

Photo: CKS

*The spirit of Cambodia's reopening*

## IN THIS ISSUE

CKS Governance  
Chairman's Welcome  
President's letter  
Then and Now  
Help Support CKS !  
2021-2022 Annual Donors

### LOOKING BACK

Beginnings!  
Building the Field of Khmer Studies

### FEATURES

Svay Village  
Recent History  
Siem Reap Returns to Life  
Siksācākṛ: Journal of Cambodia Research

01	<b>CKS LIBRARY</b>	
02	Koha: New Library Catalogue	15
03	CKS Launches First Siem Reap Book Fair	16
04		
05	<b>PROGRAMS</b>	
06	CKS Webinars and Public Meetings	17
	CKS Field School	18
	The Origin of Zero	19
07	Research Training Seminar	20
09		
	<b>ANNUAL PROGRAMS</b>	
	CKS Khmer Language and Culture Program	21
11	Summer Junior Resident Fellows Program	22
12	CKS Senior Fellows 2022-2023	23
13	From Cambodian Countryside to Cultural Anthropologist	26
14		



# Mission Statement

CKS is an American Overseas Research Center supported by major international foundations, educational institutions, scholars, and individual philanthropy. It is an independent, non-profit corporation incorporated in the state of Delaware, USA. It receives partial support for overhead and research fellowships from the U.S. Government. Its programs in the social sciences, arts and humanities are focused on Cambodia and the Mekong region.

## CKS seeks to:

- Promote research and support international scholarly exchange through programs that increase understanding of Cambodia and its region, both within Cambodia and at US universities.
- Strengthen Cambodia’s cultural and educational structures and integrate Cambodian scholars into regional and international exchange.
- CKS’s programs are administered from its offices in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- CKS is a member institution of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC).

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We are honored that His Royal Highness  
Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia,  
is the royal patron of CKS's Library.

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Deputy Director Samedy Suong (left) and Finance Manager Sreykich Tith, who kept the CKS administration running during the Pandemic.



# Welcome to CKS!

## Dear friends of CKS,

After the shock of the Covid pandemic in early 2020, we all might have hoped that the promised vaccine would restore a modicum of normalcy by 2021, the promised vaccine would restore a modicum of normalcy. But, alas, far from it. New variants emerged that were only partly resisted by the vaccines. Cambodia’s borders were closed to all but the most persistent visitors.

Blessed with a young population, plenty of sun and life outdoors, Cambodia emerged relatively unharmed. By Fall 2021, life inside Cambodia returned to relatively normal. As a result, CKS trustees and staff have been very busy throughout this year.

With a slow return to work, CKS developed a rich roster of webinars, lectures, conferences, and workshops that now reach broad new audiences around the world because all have been online. Many now also have a live local audience again. There were no less than 27 of these events in 2021. Themes varied from history, archeology, anthropology, to the history of Khmer dance. They also included important training workshops on how to conduct research and to apply for research grants. CKS Library also organized workshops and lectures, both for users and for Cambodian librarians, to introduce our exceptional new online catalog. We also published our long-awaited trilingual journal of Cambodia studies, Siksacakr vol. XVI.

CKS’s rhythm has kept apace this year, with, among others, the inaugural Benny Widyono Memorial Lecture given by distinguished international scholar, Dr. Sorpong Peou, and organized in collaboration with Cambodia’s Paragon University. Its topic was “Post-Cold War Peace Missions: Assessing UNTAC’s Legacy.” Benny Widyono’s distinguished career at the United Nations-led to his appointment as Governor of Siem Reap Province during the period of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), established by the Paris Peace Accords to carry out free elections in Cambodia with the rank of Ambassador. He then served as the Secretary General’s Representative in Cambodia; and in his retirement, as a Professor of Economics in the US. He was one of the earliest and most dedicated of CKS trustees, and we are pleased to honor his memory with an annual lecture on subjects close to his heart.

All of this is taking place as Cambodian borders reopen, and CKS is able to resume its normal programs alongside its newly created ones. We, therefore, expect an avalanche of Fellows, students, and scholars this summer-- not only those who received CKS fellowships this year but also those who were unable to take advantage of their fellowships over the past two years and had to postpone them. This will naturally



Jacques Hennessy

entail a great deal more work, and I would like to thank all our Cambodian staff, particularly our Finance Manager Sreykich Tith and Samedy Suong, our dedicated Deputy Director, who are carrying the weight of CKS’s increased operations with wonderful efficiency and good humor.

To all our friends, I will close by saying that, since Cambodia has been closed for two years, the tourist has become a relatively rare species, but hopefully not an endangered one. This is a wonderful time to come back to Cambodia-- to see the magnificent ancient temples of the Khmer Empire as it has not been possible to see them for years. And, of course, to visit our beautiful CKS campus within the historic Buddhist pagoda Wat Damnak, at the center of the delightful city of Siem Reap.

Welcome to CKS!

Jacques Hennessy,  
Chairman



CKS chair and Deputy Director welcome the Minister of Education H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron to CKS's annual reception in Phnom Penh, held this year in May.



# Greeting



President Eve Zucker

It is 2022 and it not only feels like a new beginning, it clearly is. With the release from the Covid lockdown we are experiencing the joy of experiencing life beyond our digital screens and the excitement of once again making plans for travel, gatherings, and other meaningful activities beyond our home offices.

This buzz of activity is also happening at CKS with the resumption of our in-person programming that includes book fairs, workshops, film screenings, performances, and presentations that bring students and visitors to our campus at Wat Damnak in Siem Reap. Our library is open both physically and virtually, and we embrace the people, knowledge, and ideas flowing through its doors. CKS's summer programs including our Junior Resident Fellows Program and our Khmer Language and Culture Program are running again with a new cohort of undergraduate and graduate students from the US, Cambodia and France. CKS's 2022 fellows along with fellows from previous years are arriving in Cambodia to begin their research activities and participate in CKS events. And through these varied activities we continue to host our popular webinar series featuring our Fellows and other Cambodian studies specialists presenting on a cornucopia of subjects including Cambodian heritage, human-animal relationships in demining efforts, indigenous medicine, climate change, Khmer Rouge forced marriages, and much more.

This is not a return to the pre-pandemic CKS, but the beginning of something new. It's an exciting time, a transitional time, with the possibility of many new roads ahead. Now is the time to set out on new pathways to fulfilling our mission of supporting knowledge and understanding of Cambodia's society and culture.

*The meditation session during the blessing ceremony at CKS Headquarter in June 2022*

Central to these ambitions is the recognition of the importance of connectivity. What we learned through the pandemic is not only that we need connectivity, but that it can thrive even when in-person events are not possible. Through our online webinar lecture series and workshops, we have shared knowledge about Cambodia and its region with anyone who has a smartphone and internet service. It is true that language may still be a barrier for some, but this is an enormous leap towards ensuring that everyone has access to this knowledge and concomitant insights. And because internet devices not only receive information, but also broadcast it, online programming has also allowed us to include speakers from anywhere in the world.

CKS continues to build our connections to people, places, and institutions both online and in person through a wide variety of partnerships and events. This year we formed a new partnership with the University of Chicago's Committee on Southern Asian Studies (COSAS) and several other partnerships in and outside of Cambodia have been reaffirmed. To bring our friends, Fellows and supporters together in person, we hosted our first post-pandemic annual reception in June. This event featured anthropologist Judy Ledgerwood, who introduced the late Dr. May Ebiara's seminal work, "Svay: a Khmer Village in Cambodia" that is currently being translated by CKS for publication later in the year. We will also host CKS's first ever mini book fair in Siem Reap at CKS's headquarters to connect book lovers, the CKS Library, authors, booksellers and publishers with one another. These are only a few of the many ways that CKS continues to build and support its community and encourage students, scholars and others young and old to learn about and contribute to knowledge about Cambodia and its people.

