboard system of roads and canals. One of the main attractions of this area is also a set of sites featuring more or less circular earthen ramparts. With further study to determine the region's settlement pattern, these findings could potentially provide the first regional chronology for prehistoric sites in Cambodia.

Operated as a pilot study, the project is designed as a professional improvement program for graduate and recent post-graduate Khmer scholars. Specialized treatment such as radiocarbon dating are conducted at the Universities' facilities in Phnom Penh, with all report writing and analyses done by Khmer scholars. The findings of this survey highlight the broad scope of what lies still uncovered, and the necessity for a national archaeological inventory of historic places to be conducted in Cambodia.

### Lower Mekong Archaeological Project (LOMAP)

Dr. Miriam Stark and Dr. Bong Sovath, Directors

CAMBODIA'S HERITAGE is deeply rooted in its past, and archaeology provides an important tool for studying this long-term history. While abundant recent research has focused on the period associated with the Khmer Empire (9th-14th centuries A.D.), the early to middle first millennium A.D. period remains poorly known. It is during this time that the earliest states emerged in mainland Southeast Asia, and the Mekong delta of southern Cambodia played a central role for the region.

Funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Science Foundation supports LOMAP's regional archaeological field survey of Takeo province, which began in June 2003. Combining 21st century archaeological field techniques— with specialists in geo-archaeology, palynology, and luminescence dating— the LOMAP survey team will document large sites connected to Angkor Borei through ancient canal networks, date brick architecture found from first millennium A.D., and reconstruct the region's environmental history.



Since 1996, Dr. Miriam Stark (University of Hawaii-Manoa) and His Excellency Chuch Phoeurn (Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts) have co-directed field investigations in and around the site of Angkor Borei to explore the site's settlement history and functions. These field

investigations indicate that Angkor Borei was first settled nearly 1000 years before the arrival of the Chinese, that Angkor Borei was the paramount regional center, and that Angkor Borei residents interacted with inhabitants of contemporary settlements across the Mekong delta in southern Cambodia and southern Vietnam.

The fieldwork has just begun, but the pre-Angkorian archaeology that LOMAP has documented thus far is breathtaking in its size and content. Crew members have recorded sites nestled at the base of large hills and strings of moated mounds that stretch for more than one kilometer. Most of these mounds cover ancient brick foundations: of mortuary monuments containing bones or cremations, of shrines that held carved stone images, and of temples. That these mounds were essential ideological symbols seems clear, but their ages remain a mystery until LOMAP specialists can date the brick architecture. The scope of the LOMAP field survey is large, but results from this archaeological survey project promise to revise historical interpretations of the rise and collapse of civilizations in southern Cambodia that played a critical role in the rise of the Khmer empire.

# Religion and the Arts in Khmer Life: a Question of Continuity and Challenge

BY DR. SAM-ANG SAM

*Sam-Ang Sam, an ethnomusicologist and performer by training, was educated in Cambodia at the Royal University of Fine Arts, in the Philippines at the College of Music (University of the Philippines), and in the United States of America at Connecticut College and at Wesleyan University, where he received his MA and PhD degrees in Music Composition and Ethnomusicology respectively. Sam-Ang has been actively involved in the art field and refugee resettlement since his arrival in the United States in 1977. He has made a significant contribution to the international understanding and appreciation of Cambodian traditional performing arts through his documentation efforts, scholarly work, and numerous cultural exchange projects with dancers and musicians from Cambodia.*

RELIGION AND THE ARTS have always been an inherent part of the Khmer life and have played an important role in the development and decline of Khmer civilization. This article discusses Cambodian Buddhism and the influences religion and the arts have had on the shaping of Cambodian culture and society. I would like to look at the relationship between religion and the arts as a vehicle for expressing fundamental Cambodian beliefs and customs through looking at the roles of music, dance, and literature in Buddhist tradition. Through understanding how religion and the arts are interwoven, I would like to highlight the importance of preserving such Cambodian Buddhist practices.

