



Khmer silk weaving in Thailand; credit to Alexandra Dalferro.

Center for Khmer Studies

Head Office:

PO Box 9380

Wat Damnak, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Tel: (855) 063 964 385

Fax: (855) 063 963 035

Phnom Penh Office:

234 Street 450, Tuol Tumpung II, Chamkamorn,

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tel/Fax: (855) 023 991 937

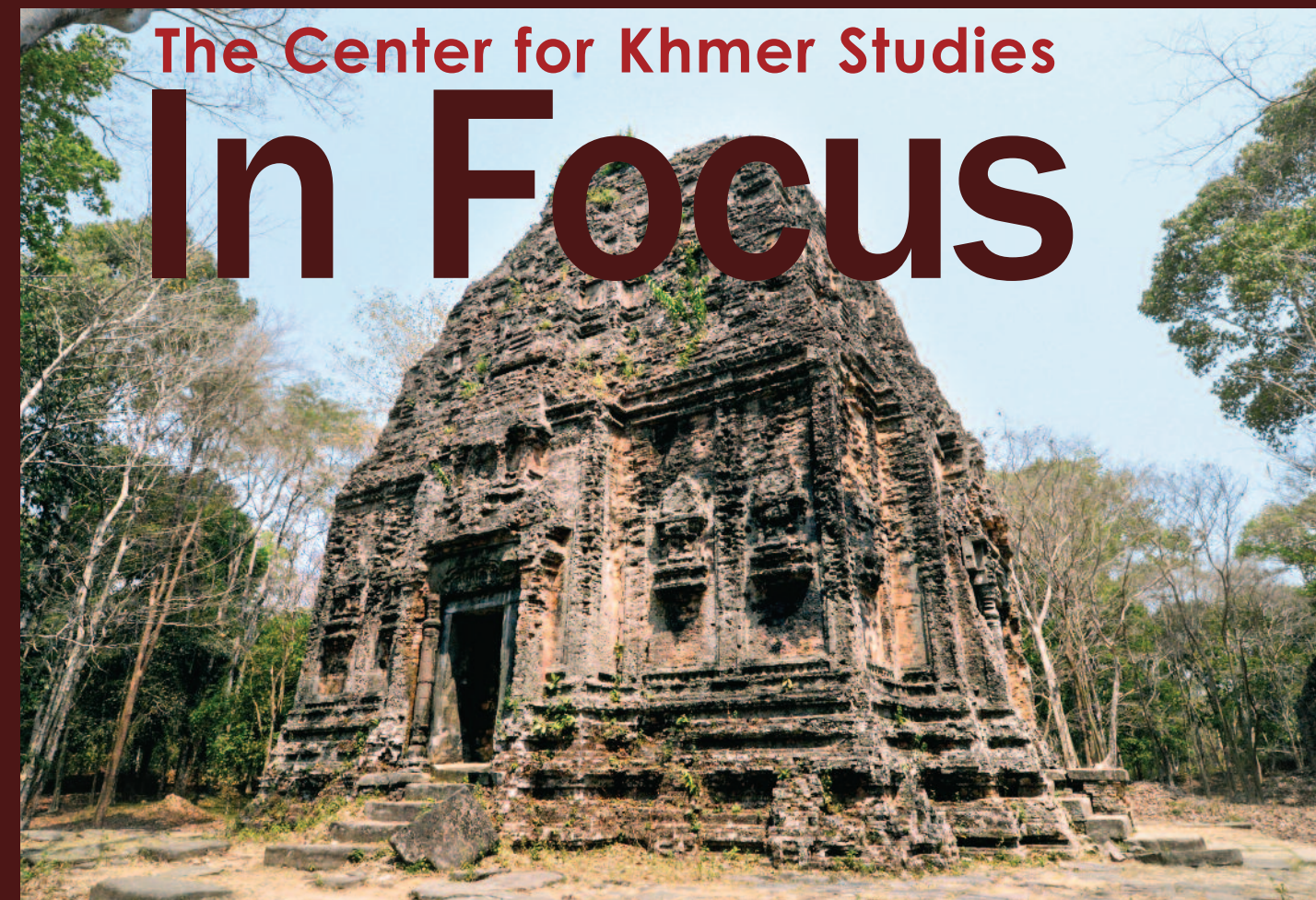
Email: center@khmerstudies.org

NYoffice@khmerstudies.org

Website: www.khmerstudies.org



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The Center for Khmer Studies In Focus

No.15, 2016-2017

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Letter ANDREW MERTHA, PRESIDENT	2	Activities & Projects CORNELL IN CAMBODIA (2016-2017) CKS PANEL AT AAS HELP SUPPORT OUR IMPORTANT NEW INITIATIVE: A CKS OFFICE AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY! CKS HEAD LIBRARIAN VISITS CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY HIS MAJESTY NORODOM SIHAMONI GRANTS AN AUDIENCE TO CKS OFFICERS A NIGHT AT THE MOVIES WITH ANGELINA JOLIE AND RITHY PANH	31-33
Director's Note NATHAROUN NGO, DIRECTOR	3		
The Story of CKS LOIS DE MENIL, FORMER PRESIDENT	4-6		
Travel with CKS OLIVIER BERNIER, VICE-PRESIDENT	7-8		
Members & Benefactors OLIVIER BERNIER, VICE-PRESIDENT	9-10		
The CKS Library JACQUES HENNESSY, VICE-PRESIDENT	11-12		
		CKS Programs SUMMER JUNIOR RESIDENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM KHMER LANGUAGE AND CULTURE STUDIES PROGRAM CKS RESEARCH FELLOWS 2017-2018	23-30
		CKS Jr. and Sr. Fellows Speak MATT MCGEE KUNTHEA CHHOM	31-33
		Promoting Cambodian Scholars	34



Mission Statement

The Center for Khmer Studies supports research, teaching and public service in the social sciences, arts and humanities in Cambodia and the Mekong region.

CKS seeks to:

- Promote research and international scholarly exchange through programs that increase understanding of Cambodia and its region,
- Strengthen Cambodia’s cultural and educational structures, and integrate Cambodian scholars into regional and international exchange,
- Promote a vigorous civil society.

CKS is an American Overseas Research Center supported by a consortium of educational institutions, scholars and individuals. It is incorporated in the state of Delaware, USA. It receives partial support for overhead and American fellowships from the U.S. Government. Its programs are privately funded.

CKS is the sole member institution of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) in mainland Southeast Asia.

CKS’s programs are administered from its headquarters in Siem Reap and from Phnom Penh. It maintains a small administrative office in New York and a support office in Paris, Les Amis du Centre d’Études Khmères .

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Nop Sovanna	Finance Coordinator
Tith Sreypich	Program Officer
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Chhor Sivleng	Research Librarian
Mai Rattana	Assistant Librarian
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Zach Nader	Administrative Officer, New York
Michel Rethy Antelme	Editor, <i>Siksācakr</i> Journal



Life of Buddha on silk at the National Museum in late 1960s.

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President’s Letter

The 2016-2017 year brought a number of challenges as well as wonderful opportunities for CKS! Within months after becoming president in January 2016, I suffered two strokes, and for health reasons, I stepped down while remaining on the CKS Board. We lost our in-country director to the Association for Asian Studies, which was able to offer her a position from which she could telecommute from London. Then, this January, a new US administration came into office whose commitment to funding American overseas research was – and remains – unlikely.

But, as CKS has done over and over again in the past, we have not simply weathered the storm, but have emerged, phoenix-like, from the ashes, stronger than before. Indeed, a number of personnel and staffing changes have made CKS more tightly-focused than ever, and poised to take current programs to the next level, while developing exciting new ones.

First of all, I have been given a clean bill of health and have reassumed my role as “CKS President”, after Olivier Bernier so graciously and expertly managed CKS in my absence. I am re-energized and genuinely excited to be “the once and future” CKS President!

Former Director, Krisna Uk, has been succeeded by Natharoun Ngo. Natharoun holds an MBA from Paris XII University, an MPA from Harvard’s Kennedy School and was the Head of Programs at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Phnom Penh before we were able to lure him to CKS. His illustrious Khmer ancestors have certainly inspired him to always bring his best in everything he believes in. Natharoun brings a very robust background in management and program development. He is an exceptional manager and provides the highest levels of professionalism, commitment, and expertise along with his natural charm.

At the same time, we have invited two new scholars to the “CKS Board”. Eve Zucker is a former “CKS Fellow” who, after finishing her doctorate at Yale, published an outstanding book on the effects of the Khmer Rouge assault on local customs in a mountain community in Southwest Cambodia and how these ancient rituals are making a

comeback, albeit with scars left from the experience. Eve has been an tremendously energetic and committed Board member and has already contributed to CKS in a number of important ways. Sophal Ear, who teaches at Occidental College, is a Cambodian survivor of the Khmer Rouge and has been a public intellectual in the United States ever since his undergraduate days at the University of California, Berkeley. His focus is on Cambodia’s economic development, particularly with regard to its relations with China. Sophal is another young scholar who represents CKS’s successful efforts to engage and recruit the next generation of Cambodia scholars to carry the organization forward in the 21st century.



All of these developments are occurring against a backdrop of political uncertainty in Washington. Traditional sources of funding from the government that have always been key to financing CKS’s mission may no longer be available. We are hearing from our contacts in Washington, DC that State Department funding may well be reduced by 25 percent or more. And Title 6, from the Department of Education, which is another key source of funding for CKS’s operations, may be eliminated altogether. Now more than ever, we need our generous supporters to help maintain CKS’s leadership in the advancement of Khmer studies and in increasing opportunities at all levels of education for Cambodians and US citizens alike! We have all the human elements in place. I hope we can count on you to help us reach our goals!

With all my very best wishes,

Andrew Mertha, President
Professor of Government, Cornell University

Director's Note

Listening to US Ambassador Heidt, as he delivered his remarks during a US study abroad event hosted by CKS in June 2017, to engage Cambodian undergraduates, I was struck by the sheer excitement in these young Cambodians' eyes. Almost certainly they were imagining the possibility of studying in the US as a transformative experience that would change their lives. Watching them, I had a déjà vu moment, as it conjured up the same positive emotions that the large numbers of researchers and undergrads CKS has supported have shared with the CKS team. Whether Americans, Cambodians or French, current or future experts on Cambodia and its region, CKS fellowships help them to better understand Cambodian society, history, culture, arts, politics and economy, and the country's role within the Southeast Asian region and the world. Our hope is that such CKS support will spark a lifetime interest in which Cambodia/Southeast Asia occupy a very important space for the rest of their lives.