All this would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of CKS's officers, talented administrators, librarians and other members of our staff, who have done an outstanding job not only keeping CKS active and operational during the pandemic, but expanding its operations and programming to make CKS more vibrant than ever.

*Eve Zucker, Ph.D.  
President*



# Then and Now

This is CKS's 24<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! We made it! CKS is now a mature NGO promoting the study of Cambodia and nurturing scholars/experts in a region scanty studied when we first began, in 1998. Since then, we have sustained scholars in the US, France, Cambodia, and around the world with our programs.

The rich and powerful Khmer kingdom, centered in Cambodia, once extended across four nations of mainland SE Asia today. But in the absence of courses on SE Asia at US universities, how could American undergraduates possibly prepare for graduate study that included Cambodia? France's colonial past inspired strong scholarship. We believed that including French scholars would cross-pollinate our CKS programs, and indeed they have. Young French students participate enthusiastically in our Junior Resident Fellows Program—one of our first. This undergraduate summer program nurtures exploration and discovery—intensive study and fun-- drawing 5 students from the US, 5 from France, and 5 young Cambodians. Our objective is to catch their curiosity and stimulate their interest in Cambodia and Southeast Asia. It is one of our liveliest and most appreciated programs—even by our staff! Junior Fellows study intensive Khmer history and Cambodia today. Cambodian students take intensive English, Americans and French, intensive Khmer. They live all together and enjoy weekly trips to cultural and political centers. They tell us the experience has changed their lives: 54 French, 59 Cambodians, and 67 US students are alums of the CKS Jr. Fellows Program.

Next, CKS's Senior Fellowship Program—for senior scholars and PhD students doing field research. To date, CKS has funded 18 Cambodians, 73 French, and 118 US Senior Fellows through major US foundations, the US Government, French foundations, and private donors. We are proud that two of our current leaders are former Fellows: one is our President, Dr. Eve Zucker. Another is the Head of our Fellowship Committee, Dr. Peter Hammer.

All the while, we have been collecting books for our Library, starting from scratch. We now number 20,000+ entries in our online card catalog. We opened our doors from the start, and the reading room and terraces of our verdant campus at Wat Damnak are now favorite refuges for young Cambodians to work and study. Far before free wi-fi was present anywhere, we made it available at our Library, along with free computers. CKS's Children's Library nurtures reading culture through story-telling programs. Our Librarians have now undertaken their own project -- educating colleagues from around the country through week-end conferences and online programs. In 2019 (pre-Covid), CKS's Library welcomed 9,328 users, and 3,445 children eager for the joyous programs of our Children's Library.



Former President Lois de Menil

We are proud of CKS's research training seminars that help young Cambodians learn to do research. They begin with training in critical thinking and analysis—how to read a short journal article and discuss it; how to frame a research question, and where to look for answers. At the end, they learn how to apply for funding to carry forward a field project. Now, Cambodian students are studying at universities around the world--and many are alums of CKS programs.

During the Covid epidemic, CKS reluctantly closed its doors. And yet, before long, we found a way to open them again through remote learning. If we invented this outreach out of desperation, it in fact opened new vistas for our program, as scholars worldwide were able to lead and participate in CKS webinars through Zoom. The array of recent webinars is on our website [www.khmerstudies.org](http://www.khmerstudies.org).

I will close on a personal note of gratitude. For long years, I served as President and Chair of CKS. It is a particular pleasure for me to look back over those years with a smile -- on our wonderful and dedicated Cambodian staff, on the many young scholars whose lives we have touched-- and to see CKS now with such able and dedicated leadership, especially that of former CKS Fellows. Its spirit of open welcome has always been its strength, and I know it will continue to be.

*Lois de Menil, Ph.D.  
Honorary President and Chair Emerita*

# Dear CKS Donors,

Thanking you for your steadfast support of CKS! You enabled CKS to continue its programs virtually throughout the duration of the pandemic and allowed us to make a difference in Cambodia during a difficult time for the country and the world as a whole. Our virtual webinar lectures and much-used online library (which was completed just in time!) allowed the flow of ideas and knowledge to continue among Cambodians as well as scholars around the world. As CKS President and CEO Eve Zucker noted, the pandemic taught us that connectivity is paramount, and it can thrive even when in-person events are not possible. We owe a great debt of gratitude to you, our CKS supporters, for helping us provide this connectivity to scholars in Cambodia and neighboring regions, and for allowing us to add to our mission of expanding knowledge even in a time when that seemed impossible.

Now, at last, in the aftermath of the COVID lockdown, CKS has re-opened its doors with tremendous eagerness. Our varied in-person programs, research seminars and conferences are now restarting. Our library is open once again, both physically and virtually, to the public, and we are ready to welcome CKS Fellows yet again through our gates this summer. None of this would have been possible without your support. Thank you. We look forward to the diverse and open cultural future that we are creating for the following generations with you by our side. Individual philanthropy has been the cornerstone of our success.



Oana Reedy

Oana Reedy,  
Chairman of Development Committee

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# Help Support CKS through its Annual Fund

**Support CKS Library** -- Open to all, CKS's free library is the largest library outside Phnom Penh. It offers unparalleled educational facilities to the general public, students of every age, and scholars from all countries.

- Support** acquisition of books (\$15,000 per year)
- Donate a computer for our library reading room--annual updating (\$1,500)
  - Connect the Library to the World Wide Web for \$1,500 per year. Support a free internet connection.

**Sponsor the translation of essential books into Khmer**, Cambodia's native language. In the absence of scholarly books in Khmer, CKS translates and publishes key texts. A contribution of \$10,000 will defray the cost for an average 300-page book and will be acknowledged in the publication.

**Sponsor a Cambodian-American undergraduate** to discover Cambodia's history and culture by attending our 6-week in-country summer Junior Resident Fellows Program (\$3,500 each).

**Support modest Travel** Grants to enable Cambodian scholars to participate in regional conferences (\$500 each). Sponsor a young Cambodian's PhD thesis research (\$5,000 each).

**Support CKS public outreach:** regular in-country workshops, our Director's lectures at US universities and community colleges.

**Support any CKS lecture programs** in honor of our late Trustee Dr. Benny Widnyono and our former President Dr. Mary Ellen Lane, whose service we honor.



## New Partnership with University of Chicago's Committee on Southern Asian Studies (COSAS)

The Center for Khmer Studies is pleased to announce that the Committee on Southern Asian Studies (COSAS) of the University of Chicago has joined our international consortium of institutions collaborating with CKS' research activities and related academic initiatives.

The University of Chicago is one of the leading centers for the study of South and Southeast Asia in the world with a diverse, distinguished group of faculty members in multiple disciplines, particularly across the social sciences and humanities. The University sustains an exceptional library and digital resources for scholarly research on Southern Asia. COSAS is the foundational institution of this research and teaching enterprise. Countries in which COSAS has scholarly expertise in Southern Asia include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; and in Southeast Asia, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Tibet (as an autonomous region), and Vietnam.

CKS looks forward to an enriching and mutually productive relationship with faculty and graduate students affiliated with COSAS and the University of Chicago.



# LOOKING BACK

## Beginnings!

A small, one-story building within the dusty complex of an old Buddhist temple; a large, but not vast, main room with, at one end, a wall fresco dotted with bullet marks--yet another of the Khmer Rouges' killing places. Outside, a bit of straggling vegetation and a rutted driveway: that was where CKS began. Inside the room, there were a few empty new bookshelves and a very small collection of books, a couple of desks. There was a staff, of course, a very small staff, in a side room.

