

## Mission Statement

The Center for Khmer Studies supports research, teaching and 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,

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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Sovanna Nop	Finance Manager
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# Dear Friends of CKS, Welcome!

Our friendly supporters who look at the first page of In Focus, with its lists of board members and officers, rather than go straight to the more interesting articles inside, will have noticed several changes this year. Lois de Menil, who is at the origin of CKS and has supported and driven the organization from its inception is still active as Chairman emerita. Andy Mertha's academic specialization in China has taken him, meantime, from the seclusion of Cornell to the bustle of Washington, where he is now Director of the China Program at the Johns Hopkins University Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). But he is very much an involved Vice President, who will definitely bring some awareness of CKS and Cambodia to the capital. I now have the privilege of moving from longtime Vice President to Chairman of CKS's Board of Directors. Mary Ellen Lane has taken over as President and CEO. And we have young scholars as new Trustees.

The purpose and continuity of the Center remain. CKS was originally established to keep Cambodia present in the world of American and French scholarship, and to support reemerging higher education in our host country, Cambodia. This is reflected in the annual fellowships for young scholars finishing their PhD research or senior scholars pursuing research in Cambodia. CKS fellowships were originally limited to French and American scholars by the grants that fund them. The Fellowship Committee, led by Prof. Alan Kolata of the University of Chicago, now welcomes applications from emerging Cambodian researchers whose projects fulfill the committee's stringent criteria. In response to this new and cheering evolution, and thanks more particularly to the generosity of Trustees Mary Porter and Olivier Bernier, a new series of research grants has been created for Cambodians.

At a more approachable level, CKS organizes summer Khmer language courses, a summer resident immersion program for undergraduates that is an introduction to Khmer history and culture, along with intensive language training. This Junior Resident Program groups young Cambodians, French and American students, in residence in Siem Reap, and is always a favorite of participants. We receive repeated visits of classes from Cornell University, which now offers a collaborative course on Cambodia in its winter semester, and visits of other university groups as well as community colleges. This year, we welcomed Boston University. Hopefully, among the young visitors

some will be sufficiently impressed by this wonderful country to devote their studies to it and become experts on Cambodia and Southeast Asia..

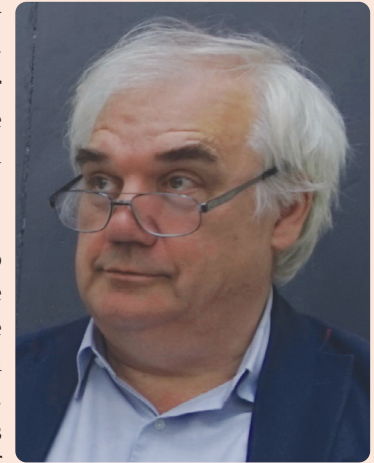
Another purpose is to enhance, as far as we are able, the resources available to students and faculty in Cambodian universities. One initial challenge was the creation from scratch of a free research library and reading room, available to all, from youngest schoolchildren to advanced researchers. Throughout the year, CKS organizes conferences and workshops, where scholars present their research and enjoy the benefits of exchange. Some workshops have training as their objective, such as a recent one on LIDAR technology for the Cambodian authority that manages the site of Angkor.

We also have a book translation program. The latest project is the translation into Khmer of "Svay, a Khmer village in Cambodia". "Svay" is the dissertation of Prof. May Ebihara, the first ethnologist to visit and study Cambodian villages, as early as the 1950s. The translation has been made possible thanks to the enthusiasm of Franz Heng. She and Kosal Path are new board members, elected this year, both Cambodian— Franz from the world of Phnom Penh business and philanthropy, Kosal assistant professor at Brooklyn College, CUNY.

Thanks to the energy of our director, Natharoun Ngo, CKS is now collaborating in new projects with many institutions in Cambodia. This year's projects reflect his own interest in many aspects of development as well as in educational reform.

CKS's activities are set forth in the pages that follow. We hope that you will be tempted to support our ambitious program, and welcome your visit and your comments. A form for contributions is included with In Focus. Welcome to CKS !

**Jacques Hennessy**  
Chairman





# President's Letter

I am very proud and honored to serve as the new President of CKS. Lois de Menil – founding President and Chairman of the Board, who contributed so much of her time and energy to launching, nurturing, and supporting CKS – is an amazing act to follow, but we are lucky that she continues to work actively on behalf of CKS.

I am not a Cambodia expert – I am a French-educated Egyptologist by training – so one might wonder why I was elected President of CKS. Early on in its history, CKS joined a network of American overseas research centers in Europe, the Middle East, South and Southeast and Central Asia, and West Africa. These overseas research centers (“ORCs”) belong to a consortium, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), of which I was Executive Director for 28 years. CAORC is responsible for obtaining and keeping a firm grip on funding from foundations, the State Department and the Department of Education that partially fund centers’ programs and basic needs. I devoted my entire career to this endeavor and now I am using all that I have learned to help to guide CKS!

There have been a lot of wonderful new developments under way to position CKS as we move forward in a time of political uncertainty around the globe – which also makes CKS’s mission all the more important. We have elected three new members to our Board. Franz Heng is a Cambodian entrepreneur, who has been instrumental in strengthening CKS’s program of translating foundational books on Cambodia from English into Khmer. Ann-Marie Murphy, associate professor at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, and senior research scholar at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, is a founding member of the New York Southeast Asia Network. Kosal Path, an assistant professor at Brooklyn College, is a survivor of the Cambodian genocide and focuses on relations between Cambodia, Vietnam, and China. They have hit the ground running and are already contributing all sorts of ideas and energy.

Winter and spring saw many activities at CKS, including CKS seminars in partnership with the European Union; work with local partners on developing a Cambodian curriculum on Khmer studies; well-attended lectures on diverse subjects; our participation in the Asian Studies Association meeting in Washington, DC; the Cornell in Cambodia and Community College program; supporting

and working with young Cambodian and American Fellows, as well as laying groundwork for an ambitious collaboration with the University of Chicago program on urbanization.

Our American, Cambodian, and French CKS Fellows are conducting innovative research into topics as diverse as representations of the life of the Buddha at Angkor; Khmer arts and the reworking of Cambodian history; Chinese literature in Cambodia; musical traditions in Cambodia; field experiments on water scarcity and cooperation among Cambodian farmers; the evolution of Portuguese-Khmer culture; the empowerment of indigenous peoples and women in Cambodia and Myanmar, and other topics contributing to the growing field of Cambodian studies.

Happily, in the midst of government budget cuts, we were successful once again in maintaining our funding from the State Department and the Department of Education that partially supports our staff and research fellowship program. We need your support more than ever. We are poised to expand our advancement of Khmer studies and provide further opportunities for American and Cambodian students. Our Library is heavily used by researchers from many countries and Cambodian students; our seminars are over-subscribed, and our Fellows are contributing significant knowledge to fields in the humanities and social sciences.

I hope we can count on your continued support.

With my very best wishes,

**Dr. Mary Ellen Lane, President**  
CAORC Executive Director emerita



# Director's Note

CKS is buzzing with activity, as I write. Signature “core” programs are about to begin. Ph.D. scholars from US institutions and French universities will converge in pursuit of their CKS research fellowships. Young Cambodians will join them. Workshops and lectures abound. The summer language training program in Khmer is about to begin. And shortly after, the Summer Junior Resident Fellows Program will bring together a group of 15 young and exuberant American, French and Cambodian undergraduates into residence at our Siem Reap Campus for an expansive survey course in Cambodian history and culture along with intensive daily language study. We are actively seeking to attract and form the next generation of experts on Cambodia and Southeast Asia.

For a new Director, mastering the art of carrying these programs forward while developing new projects and improving the way we work is a challenge. We are sustained by your support and by the glowing reports back from our alumni as they begin to build their careers. CKS, they tell us, has made a big difference in their lives.

Our library is, as ever, filled with the next generation of Cambodians, from pre-school visitors to our children's library for story time to the high school and university students who assemble in our reading room and feel that they are at home at CKS. It feels a lot like a US college campus—very different from a Cambodian context. The spirit of open doors, open inquiry and welcome is everywhere.

The Cambodian Ministry of Education and local universities have at last embarked on an ambitious program of educational

reform, and CKS intends to play a more important role in that undertaking. We are debating with them the new sirens of the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curriculum along with the value of a traditional focus on the humanities and social sciences, sources of personal values. We are also joining with the University of Chicago in a new project

on Urban Sustainability and Urban Mobility led by our distinguished Board Member Prof. Alan Kolata. Cities in SE Asia are growing into megalopolises overnight, with practically no urban planning, creating social impact of a dimension we have not seen before. Accordingly, this issue of In Focus reflects this year's theme at CKS: development, viewed from several angles. We hope you enjoy insight into our Senior Fellows' very diverse field work.

Days at CKS are busy and full. The positive impact of our core programs and our outreach is the gift of your sustained support. We at CKS are deeply grateful to you, our private donors and foundations, who sustain our mission and help us to join hands to strengthen quality education in Cambodia, and knowledge of SE Asia among a new generation of Asian and Western leaders.

**Natharoun Ngo, Director**



*Chulalongkorn University Rotary Mid-Career Fellows Workshop 2017 at CKS*



# A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

## Cambodia: 1992 to CKS

by Vice-President Olivier Bernier

A very elderly Russian propeller plane and U.N. helicopter gunships at the Siem Reap airport: a visit to Cambodia in early 1992 was not without its surprises.