CKS supports students and scholars in undertaking cutting-edge research and data collection, but it is also important for us to ensure that such knowledge is available to people both inside and, increasingly, outside the scholarly community, as well: from policy makers to development practitioners. Ultimately, this will lead to increased visibility for and a richer understanding of Cambodia. Little by little, people will realize that this country is far broader and more complex than simply King Father Norodom Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge, or Angkor Wat. As I write, there is increasing evidence that other temple complexes like Angkor are yet to be uncovered in places like Phnom Kulen. This is a civilization that dates back to 802 AD, one which ruled a large part of Southeast Asia for more than five centuries. Perhaps one day, the Cambodian Empire will be covered in history books as the Egyptian civilization or the Ottoman Empire are today.

But this has to begin with the actual scholarly work being produced. When, like me, your career has been built not in the academy but within the world of international development, it is difficult not to feel frustrated by scholarly work on perhaps fascinating topics that are nonetheless elitist in terms of who can wade through what is often a forest of arcane terms and references, open only to a select few. Moreover, when one tries to match this up with the underdeveloped academic infrastructure in Cambodia today, one which was utterly decimated by the Khmer Rouge and allowed to atrophy for the past 40 years, it is clear that there is an important missing piece to bridge the worlds of Cambodia scholarship in the West, Cambodia's

own educational landscape, and the policy universe that funds both, and is informed by both of them. That missing piece is CKS. CKS was a pioneer, if not the first such institution, to provide this critical support to Cambodia. CKS's recognized ability to build scholarly capacity and provide networks of expertise – in areas as diverse as environmental sustainability and resilience, inequality reduction, and cultural preservation – makes a huge difference, as the need for such bridging remains formidable amid economic and political development. Moreover, CKS uses an innovative approach, breaking down the barriers between the hard and the social sciences, in one illustrative case, by having ethnographers, anthropologists and climate scientists working together to examine the causes of increasing levels of indebtedness in rural communities.

In order to achieve this, true partnerships are essential. We seek to deepen our existing network of experts with academic institutions like Cornell, UC Berkeley, Yale, and Harvard in the US; Sciences Po and INALCO in France; and Thammasat and the National University of Singapore in Southeast Asia, to name a few. We wish to create new partnerships with countries in Europe and Asia-Pacific region. We continue to join hands with great local universities and institutions like the Bophana Center, Cambodia Living Arts, Cambodia Development and Research Institute, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, with committed development partners like the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, Oxfam, the US and French embassies, and many others, and with public institutions like the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, aiming to accelerate higher education reform, strengthening research systems, and contributing to ultimately making the field of Khmer Studies a world class one, so that it benefits Khmer scholars but also the vibrant younger generation of Cambodians.

I am so pleased to be able to embark on this exciting new chapter for CKS with all of you!

Natharoun Ngo, M.B.A, M.P.A.
Director



The Story of CKS

When members of the Board asked me to write the feature article for In Focus, I was a bit taken by surprise. They hoped I would assess the grand strategy that led to the founding of CKS, and how it had arrived at this juncture, in which its wide roster of programs encompasses so many different areas of our commitment to sponsoring scholarship and promoting scholarly exchange.

I have been there from the beginning, serving as Chairman and CEO for more than 15 years, struggling to save it, to stabilize it and to give it direction. There were happenstance moments from the start, and new understandings of its mission, as issues arose. And I did not do this alone.

CKS began as an undertaking of the World Monuments Fund, of which I was an active Board member. We had been working on conservation at Angkor since the Paris Peace Agreement opened the country's borders. I visited the projects every year. The Khmer Rouge had destroyed the country's intellectual infrastructure in its barbaric slaughter, and those who escaped generally did not return. When some higher education was finally reestablished, the teachers mostly held weak BA degrees at most. The young Cambodians working on the WMF conservation projects longed for advanced education as architects, and we thought we had a plan to make that possible. But how exactly to go about it was not clear. Our mission was monument conservation. So, after a failed undertaking to send several of our Cambodian team abroad, WMF eventually founded CKS, obtained seed money from the Rockefeller and Luce Foundations, and called an international conference of specialists in Khmer studies

based on their experience in the field, to explore possible program areas. Although conservation training got lost in the shuffle at the conference, WMF nonetheless moved forward. We hired a young French scholar, with the ink barely dry on his PhD thesis, as Director, to manage the in-country training program we had put into place, and a well-established scholar, David Chandler, as Senior Scholar, to assure academic outreach. WMF's President, Bonnie Burnham, served as CEO. Led by a young French architect, Francois Tainturier, who eventually became Deputy Director, we undertook a construction project to restore the roofs and windows of two dilapidated buildings that the monks, who had returned to the severely damaged Buddhist pagoda at Wat Damnak in Siem Reap, generously made available to us in exchange for an annual donation of rice. A program began.

Three years later, as initially intended in 1999, WMF announced its intention to withdraw from its management role and set CKS on its own. I was then serving as co-President. WMF Trustees left, and Board members Olivier Bernier, Selma Ertegun and I were left with trying to sort out what CKS should become.

We went back to Rockefeller and Luce with a new idea. Once we had restored a balanced budget, we would attempt to make CKS a part of the world network of American Overseas Research Centers, along with venerable institutions like the American Academy in Rome, the School of Classical Studies in Athens and the American Institute of Indian Studies. That meant a focused academic mission, both in-country and within US universities, where the study of Southeast Asia was suffering from a general shift away from area studies. The foundations agreed to support our effort by renewing their grants. It was quite a vote of confidence. The content of the training programs shifted from conservation to developing academic skills. With the help of the Soros Foundation, we eventually established a publishing program to translate core texts into Khmer, as there were practically no books.



Lois de Menil, Ph.D.
Former President



CAORC International Directors' Conference held in Siem Reap 2005

Mary Ellen Lane, the brilliant founder and Executive Director of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) in Washington, came to our rescue. But, she said, you have to create a Board of scholars to qualify. That was a tall order, as we had no track record. My first phone call was to Thak Chaloemtiarana, head of a beacon of scholarship on the region, the Southeast Asian Program (SEAP) at Cornell, who had attended the founding conference and was full of ideas. And soon we were on our way. Everyone said he was an amazing administrator, but tough-minded, and he would never agree. But he did! And he recommended other scholars. We started to grow.

With the Luce and Rockefeller grants, we established a fellowship program for US PhD students to do thesis research and a seminar-based training program for students at Cambodian universities, to strengthen their skills and bring them to a level of possible partnerships with international colleagues. Poverty is, above all, isolating. We asked US scholars to give public lectures pro bono while they did their CKS-sponsored research. Soon, Selma Ertegun was sponsoring a scholarly journal in three languages, *Siksacakr*, initiated by a French scholar on our Board, Prof. Michel Antelme. Thak brought us responsible order—a committee of scholars to select the research Fellows, peer review of projects, program evaluation. Olivier Bernier and I created an Annual Fund and worked on fundraising for operations expenses and to recover the deficit funds. Programs would be funded by grants. Another new Board member, Joyce Clark, took over the budget as Treasurer, and later, Gaye Fugate, a professional accountant, joined the Board and has managed CKS finances pro bono and trained the CKS staff in American bookkeeping practice. The good will of the Board was from the outset the key to the success of our undertaking. Everyone pitched in generously. We bought our very first books for the research library at Wat Damnak; others were contributed. The collection began to grow. Our then Director, Philippe Peycam, was particularly devoted to the Library.

As an American institution, we opened our doors to all. We planted grass in our quadrangle, a bit like US campuses, to keep out the clouds of dust. The monks copied us, and Wat Damnak is now lush, green and grassy. Soon, young students from Siem Reap were filling our library daily, as well as saffron orange-clad young monks alongside the scholars. They felt welcome. We put in free Wifi and public computers that no one had ever seen before.

In 2003, Mary Ellen Lane contacted us with the wonderful news that we had qualified as an American Overseas Research Center, and would be welcomed as members of CAORC. CKS had no better friend than Mary Ellen over the years. She guided us in applying for competitive US Government grants, and soon we landed two—we all scrambled to write the applications, an effort led by a seasoned scholar, Prof. Alan Kolata, chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Chicago. Our program expanded, and we began to see a new future for CKS. The Florence Gould Foundation established a matching fellowship program for French scholars, and soon we were in a position also to offer a summer program to undergraduates from Cambodia, France, and the U.S. From the outset, it was one of our most successful undertakings. For the last 5 years, it has been funded by a generous American donor. Mixing French scholars with Americans was a deliberate step, for France had generations of experience in scholarship on formerly French colonial Indochina.

By 2008, we were becoming victims of our success: too many books, too little space for staff, too many visitors to the library, and a lawn and terraces brimming daily with young people. We needed more space. We could not afford the cost of land in Siem Reap, which was already sky high because of the build-up of tourism to Angkor. Our distinguished Cambodian Board members, Dr. Rethy Chhem and His Excellency Son Soubert, helped us to negotiate with the Achars, who legally own the pagoda of Wat

Damnak, a 20-year agreement that allowed us to construct a new, environmentally sensitive library (aerated shelves, no sun on windows, no air conditioning), with research facilities for scholars, and our administrative offices, and to expand our old library into a much larger reading room with computer connections. When we could not break through one wall because of an historical mural, the room at the end, initially a storage area, was turned by our former Director, Krisna Uk, into a children’s library for local school children. It is a bright, colorful, joyous space. We now have over 20,000 entries in our library catalogue and a well-trained library staff. It is an enormous gift to the community and to scholarship.

You will see our lively program today described in these pages. The development of the enlarged library was largely overseen by our second Director, Dr. Michael Sullivan, and by our devoted Trustee, Jacques Hennessy, who was able to seek professional help about tropical libraries from the French Direction des Monuments Historiques and the Cornell University Library. Designed by a resident Japanese architect, it is a fine piece of modern architecture in a traditional idiom.