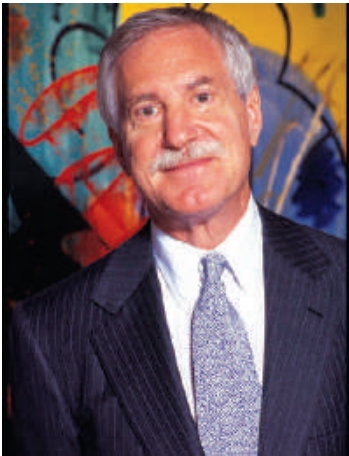
Outside the temple's grounds, Siem Reap was a very small town whose population had yet to recover from the starvation and massacres which had ended just a very few years before. As for traffic, there was almost none—a few old bicycles. Creating a Center for Khmer Studies might have seemed, therefore, not merely a bad idea, but an impossible one. Betting on the future existence of a Khmer culture, or, indeed, any culture, should have seemed an obviously losing proposition.

Cultures die. The Khmer Rouges had tried hard--and apparently succeeded-- in destroying libraries, ancient Buddhist scrolls, records of the past, and the very culture which defined Cambodia. More than a million people, men, women, and children were killed-- shot, starved-- in order to create a new country, a new society, a new way to live. Anyone with whom you spoke would tell you: they killed my parents, my friends, my children. Siem Reap was not a cheerful place.

A very few years had passed when, one afternoon, I was told that there was a new American charity in Siem Reap. Although its very existence seemed improbable, I went and looked. In the courtyard outside that room with the pock-marked fresco, a man was standing. I went up to him and asked where that charity was. "Right here", he said, "and I'm the Director".



*The CKS Conference Hall after renovation has welcomed thousands of students, scholars and researchers from around the world to learn and share their knowledge and new research findings.*



*Vice President Oliver Bernier*

That began a long conversation. We talked about the poverty so evident in the town, about the roads where kidnappings and murders still happened frequently, about the monuments --Angkor Wat and all the temples around it, about Banteay Srei, where, I was warned, people had recently been kidnapped. One could sometimes still hear shooting near Angkor Wat. The country was desperately poor. Founding a Center for Khmer Culture seemed a daring proposition. Were the Khmers still interested in their own culture? Could Cambodia, its great art and fascinating history once again become topics for Western researchers and scholars?

A country that has lost its own history, and its own culture, is not a country. It is, at best, a geographical expression. The only published history of Cambodia was in English, not in Khmer, and therefore not accessible to the population in Cambodia. The people of Cambodia had no way to learn about their own country, or their own history.

Couldn't it be translated into Khmer? I asked. Couldn't it then be published in Cambodia so that people would know their own history and learn that the extraordinary monuments in and around Siem Reap were witnesses to the country's glorious past? Yes, he said, if the money could be raised. And how much would translation of the English-language text and the printing cost? I asked.

*Olivier Bernier, a long-time Board member, is Vice-President of CKS. An art historian, he is Senior Lecturer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This remembrance is visually evocative of the early days of CKS.*



*Siem Reap in 1998  
(Photo courtesy: Siem Reap Net)*



*The dilapidated former Wat Damnak library before renovation*



*And after renovation*



# Building the Field of Khmer Studies: A Scholar's View

My encounter with the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) was serendipitous. In late 1998, Professor Stanley O’Connor of Cornell University was invited to a workshop organized by the World Monuments Fund (WMF) to discuss preservation of historic sites in Cambodia. Professor O’Connor is a renowned Southeast Asian art historian. I had just become Director of Cornell’s Southeast Asia Program, and he asked that I attend instead. I am not a Cambodia specialist, but I covered topics of Khmer art and politics in classes that I taught. I had never been to Cambodia, and a trip there was hard to resist.

The meeting, in January 1999, brought together mostly participants in WMF’s field of specialization (architecture, preservation) from several local and foreign institutions, and individual scholars. One idea was to consider establishing a field school for historic preservation. After lengthy discussions, the majority of participants concluded that a different kind of institution should be established. The new institution should address broader concerns of revitalizing Khmer Studies, help strengthen Cambodian higher education, and provide public service to Cambodia.

An important suggestion by Dr. Mary Ellen Lane at that meeting was that CKS should join similar American institutions coordinated by the Council for American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) in Washington, DC. As a member of CAORC, CKS would be eligible for funding by the US Government Department of Education. As Director of the Cornell Southeast Asia Program, I committed our institutional support for this new venture. The proposal was approved at a WMF Board meeting in November 1999. CKS was incorporated as a non-profit research institution, initially under the auspices of WMF.

In January 2001, I attended a large conference of international institutions in Siem Reap to discuss the state of teaching and research in Khmer Studies. It was apparent that the subject, especially in the US, had lain dormant for two decades, and that new scholars must be nurtured to revitalize Khmer Studies. For several decades, Cambodia has been closed to scholars, and major grants for graduate student thesis research suspended.

In early 2001, WMF decided to terminate the director and close CKS, which did not correspond to its initial vision as a center for education in historic preservation. WMF/CKS Trustee Dr. Lois de Menil and CKS Trustees Olivier Bernier and Selma Ertegun stepped up to assume leadership. Their strategy was for CKS to join the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), a network of US scholarly institutions abroad, with a focus on Khmer Studies. My participation in CKS was then formalized when I agreed to join the CKS Board of Directors as one of three institutional representatives. The other two were Prof. John Miksic from the National University of Singapore, and Prof. Bion Griffin of the University of Hawaii. CKS Chair Emerita Dr. Lois de Menil wrote a short history of CKS in the 2016-2017 volume



*Prof. Thak Chaloemtiarana,  
Cornell University*

of In Focus. She mentioned in that article that there were doubts about whether I would agree to join CKS as an active board member. It was true that I already had large responsibilities at Cornell. However, CKS had a mission which I could not ignore. As Director of the Cornell Southeast Asia Program, I also had the obligation to promote and strengthen Southeast Asian Studies whenever and wherever possible. Khmer language had been taught at Cornell since I can remember, and I was given the task of supervising and funding Khmer language teaching after it was transferred from the Department of Modern Languages to my department, the Asian Studies Department. I was also acutely aware of the need to inject new energy into Khmer Studies by attracting new graduate students. The growth of Khmer Studies in US universities was hampered by the absence of thesis research funding for graduate students (viz. Fulbright did not resume funding until 2007). By the end of 2002, CKS had joined CAORC. As a CAORC member, CKS eventually received US Government funding to support graduate students and faculty members teaching or interested in Khmer Studies. My commitment to help revitalize and strengthen Khmer Studies had prompted me to accept Dr. de Menil’s invitation. We were building a new institution.

My active involvement in CKS coincided with my tenure as Director of the Cornell Southeast Asia Program (1998-2010). When I stepped down and retired from active teaching, I was elected trustee emeritus, and continue to provide advice when asked. Looking back at my contributions during my active years in CKS, I can think of several, but my main focus was on building its library collection and revitalizing Khmer Studies in the United States.

The Khmer Rouge regime had practically destroyed the holdings of the National Library of Cambodia in its attempt to wipe out the past to create a new agrarian society. That regime was interrupted by the Vietnamese occupation, which ended when the United Nations’ intervention in early 1992 restored political calm. Cornell Library microfilmed its Cambodian holdings from the Echols Collection of Southeast Asia and donated them to the National Library. As part of its own public service mission, CKS established a new research library at its Wat Damnak campus in Siem Reap. It immediately opened its doors to the public. In 2008, CKS paid to digitize Cornell’s microfilmed holdings at the National Library. Two CKS librarians

were invited to Cornell for training. I would bring books to the library every time I was in Siem Reap. To date, the CKS library is the only library with significant holdings open to the public outside Phnom Penh. King Norodom Sihamoni honored CKS with his presence at the opening of CKS’ new, expanded library in 2010, and accepted to be its patron.

My other major contribution to CKS was chairing the new Fellowship Committee appointed to review applicants for a summer resident program for undergraduate students and to award funding to American scholars, both graduate students, and senior scholars, for their research on Cambodia. The summer resident program, initially funded by the Luce Foundation, placed five US undergraduates with five students from France, and five from Cambodia. Applications of American research proposals were reviewed by email by a committee of three: myself as chair, Prof. John Miksic of the National University of Singapore, and Prof. Alan Kolata of the University of Chicago. To this day, I marvel at how our assessments were always identical!