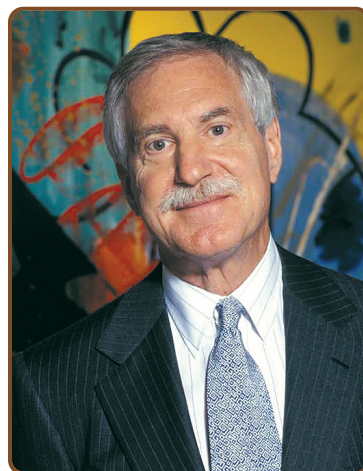
Although the Paris Peace Accord had taken effect some three months earlier, the country had hardly begun to recover from the Khmer Rouge violence and the ensuing civil war. Most roads were still unsafe because of violent armed bands; so was much of the ground. Landmines were everywhere. When I arrived, So Hoan, my guide said to me simply, "Remember— you always walk behind me, never next to me!" He knew which paths had been cleared by the French army deminers.

Indeed, I was told firmly not to go out at night because there were still Khmer Rouge infiltrations; and during the day, at Angkor Wat, you could hear guns in the middle distance. Stupidly, I asked why there were no birds? They had all been shot and eaten. As for daily life, there was no electricity. The only hotel in Siem Reap, the Ta Prohm, had a generator. There were no telephones, there were no bridges. The road to Banteay Srei was a pot-holed dirt track—one had to walk across muddy rivers. At the hotel, I was the only civilian. U.N troops from a variety of countries filled the dining room. And the people out in the streets were all much too thin—not surprising, really, since there was still almost no food in the markets.

Everywhere you looked, there were signs of hardship, reminders of the seemingly endless disasters which followed the seizing of power by Lon Nol, with U.S. support. Sitting on top of the Bakong, one day, and looking down at the only freshly painted building I had seen, I asked my guide what it was. A Buddhist temple, he explained, and, after a long pause, he added: "That's where I was imprisoned under the Khmer Rouge."

"Why?" I asked. "Well", he said, "I speak French", which

was indeed our common language. The Khmer Rouge killed everyone who spoke a foreign language, everyone who had a college degree, everyone who wore glasses. After another pause, he told me that the head of the prison had been a friend, so when the order came to send all the men out to be executed, his friend hid him. Eventually, the Khmer Rouge found out and killed his friend. "So", Hoan said, "my wife and I, we took in his children."



*Olivier Bernier,  
Vice-President*

And then, there were the monuments— uncleaned, not maintained at all, but thrilling in every way. The size, the diversity, the quality of the architecture and of the reliefs were even better than my expectation. I had the unforgettable pleasure of seeing Angkor Wat empty of people, except for So Hoan, myself and the two little barefoot boys who helped me climb to the top. I had an entire morning in which Banteay Srei belonged to me. Of course, to get there, I was told, we needed two armed policemen. The car broke down, the policemen stayed behind. So Hoan stopped two men on bicycles and they took us the rest of the way. We were alone at the Bakong and at the other temples, and it was sometimes difficult, as I enjoyed their serene beauty, to remember that disaster and destruction were everywhere.

I loved the monuments, I felt deeply sorry for the people. I also felt ashamed of the help given to the Khmer Rouge by the United States. It was also then that I fell in love with Cambodia. Some years later, the Center for Khmer Studies came into being. I joined its board and, at last, I felt I could undo a little, at least, of the suffering I had seen.

# GIVE TO CKS!

## Thank you to our 2017-2018 Annual Donors!

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

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## 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 Operations:** Contribute to our Annual Fund.
- **Support CKS Library,** Acquisition of Books (\$15,000 per year)
- **Donate a new computer** for our library reading room—regular updating (\$1,500)
- **Connect Library to World Wide Net** (\$1,500 per year)
- Donate a new computer **for our reading room** \$1,500

### 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 participant** in summer Khmer Language Program or Jr Resident Fellowship Program (\$3,500 each).

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

**Support Travel Grants** to enable Cambodians to attend regional conferences (\$1,000 each).

**Sponsor Cambodian Research Fellow** (\$5,000 each)

**Support Important Public Services:** free lectures, publications on contemporary and historical subjects, our Director's talks at US universities and community colleges.



# FEATURE ARTICLE

## China in Action in Cambodia

by Andrew Mertha, Ph.D., Vice-President

In a recent post on the Cambodia expat blog, Khmer440.com, “wpadmin” writes:

Cambodia is changing. On the way out are the wretched, the desperate, the --, albies and death-pats. They don't suit the new 'developed' status that the country now is hell-bent on portraying, albeit fairly unsuccessfully. Out with the beer guts proudly displayed protruding from wife-beater vests! Out with the flip-flops/sandals/thongs!

What are the 'deplorables' being replaced with? Chinese professionals—engineers and managers, skilled workers, legions of Chinese tourists, investors and distant relatives



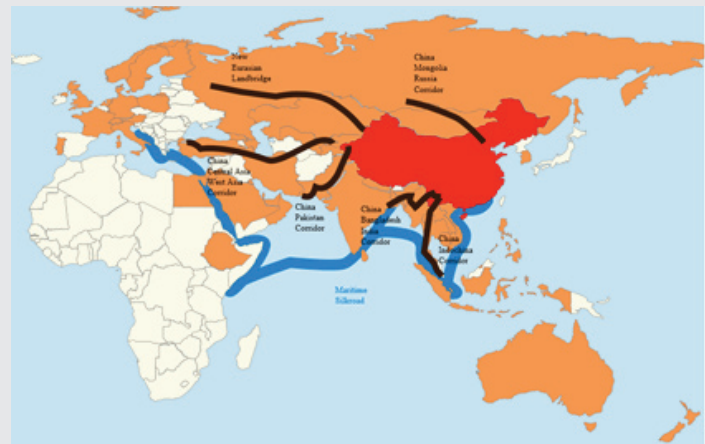
*Chinese Real Estate Development in Sihanoukville*

from Mainland China are now ubiquitous in Cambodia. In the air-conditioned Aeon mall and the Central Market, one is more likely to hear Mandarin Chinese than English or French among the shoppers there. Chinese package tours descend on the temples of Angkor (one guidebook reports that it is best to visit Beng Mealea temple in the afternoon, to avoid the Chinese tour buses that descend on the site in the mornings). And one only needs look at Sihanoukville (Kampong Som). A decade ago it was run-down, with backpackers' haunts and dirty by-the-hour hostels. Now it is a beachhead for Chinese investment and expatriate life.

This is what the retail level of China's gargantuan Belt and Road (“一带一路” it sounds better in Chinese) Initiative

(BRI) looks like. In the past ten years, China has redirected its massive investment in infrastructure projects – roads, dams, container ports, high-speed railways, etc. – from its own national borders to a constellation of almost seventy countries from Central Asia to Europe, throughout the African continent, and all over Asia. This initiative will dwarf the US Marshall Plan of the late 1940s by an order of magnitude. And within this context, Cambodia is punching above its weight in terms of its strategic importance to the success of the BRI.

This is because, once again, Cambodia finds itself bound by geography. Cambodia is right in the middle of Southeast Asia, which is in turn smack in the middle of



*“China's Belt and Road Initiative”*

Asia. As China has ambivalent relations with Vietnam, unfulfilled goals with landlocked Laos, and a string of failures in Myanmar, Beijing increasingly looks upon Cambodia as a key strategic node. Cambodia's access to the Gulf of Thailand ensures that China's investments, if they are to succeed, depend on good relations with the country. Of course, Cambodia's government is fully aware of the Faustian bargain it is making with China, but the West, particularly the United States, leaves the Hun Sen regime little choice, rhetoric notwithstanding.

China is willing to provide all sorts of foreign aid and assistance without the strings of “conditionality,” a term that essentially translates to a quid pro quo. Western aid

usually comes with a price tag of demanding political liberalization and improvements in human rights and other political costs on the host regime. China does nothing of the sort; indeed, it advertises the absence of conditionality in its agreements. What it does not do is draw attention to the fine print of any investment deal it makes with a recipient country, one that ensures a substantial degree of Chinese control into the unforeseeable future. In the West a contract is the culmination of a set of negotiations; in China, it is the beginning of a relationship, a point of departure.

While China is lavishing banquet toasts and investment on Cambodia, the United States sits on its heels. Washington's neglect of Cambodia is bipartisan. Both the Trump and Obama administrations, for example, refuse to forgive the loans (now hovering around \$500 million) that we made to Lon Nol's U.S.-sponsored Khmer Republic regime from 1970 to 1975. While these loans were being provided, between 1969 and 1973 US B-52s were secretly dropping more bombs on Eastern Cambodia than had been dropped during the entire Second World War, unbeknownst to the Cambodian leadership, something that many argue led directly to the rise of the Khmer Rouge.



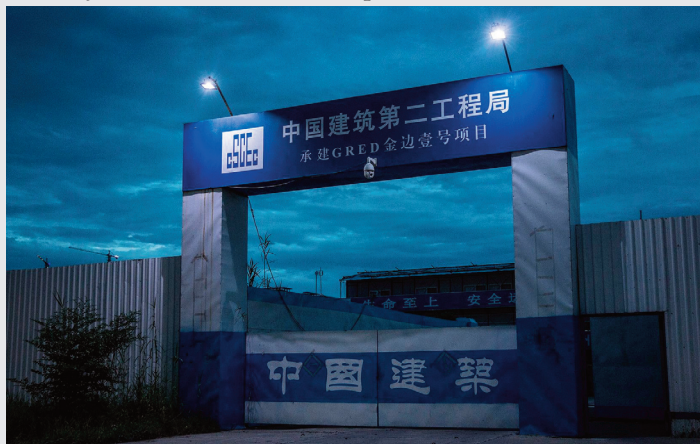
*Sino-Cambodian Friendship Bridge, Chroy Changvar*

The symbolic and financial significance of this cannot be overstated: Forgiving the loans might provide a salve for the moral complicity of Washington in the suffering of countless Cambodians, while at the same time releasing Cambodia from a debt burden that has driven Phnom Penh squarely into Beijing's arms. With the stroke of a pen, the US Government could change the balance in Cambodia. But it refuses to do so, potentially mortgaging the future to greater and more costly involvement down the road, in keeping with the old cliché, "War is God's way of teaching Americans geography."