CKS now co-sponsors educational programs with the US Embassy, runs an annual scholarly conference in collaboration with the French research center EFEO (Ecole Francaise d’Extreme-Orient) and APSARA (the Cambodian authority responsible for the site of Angkor). We hold a wide range of workshops, including training workshops for Cambodians. Our Fellowship Program now attracts top scholars from the US, France and Cambodia. Our mixed Board of scholars and philanthropists is a model for our CAORC colleagues, as government funding becomes

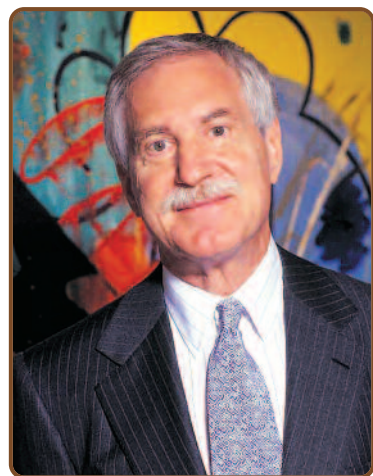
less certain and foundation grants are seldom renewed beyond two cycles. Our Annual Fund of contributors therefore continues to be our lifeline. The enthusiasm of our alumni Fellows, at receptions in Phnom Penh and at our cocktail at the annual meetings of the American Association of Asian Studies, is a wonderful reward.

As I step down from leadership of CKS after all these years, I am delighted to leave behind a thriving institution in the hands of a distinguished Cornell scholar, Prof Andrew Mertha, as President/ CEO, and the very same Dr. Mary Ellen Lane, who helped us to rescue CKS back in 2003, as the new Chair. It was always my vision to be replaced as CEO by a first-rate scholar of the region. Mary Ellen, in the meantime, retired as head of CAORC. She has had lots of experience with Boards. Board renewal has proceeded apace, with a younger generation of lively Board members to lead CKS into the future. Andy is a Sinologist, whose professional research focus has extended into Cambodia (a country which has entranced him since he was in high school in 1981). Prof. Alan Kolata, a devoted Board member, is CKS Senior Scholar and has provided guidance in the structuring of a new mid-career regional program, to draw together professionals from neighboring countries and pave the way for a network of outreach into the region. We finally have a modest investment fund, managed by finance professional Board member Mary L. Porter, to stabilize CKS finances in case of another financial crisis like 2008. In two years, CKS will begin a major assessment of its current and past programs in order to project the course of its future programming. Cambodia has changed and CKS has grown. Of course, in the end, it is all about the people whose lives we touch. I hope you will hear those voices in these pages.

Pictures from left to right

Angkor-Vat Pho Conference co-organized by CKS and EFEO at CKS Office in Siem Reap, 2015;
US Ambassador William A. Heidt’s Visit to CKS Library in Siem Reap, 2016;
Local students working at CKS’s new Office Building





I invite you to join me, in the Spring of 2018, on our two CKS trips:

**French Pleasures and Baroque Music,
(April 4th - 14th)**

*Olivier Bernier,
Vice-President*

We will attend the Spring Festival of Les Arts Florissants, a series of concerts in and around William Christie's extraordinary gardens at Thirè, in the Vendée, and stay at the seaside Sables d'Olonne. After a visit to an 11th century church, we will lunch at Maulevrier and visit the 17th century chateau. Our next day will let us see Fontevraud, the Medieval abbey where Elinor of Aquitaine is buried, as well as the chateau of Saumur.

We will watch a demonstration of the famed Cadre Noir riding school, and have dinner at the privately-owned chateau de Brissac. Then, after a visit to the Chartres Cathedral on our way to Versailles, we will stay at a chateau hotel. From there, we will go to Versailles itself for a visit to the private apartments of King Louis XV.

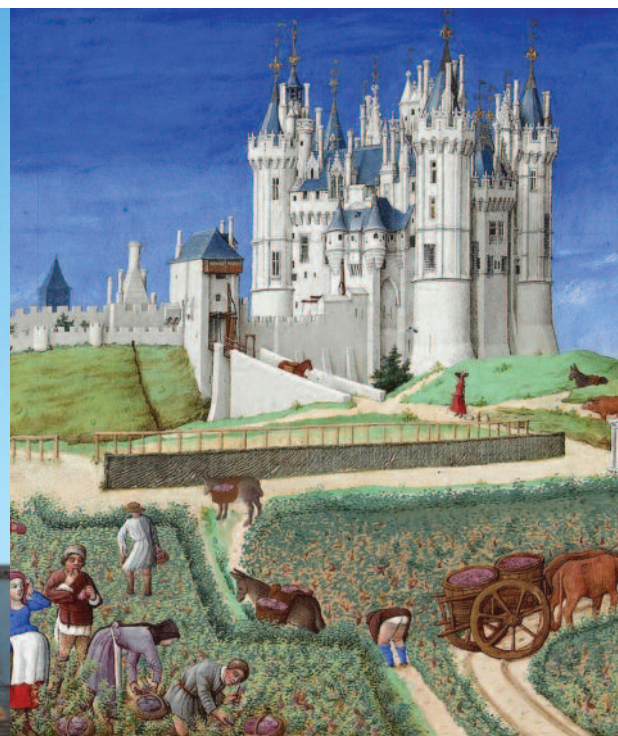
**Sicily in the Spring,
(April 17th - 27th)**

Will be a blend of many pleasures. Mary Semiti, the supreme authority on all things Sicilian, will join us as we see ancient ruins in Siracusa and the glorious Roman villa at Piazza Armerina. We will spend three days in and around Noto, where the Baroque at its most exuberant has happily survived, and stay in a monastery remade into a luxurious hotel. That will be on our way to Palermo, its amazing Normand

monuments, its churches, palaces and newly re-installed museums. We will stay there for four full days, and make a side visit to Mozia, a small island off the coast, now belonging to a private foundation; our farewell dinner will be at Princess Lanta's 18th century palace. Late April is the key time for wild flowers; we will see their vibrant colors everywhere in abundance.

**For reservation and further details, please contact
Olivier at CKS's New York Office:
nyoffice@khmerstudies.org**

Pictures, From left to right:
baroque church in town of Val di Noto, Sicily; Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry;
musical troop Les Arts Florissants.



Members and Benefactors

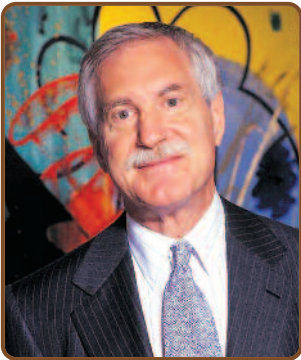
CKS is an American Overseas Research Center. A simple and evident description, but it is perhaps useful to be reminded that our programs benefit not only Cambodian students, but also American researchers and students. Events, over the last two or three decades, have abundantly proved that we need to know more about the world that surrounds us and with which, willy nilly at times, we are of necessity engaged. That obstinate fact led the Departments of State and Education to fund some of our Center’s core programs. We receive help with our summer language training program, which gives an in-country opportunity to American students of Southeast Asia. Several of our year-long programs are funded under Title VI of the National Education Act, whose budget must be approved, every year, by Congress. The State Department funds essential research fellowships for American graduate students and scholars doing core research on the region. It is now extremely unlikely that any of this funding will continue.

Our programs have been highly successful in helping many American citizens learn more about Cambodia and Southeast Asia and their languages. They have been useful to young Americans, but also to Cambodian men and women, and they have played an important part in the creation of an enlightened group of future leaders able to remember the gratitude they owe to an American institution sustained by this country’s private donors and public funds. Just as important, perhaps, we have changed the lives of many of these young people for the better. Now, all that is at risk. It is also why you have an important role to play.

CKS could, of course, survive, albeit in diminished form, by shrinking itself. But, after eighteen years of successful efforts and steady growth, this would not be an acceptable solution, and we will fight to continue the programs which have been so successful. Should we send away the students who count on us? Should we close our public library, one of the very best in Cambodia, thus denying access to knowledge? Should we cease to hold the conferences from which important knowledge is the outcome? Should we reject so many people who trust us? Surely not.

You have helped us before, and we have been cautious managers of the gifts we received. We spend very little on administrative expenses –it is a great help that so many things in Cambodia are still so inexpensive. We watch carefully so as to maximize the effect of what we spend. Now, however, the situation is grave. In this, as in so many other areas, individual initiative is crucially important. We must, more than ever before, rely on our friends—on you. Please consider being unusually generous. We need every dollar you can give us, and, as you do, you will win the gratitude of the Center, of its students, of its researchers, of young Americans and Cambodians. You will have made an important difference.

Olivier Bernier, Vice-President



Thank You to Our 2016-2017 Annual Donors!

The Center for Khmer Studies wishes to thank H.M. King Norodom Sihamoni for his continued support.

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U.S. contributions to CKS are tax-deductible.

We are grateful for your support!

Support CKS Library Fund.
CKS’s library is the largest free public library outside Phnom Penh. It offers unparalleled educational facilities to Cambodian students, children and the public, as well as to visiting scholars.

- **Support basic overhead:** Contribute to our Annual Fund
- **Acquisition of books,** and the ongoing training of our Cambodian librarians (\$15,000 per year)
- **Donate a new computer** for our library reading room—regular updating (\$1,500)
- **Connect CKS’s** library to the World Wide Web, with open Wi-Fi access. (\$2,000 per year)
- Help to **digitize our library** collection– an unending process (\$5,000 contributions)

Sponsor the Translation of Key Books in Cambodia’s native language.

In the absence of books in the Cambodia’s native language, CKS translates and publishes key texts. A donation of \$10,000 will defray costs for an average 300-page book and will be acknowledged in the publication (\$10,000 contributions)

Sponsor a **Cambodian-American** to participate in the summer Khmer Language and Cultural Studies Program (\$3,500 each).

Sponsor a **Cambodian American undergraduate** to attend our in-country summer Jr. Resident Fellows Program (\$3,500 each).

Support the **Southeast Asia Travel Grant Program:** enable Cambodian scholars to attend regional conferences.