CKS should be proud of its achievement in reviving and revitalizing Khmer Studies in the US as well as in France. US funding for senior field research came from a US Department of Education Title VI grant, while funding for French scholars came initially from the Florence Gould Foundation. I have researched the whereabouts of awardees of CKS fellowships, and have been able to document some of their progress and achievements. All in all, more than fifty scholars received research grants when I chaired the committee.

Six awards were made the first year Title VI funds were available. Our current CKS President Eve Zucker was one of the first to be funded for field research when she was a doctoral student at the London School of Economics. And if my notes are correct, she received another grant in 2010. Eve teaches at Yale. Several of our awardees have returned years later, with CKS funding, to do more field research. In that first year, Prof. John Marston, a well-known Khmer Studies scholar teaching in Mexico, also received funding. Not all awardees went on to become scholars. Two awardees took different paths: Jennifer Foley from Cornell is now a museum curator in New Mexico; Tyrone Siren from the University of Wisconsin has a business and lives in Ho Chi Minh City.

I will not give details of all the scholars CKS-funded. Instead, I will highlight some of them to show how our efforts to help CKS to fulfill its mission of revitalizing Khmer Studies were a success. Faculty members who received CKS senior grants include Bion Griffin (CKS trustee, University of Hawaii), Peter Bell (the State University of New York at Purchase), Michael Binford (the University of Florida at Gainesville), Peter Hammer (CKS Trustee, Wayne State University), Boreth Ly (CKS Trustee, University of Utah), Kheang Un (Northern

Illinois University), Kim Irvine (State University of New York at Buffalo), Kathie Carpenter (University of Oregon), Alexander Jun (Azusa Pacific University), and Judy Ledgerwood (Northern Illinois University).

Graduate students who received CKS funding and have gone on to teaching careers include Erik Davis (Macalester College, former chair of the Thailand/Laos/Cambodia committee of the Association for Asian Studies), Alison Carter (University of Oregon), Emiko Stock (American University, Cairo), Rachel Hall (Virginia Commonwealth University), Daniel O’Neill (University of the Pacific), Dennis Arnold (University of Amsterdam), Jenna Grant (University of Washington), Sylvia Nam (the University of California at Irvine), Lisa Arensen (University of Edinburgh), Viet Le (California College of the Arts), Michael Dwyer (the University of Indiana at Bloomington), Thien Huong Ninh (the University of California at Davis), and Courtney Work (National Chengchi University, Taiwan).

Significantly, most CKS graduate student grantees produced new and cutting-edge knowledge in the form of monographs and articles that have rejuvenated Khmer Studies. Looking back at what CKS achieved in just the ten years that I was active, we can all take pride in the fact that CKS has indeed played a vital and significant role in rejuvenating Khmer Studies.

*Prof. Thak Chaloemtiarana,  
Cornell University  
CKS Trustee Emeritus*



*K.R.-damaged CKS Conference Hall before renovation*

*My account includes only US scholars during my years at CKS. Following are some examples of published monographs:*  
*Eve Zucker, Forest Struggle: Morality and Remembrances in Upland Cambodia (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013).*  
*Erik Davis, Deathpower: Buddhism, Ritual Imagination in Cambodia (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).*  
*Jonathan Padwe, Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories: Jarai and Other Lives in the Cambodian Highlands (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020).*  
*Courtney Work, Tides of Empire: Religion, Development, and Environment in Cambodia (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020).*  
*Leakhina Ollier and Tim Winters (Eds.), Expressions of Cambodia: The Politics of Tradition, Identity, and Change (New York: Routledge, 2012)*  
*Jenna Grant, manuscript for publication titled Fixing the Image which examines medical imaging services in Cambodia.*



# FEATURES

## Svay Village: Rumbblings from Phnom Penh's Edge

On the southern outskirts of Phnom Penh, the predominant sound is the rumbling of thousands upon thousands of passing trucks. Day in and day out, they carry dirt and sand, literally transforming the landscape, as they dump loads into low-lying rice fields to raise the level of the land to build new housing and factories. The beltway ring road nearby is almost completed and the new airport is well underway. The scale of the change to the land is nothing short of monumental.

The changes to Svay village, in this southern region, have also been dramatic. When May Ebihara (1934-2005) conducted ethnographic research there, in 1959, the people were *neak srail* – people of the rice fields. Today, as the city has grown ever closer, fewer than half the people still farm, and virtually all households have members who work as wage laborers, many in garment factories. My research, funded in part by a CKS fellowship, follows the lives of residents across the 60 years since May Ebihara's original research, including their stories of the Khmer Rouge years and rebuilding their lives in the 1980s, '90s, and 2000s. The book manuscript that will be the outcome of this research, co-authored with Prof. Kheang Un, tells the stories of the people of West Svay hamlet, focusing on nine individuals across the 60 years – on their strategies to survive, prosper and secure better lives for their children and grand children.



*Making offerings to the Neak Ta (spiritual guardian of the village)*



*Prof. Judy Ledgerwood*

Because Svay is near Phnom Penh, it was never a typical rural village; there were always opportunities to work for wages in the city. Now, as the city boundary draws nearer, the region's economics is a dynamic combination of wage labor, agriculture, and land sales. New people arrive from other parts of the country to work in the factories, and people move out of the city driven by rising housing costs and the attraction of newly built borei, or gated communities. There is an exciting dynamism to this change, parallel to Eric Harms' (2011) work on Saigon and Jonathan Rigg's (2019) work on Thai society. Harms says there is an "edginess" to this zone, where there are greater opportunities, but also significant risks to those who live suspended across the rural/urban divide. Do you sell your farmland at dizzyingly high prices? As young people work in the city and elders now farm, who will grow rice in the future? As many farmers say, "If we don't grow rice, what will we eat?" The book's final chapter will provide a snapshot of this moment – perhaps a final look at a single "rural" village before it is subsumed.

**Judy Ledgerwood is Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies and Professor of Anthropology at Northern Illinois University. She has conducted work on Cambodian religion, kinship, gender, and social organization in Cambodia and with Cambodian Americans.**

*Ebihara, May Mayko. Svay: "A Khmer Village in Cambodia". (Edited by Andrew Mertha). Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2018).*

*Harms, Eric. "Saigon's Edge: On the Margins of Ho Chi Minh City". Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2012).*

*Rigg, Jonathan. "More than Rural: Textures of Thailand's Agrarian Transformation". Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press (2019).*

## Recent History: Thoughts of a Sinologist

There is a perhaps overused saying that "War is God's way of teaching Americans geography." I would contend that it is a way of teaching Americans history.

It is unfortunate that it takes a tragic event like Russia's invasion of Ukraine to remind us of the tensions that have threatened to tear Europe apart, tectonic plates of grievance and enmity, which have not signaled Francis Fukuyama's "End of History," but rather its dormancy. Similarly, we find ourselves having to dust off our history books to understand what is going on in the rest of the world, and the implications it may portend for all of us.

As a China scholar, I am struck not simply by what President Xi Jinping is doing to imitate an earlier period of recent Chinese history-- the Mao era. This has very little resonance with the desires of the Chinese today, the economic imperatives faced by Chinese industry and commerce; and instead grafts onto a historical period that has been thoroughly debunked around the world. I am also concerned because Xi isn't even invoking Mao the right way-- that is, from a historical point of view. As Mao sought to loosen institutions and mobilize the masses – albeit with tragic consequences – Xi is doing the opposite by institutionalizing his one-man rule and by demobilizing an increasingly frustrated Chinese society. And as I see China moving backwards from a time of genuine hope and promise, where the challenges it faced as well as those it generated could be mitigated and even resolved through engagement and dialogue, I see bridges being burned with abandon. I once asked a former cabinet official how long it would take to rebuild the fragile and complex networks of professional interaction among US and Chinese officials that had emerged over the last half-century. His flippant response was that they could be rebuilt rather quickly. Now, as then, I beg to differ which brings me to Cambodia. It is easy to become absorbed by crises unfolding in real time, and it is impossible to attend equally to the plight of societies throughout the world. But supporting those places in the



*Prof. Andrew Mertha*

world that are managing chronic challenges is the best way to pre-empt acute crises. Cambodia has a recent history that no one wishes to see repeated. And yet, we are seeing some of the same illiberal trends reemerging today -- eerily similar to those that led to Cambodia's dark struggles in the past half-century.