Closer to home are persistent threats to gut the budgets of the US Department of State and the US Department of

Education. CKS, as an American Overseas Research Center in Cambodia, depends on significant funding from each. This year, Congress pushed back on the Administration's budget that would have significantly decreased the budgets of these two agencies. Next year remains unclear. Chinese organizations in Cambodia, directly dependent on government, do not suffer from these same financial constraints or political uncertainties.

Given the political changes in Cambodia over the past year, the US has lost much of the leverage it has enjoyed in the past. Our Ambassador has been extraordinary in trying to walk an increasingly fine line against the background of a set of choices that look increasingly grim. So, what can we do? Those of us who have engaged with Cambodia in the past can step up our involvement with those organizations that seek to better the lives of Cambodians who are truly the most hurt by these events: scholars and professionals, who seek a non-political and intellectually robust world in which ideas, both concrete and scholarly, can flourish and considerably improve society. CKS grew out of its original founders' realization that for monument conservation – and, by extension, anything requiring education and technical training – the country was unable to develop its own resources because



*An entrance to a construction site in the Boeung Kak area of Phnom Penh  
Photographer: Taylor Weidman/Bloomberg*

all Cambodia's previous experts had been killed or forced to leave the country by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. In less dramatic fashion, we are now witnessing a similar closing of the door on Cambodian scholarship and expertise.

Chinese companies bring their own managers and skilled workers and have no interest in training Cambodian lower management, as Beijing's plan is to monopolize those positions with its own countrymen. Chinese investment in Cambodian higher education is exactly what we would expect: an overemphasis on politically-neutral, STEM-heavy training (emphasizing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), which leaves the social sciences,



the humanities, public policy, and the arts out in the cold, in favor of a narrative that eliminates sources of understanding – let alone debate – let alone such topics as the South China Sea, Taiwan or Tibet (as is the case in Confucius Institutes worldwide).

Meanwhile, Cambodia's past is as much at stake as is its future. In 2015, cutting-edge LIDAR technology, undertaken "during the most extensive airborne study ever undertaken by an archaeological project, covering 734 sq miles (1,901 sq km) – shows that the colossal, densely populated ancient Khmer cities would have constituted the largest empire on earth at the time of its peak in the 12th century," dwarfing all of Angkor.<sup>1</sup> Until recently, the potential of this discovery was threatened by Chinese advanced plans to build a superhighway directly through the site. Negotiations over the past year or so have diverted the road, but this fortunate outcome was by no means inevitable.

China is playing a long-term – and smart – game in Cambodia, while US policymakers step out of the way and allow these developments to move forward. It is, therefore, up to us, friends of Cambodia, to do what we can

to ensure that this country is not deprived again of both its cultural and historic inheritance and intellectual legacy for another generation or more. CKS provides the vehicle for ensuring that US scholars in Cambodia and the Cambodian academic community writ large can continue to exist within the political cloud that threatens all the good work that has been accomplished over many years.

This is not an us vs. them situation. China provides much of what other donor countries and international partners do not or will not offer to Cambodia. Likewise, the best place for the marketplace of ideas to flourish is in an intellectual marketplace, one full of competition. Cambodians benefit from a combination of Chinese and Western engagement; bereft of one or another, it is simply the sound of one hand clapping. As friends of CKS, we need to help create a robust environment of learning, exchange, and understanding, something that CKS has been doing since day one and which Cambodia needs now more than it has in almost a half-century. Let's not repeat the 1960s and '70s.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/11/lost-city-medieval-discovered-hidden-beneath-cambodian-jungle>

## CKS NEWS: FROM CORNELL TO SAIS

After ten years as professor of Government at Cornell, CKS Vice-President Andrew Mertha has accepted a new position at the distinguished Johns Hopkins Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C. As of July 1, 2018, Professor Mertha, a Sinologist by training, will be the George and Sadie Hyman Professor of China Studies. He will be the Director of the SAIS China Program and the Director of SAIS China (which includes a number of off-campus initiatives as well as the iconic Hopkins-Nanjing Center in China).

Prof. Mertha will continue to throw his energies into CKS from his new perch in Washington, DC, where he will be part of the foreign policy community and train future generations of scholars and practitioners in the art of governance and diplomacy.

Though his position is China-focused, Andy notes that China is no longer a country that can be studied in depth without taking into account its international ambitions and global reach. Phnom Penh's intimate relations with Beijing underscore Cambodia's role as the linchpin of Chinese

influence in Mainland Southeast Asia and the Greater Mekong Region. Moreover, given China's bankrolling of the Khmer Rouge throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a topic that Mertha has published on in his book, *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (Cornell 2014), Beijing has demonstrated that it is perfectly content pursuing its interests abroad without taking into account the impact on the populations of those countries. Mertha fully intends to continue research into these international dynamics in his new position at SAIS.



*Andrew Mertha in the CKS Library*

# FEATURE ARTICLE

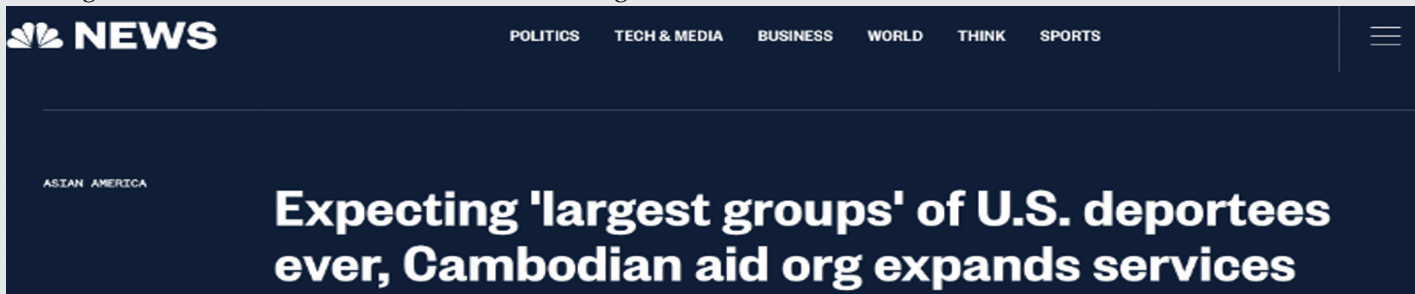
## Immigration and Deportation in the US: A Personal Witness

*This article is based on materials provided by the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center on whose board the author, Sophal Ear, also serves. Dr. Ear is an Associate Professor of Diplomacy & World Affairs at Occidental College and is a Trustee of the Center for Khmer Studies.*

What if instead of being a Trustee of CKS, I had been deported to Cambodia? Nearly 1,000 Cambodians in America have already met this fate, and many more are in the deportation pipeline.

It took me about a decade in America as a permanent resident with a “green card”, before I decided to be naturalized. My decision came after a summer in Cambodia, an attempt to get a Cambodian passport, and coming to realize that all these Cambodian immigration

have ended up involved in some regrettable activities. Then, imagine— instead of landing at Princeton, I would have landed in jail. Some decades later, after marrying and having kids, a stable job... a knock on the door and I am deported to Cambodia. That’s what has happened to more than 900 Cambodians refugees in America since 1998, almost 50 in April 2018 alone, when a plane load was sent to Cambodia in a single day.



folks wanted was ever larger quantities of my money, which I could ill-afford. After more than \$360 and no results, I gave-up. US citizenship, by contrast, required taking a test at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Cherry Hill, NJ. I was a graduate student at Princeton University at the time. An American classmate drove me to the INS Office. A group of Republican friends gave me a huge American flag when I got back to campus. Voila— my journey to US citizenship was complete.

But things could have been very different. What if instead of attending graduate school at Princeton, I had grown-up in less than savory circumstances—in the inner city, in public housing, surrounded by gangs, etc. I might well

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton between my first and second year of graduate school, made it possible to deport retroactively individuals who had committed crimes prior to the Act’s passage. Yes, I know the rule of law is incompatible with retroactive punishment, but somehow this had been finessed. As a Cambodian-American lawyer shared with me: “Generally, there is a presumption against retroactive legislation: the *ex post facto*” clause of the Constitution protects against the retroactive application of penal legislation. However, deportation is deemed a civil, not a criminal, proceeding. Thus, Congress has the authority to enact retroactive legislation if it can provide a



# The Phnom Penh Post

Thu Aug 09 2018 09:23:22 GMT-0700 (Pacific Daylight Time)

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## More than 50 US deportees expected in Cambodia on Thursday

legitimate congressional purpose, for instance, national security. The retroactive application of IIRIRA has been challenged on a number of fronts, most commonly, the due process argument. The courts have ruled that the retroactive effect of the expansion of aggravated felonies did not violate constitutional due process. The successful challenges I've seen are made on a case by case basis, where there is a strong case for "hardship to the family." And this problem is not exclusive to Cambodians, but to Vietnamese and Laotians too, among others— all victims of America's misadventures in Indochina.

From 1998 to 2017, 2,464 Cambodians in America were issued deportation orders. Of these, 1,678 were based on crimes. A total of 885 were deported after being issued travel documents by the Cambodian authorities, if they did not have a valid Cambodian passport. One thousand five hundred seventy-nine remain in limbo. The process began under President Clinton, continued under Presidents Bush and Obama, and has picked-up dramatically under President Trump.

community members to "self-deport" or face detention.

All of them completed their sentences and were released. Because agreements between the U.S. and Southeast Asian countries delayed their deportations, many have been checking in with ICE for years, transforming their lives and supporting their families. Now they face sudden deportation to countries where they have no ties, and where they may not even speak the local language fluently.

The roundups and intimidation tactics sent a clear message that more refugees would soon be deported and separated from their children, families, and loved ones—and indeed nearly 50 were deported in April 2018 alone. The US expects to send a total of 200 people back to Cambodia in 2018, having arrested that many in roundups recently. The unpredictable and harsh methods that ICE uses have triggered collective intergenerational trauma in the Cambodian-American refugee communities. These enforcement measures are part of a broader pattern of attacks by the Trump administration against vulnerable immigrant families.