## Buddhism in Cambodia

Cambodia is essentially a Buddhist country. Some 95% of the country's population is Buddhist and Buddhism has been the core of Khmer culture and civilization. To exemplify the importance of religion, one finds that Cambodia's National Trinity has been "The Nation, Religion, King," suggesting the three important components of Khmer national identity. In the Khmer view, the upheavals which occurred following the coup in 1970 (during the Khmer Republic and the Democratic Kampuchea) were the result of breaking the concept of national trinity as the Monarchy and Buddhism were abolished.

A blend of Animism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism have been deeply embedded in the Khmer's beliefs for millennia. The history of Cambodia has revealed that at the

beginning, in our case the earliest we can go—the Funan period (first to sixth centuries A.D.)—Khmer people practiced Animism. When Brahmanism and Buddhism were introduced, the Khmer did not abandon their beliefs and replace it with new ones, but adapted the new religion to the old one. Khmer religious practices reflect a conscious 'Khmerization' suiting Khmer tastes, adopting beliefs that were practical, and which helped serve the community both socially and spiritually.

## Impact of Buddhism in Khmer Society

Buddhism plays a significant role in Khmer rural and urban life. In Buddhism, the essential teaching rests upon the good deeds, accumulation of merits, and peace-making. Adhering to the ten Buddhist precepts, this is how Khmer dedicate their souls and merits to the next world. In the traditional setting, monasteries functioned as educational and cultural centers, and offered a wide range of social services. Past and current Kings have often lived a monastic life for some time in order to gain education and become good and effective leaders. Monasteries also served as mental health centers, retreat centers for the aging, recreational centers, meeting places, rest areas for travelers, orphanages, and funeral homes.

Each individual Khmer owes a great deal to the monastery for the memorable experiences it provides from childhood to adulthood to old age. For an elderly person, the monastery provides a peaceful place to relax, meditate, and prepare for death. When life ends, remains are cremated and the ashes are kept in a stupa within the temple grounds.



### *Apsaras*

*Left: wall carving at Angkor Wat;*

*Middle: in front of Royal Palace, beginning of 20th century;*

*Right: recent performance at Sovanna Phum Theater, Phnom Penh.*

## The Arts in Cambodia

Throughout Khmer history, religion has also had a tremendous influence on the expression of Khmer traditional arts, especially in architecture, sculpture, literature, music and dance.

### Religious Ceremonies and Khmer Life

Ceremonial practices in Cambodia depict a blend of Animist, Brahmanist, and Buddhist influences. Animist beliefs such as *arakk* (guardian spirit), *neak ta* (male guardian spirit), and witchcraft have been with the Khmer people since the olden days and these practices are still prevalent in the rural areas of Cambodia today. When members of the family and village are ill, people perform spiritual ceremonies to have mediums enter into trance in order to tell the causes of the illness. In the belief that spirits cause the persons to fall ill, ceremonies are performed to ask for forgiveness and for the sick persons to get well again.

### Khmer Court Dance

Associated with the royal court of Cambodia for over a thousand years, Khmer court dance originates in the sacred rituals of ancestral worship, and has thus been regarded as "sacred dance." On the walls of the Angkor temples, 1,737 *apsara* (celestial dancers) were carved, reflecting a period of history in which Khmer performing arts reached its greatest expression (Thierry 1963:361, Sam 1988:231-232, Sam 1997:13-14). Regarded as "sacred dancers," these *apsara* functioned as intermediaries between the gods and humans, whose function

was to perform and make offerings to soothe gods and the spirits of ancestors. Thus, one may observe Khmer dancers, still true today, move about the earthly world noticeably celestial in their aerial stylized walking manner, adorned in their divine costumes and headdresses. Alongside the Angkor Vatt Temple, Khmer court dance is perceived to be the symbol of Khmer national pride and identity.

In dance, ceremonies are always conducted with an offering. The smoke of lighted candles and incense sticks signify an eclectic practice of religion and beliefs. Going back to the very beginning of a dancer's career, a ceremony called *pithi sampeah krou* or "ceremony of paying homage to the spirit of the teacher" precedes one's first lesson (Chan Moly Sam 1987:13). This ceremony is so important that a dancer performs it over and over again throughout his/her dancing career. The ceremony is believed to place a dancer under the safeguard of Samdech Preah Krou (the spirit who resides in the dance) who thus protects and blesses the apprenticeship.