As with China, there is no silver bullet; there is only the promise of mitigating challenges and carefully fostering what Cambodia needs most – continued educational development – in order to prevent acute crises in the future and to avoid reacquainting ourselves with Cambodia through war, political turmoil, or societal instability and decay. Let us, together, become students of Cambodia's history, and work with one of the most extraordinary cultures in the world, helping it to regain its poise, its expressiveness, and its intellectual heritage, expanding the field of Khmer Studies.

**Andrew Mertha, Ph.D. CKS Trustee  
Professor of China Studies  
School of Advanced International Studies  
Johns Hopkins University**



*On May 17, 2017, President Xi Jinping met at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse with Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia attending the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.*





*Performance of Chapei Dang Veng, a Cambodian classical music instrument, by Mr. Kong Boran at Chau Say Tevoda Temple on AIFA opening day. (Photo: CKS)*

## Siem Reap Returns to Life

### CKS in the International Festival of Arts

Siem Reap returned to ‘life’ after the Covid-19 shut-down, in December 2021, marked by the first Angkor International Festival of the Arts (AIFA), a three-day celebration from 10-12 December 2021. AIFA was also intended to feature Siem Reap, designated the ASEAN City of Culture 2021-2022. Sixty activities, including Cambodian classical music concerts and dance performances took place at the temples, in the streets, and at other locations in Siem Reap. The festival welcomed thousands of visitors— adults, children, residents and international visitors all participated.

Joining in the festival the second day, CKS welcomed over 100 visitors to a series of events, including discussions and presentations held in our conference hall and campus in Wat Damnak, and broadcast over Zoom and social media. Displays on tables outside the Conference Hall included CKS publications and treasures from its rare book collection, along with displays from the CKS Dance Database and Agrisud.

Among CKS’s festival events was a panel on the preservation and transmission of classical Cambodian dance, led by cultural heritage specialist Dr. Toni Shapiro-Phim. Dr. Shapiro-Phim presented a selection of the rare film footage she had taken more than 30 years ago, at the Site 2 refugee camp in Thailand, of Cambodian classical dance training, and featured several of the dancers on the CKS panel. Scenes from the footage brought back memories of her first meetings with the Cambodian artists and her early days of filming, as she documented the dancers' beautiful movements and recorded their training sessions, performances, and ritual ceremonies. For the panelists, seeing themselves and others they knew long ago in the films stirred emotions. They expressed gratitude for the value of the films as an important contribution to preserving Cambodian dance heritage.

The audience for the event included 30 in-person attendees present in CKS’s Conference Hall, and 72 online via Zoom and CKS’s Facebook page. The intention of the panel discussion was to raise awareness of the great efforts made by previous generations to preserve the Cambodian dance tradition and to inspire a new generation of Cambodians to continue that mission.

## Siksācākṛ: Journal of Cambodia Research

In 2021, CKS published the 16th issue of its signature publication, Siksācākṛ: Journal of Cambodia Research.

Soon after CKS began, Board Member Prof. Michel Antelme, of the Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, (the wheel or sphere of studies), first as a bi-annual newsletter (issues 1 to 5), which included some research articles, and hence very rapidly turned into a full-fledged peer-reviewed CKS journal, with articles submitted to an editorial board and anonymously reviewed by referees, to bridge the worlds of Cambodian, French and Anglo-American scholarship on Cambodia. At the time of its founding, there was very little of any publishing in Cambodia.

One of CKS’s first undertakings was, in fact, a project entitled “Publishing in Cambodia”, and for the first years of our existence, we worked hard promoting that subject, going so far as to assist in the founding of the international writers’ organization “Pen” in Cambodia. This contribution to scholarship and culture was a major focus of our then Director, Dr. Philippe Peycam.

Articles are submitted to Siksācākṛ by scholars in English, French or Khmer. Khmer articles are translated into either English or French, while English and French articles are translated into Khmer, so that

Cambodian scholars can participate fully in international scholarship, while also receiving assistance reading significant articles in their own language. Siksācākṛ has become an important contribution to international scholarship. It is unique in its tri-lingual ambition.

The editors of Siksācākṛ experimented with different formats over the 21 years since its founding. The first 5 issues were published semi-annually in its first three years. From 2003 on, it became a larger, traditional annual publication. Then, the editors had the idea of dedicating special double issues to important in-depth topics, gathering articles around a single subject. Among them were ambitious, academically significant issues on Metallurgy of Ancient and Modern Cambodia, Colonial Encounters, and Buddhism. Because these issues take far more time and prevent scholars from publishing single articles while they are being assembled by the editors, Prof. Antelme decided not to publish more thematic issues, but instead to return to the traditional content of an annual publication containing articles on a variety of topics. Single subject publications will henceforth form a separate part of CKS’s publishing program.

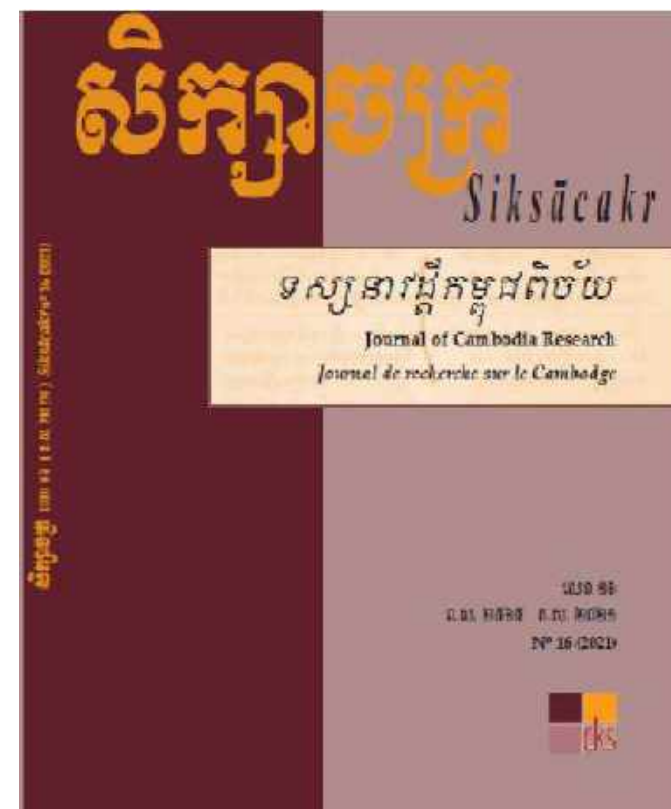
**Availability:** Siksācākṛ is available by subscription, or is for sale at CKS offices and international bookstores. Selected articles are available for free download on our website: <https://khmerstudies.org/publications/Siksācākṛ-journal-of-cambodian-research/Siksācākṛ-articles/>.

**Submission of articles to Siksācākṛ:** Current and former Fellows and scholars are welcome to submit scholarly articles of 6,800 words, including notes and bibliography. [See our website.]

Proceeds from all CKS publications are used to support the CKS Publishing and Translation program. This important program is not self-sustaining. We fundraise for it annually.