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USA

December 07, 2017 9:01 PM

## US Set to Deport 70 Cambodians

In October 2017, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers detained over 100 Cambodians in America. Most, if not all, of those detained were lawful permanent residents who came to the United States as refugees in the aftermath of U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia and the Khmer Rouge genocide that followed. Many were born in refugee camps and came to the U.S. as very young children. They were resettled in blighted urban centers and lived in poverty, with parents reeling from the trauma of war. They succumbed to their environments and made mistakes that funneled them into the criminal justice system. They did not know that incarceration could lead to automatic deportation. In addition to these roundups, ICE is engaging in aggressive scare tactics against the Cambodian-American community, such as forcing

The majority of Cambodians in America facing deportation to Cambodia are individuals who came to the U.S. as refugee children, and who came into contact with the criminal justice system before their families were able to naturalize. All of them finished serving their sentences, and some had returned to their families and communities years ago, living transformed lives and supporting their loved ones. Imagine that. There, but for the grace of God, go I.

by **Sophal Ear, Ph.D., Trustee**  
Associate Professor, Occidental College

# FEATURE ARTICLE

## Microfinance in Cambodia: A Debt Trap?

*W. Nathan Green, University of Wisconsin-Madison, CKS Senior Fellow 2016*

Is microfinance in Cambodia reaching the limits of growth? Not yet. Thailand's Bank of Ayudhya and Honk Kong's Bank of East Asia just bought out two of the largest microfinance institutions (MFIs) in the country, Hattakaksekor and LOLC. In April 2018, the International Finance Corporation invested \$40 million in Amret, Cambodia's oldest MFI. The Asian Development Bank reports that increased access to formal finance through digital banking could boost Cambodia's GDP by as much as 32 percent. It would seem that there are good times ahead.

The view from the village, however, is not so optimistic. I have conducted ethnographic research on microfinance borrowing in several villages in Kampot Province over the past few years. It is common to hear people lament, "We are in debt up to our necks now, because there are no jobs here and we have borrowed so much from the MFIs." As a result, most every villager has told me about a friend or family member who has either sold land to repay their loans or fled the village to escape their microfinance lenders.

Needless to say, microfinance is a major force in village life. It was not always this way. The first MFIs arrived in Cambodia in the early 1990s in the United Nations Transitional Authority period. By the end of that decade, MFIs began to transform into commercial institutions. MFIs and their international advisors, such as the World Bank, contended that only a business-model of growth would enable them to provide loans to a majority of Cambodians. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of borrowers in Cambodia grew from about 175,000 to 2.16 million. Much of this growth came from people borrowing from more than one MFI. With almost no regulation of the industry, it was easy for people to borrow from multiple institutions so long as they had enough land titles to provide collateral.

Multiple borrowing is now the primary cause of indebtedness, contributing to a host of social problems. With interest rates averaging 30% until just last year, many borrowers in Cambodia now find themselves caught in a debt-trap. As a result, households often reduce their food consumption or take children out of school or sell off assets like vehicles and agricultural land to repay their increasing debt.

The industry has taken measures to reduce multiple borrowing. In 2012, the National Bank of Cambodia helped to launch the Credit Bureau of Cambodia (CBC) to track borrower's credit history. The CBC faces several challenges. There are still local moneylenders in every village, as well as hundreds of non-registered rural credit operators not included within the CBC's system. There is also little oversight to ensure that MFI credit officers input accurate data into the system. In a fiercely competitive industry, where credit officers are rewarded and punished according to the size of their loan portfolios, there is often incentive for credit officers to abuse the system.



In addition to multiple borrowing, the microfinance industry has also continued to grow as loan sizes increase. In a way, it makes sense that loans have increased in a country that has enjoyed strong GDP growth. However, microfinance loans have far outpaced annual income. One reason is cross-borrowing. People who cannot repay one loan will often borrow from another institution to repay the first. If they cannot get a loan from an MFI, they will turn to the local moneylender to provide them with a short-term loan to repay the MFI. Once they have paid off the MFI, they will take out a new microfinance loan to repay the moneylender. This time, they need an even larger loan from the MFI to repay the local moneylender's high interest rate. In repaying the initial loan, from the perspective of the MFI, the borrower has demonstrated their financial capacity to borrow again—even if the new, larger loan in fact pushes them ever further into debt.

So why are Cambodians taking out such large microfinance loans? The original purpose of microfinance—one still touted by the industry—was to finance private enterprise. But in Cambodia, less than half of microfinance





*Senior Fellow Nathan Green presenting public lecture on Microfinance in Cambodia at Royal University of Phnom Penh*

loans are actually used for business activities.<sup>1</sup> Instead, most borrowers use their loans to purchase consumer goods, improve a home, pay for education, or cover the costs of illness and accidents. When borrowers face problems repaying loans, the industry is quick to blame them for using loans for “non-productive” purposes. This criticism is unfounded for several reasons. Put simply, many consumer goods are now needed to participate in Cambodia’s economic development. For example, Cambodia’s rapidly growing economy is largely driven by people migrating to the city to find work in factories, construction, and the service industry. They now require access to phones and motorcycles if they are to find jobs and stay in touch with their families.

To blame borrowers for how they use their loans also deflects responsibility from systemic issues such as the high cost of healthcare. In a country where quality healthcare is privatized, microfinance is often the only way to pay for emergencies. In the case of accidents or severe illness, most people do not go to state-run health clinics because the quality of care is low. But they do not have health insurance to cover the cost of private hospitals. Growth of the microfinance industry is thus fueled in part by borrowers striving simply to survive.

Moreover, the use of loans for non-business activities is, in fact, actively promoted by MFIs, even if they do not acknowledge it. Credit officers know that their clients are not borrowing for business. “We know that people won’t use the loan for the reason they tell us,” a credit officer at

ACLEDA told me recently, “but if we don’t give them the loan, then they will just go someplace else.”<sup>2</sup> Ignoring the lie is just a part of the job in a competitive industry that rewards credit offices who have large loan portfolios.

Will the microfinance industry in Cambodia continue its growth? The answer is not clear. In the short-term, increasing regulations on lending, such as last year’s 18% interest rate cap, may cause MFIs to stop lending to their poorest clients. Growth could also be curbed by strengthening the Credit Bureau and actually enforcing how many loans people can hold. More likely, however, larger economic changes will determine the future of microfinance. A slowdown in the country’s manufacturing sector causing unemployment, for example, would spell disaster for families reliant upon remittances to repay their loans. On a more optimistic note, national healthcare, such as the country’s National Social Security Fund for factory workers and civil servants, might lead to a reduction in reliance on microfinance loans to pay for healthcare.

Collective refusal to repay the banks is also not without precedent: in 2010 the microfinance industry in Andhra Pradesh, in southern India, crashed after widespread public protests. However, social protest movements do not seem likely any time soon in Cambodia. Addressing social problems exacerbated by over-indebtedness—such as malnutrition, low-educational attainment, and land dispossession—needs to be a top priority in Cambodia.

**W. Nathan Green,**  
University of Wisconsin-Madison, CKS Senior Fellow 2016

<sup>1</sup> Kimty Seng, “Rethinking the Effects of Microcredit on Household Welfare in Cambodia.” *The Journal of Development Studies*, 2017, pp.1–17.

<sup>2</sup> *Personal communication*, June 17, 2018.



# FEATURE ARTICLE

## Development Meets Kuy Villagers in the Prey Lang Forest

*by Senior Fellow 2016 Courtney Work*

For over a thousand years, the indigenous Kuy people have lived harmoniously in Cambodia's northern Prey Lang Forest. The sovereign of this forest (and all water and land), who is often called "Lok Ta", or "honored grandparent," arbitrates resource access and ensures social prosperity. Everyone is entitled to as much as they need from the water and the land, provided they ask permission, make regular communal offerings in gratitude, and behave with respect towards all period.

"Nature" enforces the rules. The sovereign of the water and the land delivers swift punishments for infractions, mostly illnesses or accidents for perpetrators or their loved ones, but also floods, droughts, and blocked access to resources. Now, after 25 years of development in Cambodia, market forces have spurred rapid deforestation, degradation of water sources, and destruction of habitats, laying waste to the once vibrant forest. In the most heavily developed regions, forest remains only where perpetrators fell immediately and deathly ill or where terrible accidents occurred. In these places, people say, "Lok Ta won!" and the area remains open for use and habitation by multiple species.

Outside these pockets of life, however, the punishments promised by Lok Ta for not respecting the bounty of the

water and the land have arrived. During my research in 26 villages in and around the Prey Lang Forest, I collected consistent reports from residents of increased illnesses, dramatic losses of vital tree species, the absence of fish in the water and game on the land, the breakdown of social solidarity, as well as floods and droughts that affect both



local prosperity and the ecosystem. In the face of this loss, the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN), comprised mostly of indigenous Kuy villagers, began organizing and patrolling their forest in the late 1990s.

By 2006, the Kuy reported dramatic changes in their environment due to excessive harvesting of forest resources and conversion of native forests to industrial plantations, which continues into the present, although new concession awards ceased in 2012. In May 2016, Cambodia's Ministry of Environment designated nearly one million hectares of state production forest to protected areas. The largest of



*Spirit House shrine to "Lok Ta", or honored grandparent*



*Village of Kuy*



these is the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary. To meet the challenge of protecting these areas, the ministry has called on local communities and organizations, including the PLCN, to help manage the forest collaboratively and to assist in writing new forestry regulations.