Sponsor a **Fellowship for a Cambodian, US or other Doctoral Student's Research.** (\$5,000-\$10,000 each)

The CKS Library

By Jacques Hennessy, Vice-President

All good things come to those who wait. Over the years, the CKS library has been lucky enough to acquire a diverse collection of maps and atlases of Cambodia and the surrounding region. These cover many different subjects. There are administrative maps of Vietnamese and Burmese regions as well as Siem Reap and Battambang published in Saigon in the 1960s. There are pilotage charts of China, Thailand and Indochina published in the '90s by the American Defense Mapping Agency. We also have an early 1909 map of Siem Reap and the Angkor complex, a 1946 map of Bangkok, and the famous map of Phnom Kulen published in 1975 by Jean Boulbet, who discovered there the Akbar Spean, or "Valley of the 1,000 Lingas". Maybe Cambodia, that has among the greatest sites anywhere, likes to tease archaeologists. Angkor Wat was rediscovered by the naturalist Henri Mouhot; Jean Boulbet was a polymath—cartographer, ethnologist, botanist and more, but not an archaeologist.

Maps are particular material, often fragile, that need specific storage, and a large, flat surface to be read comfortably. After a few years of discussion, these documents now have a home: Dr. Bion Griffin, who gave CKS several of these maps, designed it, a cabinetmaker was found, and a map chest was built and installed last year. We obviously hope that many more maps will come and increase the existing collection.

The library suffered a major setback in February, when the catalogue server was largely fried by an electronic glitch. Daraneth, our head librarian, and Sivleng have been working diligently ever since to restore it and it came back online earlier this year. We have now adopted a policy to protect the memory, which, in the sartorial world, could be described as a belt, braces, and sellotape, just in case.



CKS Head Librarian Um Daraneth leading a group of high school students in a story telling session at CKS, Siem Reap.



Students from Cornell Program in Cambodia 2017 visit CKS Library.

The scholar's room has had practically in-residence for several months of last year researchers from Indian universities: Dr. Narendra Kumar Jain, working on Indian and Cambodian archeological and cultural relations, Prof. Swati Chemburkar and Prof Shivaji Kapoor, researching Khmer art, epigraphy and Buddhist architecture, and Prof. Udayan Anant Indukar who specialises in Hindu iconography and temple architecture.

The children's library was also active: students from the Tomkins Cortland Community College gave two readings to the children. We also had the visit of Dr. Hedwige Multzer, a specialist on the Khmer country during the reign of Jayavarman II. She kindly took some time off from her research to give an introductory course on J2 to 45 children. Sue Guiney once again came to read, and we have also had many visits from other schools and libraries.

In total, the library had 12,400 visitors last year, which is more than in 2015. One peculiarity is that we had significantly fewer readers from several universities, Southeast Asia University, Vanda Accounting University, and several others. This is not because CKS is suddenly less popular, but because these universities are building up their own libraries. This is rather good news, and will

increase the audience for the next training programme. This year, 18 outside librarians joined CKS for a session with Nancy Perle, a Seattle librarian, who spoke on the role of libraries in promoting reading.

That, of course, is what the CKS library attempts to do by offering books, films, newspapers, novels, manuscripts, and more to all manner of readers, from children to scholars. Hopefully, we are successful, and with the help of our donors, we will continue our lively programs.



Monica Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer at US Embassy Cambodia (right) visits CKS library.

ACTIVITIES & PROJECTS

Conference and Workshops



Cornell in Cambodia team visits Angkor.



Cornell in Cambodia team visits a Social Enterprise, EGBOK, in Siem Reap.

Cornell in Cambodia (2016-2017)

By Dr. Kaja M. McGowan, Director of the Southeast Asia Program and Associate Professor of the History of Art and Archaeology

In 2015, Cornell Professor (and CKS President) Andrew Mertha developed a partnership between CKS and the Cornell Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) with a course entitled “Chinese Empire and the Cambodian Experience” to be taught as a winter semester in Cambodia. After two very successful iterations of the course, Dr. Mertha was able to develop and fine tune the necessary study abroad infrastructure at CKS’s campus in Wat Damnak, creating in the process a “Cornell in Cambodia” model, readily adaptable for any future courses with Cambodia content taught by SEAP faculty.

In January 2017, I offered a Cornell in Cambodia course, entitled “Performing Angkor: Dance, Silk and Stone.” I can say for myself that this course was one of the highlights of my own teaching experience. In almost every respect,

academic and otherwise, it appears to have been successful: the ten internationally diverse undergraduate students who enrolled were a pleasure, the guest speakers and site visits exceeded all expectations, and the CKS-assigned staff have been extraordinary. Particularly memorable for their service above self, their kindness, and generosity are Sreypich, Sovanna and “Mr. Pheng” (as he was endearingly called by all the students), without whom this Winter Session in Cambodia would never have succeeded. It was also a pleasure to welcome for the first time mid-way through the course the new in-country director of CKS, Mr. Natharoun Ngo. As a result of subsequent discussions with him, and with the Director (and original mastermind of the Cornell in Cambodia Program), Dr. Mertha, I am happy to see that the future running of this CIC/CKS program is in excellent hands.

The initial goal for this two-week Cornell in Cambodia course was to encourage students to embody the exploration into how the creative and political fastening of the lived world to a spiritual place like Angkor has a long and richly embedded history combining dance, silk and stone. Students visited sacred sites, weaving workshops, observed dance classes and performances, explored Cambodia’s National Museum, the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh with its Wat Phra Keo and its Ramayana reliefs, and the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes (S-21). This course begins to address memory, its formation and its manipulation. Angkor becomes the site for what anthropologist Tim Ingold advocates as a way of “thinking through making” in which sentient practitioners and active materials—dancing bodies, carved stone, and woven threads—continually answer to, or correspond with one another, in the generation and regeneration of forms.

I had imagined that my role as professor would be to bring the students to these remarkable places and lecture in situ. In fact, I was pleasantly surprised to find that, for each excursion, CKS matched us up with local expertise. For our trips to Angkor Thom, Kbal Spean, and Banteay Srei, we

had the great pleasure of learning firsthand from Cambodian Deputy Director of the Department of Conservation of the Monuments Outside Angkor Park, and Apsara National Authority, Dr. Ea Darith, famed archaeologist, professor, and photographer.

During the second week in Phnom Penh, we followed a similar pattern. I was also able to invite choreographers like Prumsodun Ok, and his dancers, curators like Reaksmei Yean from The Java Café, and conservationists at the National Museum in Phnom Penh, introduced to the students by Luce Grant recipient, Alexandra McTighe, from the University of Hawaii. The multiple perspectives were invaluable, and helped me and my students to realize the initial goal for the course in profound ways that we could not have imagined at the outset.

One salient example was our designated guide to Angkor Wat, Mr. Buna. He started us off poignantly beneath a Bodhi tree near the moat. As a result of his attention to the sacred Buddhist history of this tree in South and Southeast Asia, many of the students were inspired to pick up fallen leaves from the ground, and included them in their

journals as a spiritually engaging form that assisted them experientially in exploring the complexities of Angkor Wat, especially the realistic treatment of the flora and fauna (as ethno-botany) in the relief carvings themselves. Key to Buna’s account was his descriptions of growing up as a child in the environs of Angkor. He claimed favorite reliefs as sites where he had taken rubbings as a child to sell to tourists (when this practice was still permitted), and as he pointed to the top of the central tower, he commented with exuberance: “Up there is heaven – you can see my home from there!”

While Mr. Buna’s lively account enabled the students to see Angkor Wat, not just as an “art object of global significance,” but rather as an embodied part of Buna’s lived experience, Dr. Ea Darith was able to unlock for the students the

complexities of determining when to limit access and protect sacred sites, and when it is acceptable to open them up to touristic experience.

Below are two images taken on the hike to the sacred pools at Kbal Spean. In the second photograph, I am standing in the center under the waterfalls flanked by Piragash (left) and Tenzin (right).

The CKS staff were exceptional in every way. They are the essential ingredient that makes this program successful and memorable for everyone involved. I was impressed at every turn with their professional behavior, combined with generosity of spirit and good humor. At CKS, Sovanna has been wonderful in terms of managing and

advising on budgetary issues. Sreypich in Siem Reap was a fountain of wisdom, and a real friend. She invariably bent over backwards to assist faculty and students with any emerging problems or concerns. Mr. Pheng has been the CKS/CIC facilitator now for four years and is critical to the program’s success on a day-to-day basis. A fountain of wisdom, I will never forget our conversation on the healing properties of various plants as we walked on the forested path to and from Kbal Spean. He is smart, funny, and remains unmatched in his problem-solving skills. I cannot imagine anybody else doing this job as well as Mr. Pheng. He is truly amazing, and a wealth of cultural information. He also provides the much-needed institutional memory of the Cornell in Cambodia course

thus far. And, of course, Natharoun’s support for the program will be crucial from Phnom Penh, where I understand he will be stationed. I think that my first experience of CIC at CKS was one of transition to new directorship. Due to this, Sreypich and Mr. Pheng certainly took on the lion’s share of the work to make the program unfold as effectively and seamlessly as it did. Everyone made us feel welcome and well-taken-care-of. I cannot think of a better partner institution than CKS. We should make sure that we do all we can to nourish and further develop this remarkable and best possible relationship.

Pictures at bottom, clockwise: An artisan at Artisans d’Angkor working on Buddha Head; Two Cornell Students riding on elephant at Angkor; Cornell students receiving blessing from a Buddhist monk; and a drama setting forth part of ‘Curning of the Milk Ocean’ by Cambodia Living Arts.



CKS Panel at AAS

The topic of the CKS panel at the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) annual meetings in Toronto was “Beyond the Khmer Rouge Tribunal: A Multidisciplinary Multi-sited Approach to Recovery and Framing the Past”. It sought to shift our attention from the Tribunal to alternative sites and venues where other voices are heard, places where the Tribunal is absent, and to spaces where other processes of recovery and framing the past can occur. The panel presented perspectives that

ranged from international relations all the way to rural village politics and used an inter-disciplinary approach from political science and sociocultural anthropology. The panelists were: Dr. Kosal Path, Brooklyn College, The City University of New York; Dr. Eve Zucker, Yale University, Dr. Caroline Bennett, Victoria University of Wellington; Dr. Andrew Mertha, Cornell University, both presented in absentia of Dr. Benny Widyono, University of Connecticut, and also acted as the panel discussant.



Help Support Our Important New Initiative: A CKS Office at Cornell University!