Topics in the current issue of Siksācākṛ include: “The Rituals Accompanying Preaching in Traditional Khmer Buddhism”, “A Surprising Representation of Kālī at Wat Kien Svay Krau in Kandal Province”, “The First Independence: Son Ngoc Thanh’s Controversial Contribution to the Birth of Nationalism in Cambodia”, “The Measure of Man: Y Bun Sur. Life and Death of a Young Mnong Ralam”, “Between Issarak, Viet Minh and Khmers Rouges: Insurrection and Political Manipulations in the Province of Ratanakiri in Cambodia”.

CKS applauds Prof. Michel Antelme’s exceptional leadership in creating this major new academic journal.





# CKS LIBRARY

## Koha: New Digital Catalog

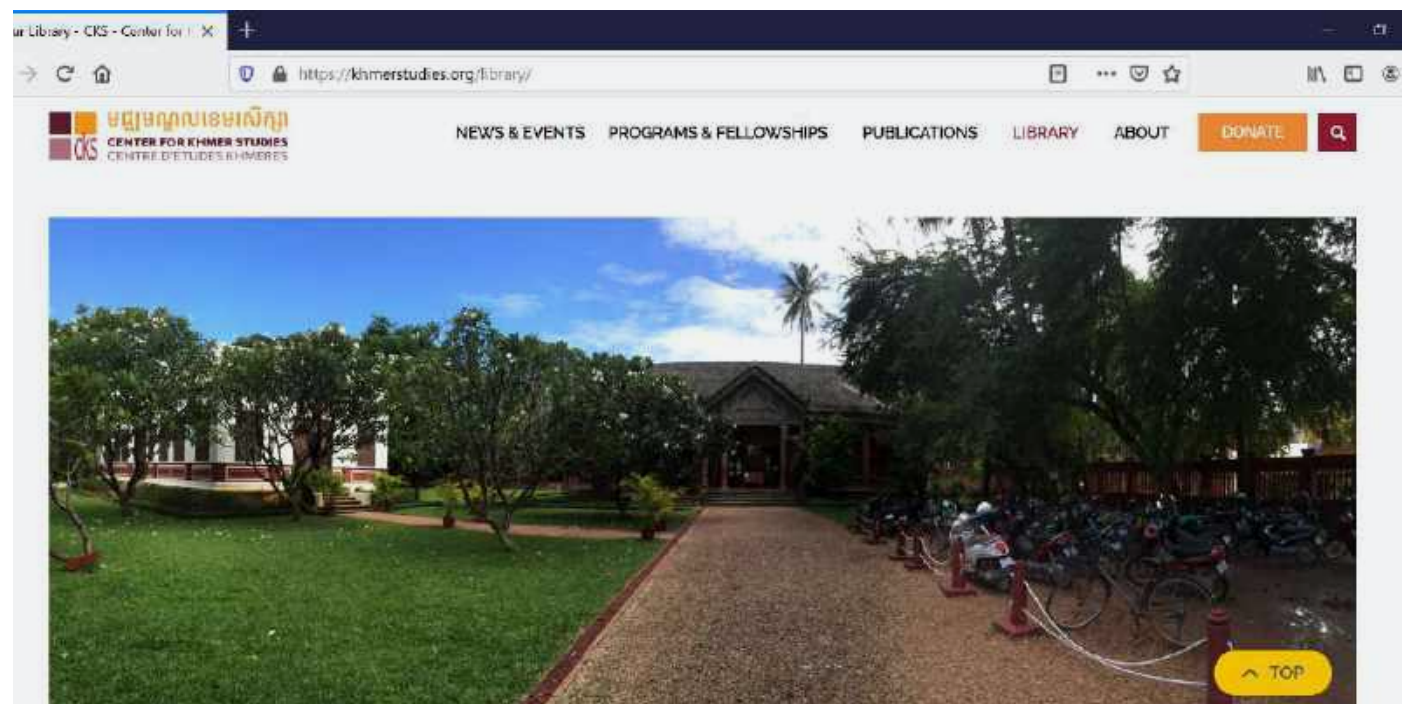
CKS's new online library catalog system Koha went live on July 16th, CKS's new library system Koha went live. The existing records were migrated from the old system, and CKS's Library began to share its catalog worldwide on Koha.

The integrated library system has a range of features including the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) module, providing library users a greater range of options, such as fully automated borrowing and item management. Koha also offers a fuller catalog module that enables the library staff to capture details of all library items, improving management of user services. Particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, this system has provided an amazing new interactive opportunity for users to browse our electronic resources virtually, with full access. It turned out to be a timely transition.

With the superior metadata capability of this system, CKS can standardize our catalog record for use by the Library of Congress,

Cornell, or Yale University by using Z39.50, a standard international client-server. We have also been able to update our catalog substantially, as Koha holds not only our book records, but also our webinar records, with a link to their video recordings and other online resources. Koha now opens to CKS library users' wide availability of other sources to which our library now has partial or full access.

Koha also allows library users to search our collections and to place a hold from home in advance. Previously, they had to phone one of our librarians or visit in person. According to our CKS OPAC Audience Overview, since the inception of Koha, some 12,000 individuals have already accessed our online catalog. More than 150 individuals access our online catalog per day-- over 60% access our catalog by cell phone, as well as by desktop computers and tablets.



Our new online catalog page

## CKS Launches First Siem Reap Book Fair

### "Begin Reading with Us"

A central mission of the Center for Khmer Studies Library is to promote reading. We regularly host outreach events to promote the love of reading and use of our library, beginning at a very young age with our storytelling videos, increasing resources, and offering orientation sessions on how to use the library. CKS librarians strive to raise awareness of the benefits of reading and to encourage children to begin cultivating reading skills as early as possible.

CKS has participated in the annual book fair organized by the National Library in Phnom Penh since 2013. This event has brought together a diverse range of exhibitors, attracting a large crowd, both students and a broader public. This book fair was canceled for two years during the pandemic, encouraging CKS librarians to organize our own mini-book fair in Siem Reap to bring our community here the same benefits. CKS's librarians took the lead in this initiative and reached out to other collaborators-- authors, publishers, universities, and partner librarians. Our librarians hoped to promote CKS's Library among the local community, drawing together book lovers of all ages to engage with one another.

In collaboration with the American Corner Library, the U.S. Embassy's library in Siem Reap, CKS organized a day-long Mini Book Fair, on June 25, 2022, around the theme "Begin Reading with Us!" The book fair was supported by Cambodian volunteers, including local university undergraduates. The event took place from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm at CKS's campus in Wat Damnak, the central Buddhist Pagoda of Siem Reap. It was designed to draw both children and adults. Activities



CKS Librarians and volunteers at CKS Booth at Siem Reap Mini Book Fair

at CKS's Conference Hall included an orientation to CKS's Library by Head Librarian Sivleng Chhor, a panel on fellowship programs chaired by our Deputy Director Samedy Suong, and a lecture on "Why We Need to Read" by Neak Oknha, author, founder, and chair of the Mengly J. Quach Education, which supports a network of private schools. Over 300 students from local primary, high schools, and universities attended. Outdoors on our campus were 32 booths from 30 educational institutions, including libraries, bookstores, magazines, archives, and museums, as well as authors, and publishers. In the evening, CKS hosted a performance of Khmer classical dance. Young children particularly enjoyed the painting, drawing, storytelling, and face painting activities on our campus lawn.

Almost 5,000 visitors of all ages attended this first-ever CKS Mini Book Fair. Our busy and productive day concluded successfully, with enthusiastic comments by attendees. Many approached us individually to share their appreciation, sharing their hope that the Mini Book Fair might be an annual event and over several days. The Fair was covered by local media and hundreds of individual posts on social media by visitors.

CKS is grateful to the many institutions and volunteers whose efforts made this event such a resounding success. With so much encouragement from attendees, we hope to make the CKS-sponsored Siem Reap Book Fair an annual event.



A big crowd of students in front of the entrance of the Siem Reap Mini-Book Fair.