There are considerable challenges to sustainable natural resource management in an environment that privileges economic growth over protection and management. From international development organizations to national actors, down to individual villagers, the value of cash and the power it can bestow invite resource destruction. Two factors, however, with slowly gathering force, push against the seduction of blind deforestation for profit in Prey Lang. The first is climate change. Every village reported crop failures over the last three years from droughts and heavy rains. In 2018, rice and cashew harvests were down by half. Everyone living and working in the Prey Lang Forest has been and will continue to be affected by the localized climate change effects of rapid deforestation.

The second is that both the majority Khmer and minority Kuy share knowledge of and respect for Lok Ta, “the owner of the water and the land.” None say that contemporary climate change and the effects of flood and drought are punishments from Lok Ta. But they all recognize

directly to market pressures that now break down the circular economy of Lok Ta. The logic of the two systems are near inversions of each other. Success in a market economy is measured in financial gain, available through extraction: timber, plantations, metals, fish, and game. From this perspective, people take as much as they possibly can: “I’d be rich just like them, if I were willing to cut to sell,” said one PLCN member. In the circular economy of Lok Ta, you take as much as you need, and share the excess. But not in a market economy.

The villagers’ consequent desire for money, which quickly becomes a need for money, also renders the ministry’s rangers’ work far more complex and difficult. As one ranger noted, “The people are poor. They need money to pay back loans.” The market economy is privileged, while the environmental and community health that for centuries was governed by Lok Ta is marginalized. Rangers and villagers alike want development, but not development’s costs. “We have a lot more stuff now: motorbikes, clothes, and dishes are so easy to get now. But, everything is gone. What kind of development is this?”<sup>1</sup>

My philosopher friends in the Prey Lang Forest are asking important questions and making astute observations. They have one simple conclusion as a point of departure for



*Forest showing signs of deforestation through harvesting trees*

the convergence. Indigenous peoples all over the world recognize this disarray as the logical outcome of not respecting the extended kinship networks that include the water, the land, and all their inhabitants— explicitly not “nature,” but rather a huge society of entities in which humans participate as everyone tries to make a living. Part of my research objective was to learn whether, and to what extent, this shared understanding can facilitate conservation and cooperation in the tense environment of the Prey Lang Forest.

My research uncovered a thorny situation pointing



*Community protection*

addressing our globally shared concerns about climate change and environmental collapse: “Respect is very important ... Respect, solidarity, and gratitude. Maybe we could just start there.”<sup>2</sup>

**Courtney Work,**

Is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Ethnology,  
National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan.

<sup>1</sup> Interview female villager, 16 Feb 2018, Preah Vihear

<sup>2</sup> Interview ritual specialist, 21 Jan 2018, Steung Treng

# FEATURE ARTICLE

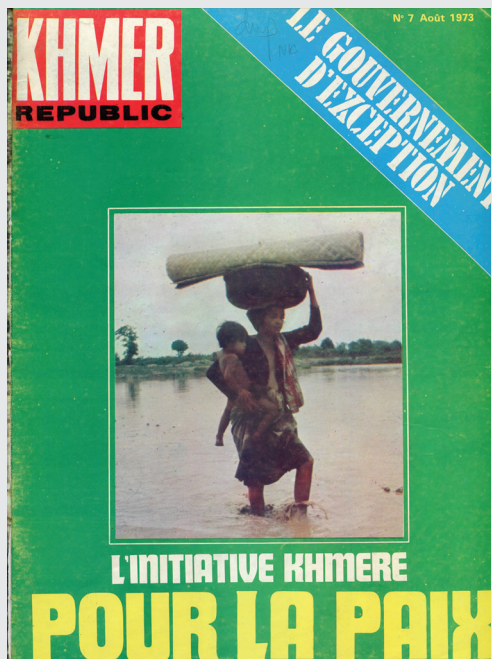
## The Search for the Apollo 17 Moon Rock: A CKS Detective Thriller

In 1973, one month before the US stopped bombing Cambodia as a part of the Vietnam War, President Nixon presented to Cambodia a fragment of the Moon Rock brought back to earth by Apollo 17 astronauts Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt as a symbol of peace and harmony among countries throughout the world. It was received by then Cambodian president Lon Nol, and, at some point in the 2 years before Cambodia fell to the Khmer Rouge, was deposited in the storage of the National Museum of Art in Phnom Penh, where it was subsequently detached from its original plaque and its documentation 'lost'.

Longtime French conservator at the National Museum, Bertrand Porte recently found a piece of rock without identification or listing in the Museum's catalogue, and thus began a search for the provenance of this piece. Authenticating the Moon Rock turned into quite an

adventure, from the Museum's conservation lab to the French Cultural Attache, to the US Embassy, State Department, Nixon Archives and National Archives. And finally CKS.

After 6 months of searching, US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Newbill and Cultural Affairs Officer Monica Davis chanced to be visiting CKS Director Natharoun Ngo and CKS's Library in Siem Reap. Monica inquired whether the CKS library kept archives or copies of old newspapers. CKS Librarian Sivleng Chhor responded that we did indeed, and pointed Monica to the place she was seeking. A few minutes later, Monica cried out gleefully, "I found it!" A Eureka! moment. Indeed, in its research library, CKS had a 1973 edition of the Khmer Republic magazine, recounting the ceremony in which the moon rock was presented to the Cambodian Government. The Apollo 17 Moon Rock is now a central feature of an



Khmer Republic magazine, August 1973, cover



Khmer Republic Magazine August 1973, pages 2 and 3





exhibition at the National Museum, in celebration of the Museum's 100th Anniversary in 2020.

CKS's close relationship with the National Museum dates back to the early days of our program in Cambodia. At that time, distinguished art historian and CKS Trustee Emma Bunker came to Phnom Penh with major NY philanthropist/ collector and Metropolitan Museum Trustee, Shelby White, founder of NYU's Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, funded by the Leon Levy Foundation, named for her late husband. Moved by the plight of the National Museum, a treasure chest of brilliant ancient Khmer art, Shelby White discussed with its Director how she could help the Museum. The collection was undocumented and scattered, after more than 15 years of civil war— the catalogue files hand-written and faded. And scattered— and no modern system of documentation existed to identify, locate or explain pieces in the collection. Existing photographs were often on glass plates and faded. Thus was born the CKS/Leon Levy Foundation National Museum Digital Database and Catalogue Project. Over 10 years, from 2004 to 2014, CKS Trustee Darryl Collins, an Australian art historian living in Cambodia, devoted his time, as project director, to creating a new digital database— patiently instructing Museum employees, establishing a center at the Museum for digital photography, and carefully overseeing the documenting of every piece in the Museum's display and storage, such that they would be recorded and photographed, and storage carefully relocated so that objects could be found. Darryl was project manager for the CKS project for which the Leon

Levy Foundation generously granted over \$300,000 in funds for equipment and personnel training, to bring the National Museum's Collection Catalogue to international museological standards. Upon completion of the digital database and catalogue in 2014, it was posted to the Web so that scholars and art lovers throughout the world could visit the Museum's collection and access the multiple digital images. The curatorial work of provenance and authentication continues.

The rock Bertrand Porte found in his conservation laboratory and sought to authenticate is thus by chance another quirky step in an ongoing relationship between CKS and the National Museum. It also pays tribute to our own meticulously kept research library and the scholarship it enables. We at CKS are delighted by this story of the finding of the Apollo 17 Moon Rock— a symbol of peace and good will among nations— even as the underlying knowledge that enabled those astronauts to reach the moon and return to earth was a tribute to science. We join in the Museum's celebration!

**Lois de Menil, Ph.D.**

This discussion is indebted to Robert Z. Pearlman, "Apollo Moon Rock Rediscovered in Cambodia Debuts ...", [www.space.com/40947-rediscovered-apollo-moon-rock-cambodia-display.html](http://www.space.com/40947-rediscovered-apollo-moon-rock-cambodia-display.html)



*Director Natharoun Ngo in CKS Library with U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Newbill and Cultural Affairs Officer Monica Davis*



*Monica Davis looking at magazine article on the moon rock in CKS Library*



# Cornell IN CAMBODIA 2018

The fourth iteration of Cornell in Cambodia, a program jointly-sponsored by Cornell University's Southeast Asia Program gathers up to twelve students (preferably with no prior knowledge of Cambodia), who engage in a combination of classwork activities, fieldwork, and lectures by the instructor and guest experts.

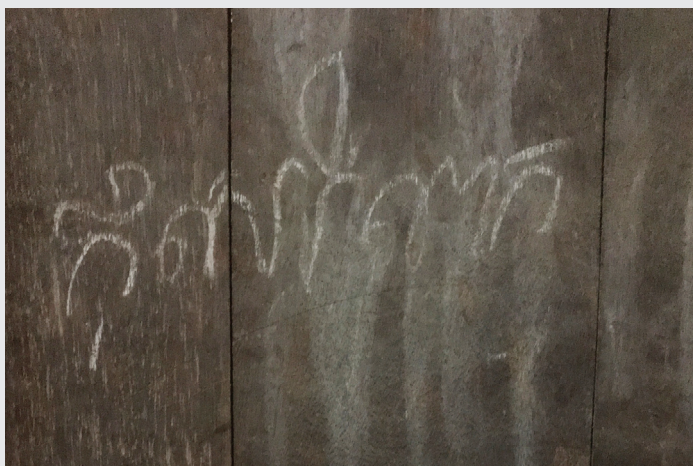
This year was particularly interesting as we met with two extraordinary scholars of Cambodia. Anne Laure was our guide at the Tuol Sleng S-21 museum, a school which had been transformed into a Khmer Rouge torture and execution center. However, the young new director, Chhay Visoth, has sponsored a number of initiatives involving young volunteers and scholars who are taking a fresh look at some of the data on display at Tuol Sleng, data that previous scholars and museum staff had overlooked in the past. Our class focused on graffiti, which we and others had assumed were the inevitable product of tourists furtively scribbling their names on walls and doors. What these young scholars discovered, however, was that much of the graffiti was written by the S-21 guards themselves!