By Andrew Mertha

When I first arrived at Cornell, I saw immediately that certain countries and regions had more attention than others within the world of country-specific programs. Cambodia was in the latter category. There were no dedicated faculty to teach courses on Cambodia, which may have been covered in one lecture per semester on some syllabi in some of the broader Southeast Asia survey courses (themselves suffering from a dramatic drop-off in enrollment). Thak Chaloemtiarana (Trustee emeritus) and Thamora Loos sought me out to help fill that role. I happily accepted. Since that time, I have worked to develop courses (one dedicated Ithaca-based seminar, *Political Violence in Cambodia*; and one study abroad course, *Chinese Empire and the Cambodian Experience*). Other colleagues have developed courses of their own: Professor Loos’ *Cambodge* and Professor Kaja McGowan’s *Performing Angkor: Dance, Silk and Stone*, to name two. We have actively worked to build the profile of our Khmer language platforms, with Senior Lecturer Hannah Phan experimenting with off-site course offerings and seeing her Ithaca-based enrollments rise as a result of students’ enthusiasm after taking the aforementioned Cambodia-based courses. And, as we at the Cornell Southeast Asia Program discussed during our recent retreat in May 2017, Cambodia will be a key feature in our programming for the next several years.

During that same time, Thak retired from active membership on the Board of the Center for Khmer Studies, and I was challenged to try to fill his shoes. When CKS was evolving away from its World Monuments Fund origins, Thak became the first scholar to join the CKS Board, taking the key first step, as a scholar, for CKS to become an American Overseas Research Center (AORC). Thus, Cornell’s relationship with CKS was a crucial early part of CKS’s DNA, on the premise that by attaching itself to one of the most respected academic centers for the study of Southeast Asia at Cornell, CKS could raise its academic profile, while Cambodia-based scholars at Cornell and elsewhere would, in return, have access to crucial funding for research at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels. This was the mutually beneficial relationship upon which CKS and SEAP’s cooperation has expanded and deepened.

In recent years, CKS and SEAP have developed a number of important programs, targeting a wide array of local and international communities. We have expanded outreach and study abroad opportunities to local community colleges (especially, Tompkins Courtland Community College, or TC3), and we have worked together to publish key scholarly texts on Cambodia at SEAP Press, thereafter to be translated by CKS into Khmer. At the same time, the Cornell Southeast Asia librarians are in close contact with CKS’s library team, and we are planning to working on some digitalization and archival projects that will make our partnership an essential venue for scholars of Cambodia, whether in the United States or in Cambodia.

Our next step is to extend these opportunities for cooperation to academic partners in the study of Cambodia, including Yale, UC Berkeley, U Wisconsin-Madison, Northern Illinois University, Ohio University, Columbia University, University of Washington, University of Michigan, University of Utah, UMass Lowell, and many other scholarly institutions that have an interest in or a focus on Cambodia. (It is important to note that we are not competing with these other institutions, but rather taking the lead in enhancing the sum of what we all do by providing such a managerial site). Not only do we seek to engage and fund faculty and graduate students for research and for conferences, workshops, and other networking opportunities that we would like to sponsor, but we also deeply believe in training the next generation of Cambodia specialists among the undergraduate population. These are students who generally have had no idea of Cambodia but who become committed scholars of and cultural advocates for Cambodia.

Thus far, we have only been able to do these things in an *ad hoc* and informal manner. CKS Board members have engaged Cornell faculty and SEAP staff to work during their time off to cobble together what has become a critical mass of interest in and scholarly expression of Cambodia. In order to maintain this, and certainly if we wish to expand and build upon our efforts, we have come to the realization that we need to establish a CKS office at Cornell, in which a part-time experienced staff member



Current Cornell student / future Cambodia scholars take a well-deserved rest after a morning of fieldwork in Kampong Chhnang during a CKS-Cornell course in January 2015. Three of them began studying the Khmer language after this experience, another became a CKS junior summer fellow in 2016, and yet another is the new CKS Intern for summer 2017.

can do all the work that cannot be done in Cambodia and which is not possible given current staffing levels.

The functions of such an office would include (but not be limited to) the following:

- The office would function as the key liaison point between CKS (and its partner institutions in Cambodia) with US-based universities, government agencies, scholarly communities, and outreach communities.
- Maintain contact with donors and key foundations in the US in order to identify, apply for, and obtain new funding opportunities for CKS.
- Work together with CKS-affiliated scholars to support new project formulation, and the development of new proposals to secure new funding opportunities. The office would provide administrative support and

coordination for the development of joint research projects, workshops, and conferences in the US and in Cambodia.

- Strengthen CKS communication strategies along various traditional and new, social media platforms to reach hitherto underserved audiences and potential collaborators in the US. This includes conceptualizing, designing, and producing key CKS key publications and translations of materials from English into Khmer.
- Identify, recruit, and train interns to work both on-site in Ithaca as well as in Cambodia (at the CKS Phnom Penh and Siem Reap offices).

Please support this exciting and bold new initiative! Help to put CKS at the pivotal center of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate study of Cambodia, both in Cambodia and in the US.

CKS Head Librarian OUM Daraneth visits the Cornell University Library in March 2017

By Andrew Mertha, President



Ms Oum Daraneth, CKS Head Librarian, working at Cornell University Library, March 2017.



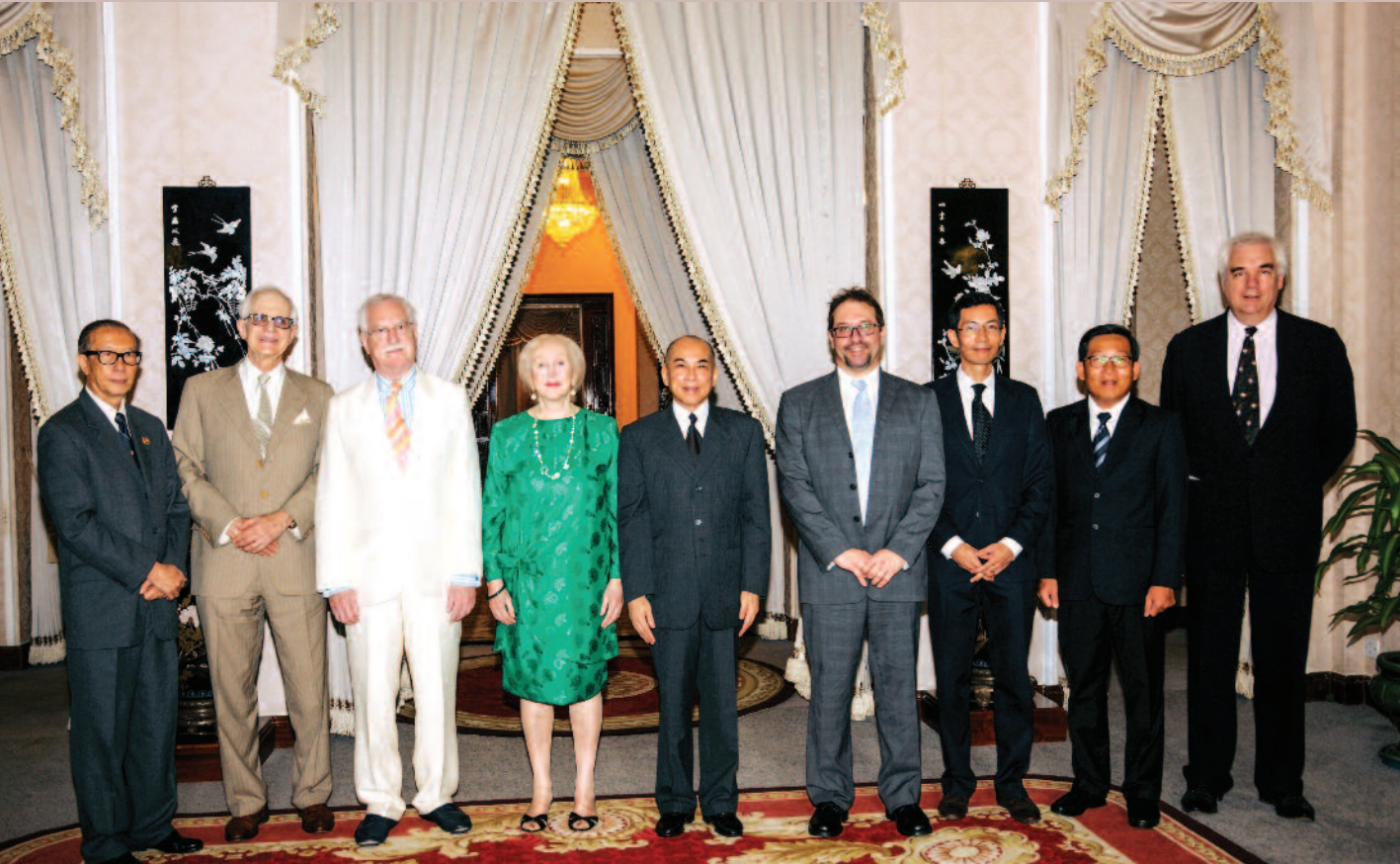
Ms Oum Daraneth in front of Goldwin Smith Hall at Cornell University, March 2017.

Over the course of the week Head Librarian OUM Daraneth spent at the Cornell University Library, she had thirteen meetings with different departments and teams within the library. She also met with the Khmer language instructor and attended the Southeast Asia Program lunchtime lecture. Much of Daraneth’s time focused on technical services, including ordering, cataloging and e-resources. She also met with staff from collection development, conservation, digitization and metadata creation, library administration and rare collections. A final meeting focused on a possible vendor arrangement with CUL, with both sides attempting to judge how the relationship would work and if it would be beneficial to both sides. Between meetings, Daraneth made use of office space in the library to do her own research and explore the online offerings available to Cornell through license agreements.

The staff at CUL enjoyed meeting with Daraneth and benefited from hearing about her experiences as a librarian at CKS. For her part, Daraneth learned a lot about how we manage various tasks within a large and complicated library system. We look forward to a partnership that will work well to the advantage of both CKS and CUL.

His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni Grants an Audience to CKS Officers

By Andrew Mertha, President



CKS President, Board Members and Senior Management posed with King Norodom Sihamoni at the Royal Palace, January 2017.

On January 16, 2017, the King of Cambodia, His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni (whose full title is 32 words long), granted an audience to CKS officers Lois de Menil (and her husband, Georges), Olivier Bernier, Jacques Hennessy, H.E. Son Soubert, Andrew Mertha, and CKS Director Natharoun Ngo and Program Manager Sreang Chheat.