# PROGRAMS

## Webinars and Public Meetings

CKS hosted over a dozen public lectures and meetings in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap each year. During the pandemic, CKS continued this program by adopting a webinar format. As the situation improved and Cambodia eventually reopened at the end of 2021, we began organizing meetings again, but now realizing the international outreach potential of the webinars, we did in a variety of formats—online, in person and hybrid—with topics ranging from Cambodia's history, to research methodology, Khmer classical dance, and the environment. There have been about 20 events so far, including webinars, online workshops and hybrid presentations—in person and livestreaming on CKS social media organized in collaboration with other local and international institutions and universities. Below is one highlight of the events we organized.

## Mobile Film Screening

### “Elephant Conservation and Indigenous Experiences in Cambodia”



The panel discussion with the three young filmmakers, Bophana Center's Director Sopheap Chea (first from the left), moderated by CKS Deputy Director Samedy Suong seated at far right.

Elephants play a prominent role in Cambodian culture. They are believed to bring water, happiness, and prosperity. Indigenous people also believe that, whether accidental or unintentional, if a female elephant becomes pregnant without a traditional wedding or offering to the spirits, this will result in a disaster for the villagers. A so-called "wedding ceremony" or “offering to an elephant” is required, and it is sometimes even larger than a human wedding.

The Center for Khmer Studies, in collaboration with the Bophana Center, organized a mobile screening of documentary films from the project "Elephant Conservation and Indigenous Experiences in Cambodia" in the CKS Conference Hall in Siem Reap. This event was also livestreamed on both institutions' Facebook pages. We invited the public to attend in person to watch the films and subsequent panel discussion between CKS's Deputy Director, Bophana Center's Director, and the three documentary filmmakers. The three films screened were: My Home, Dull Trail, and Memories. Each film was less than 30 minutes long. Each of them required one whole year of the filmmaker's time, from research to shooting, editing, and subtitling them. Forty-five participants were present in person in the CKS Conference Hall and a dozen more on our Facebook livestreaming.

You can watch the recorded discussion here: <https://www.facebook.com/CenterForKhmerStudies>

## Field School on Cambodian Environment and Social Issues

For the first time, CKS ran a free of charge intensive six-day field school, in collaboration with Michigan State University, to teach both theoretical models and practical methods of studying social and environmental issues. The goal of the field trip was to give Cambodian participants a hands-on experience of issues in a field research setting, while considering these issues and writing them up in relation to multiple social and environmental factors.

We began with two days of on-campus workshops for 18 Cambodian and four Michigan State University undergraduates. These workshops helped to frame and familiarize students with the issues they would encounter in the field. We had lively discussions.

We then spent four days in Chong Kneas and Kampong Pluk communes, in Siem Reap province. Our focus was to observe how ecological, political and economic changes around the Tonle Sap Lake are affecting those whose livelihoods depend on fishing. Decreasing fish stocks, the impact of dams, climate change, intersecting government authority, and exclusion from land merge in contradictory and complex ways. Participants navigated these intersecting factors, and later linked them to the stories and observations from the field, demonstrating eagerness and patience in interviews, and trying to understand villagers' struggles. In Chong Kneas, a Vietnamese community lives without immigration papers on the Tonle Sap Lake itself and faces a plethora of struggles because of their ethnicity. This community is both misunderstood and often demonized. Participants empathized with the people we spoke with. Students came to their own conclusions about the often stark differences between the two communes, and the effects of marginalization. Every night, we engaged in discussion centered on what they were seeing and experiencing. New experiences tested participants' thinking while they developed interview techniques and field skills. Participants will be writing brief reports on their experience in the following weeks.

The Center for Khmer Studies staff has gone above and beyond to support this field school. CKS has provided the flexibility and logistical and financial support to offer a field school that is hands-on, challenging and very rewarding.

Tim Frewer, PhD, is a CKS research affiliate based in Siem Reap. He has 17 years' experience researching social and environmental issues in Cambodia. He received his PhD from the University of Sydney, in 2017. He hopes to lead similar field schools for CKS in the future.



The wrap-up session of the workshop at CKS Conference Hall in Wat Damnak after four days of a field visit in Kampong Pluk and Chong Kneas. Dr. Frewer, the second from the left in the front row.



Students exploring the flooded forests of Kampong Pluk with local women, and learning the significance of these forests for local livelihoods.





Debra Aczel (left) and Dr. Miriam Aczel (right) unveiling K-127 at the National Museum of Cambodia, March 2019

# The Origin of Zero

## A Collaboration between CKS and the Aczel Foundation

support mathematics and science research and education in Cambodia. Its first effort, with support from the Ministry of Culture, was the installation of K127 on permanent exhibition at the National Museum of Cambodia. We are now excited to collaborate with CKS. Our first event is a virtual lecture, featuring Professor Ea Darith, who will discuss the importance of the K127 inscription, as well as the use of zero in Angkor construction. Future plans include a CKS workshop/ Junior Fellows’ program and support for a scholar(s) with an interest in pursuing work on zero or a related topic.

**Debra Aczel, BA, MA, wife of Dr. Amir Aczel and former program manager at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is co-founder and co-director of the Amir D. Aczel Foundation.**

**Miriam Aczel, MSc, PhD, daughter of Amir Aczel and co-founder and co-director of the Amir D. Aczel Foundation., is a postdoctoral scholar at UC Berkeley.**



សិលាចារឹក K127 Inscription K127

Professor of mathematics Amir Aczel (1950-2015) had been fascinated by the origin of numbers from the time he was a child. How did humans come up with the idea of representing quantities with symbols, and particularly zero, a non-number? Where did this idea originate? and how did it spread?

With a grant from the Sloan Foundation, he set out to track down the oldest symbol used to represent a zero. He knew that a zero—at the time considered the oldest—had been found in Gwalior, India, but he also knew of a stone rubbing of a likely even older zero that had been found in the late 19th century in the Sambor-en-Mekong temple complex, about 300 kilometers from Phnom Penh, in Cambodia.

In 1931, French epigraphist Georges Coëdès translated the pre-Angkor inscription, and labeled it K127. This zero, represented by a dot, dates to 683 CE, and demonstrated conclusively that zero came from the east not Arabia, as had previously been thought. But then, K127 disappeared, and it was feared that it had been destroyed during the Khmer Rouge period. Aczel tracked it down and rediscovered it in remarkably good shape at the Conservation d'Angkor, in Siem Reap—a French repository of artifacts. The story of the search that ended with the rediscovery of K127 in Cambodia is recounted in Aczel’s book *Finding Zero*, translated into Khmer by Dr. Solang Uk.

In an interview in *Scientific American*, Aczel explained why he found the zero so important and fascinating: “To me it represents something immense because it’s the human understanding of the concept of nothingness, which is a hard concept to accept.”

Aczel sadly died in 2015, leaving his projects related to zero and Cambodia unfinished. The Amir Aczel Foundation was established to

# Research Training Seminar:

## How to Frame a Research Topic and Collect Resources

Over six weeks at CKS headquarters in Siem Reap, young Cambodian scholars in the CKS Research Training Seminar met daily and gained important insight into how to do research. Taught by Fulbright English Teaching Assistants Marie Catanese and William Gear, this course focused on training young scholars for a hypothetical research project. Students learned what doing academic research involves, from the first steps of identifying a field of research, then defining a research question, to how to find reliable and relevant resources. The course combined lectures, independent work, and class presentations that required students to engage with course materials both in class and in homework assignments. At the end of the course, students designed a hypothetical research proposal and bibliography as a model for a full-length research project for future CKS or university courses.