Of course, it is still a very early phase in the study of these texts – and, yes, they are texts – some of the potential interpretations are fascinating.

Below left, is graffiti by the guards that has been determined to be a sketch of the crest of the Government of Democratic Kampuchea (pictured on right). Why did the guard draw this particular image? Where had he seen it? Was he demonstrating his fidelity to the regime? Was he just doodling? (If so, how much free time to doodle did

guards at S-21 have?) There are many questions that, once raised, can inform and lead us down new paths to learn about this seeming byway of Cambodian political history.

In the cells where prisoners of some importance were held, we were invited to look at the graffiti on the doors, written by the guards to be read by prisoners, who by their very placement at Tuol Sleng were to be executed without exception. The guard wrote, "Don't be too free." What does that mean? Is it a taunt by the guard? Is it a warning that the prisoner is not yet ready to die, but still has to write his or her confession (often multiple times) to satisfy the prison officials? Does it mean that the prisoner is expected to carry some sort of moral baggage with her/him into the next life? The ambiguity of the statement is as frightening as it is intriguing. We wrestled with this quite a bit.



*Graffiti/inscription on the inside of the prison cell: "Don't be too free"*

The goal of this winter-semester course is to demonstrate to students first-hand how challenging it is to generate and evaluate knowledge, that the world is full of ambiguity, and that we, as scholars, must wrestle with gaps of information and difficulties of access in order to interpret and make sense of events.

In January 2019, Cornell will continue this important program with veteran instructor Kaja McGowan taking the helm once again, along with Cornell's Senior Lecturer in Khmer, Hannah Phan. It promises to be a wonderful opportunity for a new group of students to experience and be drawn into Cambodian life and culture.



*Guard Graffiti at Tuol Sleng*

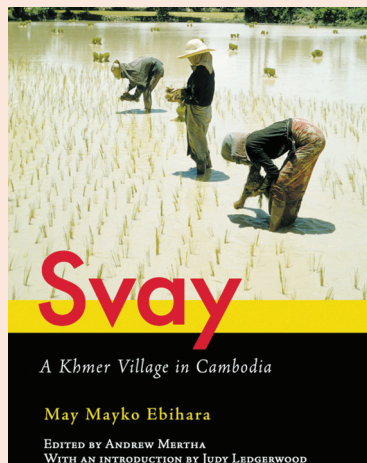


*Crest of the Government of Democratic Kampuchea*

# CKS PUBLISHING PROGRAM

## Svay: A Khmer Village in Cambodia

In January 2018, at the instigation of former CKS President Andrew Mertha, the newly-merged Cornell University Press and Cornell Southeast Asian Studies Press published May Mayko Ebihara's 1968 doctoral dissertation, *Svay: A Khmer Village in Cambodia*. Ebihara, a student of Margaret Mead, undertook extensive fieldwork in Svay, Kandal province, during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The result was a groundbreaking thesis, one of only two existing written ethnographies of rural Cambodian life prior to the Khmer Rouge. It is thus an invaluable lens into a rural way of life as-yet uncomplicated by the horrors that were to follow. Half of Svay's inhabitants died of starvation or disease, or were killed during the Khmer Rouge era, including her adopted parents and grandparents. These aftereffects of a tragic civil war still affect rural Cambodians today.



*The publication of Svay: A Khmer Village in Cambodia*

Astonishingly, Ebihara's thesis was never published. Although widely cited by scholars on Cambodia, it existed as a text available only via scratchy microfilm or through dog-eared copies in forgotten library shelves.

Three years ago, CKS's Publishing Committee voted to translate Ebihara's thesis into Khmer in order to provide Cambodians with access to this text so that they could learn more about their own history and culture. However, CKS can only translate publications that already exist. We do not have the legal capacity to establish intellectual rights or to apply for ISBN (Library of Congress) registry numbers, so we approved this project faced with this dilemma: How to publish May Ebihara's thesis in English subsequently to be able to translate it.

Board member Andrew Mertha got busy. He, contacted one of Ebihara's former students, Prof. Judy Ledgerwood, of Northern Illinois University, who wrote a loving and richly informative introductory essay. He then secure

permission to reprint a chapter written by Ebihara about her subsequent visits to Svay village between 1989 and 1996 to document the devastation of the Khmer Rouge. Ebihara, by then a faculty member at Lehman College, CUNY, had died in 2005. Sandwiched between these two new chapters is Ebihara's original thesis, with only minor editorial changes (pseudonyms, corrections of sources cited in the index, etc.). Cornell University Press took on the project.

David Chandler, the doyen of Cambodia studies, has written: "For more than forty years this luminous, clear-eyed book, now published commercially for the first time, has been an inspiration for anyone interested in the details of



*May Ebihara (in the middle) with Svay villagers in Kandal province in 1989; Photo: <http://sea.lib.niu.edu>*

Cambodian rural life. Svay is an admirable, thoroughly professional ethnography of a rice-growing village and its people, as Ebihara observed them so astutely in 1959–1960. Now it can also be read as a fond, crisply written, and indispensable eulogy for a badly damaged, disappearing way of life."

At CKS we are extremely proud to have accomplished what had not been done in a half century, initiate a process whereby May Ebihara's thesis finally achieved what it has so long deserved – a proper publication. This, in turn, will allow us now to translate this important text into Khmer and give back to Cambodians a key missing piece of their own history. Our translation is well underway and will be completed by late 2018. We hope to have the translated book for sale in Cambodia by early 2019.



# LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

In the course of their research, Senior Fellows are asked to chair CKS public lectures or seminar/workshops. Estes and Green, for instance, conducted a CKS public lecture at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, and a CKS workshop on ethnographic research methodology for students at the Royal University of Law

and Economics, in Phnom Penh, using the example of rural finance in rural Cambodia. There were two goals of the workshop: to outline the context of microfinance in Cambodia; and to demonstrate how ethnographic methodology can provide a unique micro-perspective.

## Boston University Workshop at CKS

Development strategies concerning food, energy, and water security (FEWS) have nation-wide impact, above all on the ecosystem that Cambodians depend upon. To analyze different development scenarios, a Boston University team has developed data-based models and a decision-support tool called MIDAS. MIDAS assists decision makers in understanding tradeoffs that require complex data modeling.

The CKS/BU 2-day workshop offered participants an

opportunity to learn about and work with MIDAS on a variety of development scenarios, and to envision outcomes, such as deforestation and urbanization. Leaders of the workshop were Dr. Suchi Gopal, a professor at Boston University whose approach is interdisciplinary and deals with spatial analysis and modeling. She has applied spatial analysis to a variety of issues in biology, environmental science, public health and business. Josh Pitts, also from Boston University, is a data scientist and software engineer.



*At CKS-BU Seminar Workshop*



# LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

## CKS Hosts Two Workshops on Social Science Research in Cambodia

Workshops focusing on specific topics are at the heart of academic life. This four-day workshop co-organized by CKS and the European Union project “Governance and Emergence of Human Science Research in Cambodia”, in partnership with three Cambodian universities and two Government Ministries<sup>1</sup> explored the role of the humanities and social sciences in the university curriculum, with the objective of improving higher education in these fields and strengthening research at Cambodian universities.

Speakers and participants from Cambodia, France and the U.S. represented a broad spectrum of the social sciences and humanities. The workshop’s purpose was to forge links in training, research and scholarship among those present, and to identify short- and long-term goals to bring Cambodian universities up to international standards of scholarship.

This workshop’s organizers set as their first objective identifying the available local and international resources willing to work together to establish centers of research activity and to participate in further meetings. Participants suggested the topics for future meetings. The workshop therefore also served as an opportunity for encounter between those starting out and those already involved in research— a rich opportunity for professional career development.

Capacity building in Cambodian universities is a central focus of CKS’s mission to its host country.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.



*Natharoun Ngo speaking at workshop in CKS Lois de Manil Conference Hall*

## US Intern Jocelyn Vegas: Mastering JSTOR

JSTOR is an online international archive of high-quality English language journals available by subscription to libraries around the world. It is an invaluable research asset. CKS library is a JSTOR subscriber. All U.S. graduate students and researchers now use JSTOR.



CKS intern Jocelyn Vega, a graduate student from Cornell University, collaborated with CKS librarians to organize a JSTOR training workshop open to all, "Introduction to JSTOR". Eight students as well as researchers from local Siem Reap universities and institutes, and a monk gathered in CKS's seminar room in the late afternoon. As presenter, Jocelyn's ambition was not only to introduce JSTOR as a research tool, but also to suggest the role of research in everyday life.

Despite their absence of familiarity with online databases, participants eagerly embraced the presentation. During the

discussion following, participants posed questions ranging from questioning the validity of academic journals to how to pursue advanced searches for specific topics. Participants engaged with the presenter in an environment of mutual learning. They also agreed to share their new acquaintance with JSTOR with friends.

After the presentation, Jocelyn pointed participants to the availability of a free online research class on JSTOR, so they could continue learning about research, journal articles and citations. This course is self-directed, but provides ample videos, practice sessions, and descriptions to guide them through each module. They can work at their own pace. At the end of this class, participants will hopefully have sufficient practice and confidence to return to the CKS library to use JSTOR and other online databases.

The training workshop was a great success because of the involvement of informed and enthusiastic participants, and our intern Jocelyn Vega's willingness to take on the challenge. Thank you, Jocelyn!

## Sustainable Development: Workshop with Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University Rotary Club Mid-Career Fellows

Chulalongkorn, a leading Bangkok university, hosts a Rotary Club Mid-Career Fellows Program. This year's program featured field study focusing on Cambodia, with the theme "Post Conflict Transformation", for a class of 23 Rotary Peace Fellows from 19 countries, including 4 Americans, of which two scholars from Texas and upstate New York.

Held at CKS, a morning workshop entitled "Cambodia Sustainable Development in 2017", led by CKS's director, focused on technical aspects of Cambodia's post-conflict transformation based on economic and social data analysis from the director's previous experience at the UNDP, plus recent research, technical reports and information from the World Bank, the United Nations, and Oxfam.



# LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

## Focus on Microfinance and Ethnography: Putting People at the Center of Development

*With Senior Fellows 2016 Jennifer Estes and Nathan Green*

As part of their research Fellowships, CKS Senior Fellows agree to contribute to CKS in-country programs, especially public lectures and workshops.

Ethnographers spend an extended period of professional time living with and observing a particular group of people, and participating in their activities. CKS Senior Fellows Estes and Green, for instance, lived in a Cambodian village for a year. While participating in community events and daily household activities, they focused on use of microfinance loans. In interviews and informal conversations, Estes and Green gained an in-depth understanding of the ways that loans are changing social relationships within families and the community. Many youth and adults now migrate out of the village to cities to help their families repay their microfinance loans. As a result, grandparents have taken on a greater responsibility raising grandchildren, relying heavily upon their adult children for economic needs.

Based upon their research, Estes and Green are advocates for more ethnographic research on economic development in Cambodia to supplement the large number of quantitative studies already underway. Quantitative studies of microfinance can tell us a lot about large-scale trends within the country. However, they offer little in the way of how people experience and understand microfinance borrowing. Nor can quantitative studies capture the complex borrowing behavior of people. The detail-rich information gleaned through ethnography thus allows for a more nuanced understanding of economic development in Cambodia, one that should inform future policy decisions.



*Jennifer and Nathan lecturing at Royal University of Law and Economy*



## Everyday Life under the Khmer Rouge: A CKS Collaboration with Bophana Center

“How Khmer Rouge Framed Everyday Life” is one of the eight chapters of a multi-media application on Khmer Rouge History” produced by the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center. This app offers an online learning platform that includes multimedia and interactive tools for users, in addition to written articles. Keo Duong, one of its authors, made a presentation to fifty local and international participants, together with Mr. Tea Nguon, a Civil Party to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia, at CKS Conference Hall in Siem Reap.

The presentation covered many aspects of the Khmer Rouge policy of control, including description of common living conditions. New social status in the so-called single-class society was presented to show the difference between announced policy and its implementation. While the Khmer Rouge policy claimed that everyone was equal, at least two social classes were clearly in place: New People (those who were expelled from towns) and Based People (those who remained in the area controlled by the Khmer Rouge before they took power in April 1975). Next, he turned to living conditions in cooperatives and overwork assigned by Khmer Rouge cadres. Although Democratic Kampuchea’s Constitution stated, “Joblessness is absolutely abolished in Democratic Kampuchea,” this was far from the reality of what occurred. Keo Duong showed photos of individuals of varying ages all forced to work for the Khmer Rouge— all except for new-born babies. It was not a ‘job’ in the way we define it today, but rather it was forced labor slavery.

In addition to social division and overwork, starvation and health treatment were also topics of the presentation. The presenter described the Khmer Rouge “Four Year Plan,” and analyzed the policy as well as its implementation in order to explain why people starved during the Khmer Rouge period. To help participants visualize the reality under the Khmer Rouge, he screened an eight-minute documentary film about the experience of an old woman who was assigned to cook for people in the cooperative.



*KRA tablets donated by Bophana Center set up at CKS Library*

It is one of sixty-five short documentary films and videos of witnesses’ testimonies in the KR-App.

After the presentation, Mr. Tea Nguon, a Civil Party before the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia, shared his personal experience under the Khmer Rouge. He was in the youth mobile unit and was assigned to build Kamping Pouy dam in Battambang province, a several thousand meters long dam that cost the lives of many people. He endured grueling work to build the dam, together with thousands of people. “I had only bones and skin. I was very skinny.” That was why he filed a complaint Khmer Rouge Tribunal against the Khmer Rouge leaders and was accepted as a Civil Party.

The presentation ended with questions and discussion among the participants and presenters. Following the presentation, CKS, a partner in the Bophana Center’s KR-App project, accepted the Bophana Center’s request to provide space to install five tables with the KR-App at CKS’s Library in Siem Reap for public access.

# LANGUAGE & CULTURE PROGRAM

CKS's Khmer Language and Culture Program is an intensive in-country language training program for all levels of learners, run in collaboration with the Advanced Khmer Studies program (ASK) of the University of Hawai'i Manoa.



*Khmer Culture class*

The two combined immersion programs aim to fill a void at the U.S. universities by providing a one-of-a-kind opportunity to acquire an in-country linguistic foundation to engage in academic research and professional contact with all segments of Cambodian society. Instruction is in small individualized groups taught by local Khmer instructors.

The academic program is structured to be equivalent to a full year's university course credit, consisting of daily four-hour morning language instruction, followed by three-hour afternoon visits that engage task-based learning in interaction with Khmer society and non-governmental agencies.

Some personal experiences of our 2018 summer program are highlighted in students' comments:

*"The CKS/ASK language program has been a life-changing experience for me. The moments I've gotten to experience being Cambodian-American during this program have been extremely heartfelt. I never thought that I would be able to come back to the motherland from where my parents once lived and to truly embrace Khmerness."*

*"The 6-week program truly is intensive, but in the best kind of way. We are constantly learning, travelling, and applying our newly acquired skills in different circumstances. I think one of the best assets of the program is that*

*it is not simply a language program, but a language and culture program, which allows the students to learn the specifics of the Khmer language and engage actively with its social and cultural constructs."*



*Students learning how to use Kroma, Khmer scarf*

*"It is a learning and nurturing atmosphere. I will bring this back to my school, share my experience with students on my campus to learn more about Cambodia, while have fun learning the language, and Khmer culture."*

*"As a PhD student, it afforded me the opportunity to see the types of resources I can get access to in the city, when I return for my fieldwork."*

Total immersion in the host-country is an incomparable opportunity for language learning, and it provides students with the foundation necessary for academic growth, acquiring research skills, and future career opportunities.

Khmer is one of the less commonly taught languages in the U.S. and elsewhere. Our program equips students with a solid foundation to continue their learning after the program ends. Since it is rare to find Khmer language material for learners, our project this summer included producing a textbook, Reading and Writing Khmer for Beginners, with organized exercises and audio recordings by native speakers to improve learners' listening, reading and speaking skills. Our goal is to help them become independent and self-directed learners and insightful researchers in the field of Khmer studies.



# JUNIOR RESIDENT FELLOWS PROGRAM 2018

CKS welcomed a new cohort of undergraduates for its always popular 2018 Junior Resident Fellows Program at its headquarters in Wat Damnak, Siem Reap, on Monday, July 2nd. Five students each from France, Cambodia, and the United States hailed from George Washington University, Cornell, SUNY-Geneseo, Zaman University, the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Sciences Po-Le Havre, the École du Louvre, and Ankara University. For most Fellows, this was their first time in Cambodia. After meeting their instructor, Dr. Alberto Pérez-Pereiro, and touring CKS facilities, students from Pannasastra University of Cambodia prepped them on Khmer culture and etiquette in preparation for their six-weeks in Cambodia. In addition to a daily course on contemporary Cambodia, French and American Fellows followed daily Khmer language classes, while Cambodian Fellows took classes to improve their classroom English. A core of the program was for each student to undertake his/her own research project and to submit a term paper.

Fellows pursued projects on topics as diverse as the effects of tourism on Angkor, silk production in Cambodia, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and small-scale farm agricultural diversification. Others addressed the potential of socially engaged Buddhism to play a role in mental health treatment, the changing symbolic role of Angkor Wat in Cambodian education, and the transformation of the tourism sector as a response to Chinese investment and interest in Cambodia as a vacation destination. In order to undertake these projects, Fellows spent the first few days of class focusing on ethnography, research ethics, and research design.

During the course, they learned about Cambodian society including minority groups, folklore such as the Ramayana and the legend of Preah Ko and Preah Keo, Cambodian

economics, contemporary art, etc. These classes were complemented by guest lectures. Professor Gerard Diffloth lectured on the many Austroasiatic languages scattered across South and Southeast Asia and the historiography of this field. Julia Wallace addressed the changing media and journalistic landscape of the country. CKS Senior Fellows Nathan Green presented his research on the long-term effects of the micro-finance industry on rural livelihoods; while Michael Powell lectured on changes in Cambodia's agricultural sector as a response to climate change and the government's development goals. When the Jr. Fellows were not attending class, working on their research projects or completing their copious reading assignments at the CKS library, they had the opportunity to visit the Angkor temples, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, the Choeung Ek Killing Fields, the Royal Palace and the National Museum of Art.

Fellows concluded the program by presenting their research projects, the culmination of their archival and ethnographic research. Several students expressed their dismay that the program was not longer. Nevertheless, the quality of their presentations reflected their dedication and commitment. Although, as undergraduates, not all Jr. Fellows will continue professional careers focused on Cambodia, they finished their stay with an appreciation for its history, culture, and people. As well, they mastered research skills that will prove invaluable, no matter their future endeavors. Fellows expressed their keen appreciation for the diverse composition of the class and for their ability to make international connections. Without any doubt, these connections and experiences will last a life time.

This program has been generously funded by a private donor.



*Junior Fellows in front of CKS Library*



*Junior Fellows in front of Angkor Wat*

# 2018 JUNIOR FELLOWS' VOICES



**Priyanith Keo**

I have enjoyed conversations with other Fellows whose academic and personal backgrounds vary greatly. My roommate, who studies history of art in Paris, introduced me to new and fascinating concepts about Western Art, which, coincidentally, related to one of the assigned readings for class. Every interaction has the ability to move from the most banal things to a lesson in American life, French cuisine or Khmer words. I have also loved the immersive nature of the program. Though I live in Phnom Penh, I stay at the hotel with the other Fellows and spend almost all my waking hours with them. I get to see my own city through the eyes of a stranger.