### Khmer Music

Music also accompanies every Khmer as far back as his cradle. Lullabies are common and there are numerous traditional songs embedded with traditional morality. Music ceremonies are conducted throughout one's life, starting with the birth blessing, hair shaving, entering the shade (rite of passage), ordination, wedding, and family gatherings at a funeral. Music also plays a very important role in the accompaniment of the performing



Courtesy of Sovanna Phoum Theater

arts, including dance, traditional theater, the ceremony of paying homage to the spirit of the teacher, ancestral worship, and national ceremonies such as the Khmer New Year, Soul Day, and Worship of the Spirit.

### **Khmer Literature: The Reamker**

The *Reamker* (Khmer version of the Ramayana), *Moha Bharata*, and old religious scriptures in literary forms are the foundation upon which ideas, beliefs, and philosophies are built in Khmer society. Brahmanist literature, such as the *Reamker* (Ramayana) denotes the victory of good over evil, with the King representing the good, with a mission and duty to destroy evil to protect the weak or the ruled. In the Khmer *Reamker*, the authors intended to portray *Preah Ream* not as a god or Avatar of Vishnu, but as being an ordinary human being, engaged in human activities and having emotions (Giteau 1957:18, Kak 1996:20). In doing so, the *Reamker* becomes very popular among the people as it unfolds their real and natural ways of life contextually, socially, religiously, and culturally. With good always prevailing over evil, this, in essence, teaches Khmer how to conduct their lives appropriately. In the performances of masked play, for example, only certain episodes are chosen to perform, and those only happy ones. Sad or unfortunate episodes are not supposed to be staged, as they bring bad luck (Kak 1996:24).

*Reamker* and Buddhist *jatakas*, which depict the life of Lord Buddha, serve as the main themes for the development of several Khmer art forms, including dance, plays, paintings, bas-reliefs, sculptures, and astrology. The oral history retold by Ta Chak (Mi Chak 1897-1971) is invaluable for its revelation of Khmer life and devel-



*Mask of Krong Reap (Tous Mouk) 10 faces performed for Ramayana.*

*Drawing by Sappho Marchal, in Danses Cambodgiennes, d'après la version originale de Samdach Chauea Thiounn (Premier Ministre du Gouvernement Cambodgien), revue et augmentée par Jeanne Cuisinier, Bibliothèque Royale du Cambodge, 1930, Hanoi.*

opment and evolution of Khmer literature—the variation of the word use in spoken and written Khmer languages (Bizot 1973). In the Angkor vicinity, the bas-reliefs of *Reamker* story adorned the historic temples, including the temples of Koh Ker, Banteay Srey, Ba Puon, Angkor Vatt, and Banteay Samre (Sar 1975:2, Kak 1996:22). Along the walls of other monastic shrine halls, including Vatt Bau (Siem Reap), Vatt Chaktotih (Udong, Kampung Spoeu), and Vatt Preah Vihear Preah Keo Morakot (Phnom Penh), the *Reamker* is beautifully painted.

### **Challenge of the New Millenium: A Question of Continuity**

Religion has certainly been the pre-eminent foundation of Khmer societ. Religion and the arts have had a great impact in the shaping of Khmer culture. The Khmer



Buddhist religion has strengthened common beliefs, building solidarity of the people and nation, teaching values, self-esteem, pride, and emphasis upon the mental over the physical, and the spiritual over the materialistic. Buddhism for Cambodians, is at the heart of their tradition, culture, and identity.

The Khmer Rouge atrocity (1975-1979), in which more than a million of Cambodians died by torture, starvation or illness, destroyed the foundation of the Khmer family– in separating children from parents, husbands from wives– along with education and health. To many Khmer people, the absence of Buddhism is the absence of the “Khmerness”.