In the traditional exchange of gifts, each guest gave the King a copy of a book he/she had written, while Jacques Hennessy offered a bottle of his family Cognac to help the academic prose go down better. In addition, CKS donated several large bags of rice to the King’s charities.

We spoke for about an hour in a combination of French, English and Khmer about CKS’s hope to expand its programs to better serve the educational interests of Cambodian scholars, and of the country more generally. We talked about the library (of which King Sihamoni is a benefactor), and our commitment to raising the level of education in Cambodia by sponsoring research fellowships and increasing the opportunities of Cambodian students

and scholars. Andrew Mertha, a professor at Cornell University, underscored the importance of introducing new generations of undergraduates to the wonders of Cambodia and of inspiring these young scholars with his own lifelong fascination with Cambodian history, politics, culture, and arts.

King Sihamoni is an active patron of the arts, particularly of dance, and some of the CKS officers recall him bicycling through the streets of Paris as a young man.

Although some of the officers had been fortunate to have met with King Sihamoni before, it was the first time for me. It is difficult for me to impart the feelings I had without running into cliché, but the experience was truly magical and reminded me why it is that I am so devoted to the work that CKS was founded to undertake. And – even after a series of meetings that left me exhausted – this audience rejuvenated me and inspired me to approach the current tasks of CKS with energy and enthusiasm.

A Night at the Movies with Angelina Jolie and Rithy Panh

By Natharoun NGO

Cambodia—land of fabled Ankor Wat, and of the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge have indeed inspired an abundance of literature, studies, testimonials and analyses of the horrors of Cambodia during those KR years that are widely available. It is all the more puzzling to realize, therefore, that a large majority of the younger generation of Cambodians, those under 30 years old and constituting about 80% of today’s population, is growing less and less interested by/in it. A few years ago, the New York Times published an article titled ‘Pain of Khmer Rouge Era Lost on Cambodian Youth.’ That article cited a study conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, contending that 4 out of 5 Cambodians in this younger generation know next to nothing about the Khmer Rouge events. Indirectly affected, a few of them are even questioning whether the historical tragedy even occurred. They are understandably future-minded, preoccupied by whether or not they will get a job. That the limited information readily available in Khmer, as they went through their formal education, contrasted with abundant/repetitive information in English and French languages is only a small part of this disinterest. The major factor is their incapacity to relate to their parents’ and grand-parents’ experience. Restraint, fears, willingness to shield young ones from bad memories, trauma, all those factors....

Against that reality, it took all Angelina Jolie’s talent and passion for Cambodia to adapt on screen the wrenching autobiographical testimony written by Khmer Rouge survivor Loung Ung. She took up the challenge head-on, teaming up with widely acclaimed film maker Rithy Panh, to produce and direct a movie about the Khmer Rouge, from the unique perspective of a little girl suffering with her family as they strive to survive.

When Bong Rithy Panh asked me if CKS would host a private screening and discussion of the movie, “First, They Killed My Father”, in the CKS conference hall at Wat Damnak as part of the nation-wide movie premiere, I accepted with enthusiasm. The choice of CKS was a very symbolic one. Hosting the event within a Buddhist monastery, in CKS’s library and conference room, was important to Rithy and Angelina. Of equal importance was CKS’s capacity to build bridges between different cultures and different generations, and to do this in an environment that allows in-depth discussion and privacy. As the movie is intended for a younger Cambodian audience, screening at CKS was exclusively targeting young Cambodian students, professionals and monks, who use our facilities. Angelina Jolie was inspired to interact directly with the audience, to collect first-hand reactions and impressions.

A parallel event took place in CKS’s library, a dialogue between Angelina and Khmer Rouge survivors, sharing and comparing their own experiences with the ones narrated in the movie. It was an opportunity for all to remember, to reflect and discuss historical and social facts of the past in a present context. The film allowed an immediate discussion between film makers and the young Cambodian audience. But beyond CKS’s walls, it also created a spontaneous dialogue between 3 generations of Cambodians, from grandparents to parents and children, allowing them to transmit and share experiences, build mutual understanding of the facts and of each other’s experiences. And that is exactly what we hope to achieve at CKS— to transmit knowledge and information that can be shared with a larger audience so that it contributes in the end to positive change, and eventually improves lives of the people.

To the question raised by one of the students: “Why another story about the Khmer Rouge— about the past?” Angelina responded: “It is in fact not a movie about the past; it is a movie about the future. It is a story to help you understand what you want for the future of your country”.

It will certainly be difficult to assess what impact this story will have on Cambodian youth today, whether in Cambodia or abroad, but surely it will have one, and perhaps it will change something in the minds of many youths as the country approaches the important 2018 national elections— whether they fear a return of troubled times and therefore adopting passive attitudes, or assured of Cambodia’s rebirth after such tragedy, are now emboldened to step in further in the hope that the future they want to ensure for their own children will be a more open and equal one.

Pictures at bottom, from left to right

Angelina Jolie (right), film director/producer, Rithy Panh (middle), Cambodia director/producer-Bophana Center co-founder, and Natharoun Ngo (left), CKS Director at the screening of “ First They Kill My Father” at the Center for Khmer Studies at Wat Damnak in Siem Reap; Private screening of “ First they Kill My Father” at CKS conference hall; Angelina Jolie and Bophana Center director Sopheap Chea meet with Khmer Rouge victims, at CKS library.



CKS PROGRAMS

Summer Junior Resident Fellowship Program *Introducing Cambodia!*

By Professor Markus Karbaum, University of Berlin, Instructor



Professor Markus Karbaum (left, standing) and Summer Junior Resident Fellows 2017.

In its twelfth iteration, the Summer Junior Resident Fellowship Program, already a flourishing institution among the Center for Khmer Studies' core programs, provided twelve students – two French and five each from Cambodia and the United States – the opportunity to explore the diversity of contemporary Cambodia. And, indeed, these Junior Fellows distinguished themselves in their thirst for knowledge, their curiosity, and their hard work on the course syllabus, as well as on their individual research projects. In class, students were introduced to a diversity of subjects, including symbols of national identity, the evolution of Cambodia's contemporary sociocultural setting, the political system and the country's developments and achievements since 1979. At the same

time, students were engaged in debates on issues facing Cambodia today: land conflicts, the difficult situation facing women within society, and the threats against language and lifestyle of Cambodia's indigenous peoples.

Two weeks of the six-week-program were spent in Phnom Penh. Students visited the European Chamber of Commerce, the local offices of UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and Oxfam. H.E. Son Soubert, former member of the Constitutional Council of Cambodia (and CKS Board member), and the Venerable Khy Sovanrathna, abbot of the Mongkolvan monastery, enriched the program with their insights. For most participants, the emotional highlight was the discussion with Chum Mey, one of the

last few survivors of the Khmer Rouge's S-21 torture prison. Further major field trip destinations included the Khmer Rouge genocide memorial Choeung Ek, The War Crimes Tribunal, and Kampot, where students visited the Sonja Kill Memorial Hospital for children as well as Bokor Mountain.

In addition to their core academic classes, students were required to attend daily language classes, where the international students learned Khmer and their Cambodian counterparts improved their English skills. In the afternoons, Fellows read academic assignments and worked on their individual research projects, broadly spanning many academic disciplines from the economics of tourism to national memory, from activist Buddhism to international relations in the region. Students provided considerable support for each other and visibly bonded as a group, beyond cultural, disciplinary, and other differences.

*Picture, below: Summer Fellows at Taprom Temple in Siem Reap.
Right: A Fellow giving presentation of her research at CKS Office,
Siem Reap.*



It was particularly heartwarming that several international students expressed their strong motivation to continue studying Cambodia in their future academic and professional careers, the key goal of the Summer Junior Fellows Program. For them, the program was an ideal entry point, as it provided a comprehensive picture of contemporary Cambodia – the beauty of the country and its people, the sociocultural and environmental consequences of rapid development, and how academic researchers can contribute effectively to our knowledge of Cambodia. I wholeheartedly agree with what CKS's President Andrew Mertha told the students during his guest lecture: "You can make a difference!"



Khmer Language and Culture Studies Program



A student in the Khmer Language and Culture Studies Program working on her Khmer text during the program.



Students, teachers, and coordinator in the Khmer Language and Culture Studies Program at 12th-century Bridge along the way to Angkor.

The Center for Khmer Studies continues to partner with the University of Hawaii’s Advanced Studies in Khmer (ASK) program to administer a six-week in-country Summer Language and Culture Studies Program for US students and scholars. In 2017, the program accepted US students from Cornell University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the University of Utah. Students work with experienced instructors in Khmer on reading, writing, listening, and communication skills. In addition to classroom sessions, students also have the opportunity to communicate directly with in-country Khmer speakers to further develop their professional vocabulary as they learn about topics in their areas of scholarly interest, as well as to encounter Cambodian people and culture.

Margaret Cora Jack, Ph.D Candidate in Information Science at Cornell University, might have been speaking for the entire 2017 class when she wrote: “The Advanced Study of Khmer program at the Center for Khmer Studies was a wonderful experience and I’m so grateful I was able to be a part of it. Since January 2014, I have had an ongoing ethnographic project in the Cambodian technology community. These projects have included research on the use of and implementation challenges for advanced, computationally-dependent medical equipment in the health care system as well as a study on the use of new digital tools (particularly Facebook) in the Phnom Penh marketplace, and their implications for local business owners. The Advanced Study of Khmer program was an extremely helpful

re-entry into the country. I now feel much more confident using the Khmer language in my research. I was also able to learn more about the breadth of Cambodian culture, including more detail about the religious, arts, and historical context, all of which help me to refine my research questions and research approach. I also feel grateful that we were introduced to some of the primary educational and research institutions in the country, including the Royal University of Fine Arts and the Royal University of Phnom Penh, and other resources for research such as the Hun Sen library, the National Archives, and the National Library. Thank you to our wonderful professors and the staff at CKS for such an enriching experience.”



A student reading Khmer text.