The CKS library is mind-blowing. My senses go into complete overdrive every time I step into the back library. It still amazes me that as soon as I step into the Center, the hustle and bustle of the outside world just melts away. It really allows me to focus on my work or just sit and think.

**Jordan DesRosiers**

What I like most about the program is that it gives you the unique experience of being fully enveloped in the same field that you are studying. So many times in schools and universities the subject matter that you're learning about is so far removed from your life. This program actually forces you to be submerged in the Cambodian culture during the entirety of the program, which provides such a unique experience. I feel that this program will definitely give me an advantage in the job market, due to the hands-on experience that [it] provides.



**Maland Khim**

[What] I love about this program is the opportunity to meet and work with the foreign fellows because we have totally different backgrounds. I wish the program were longer. I have had a great impression of the CKS staff who have been supporting me since my first day in Siem Reap and in Phnom Penh. They have not only played a role as advisors, but as brothers and sisters taking care of us in time of emergency needs. This program has helped me to understand more about Cambodian culture. My research is a new gateway for me to what I have to do in the future.



**Lisa Fidon**

This program is an amazing opportunity: more than a simple study program, it's a combination of many new experiments and discovery. I pursued my first research project, made new contacts in my domain of work and learned a lot about the everyday life of the Cambodian people. I particularly enjoyed the many nationalities of the fellows of this trip.



**Soramee Nhov**

I found out about the program three years ago and I had always wanted to be a part of it. I'm doing research on a topic I love. One of the things that I love most about the program is its support and facilities provided to assist in learning and doing research. I think CKS one of the most important research institutions in Cambodia and its library contains important books and documents. The environment in Siem Reap is peaceful and amazing.



I've learned a lot about myself through this program and it has changed my perspectives about my career. I tended to exclude a research career in my future, thinking it was a lonely process. However, I've discovered research has a human and social side that I'd never thought of. As the youngest fellow, I'm very thankful for this opportunity, which will have, for sure, an impact in my academic plans.

I'm currently a journalist student and I'm planning to work in international media sectors. This program has provided strong background knowledge for my academic journey.



# 2018 CKS SENIOR FELLOWS

One of CKS's core programs is the Senior Fellowship Program intended to support scholarly research on Cambodia, including Ph.D. dissertation research. CKS receives funding for these fellowships for American scholars from a sub-grant of the U.S. State Department Bureau of Economic and Cultural Affairs through the Council of American

Overseas Research Centers; from the Scaler Foundation for French scholars; and from Board of Directors' contributions for Cambodian scholars. Awardees are chosen from among numerous applications by CKS's Fellowship Committee of scholars, headed by Senior Scholar Alan Kolata.

**Mary Collier Wilks** is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Virginia. Her research topic is: "Global Civil Society or Asian Modernity? Negotiating Donor Imaginaries in Cambodia Context" which will investigate how national perceptions shape gender and development programs funded by the U.S. and Japan and implemented in Cambodia. This project explores how Japanese and U.S. NGOs implement gender and development programs based on a different perception of what it means to 'advance women.' Her research in Cambodia will explore two questions: (1) how do local and foreign development practitioners adapt and negotiate the priorities of U.S. and Japanese donor organizations in Cambodia? (2) To what extent do these programs shape Cambodians' self-understanding, including their professional identities and subjective experience?



**Dr. Phyllis Ngai**, Visiting Associate Professor, University of Montana-Missoula, is studying local approaches to global issues. Her subject is: "NGO Approaches to Empowering Indigenous Peoples and Women in Cambodia and Myanmar". The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals-2030 Agenda has called for reducing inequality and empowering Indigenous peoples, women, and girls. As a critical reflection on the practical implications of adopting a global vision to the local development context, she is investigating how local NGOs "translate" the global rhetoric to the national socio-cultural and political context. Her purpose is to suggest how local efforts can be enhanced to bring about sustainable social change beneficial to the marginalized and the underserved.



**Jennifer A. Zelnick**, PhD candidate in anthropology, University of California, Irvine, is pursuing transnational, multi-sited ethnographic research: "Deported 'Home?': Cambodian-Americans and the Limits of Legal Permanent Residency." Cambodian-Americans are exiled to Cambodia as stateless non-citizens largely unfamiliar with their "homeland." What does it mean to "return" to a country one doesn't remember, or where one has never lived? , As of June 1, 2018, 638 Cambodian-American legal permanent residents (LPRs) have been deported from the U.S. to Cambodia, and thousands more await final orders of deportation. ." Specifically, Zelnick is studying how the emergence of "deportable refugees" challenges issues of transnationality, migrant precarity, documentation, and illegality.



**Sokhieng Au**, an independent scholar, is focusing on the history of the Luso-Khmer population in Cambodia. Her subject is "The de Monteiros: Miscenehation and Tribalism in Cambodia", Specifically focusing on the prominent Portuguese-Khmer clan of the de Monteiros, descended from sixteenth-century Portuguese adventurers in Cambodia, her project reframes issues of migration and miscegenation beyond the colonial narrative. Catholic Luso-Khmers, an immigrant minority, often served in important positions as emissaries, translators and court officials for Khmer rulers.



# 2018 CKS SENIOR FELLOWS



**Jeffrey Dyer**, PhD candidate, musicology & ethnomusicology, Boston University, is working on “Spectral Sounds, Spectral Time: Remembrance and the Future in Khmer Ritual and Performance.” His research explores personal, collective, and political issues that arise when Khmer people incorporate memories of the past as a means of animating the present and future. Focusing on the intertwined topics of rituals, sound, performance, and temporality, this project describes Khmer people’s relations with spirits, ancestors, and the dead, which emerge when musicians manifest those spectral beings in sound. He examines how this musical representation, informed by Buddhist morality, brings stability and strength to people grappling with loss, change and precariousness, trauma and recovery.

**Dr. Pierre-Mong Lim** holds a PhD in Chinese transcultural studies from the University of Lyon. His post-doctoral research on “Cambodian Sinophone Literature, 1957-1967” focuses on texts written in modern Chinese and published in Cambodian Chinese journals and their literary supplements. He seeks to reread theories of nationalism that link it to the development of press capitalism and vernacular literature by exploring the content and cultural referents in Sino-Khmer literature that appear neither in Chinese nor Cambodian literature, but as a process of hybridization. He also proposes to translate into French a selection of texts, especially prose poems.



**Dr. Nicolas Revire** is a lecturer at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. His topic, in Buddhist art and archaeology is: “The life of the Buddha at Angkor.” He will undertake a detailed study of the narrative reliefs of the life of the Buddha depicted at Angkor, comprising all material dating to before the pre-modern period (ca. 12th–16th c.). These reliefs are found either in situ on Buddhist monuments or on stone stelae, mostly unpublished, and now either on display in Cambodian museums or in storage depots throughout Cambodia.



**Tum Nhim**, Cambodian PhD candidate in environmental economics and natural resources at Wageningen University (Netherlands). He is conducting research on “Water Scarcity and Cooperation among Farmers in Cambodia: A Field Experiment” exploring how social norms of cooperation among farmers in Cambodia can be fostered and preserved in times of increased scarcity. Water governance is a problem in Cambodia as resources grow scarce, cooperation among farmers and government enforcement are weak. He will conduct field experiments in a Cambodian river basin to understand how different enforcement mechanisms (community and state enforcement) affect levels of cooperation among farmers, how farmers make decisions on collective action.



**Marylou Cler-Torres**, PhD candidate in cultural studies at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. Her topic is: «The restoration of the ancient musical heritage in Cambodia through its ‘artisans’: craft, memory and socio-political issues associated with the reinvention of the Khmer harp.» Her project stands at the intersection of social anthropology and ethnomusicology. In studying the Khmer harp, which disappeared in the 15th century with the fall of Angkor, her research aims, from the workshop to the stage, to analyze the musicological aspects of its revival, as well as its musical instruments— learning and transmission of the new and ancestral “know-how”.





# 2018 CAMBODIAN SENIOR FELLOW TUM NHIM SPEAKS

I am delighted to have been selected for the CKS Senior Fellowship Program 2018-2019. As a Cambodian scholar, I view this program as an innovative, forward-looking, and influential in enabling Cambodian, French and American scholars to conduct research in Cambodia. I am impressed by the diversity of research topics supported by this program, which include cultural studies, environmental sustainability, social inequality, and governance, all of which attest to the crucial role of research to the future development of Cambodia, while fostering a scholarly network between Cambodia and the world. This network helps integrate Cambodian scholars into the international community, opens the possibility for the transfer of knowledge and expertise among Cambodian and international scholars, and fosters understanding of Cambodia. The CKS Senior Fellowship Program is unique in Cambodia.

I am grateful for the generous support I receive from this program. CKS provides not only critical funding for my fieldwork, but also support for research-related activities in Cambodia, including space to work at CKS's office, a letter of affiliation required for permission to do a field experiment, and useful information regarding

accommodations, transportation and other logistics in Cambodia. In addition to access to its research library, CKS also provides a venue for publication of research findings and opportunities to present my research at conferences.

When I learned that I was awarded the fellowship, I immediately felt encouraged in the belief that I can bring my research to a higher level by connecting theory and practice. I mainly work on building stylized mathematical and computer simulation models to understand how resilient social norms of water sharing are to climate change and to explore mechanisms and governance arrangements that promote efficient and cooperative uses of water among small farmers.

Because my work is entirely theoretical, and its lack of empirical grounding therefore prevents any predictions about real world cases, the fellowship program made it possible for me to take my model predictions to the field to validate the results and test potential policy solutions that help promote efficient and cooperative water use in the face of climate change.

The grant provides an opportunity for me to learn from the real-life application of methods, tools and approaches in conducting interdisciplinary research in behavioral economic, water governance and climate change.



*Tum Nhim (left) discussing water sharing system with farmers and local authority in rural Cambodia*



*Cornell students learning the Cambodian classical dance*

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*Headquarters of the Center for Khmer Studies*

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