In this new context, efforts are being made to restore, revive, and preserve Buddhism in Cambodia. The traditional arts are also increasingly being viewed as valuable resources for community development, urban revitalization, and the development of tourism. Recreating and preserving the traditional practices of Buddhism in the new physical and social contexts beyond Cambodia, however, are next to impossible. In Japan, Australia, France, Canada, and the United States, millions of

Khmer people now make their new homes. The change in education, experience, context, value and role of monks and Buddhism itself, makes the practice of Buddhism a challenging one. New monks, particularly young ones, do not learn Pali or Sanskrit, as there is no such school. Ceremonies have been curtailed and simplified. Without encouragement from parents, the practice of Buddhism among the younger generation is dwindling.

As we begin the new millennium, in the context of the computer age and technology, a new chapter will be written on religion and the arts, and the shaping of Khmer culture. In my opinion, it is the responsibility of the present and future generations to keep alive the culture of their forebears. In Cambodia and Khmer communities beyond, a valuable first step is to look back and study their religious and artistic traditions and understand them. The challenge ahead is not to break away from tradition, but to find a contemporary way of expressing it. Only within continuity of the past, can Khmer cultural identity be preserved and reaffirmed for its future generations.

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## U.S. JUNIOR FELLOWSHIPS 2001–2003

CKS initiated the first fellowships for U.S. scholars to undertake research on Cambodian history, culture and society. Begun in 2001, the Junior Fellowship Program has been funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, and has provided stipends for six junior fellowships awarded in 2002 and 2003. A presentation of the research fellowships follows.

**Sokhieng Au.** *The Impact of Western Medical Theories and Practices on Colonial Medicine in Cambodia, 1860–1940.* Began research in February 2002. Amount of Award: \$12,000

A Ph.D. candidate in the History of Science at the University of California Berkeley, Ms. Au, a Khmer-American, explores the interaction between French and Khmer medical theories and practices on colonial medicine. Crucial questions addressed by her research include: how far did colonial budgets and colonial expectations extend in the areas of public health and preventive medicine? How were vaccines and other medicines perceived and taken by local people? What effects did Western interventions have on peoples' health? Working mostly in the Cambodian National Archives, and in archives in France, Ms. Au has discovered a considerable amount of invaluable, unexplored primary source material.

**Jennifer Foley.** *Using Art and Architecture in the Creation of Identity.* Began research in March 2002. Amount of Award: \$9,000

Ms. Foley, a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at Cornell University, focused on the construction of Cambodian cultural and national identity, as well as its appearance in present-day Cambodian popular culture. In Cambodia and among the Khmer diaspora population, "Angkor" is endowed with powerful meanings, and representations of Angkorean temples serve as a potent symbol of Khmer identity. Ms. Foley investigates the evolution of 'Angkor' as it is perceived today, and focuses particularly on the creation of the Angkor Historical Park and the National Museum during the French colonial period.

**Eve Zucker.** *Violence, Memory and Ritual Practice in Two Cambodian Communes.* Began research in September 2002. Amount of Award: \$13,500

Ms. Zucker is a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the London School of Economics, where she works under Professors Charles Stafford and Maurice Bloch. She began fieldwork in one of the mountainous regions of Kompong Speu province in September 2002, after a year of Khmer language study and preliminary ethnographical work. Ms. Zucker has found that two relatively isolated Khmer

communes have ritual practices that differ markedly from each other and from those in lowland Cambodia. Recording oral histories, local myths and rituals, she has been curious to learn to what extent the Khmer Rouge disrupted these time-honored elements of local culture, and to what extent they have been "remembered" and rebuilt. By comparing these elements of "memory" in villages, Ms. Zucker hopes to gain insights into Cambodia's recent history and the persistence of tradition.



Eve Zucker with the chief of a village in Kompong Speu province.

**John Marston.** *Millennialism, Building Wats, and the Reconstruction of Khmer Religion.* Began research in April 2003. Amount of Award: \$8,500

Dr. Marston holds a Ph.D. degree in Anthropology from the University of Washington, and has been involved in Khmer studies since the late 1980s. He has edited a volume of essays dealing with aspects of Cambodian religion, and has published and lectured widely on Khmer linguistics, the Khmer Rouge and millenarian Buddhist cults. His project, based on a three-month research sojourn in Cambodia, will document millennial projects, investigate the reconstruction of wats and the attendant rituals, use the National Archives to examine wat building before the 1970's, and study how local and foreign NGOs are working to construct their own versions of Cambodian Buddhism.