CKS Research Fellows 2017-2018

French Fellows receive support through a grant from the Scaler Foundation. U.S. Fellows are supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers



Alexandra Dalferro, PhD student, Department of Anthropology, Cornell University. Titled “*Shimmering Surfaces and Stray Threads: Weaving State Politics into Khmer Silk in contemporary Thailand*”, her project explores the tensions in silk making between efforts to “democratize” heritage, while simultaneously recuperating it for a monoethnic nation-state. These tensions have broader relevance to how material and intangible heritage objects and practices are negotiated nationally and globally. Ethnic Khmer silk weavers in Thailand bring unique methods and meaning to their craft. In Thai government efforts to promote the industry, however, Khmer silks are often treated as part of a static “Thai” national cultural heritage. Woven in today’s Thailand for over 1,000 years, silks were key tributary gifts exchanged among neighboring kingdoms, as the choice of cloth bestowed rank upon recipients in an embodiment of political and social hierarchies. Time has not diminished the importance of silk and the role it plays in visions of relatedness and belonging. Using sensory ethnographic methods and archival research, Dalferro treats silk as an assemblage of species, cultural orientations, values and histories that creates and is created by weavers and consumers in particular ways for divergent ends. She examines how Khmer weavers in three villages in Surin province are engaging with state-mediated demands for shimmering surfaces that conform to standards of technical quality, marketability, and Thai heritage ideals that elide local meanings and creation processes.



Elena Lesley, PhD student, Department of Anthropology, Emory University, is studying “*Testifying to Trauma: Reframing Narratives of Distress among Khmer Rouge Survivors*”. This project examines how two forms of therapeutic treatment affect narrative construction of trauma and psychological wellbeing among Khmer Rouge survivors. The opening of a UN-backed tribunal in 2006 to prosecute leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime was accompanied by numerous affiliated “transitional justice” efforts. These included psychosocial interventions, such as “testimonial therapy”, in which survivors work with therapists to create a narrative of their suffering under the Khmer Rouge and contribute to a public call for legal justice through the tribunal. This differs greatly from traditional approaches to healing, which focus on rituals to alleviate social and spiritual disruption. Using current life stress as a mediating variable, this study asks how imported and traditional healing methods frame explanations of illness causation and how these processes impact psychological outcomes, conceptions of self and social relations. In addressing these questions, this project will refine anthropological understanding of post-genocidal recovery and the relationship between narrative construction, current life stress and psychotherapeutic healing.



Courtney Work, Post-doctoral Fellow in the Department of Agrarian Studies of the Institute for Social Studies at Erasmus University, is working on “*Climate Change and Co-management in Prey Lang: Social experiments in conflict transformation*”. This project will investigate new collaborative initiatives between sub-national government officials and the Prey Lang Community Network designed to enhance forest protection and decrease deforestation. Current conflicts between multiple stakeholders will make this cooperation challenging. Work questions whether, or to what extent, two discourses can transform conflicts into socially and environmentally just outcomes. The first is global climate change—affecting all stakeholders at some level. The second is PLCN attention to, and honoring of, the spirit owner of the land—recognized by the majority of competing stakeholders. This is an initiative to gather textured data about resource negotiations at the grassroots level and to complicate the over-naturalized notion that humans will compete over scarce resources with escalating violence.



Jacob Orin Gold, PhD candidate, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago, is investigating “*E-Pluribus Angkor: Resource-Driven Cultural Exchange in the Forest Frontier*”. The vast urban-agrarian landscape of Yasodharapura, capital of the Angkorian Khmer Empire (ca. 9th-15th centuries CE), has cast a long shadow over the archaeology of its territories, which encompassed all of present-day Cambodia and parts of Thailand, Laos, Malaysia and Vietnam. This has had the effect of obscuring what we know about the diversity of places and peoples who shared Angkor’s imperial space, and whose practices contributed to its expansionist state project. Gold’s research hopes to move beyond that shadow by focusing on a little-understood zone along the empire’s resource-rich northeastern forest frontier. There, a range of actors, Khmer and non-Khmer alike, sustained the capital and its core provinces with a supply of raw materials that were vital to the empire’s political and economic dominance over the region. This research will examine traces of the region’s markedly “atypical” Angkorian-era patterns of settlement, subsistence, devotional architecture, as well as the sourcing of perishable forest goods, iron, and livestock (especially cattle and elephants). It will also draw upon ethnographic, ethnohistoric, and textual data ranging from Angkorian epigraphy to French colonial travelogues. In so doing, this research hopes to uncover if and how the resource frontier created opportunities for, and imposed imperatives on, local inhabitants’ hybrid ways of “being Angkorian.”



Hudson McFann, PhD student, Department of Geography, Rutgers University, is looking at “*K.I.D. | Cambodian Refugees and the Humanitarian Politics of Cityness*”. Using oral history interviews, participatory mapping, and archival research, this project studies how Khao I Dang (K.I.D.) refugee camp—established at the Thai–Cambodian border in 1979—was planned, designed, administered, and experienced. It does so by studying the historical geographies of K.I.D.’s “cityness” from the perspectives of relief workers and Cambodian refugees. His preliminary findings suggest that an in-depth study of K.I.D. promises to yield fundamental insights into the politics of humanitarianism and urbanism—shedding light on the refugee camp as a specifically urban technology of humanitarian intervention. McFann posits, more specifically, that the establishment of K.I.D. marks a pivotal moment in the translation of categories like community-based development, empowerment, and self-reliance to the refugee camp setting—and that this occurred largely on the basis of particular ideas about the cityness of refugee camps. The recent inauguration of the Learning Centre for the History of Khao I Dang—at the former site of K.I.D. in Sa Kaeo Province, Thailand—makes this a particularly significant moment to explore K.I.D.’s enduring legacies.



Catriona Miller, Ph.D candidate in History at the University of Wisconsin, is doing fieldwork on “*Pages of Style, Associations of Benevolence: Class and Gender in Postcolonial Cambodia*”. Miller proposes to conduct research in Cambodia on the intersections of class, gender and urbanism during the late colonial and post-colonial period in Cambodia (1949-1970). During the Sangkum Reastra, Prince Sihanouk and Phnom Penh elites sought to transform Cambodia into an educated modern country. The social roles of urban women underwent a self-conscious transformation as girls attended school and new graduates started careers. Instrumental to the transformation was the burgeoning print media industry that promoted cosmopolitan educated women. In addition to cosmopolitan concerns, urbanites founded and joined associations that promoted women’s interests, improved healthcare and philanthropy—each of which was crucial to Sihanouk’s vision for a modern Cambodia. Considering the centrality of urban women during this critical time, Miller’s hypothesis is that post-colonial modernization was a gendered process whereby middle-class women consumed and produced social development discourse. Her dissertation will portray women as pivotal actors in these modernization efforts.

CKS Research Fellows 2017-2018



Ron Leonhard, PhD candidate in History at The George Washington University is examining “*Modernity through Merit-making: The construction of Cambodia’s Cold War Buddhist Imaginary*”. His project explores how King Norodom Sihanouk’s postcolonial government used Buddhism to construct an alternate version of modernity during the Cold War. Following independence from France in 1953, Sihanouk’s government used Buddhism, Marxism-Leninism, and the Cambodian monarchy to drive its program of “meritorious modernization.” Through its ties to countries such as Bulgaria and Burma, Cambodia not only advertised its national religion, but also actively resisted Western and Soviet-driven development models. Having successfully modernized in less than fifteen years while keeping the morality of Khmer society intact, Sihanouk’s government saw itself as truly unique. Buddhism—not capitalism or communism—was the key to good governance.



Stephen Russell Heder, Research Associate, Department of Politics and International Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, is working on *Khmer Rouge Success and Vietnam Relationships 1970-75*”. This project will research the rise to power of the Khmer Rouge from 1970 to 1975 and how it was connected to the Khmer Rouge’s shifting relationships with the Vietnamese Communists. The research follows directly his book *Cambodian Communism and the Vietnamese Model*, which covered the 1930-1970 period. It will make possible the post-research writing of a sequel book covering the 1970-75 period of Khmer Rouge history. The research will thus contribute uniquely towards filling a major gap in the history of the Khmer Rouge, doing so by relying mainly on research into a large mass mostly of primary Khmer-language, but also primary Vietnamese-language documents and interviews with Cambodian and Vietnamese directly involved in the events of 1970-75. It also reflects his conviction that what happened after April 1975 can only be understood in relation to what happened before.



Eric Galmard, Professor at the University of Strasbourg, is examining “*Production of a Script Based on an Ethnographic Collection of Testimonials by Cambodian Villagers on Their Lives in the 1980s*”. This project consists of writing a fictional narrative that tells how a group of characters in Cambodia go through the period from 1979 to 1992. It starts with observation of the absence of contemporary production of stories over this period in the history of Cambodia. The initial choice is to limit the narrative in geographical terms by concentrating it, at least for the most part, within a rural community. Galmard proposes to engage in an ethnographic work to record the testimonies of a group of people belonging to this village, as well as in parallel in a historical study of the period. The narrative idea is to follow the parallel destiny of two families— one Sino-Khmer trader and the other peasant— through three different years (1979, 1986, and 1992). Starting from the ethnographic enquiry, the work will follow the classic stages of the development of a scenario: developed synopsis, treatment, and final script. This scenario could be used either for a feature film or for a comic book.



Bernard Dupaigne, retired professor at the National Museum of Natural History, is looking at “*Silk in Cambodia*”. The project is to examine the present state of silk weaving in Cambodian villages and to publish a corpus of Cambodian silks, province by province, covering the period of 1968-1970. Pictures taken at that time will be completed by those he took at the National Museum of Phnom Penh. Items from other museums will be also studied. It will be a unique opportunity for the general public to realize the beauty of Cambodian silks. The work could also be useful for Cambodian administration, and rural development.



Lucie Labbe, non-resident PhD student at the Centre de l’Asie du Sud-Est (CASE) is doing research on “*Khmer Classical Dance Iconography from the Time of the French Protectorate and its Impact on Current Conceptions of Dance*”. The project studies the iconography of Khmer classical dance in a perspective combining visual anthropology with an historical approach. It aims to contribute to the knowledge of Khmer dance and the role it played in Khmer society at the time of the French protectorate. The evolution of the aesthetic of the dancing body over time will be studied, as well as the influence of dance iconography dating back to the protectorate from the viewpoint of today’s dancers and their conceptions of dance, and of the past. This project affords an opportunity to create an iconographic documentation in this area, of interest to historians and Khmer studies researchers in general.

