

The Director's note

by *Dr. Philippe Peycam*

Since the first issue of Siksacakr was printed last April, the growth of the Center for Khmer Studies has undergone new developments which I am pleased to share with Siksacakr's readers.

PROF. DAVID CHANDLER IS ON BOARD

In June of this year Prof. David Chandler, the well known historian of Cambodia, then Adjunct Professor at Cornell University, formally joined the CKS team. David Chandler's association with the CKS represents — even though he would not dare to admit it himself — a unique step in the project's development. The original group of people who started the Center, in Cambodia and outside the country, considered his joining the Center a reward and a recognition for the work that had already been accomplished. There is no doubt that David's knowledge, experience and dedication to Cambodia will have a positive effect on the Center's future and its role in the academic world. David's full-time involvement as the CKS's Senior Advisor is made possible by a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.

A GROWING CKS CONSORTIUM

The other important development in the last six months has been the reinforcement of the Center's credibility as a network of institutions and individuals.

In Cambodia, the CKS has established itself as partner of several prestigious educational and intellectual institutions in addition to those who became its partners in 1999. These institutions include the Royal Academy of Cambodia, the Buddhist Institute, the National Museum of Phnom Penh, the National Archives of Cambodia and the Center for Advanced Studies. Their support and cooperation will be sought to make maximum use of the Center's resources, particularly with its international members, in the common effort to reinforce higher education in Cambodia, in full association with the CKS's existing Cambodian partners, the University of Phnom Penh and the University of Fine Arts.

The Center's international consortium has also grown substantially. Between March and June 2000, I was able to visit numerous organizations in the United States, Europe and

Southeast Asia and I met many people who showed a lively interest in Khmer studies.

In August, David Chandler traveled to California and to Australia to gather institutional support while I visited several European institutions before we met in Singapore for another working visit. After a brief stop in Bangkok, David and I spent another week meeting scholars and students in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

The CKS consortium is becoming more diverse. We see this diversity as a source of strength and openness for a project which aims primarily to conduct its activities in Cambodia and with Cambodian institutions and people.

CKS IS PREPARING TO BECOME FULLY OPERATIONAL

Over the last six months there have also been many tangible achievements, and CKS is on the verge of becoming fully operational.

There is first and foremost the work carried out at Wat Damnak in Siem Reap, where the Center is establishing its physical base. Restoration of the library and the conference buildings has been completed on time thanks mostly to the skill and dedication of the CKS architects, Chim Phet, François Tainturier and Cheam Phally - who has since left to Japan to pursue further studies. Thanks to a generous individual donation, Phet has recently turned his attention to the building of two classrooms for the primary school located in the monastery's compound, as he explains in his article elsewhere in the newsletter. François has continued to supervise the restoration of the Center's two buildings while focusing on the interior fittings and the surrounding landscape of these architectural pieces. François and Phet have continued their investigation of Wat Damnak and they have prepared a plan for a third building to be erected to house the Center's administration.

The restoration of the Center's library and conference room and their furniture have been made possible thanks to private donations from individuals in the United States, France and the United Kingdom. I want to thank them on behalf of all the people at the CKS.

Other activities include the publication of the present issue of Siksacackr and the building of the CKS library collection. This second newsletter benefited from the editorial supervision of David Chandler and Michel Antelme, and, like the previous one, it is the result of collective work by the CKS team and the voluntary researchers associated with the Center. We thank them all for their contributions and their help.

As for the long process of building the CKS library, limited acquisitions have been made, based in large part on the bibliographical work compiled by Dr William Southworth. The CKS has also embarked on an enriching cooperation with the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh. The CKS library has benefited greatly from donations of books and funds. I want to take this opportunity to thank wholeheartedly Ms Judith Jacob and Ms Jacqueline Filliozat for the generous donations of books which they made to the Center's study library*.

These developments within the CKS project have meant that the Center's team has had to expand. The team now includes Dr Beng Hong Socheat Khemro, CKS program coordinator, Danh Hong, lexicographer and computer fanatic, and Chhanh Pharin, the new CKS librarian.

The growing number of collaborators and participants, the involvement of numerous 'friends' in and outside Cambodia, and the steady encouragements of such a people as Bonnie Burnham, Michael Tomlan, Thak Chaloemtiarana and Marry Elen Lane have enabled the CKS to become a living and open forum of exchange. Some evenings, waves of heated brain activity seem to diffuse from the Center's

house in Siem Reap. When email connection is working — when it is working — this effervescence can be relayed to and from the rest of the world.

THE CKS INAUGURAL WORKSHOP (JANUARY 14 - 17)

These efforts are paving the ground for the CKS inaugural workshop which will take place in Siem Reap between 14th and 18th January 2000 and which will constitute the real operational launch of the Center.

Those attending the workshop will include over twenty members of the Center's academic consortium, drawn from Cambodian institutions and from universities in several countries, as well as scholars from a wide range of disciplines who are actively engaged in the study of Cambodia's history, culture and society. Participants are expected to discuss the "state, practice and future of Khmer studies".

Aiming to work as a catalyst for discussions and projects in all aspects of Khmer Studies, we hope that the event will help to establish and renew friendship among scholars of Cambodia and supporters of CKS, and will also create new connections that can truly benefit Cambodia and Cambodian higher education as a whole.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the workshop. In the meantime, we are very grateful for your continuing support.

* To be more precise, Mrs Jacob's donation was made to the monastery of Vat Damneak. They concern Buddhist books in Pali and they will be stored at the Center's library, in agreement with the Vat's authority.

The Center is establishing or has already established working ties with representatives of universities and cultural institutions such as:

The Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Royal University of Fine Arts, The Royal Academy of Cambodia, the Institut Bouddhique, in Cambodia, U.C. Berkeley, C.S.U. Long Beach, U. of Northern Illinois, U. of Washington (Seattle) in the United States, International Institute of Asian Studies (The Netherlands), School of Oriental and African Studies (United-Kingdom), Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, U. Paris VII, Institut des Sciences Politiques de Paris, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (France), U. of

Passau, Köln Fachhochschule, Bonn U., Humboldt U. (Germany), Thammasat U., Chulalongkorn U. (Thailand), Australian National University, Monash U. (Australia), and the University of British Columbia (Canada).

Members of these institutions have joined (or will soon join) the original founding members of the consortium including the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Royal University of Fine Arts, APSARA, the World Monuments Fund, National University of Singapore, Cornell University, the Asia Society and the University of Hawaii at Manoa.