**Chean Rethy Men.** *Powerful/Dangerous Medicines: an Ethnographic Study of Pharmaceutical Use in Cambodia.* Began research in April 2003. Amount of Award: \$16,000

Mr. Men, a Khmer American, is a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the University of Hawaii. He holds an M.A. in Anthropology from Northern Illinois University, where he studied under Dr Judy Ledgerwood. His current project in Ban Lung, Rattanakiri province, aims "to study the distribution of beliefs about, and practices related to pharmaceutical use, particularly the injection of pharma-

ceuticals". His three research agendas are : (1) to investigate the distribution of pharmaceuticals from national to local contexts; (2) to study local medical knowledge and people's perceptions about injections and (3) to understand how socio-economic and political factors influence people's decisions to use injections. Men's study has important implications for Khmer medical anthropology and, more widely, for the notions of global "medicine" intruding in countries like Cambodia, where medicines are uncontrolled, unmonitored and poorly understood.

**Tyrone Siren.** *Casino Cambodia: Gambling, Dreams and Borders in a "Developing" Nation State.* Began research in April 2003. Amount of Award: \$16,000

Mr. Siren is a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, where he is working with Prof. Katharine Bowie. He holds an M.A. from Northern Illinois

University, where he worked with Prof. Judy Ledgerwood. His research focuses on "two inter-related aspects of gambling: 1) how it is performed and experienced and 2) how it has been imagined and sanctioned by the Cambodian state and society over time". His research will take him to the National Archives of Cambodia to examine "how gambling was...regulated by the state in earlier eras" and he will then conduct participant observer research in Poipet, the Thai-Cambodian border casino town. His work will focus on Cambodia's younger generation in an effort to understand its "positioned expectations for personal and national prosperity" and how gambling might be seen and employed as a method of achieving these goals. The study, which will be the first of its kind, will offer helpful insights into a key element of Khmer behavior.

## CKS/TOYOTA JUNIOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM FOR CAMBODIANS

### ETHNOGRAPHY AND MEMORY AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL

#### A Research and Writing Methodology Training Program for Young Cambodian Scholars

June 2003-January 2004

In keeping with our commitment to the intellectual advancement of young Cambodian scholars, CKS set up the first Junior Fellowship Program (JFP) for young Cambodians, with funding from the Toyota Foundation. The JFP parallels the pioneering Cultural Resource Management training program (see p.10 above), which started two years earlier. The aim of the JFP is to serve as a bridge in training between undergraduate programs at Cambodian universities and the international standards required for professional graduate study abroad, including important research methodology skills. The program consists of a three-week intensive workshop on anthropological research methodology, led by scholars whose field of specialization is Cambodia; a three-month period of supervised field research; and a three-month writing-up phase under the guidance of senior scholars.

Fifteen candidates have participated thus far in this program and received certificates at the completion of their project. Lectures were delivered both by senior Cambodian scholars and distinguished international guest lecturers, such as Prof. Michael Vickery (United States), Dr. Son Soubert (Cambodia), and Dr. Keiko Muira (Japan). Among the top fifteen trainees in the preliminary Workshop, the five best have been awarded fellowships to

undertake six months of supervised field research.

Upon completion of their field research, these five young scholars will present their work at the January 2004 Research Workshop organized by the Center. They will also attend a special orientation course on graduate study abroad and be prepared for the required TOEFL English proficiency exam. Cambodian Junior Fellows' projects include the following:

**AN Rasmey,** Villagers' Beliefs Related to Vatt Mohor, Kompong Thom Province.

**LONG Pov,** Memory of Kreung Villages in Pouy Commune, O 'Chum District, Rattanakiri Province.

**OUCH Sophany,** Culture and Memory of the Community of Sre Ambel, Kandal Province.

**PRAK Bonamy,** Life of Female Workers in Garment Factories, Phnom Penh.

**SENG Sary,** Rehabilitation and Search for Identity of Refugees Back in Cambodia, Pursat Province.

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