Alexandra Dalferro's weaving in action.



Making silk thread by a family in Bati, Takeo province, 1960s.



Former CKS Jr. and Sr. Fellows Speak

Matt McGee Junior Summer Fellow 2016



Matt McGee (third from left) with Summer Fellows.

Participating in the Center for Khmer Studies Junior Fellowship program was one of the most rewarding professional experiences I have had as an undergraduate student. In addition to the academic lectures on Cambodian history, culture, and language, I had the opportunity to explore the country, learn and practice research skills, and make enduring friendships with people from around the world.

On an average day, we would spend the morning in class, exploring the city or working on our research projects in the afternoon. While we went on excursions to see the Angkor temples in Siem Reap and the Killing Fields outside Phnom Penh, the most memorable class trip for me was when our instructor, Dr. Alberto Pérez-Pereiro, took us to a Cham village he had researched for his dissertation.

After studying Cham culture and history in class, we took part in a Cham possession ceremony (luckily none of us got possessed!). I don't think any of us students will ever forget it. When we arrived at our destination in Kampong Cham province, we were greeted by scores of villagers running about, making final preparations for the ceremony. We took our places near an elaborate stage that included a dancing area with some sort of stand set up in the middle, and a covered area with a table where important-looking villagers were seated. As the crowd grew silent, children began to beat poles on the ground to provide the rhythm for the dancers making their way around the stage. Alberto explained that the part of the ceremony we were watching described how the Cham fled to Cambodia from Vietnam. Following a mock swordfight between the Cham and Vietnamese, everyone, including the CKS fellows, was invited to dance and celebrate the Cham's arrival in Cambodia. Traditionally, some sort of alcohol was served

from the stand in the middle of the dancing area. Being devout Muslims, the Cham today instead opt for green Fanta ladled out of a bowl. Despite being called a possession ceremony, there did not appear to be any possessing during the parts of the ceremony we witnessed. Nonetheless, having the opportunity to witness the ceremony with a Cham expert was something that would not have been possible with any other program, and was one of the many experiences that made the CKS summer fellowship unforgettable.

Although this event was unforgettable for many reasons, my single favorite memory of the summer, though, was when I biked to Phnom Bok, approximately 24km from Siem Reap. After I left the city, I quickly found myself on a road surrounded by jungle and rice paddies. As I continued my journey on a city bike that definitely was not designed for such a trek, I passed through a number of villages where children would run up to the road and yell "Hello!" at me. At one point, I stopped to buy a snack before making the final push to Phnom Bok. Unsurprisingly, no one in the family running the store on the side of a dirt road in the middle of the jungle spoke any English. It was at that moment that I was able to fully appreciate how far my Khmer language abilities had come in just a few short weeks. While I was by no means able to hold a substantive conversation, I was able to communicate with them on a basic level to buy a snack, talk a little bit about myself, and ask how far it was to Phnom Bok. When I finally got to the temple on top of Phnom Bok, there was no one else there, save a lone guard who gave me a tour of the grounds. On my way back to Siem Reap that evening, I was able to use my Khmer once again to buy street food for dinner.

A big part of what made the program so enriching for myself and the other junior fellows was having a roommate from another country. My roommate, the only other male junior fellow, was from Cambodia. He and I became close friends over the course of the summer, spending a lot of our time outside of class together. When we were in Phnom Penh, I hung out with his friends, and I even played a game with his club soccer team. Unfortunately, after the game I was told I have a "good body for soccer, just no technique," and I was not invited back.

Nonetheless, he was able to share experiences with me that would have otherwise been inaccessible for me as a foreigner with limited Khmer skills. From zipping around the backstreets of Phnom Penh on the back of his moped to interviewing business owners for a class project, to exploring the old French police station, having a local roommate was immensely helpful. I was even invited to his house for dinner several times, where I was introduced to his carnivorous pet catfish, Kevin.

One of the key aspects of the junior fellows program is the research project. Mine was on the development of solar power infrastructure in rural parts of the country. To prepare for the final presentation at the end of the program, I conducted a number of interviews with government officials and business owners. Although the language barrier and the reluctance of individuals to speak with an unknown foreigner hindered some of the interviews, the experience of tracking down people and trying to get them to talk to me was itself extremely valuable. On one occasion, I waited in a torrential downpour outside the Siem Reap electrical utilities complex for what seemed like forever, only to be shuffled between various offices by low-level bureaucrats who barely spoke any English. After spending at least half an hour watching geckos eat insects in a waiting room, I finally spoke to the head of Siem Reap's state-run energy utility about funding for several government programs. Afterwards, he gave me the phone number for his friend, who was one of the utility's executives in Phnom Penh. While the friend unfortunately did not speak enough English to answer any of my questions, the process still taught me a lot about conducting interviews as part of a research project.

The six weeks I was in Cambodia with the CKS Summer Junior Fellows program were amongst the best I have had as an undergraduate. During the program, I was able to make new friends from the United States, France, and Cambodia. We shared experiences that would have been impossible in another program. These adventures, in addition to the academic aspects of the program, gave me experiences and insight that I have been able to draw upon and apply in my studies back at Cornell.

Dr. Kunthea Chhom: Another CKS Success Story



Dr. Kunthea Chhom is received by His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia.

The story of Kunthea Chhom begins with an auspicious intersection of events. Former CKS director Philippe Peycam had just met the renowned Prof. Kamalesvar Bhattacharya, the doyen of Sanskritists, and the two of them commiserated over the fact that there were no longer any Sanskrit scholars left in Cambodia. This was particularly poignant because Sanskrit is the root language for Buddhist texts as well as for many of Cambodia’s core myths, repeated over and over again on the temples at Angkor and throughout this profoundly Buddhist country.

And, seemingly out of the ether, entered Kunthea, who, in 2004, had just secured a freshly-minted bachelor’s degree from the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Prof. Bhattacharya persuaded Kunthea to consider bringing Sanskrit back to Cambodia.

Philippe came to then-CKS President and Chair Lois de Menil and told her he had met the Indian ambassador, and that if CKS would provide a fellowship to pay for half of Kunthea’s studies, the Indian government would provide a fellowship to send her to Magadh University in Bodh Gaya for a Master’s in Sanskrit.

Kunthea had first to master English to a sufficient level to follow advanced university classes in India. Kunthea became the protégée of Prof. Bhattacharya, and she did brilliantly in her Sanskrit studies in India, completing her Master’s in two years. Bhattacharya was very proud of her, but he felt that Kunthea still had more to learn about the cultural background of the society that gave rise to Sanskrit because one cannot really understand Sanskrit without understanding how the language is infused by the the Vedas and by knowledge of the poetry and myths that constitute that culture.

At this point, Kunthea determined to pursue a Ph.D. Prof. Bhattacharya hoped she would continue in the US, preferably at Harvard or Berkeley. That required an application, a request for financial support, and a long period of delay in response. CKS Board member Prof. Michel Antelme suggested instead the Institut des Hautes Etudes in Paris, where she would be able to obtain a French Government fellowship, and she could build upon her Master’s studies in India and write a thesis without having to take more classes and start all over, as she would be required to do in the US.

Kunthea’s doctoral thesis is entitled: **The role of Sanskrit in the Development of the Khmer language: an epigraphical study from the 5th to the 14th century:**

The Sanskrit loanwords in each domain show different features of interaction with Khmer terms: some of them acquire local connotations.[...] If the early inscriptions seem to favor Sanskrit ...those from the 10th century A.D. onwards are increasingly in a form of Khmer characterized by an abundance of new Sanskrit loanwords. The 10th century is also marked by the appearance of some texts containing “equivalent” passages in their Khmer and Sanskrit portions; later on, in the 12th and the 14th century we find two inscriptions with equivalent passages in Khmer and Pali. These passages prove that Sanskrit texts play not only the “rhetorical” role for which they are famous, but also the “documentative” role associated with the Khmer texts.

Unlike the US, where one’s doctoral chair determines when the candidate’s thesis is ready and only then convenes a defense, in France, the outcome is not at all automatic or presumed. In fact, many people write the dissertation and are then rejected for the Ph.D. degree. Kunthea not only passed her thesis defense; she passed with the highest honors.

Kunthea is a national treasure, a fact that is hidden by her modest demeanor which nonetheless suggests an ebullient personality not far beneath the surface. She represents that type of success story that is a big part of CKS’s raison d’être. She is part of a growing network of US and Khmer scholars who are truly shaping the boundaries of what is possible in Cambodia.

Promoting Cambodian Scholars

Travel Grants to permit participation at regional conferences



CKS Travel Fund grantees (Leang Un, far left and Rosa Yi, third from right) and Cambodian researchers at ICAS10 in Chiang Mai.

During the last three decades, Cambodia as a country has moved from war to peace, from communism to democracy, and from planned market to liberal economy. Education has been improved over the two decades of peace, and young people have gradually taken positions in the public sector, business, and higher education. However, the state of advanced research has not changed as much.

While people graduating with more advanced degrees has increased over the years thanks to the continued support of foreign scholarships and new graduate programs established in the country, many of them do not pursue careers involving research after graduation. In part, this is because research is seen as a demanding profession in terms of time, resources, and hard work— or at worst too risky in terms of personal safety—and partly because opportunities in other sectors such as business or simply ‘teaching’ have also grown over the years. For some wishing to pursue such a career, there has not been adequate infrastructure to support them, as would have been required.

In this context, CKS’s partial travel support to regional conferences is critical for Cambodian researchers, who, while they are few in number at any regional conference on Southeast Asia, deserve to share in the discussion of issues

of relevance to their country and to join in professional discussions with international colleagues..

This year, four researchers received travel support:

- (1) **Dr. Leng Pirom**, senior fellow at Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), presented his research “STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Education in Cambodia”;
- (2) **Dr. Leang Un**, Dean and professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, presented on “History and Ontology of xHigher Education in Cambodia”;
- (3) **Mr. Rosa Yi**, a professor at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, on behalf of his team, presented findings on the project “School-to-Work Transition for Cambodian Students”, and
- (4) **Young Sokphea**, Ph.D. student at the University of Melbourne, shared his findings on “Foreign Aid and Social Movement in Cambodia”.

All of these presentations took place at the 10th International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS10) in Thailand’s Chiang Mai on 20-23 July 2017.