Students were asked to think critically about the type of research they would like to conduct-- its relevance and applicability. Discussions about the reliability of data, the dangers of misinformation, and the importance of requesting the informed consent of research subjects are just a few of the ways in which students’ knowledge of research was expanded. The course was broken up into six topics that built upon one another. In the first week, students mastered information literacy and its importance for research. Students discussed potential topics and the criteria they should apply when planning a project. In the second week,



Instructors and participants in front of CKS's Seminar Room at the end of the course.

the course focused on generating key search terms for their topics, which required them to think holistically about their research topic and the subtopics their main topic might entail. The third week dealt with social science research methodology, data collection, and different approaches. Students were tasked with evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods and the reliability of data gained from each method. The fourth week focused on quality research information, avoiding misinformation and disinformation, and evaluating resources based on five specific criteria. Week five focused on the necessity of footnoted citations and the risks of plagiarism. Finally, in the last week, students were asked to present their research proposals.

Students submitted a diverse array of original research topics. Each week, students were tasked with delving deeper into their research topics and given feedback by the instructors to strengthen their ideas. Students selected topics ranging from, “The Impact of Climate Change on Agricultural Production in the Lower Mekong Basin (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam)”, “How the Food Industry Has Become Unhealthy Now”, and “Japanese Health Care Practices that Lead to Higher Life Expectancy”, to “Inappropriate Use of Antibiotics”, to “The Role and Responsibilities of ASEAN”, “The Effectiveness of Learning Online in High Schools in the Angkor Thom District”, and “How Effectively to Learn English as a Second Language (ESL) within a Public Speaking Context”.

By the end of the course, participants had engaged in stimulating, critical conversations, learned from their instructors and each other and obtained strong research foundational skills.

**Marie Catanese and William Gear, Fulbright English Teaching Assistants**



Thakvila Thach, one of the participants, discusses his research topic: "How the Food Industry Has Become Unhealthy Now".



# ANNUAL PROGRAMS

## How Better to Learn a Language than In-Country?

CKS's Khmer Language and Culture Program (KLCP) offers students and scholars from U.S. and international universities a unique opportunity to participate in an intensive eight-week summer Khmer language program while immersing themselves in Cambodian life in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. Since its launching, in 2009, it has hosted significant numbers of participants each year. Unfortunately, the program was suspended over the past two years because of the pandemic.

CKS is delighted to see KLCP up and running again and to welcome participants to their two-month adventure in Cambodia. Participants in this year's program include undergraduates and Ph.D. students from U.S. universities. Their academic backgrounds are varied and include literature, linguistics, and anthropology. Their research interests include Buddhism, urban studies, and the looting of the ancient artifacts in Cambodia.

Once accepted into the program, participants introduce themselves by email and express their anticipation of applying to the program. Brendan Ryan wrote, "I love learning languages, and am looking forward to learning with y'all. I'm really curious about the ethnic Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese populations of Cambodia (as well as the ethnically Cambodian population here in Vietnam). I like architecture and want to explore some of the modernist buildings in Phnom Penh." Another participant, Zepei Yuan wrote, "I am a cultural anthropology student, and my research project is on Buddhist monasteries in Cambodia. I would appreciate it a lot if we could visit



*KLCP students visiting the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh.*

famous temples and Buddhist places of interest during field trips, such as Wat Phnom and Wat Ounalom in Phnom Penh."

Reviewing students' applications enables the instructor, Dr. Sannang Choum, who teaches the Khmer language at the Royal Academy of Cambodia and has been an instructor of the KLCP program for several years, and the staff to organize field trips tailored to the students' interests, such as visits to the National Museum, the Buddhist Institute, the National Archive, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, the temples in Angkor Park in Siem Reap, as well as guest speakers on Cambodia's history, classical dance, a Cambodian cooking class, and other activities. Five days a week, students attend four hours of classes taught by our language instructor, and every afternoon there are two hours of study hall to complete their homework assignments with the support of the program Teaching Assistant. The 8-week program is full-time and intensive, aiming to equip students with a strong foundation in the Khmer language.

In this first post-COVID program, we take special pleasure in once again seeing participants enjoy mastering the Khmer language and discovering Cambodia's rich culture. We are grateful to all involved, especially our funders and generous donors, who make this program possible.



*Activity during the in-class learning*

## Summer Junior Resident Fellows Program

CKS's introductory Junior Resident Fellows Program seeks to nurture the interest of undergraduate students in Southeast Asia. After a two-year suspension during the pandemic, we were delighted to resume the JRFP, in summer 2022, with fifteen participants: five each from the U.S., France, and Cambodia. Fellows spend six weeks in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, working with the instructor both in the classroom and during commented field trips that explore Cambodian and Southeast Asian history and culture. In addition to this course material, there are daily intensive Khmer language classes that enable participants to begin to have conversations with the Cambodians they meet. Their Cambodian counterpart study intensive English, which helps them with their university courses. They help each other cheerfully. Many former Junior Fellows have continued to participate in CKS programs in their subsequent careers. From its inception twenty years ago, CKS has structured this immensely successful program around the encounter of young scholars from the U.S., France and Cambodia. Their mutual discovery, as they explore the rich curriculum of the course, is one of its most engaging features.

Napakadol Kittisenee, the 2022 JRFP instructor, commented, "I have learned tremendously from the Junior Resident Fellows, as I hope they have from me. We taught one another, we shared laughter and tears, and we shared the learning process in a community of caring. I am certain this budding generation of young scholars will leave our JRFP 2022 with many unforgettable memories and hope they will fondly



*Napakadol Kittisenee, Instructor*

recall their encounters with the people they met each day. The CKS staff, in particular, has left a strong sense of gratitude for their caring support."

It is difficult to obtain grant support for undergraduate programs. The JRFP has been supported for many years by the personal foundation of a generous CKS American donor.

*Napakadol Kittisenee, JRFP instructor, is a graduate student in history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has conducted field research in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and India. After a decade-long engagement with Dhammayietra, the peace walk held in the spirit of the late Maha Ghosananda, he is currently pursuing a Ph.D.*



*JRFP participants with Dr. Darith Ea lecturing on the history of Angkor Wat during the temple tour at Angkor. Dr Darith Ea, Director of the Department of Conservation and Archaeology at the National Authority for Preah Vihear (NAPV), and lecturer at the Royal University of Fine Arts and Pannasastra University in Phnom Penh.*



# CKS Senior Fellows 2022-2023

The CKS Senior Fellowship Program is a CKS core program to support academic research on Cambodia, including Ph.D. dissertation research and post-doctoral research. These scholarships are supported by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Economic and Cultural Affairs (ECA) for American scholars; by the Scaler Foundation for French scholars; and by CKS Board of Directors' contributions for Cambodian scholars. Awardees are chosen by CKS's Fellowship Committee of scholars, headed by Board Member, Prof. Peter Hammer. In academic year 2022-2023, CKS has offered fellowships to five US, three French and three Cambodian Ph.D. dissertation and post-doctoral researchers.

## U.S. Fellows



**Dr. Alison Carter** is an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Oregon. She will undertake a comprehensive site survey around the village of Baset, in Battambang province, to map archaeological features. Her project is part of a wider project, a collaboration of the University of Hawaii with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, whose objective is understanding life in a provincial Angkorian village through archeological exploration of its habitation areas, to determine the site's relationship to the Angkorian capital over time.



**Lucy Right** is a PhD candidate in political science at Duke University. Her project, "The Democratic Returns to Pluralism in Cambodia's Commune Councils," studies the effects of multi-party participation in commune Sangkat councils on the delivery of public service and infrastructure development from 2012 to 2017, drawing on quantitative analysis of commune-level data and in-depth interviews of elected officials. Her project will explore the ways in which multi-party participation can shape governance, even when a single party dominates politics at the national level.



**Dr. LinDa Saphan** is an associate professor of sociology at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, New York City. An established voice in the field of Cambodian cultural studies, she has published extensively on Cambodian pre-war popular music. She was the lead researcher and associate producer for the documentary film, *Don't Think I've Forgotten: Cambodia's Lost Rock and Roll* and has served as executive producer for several other film projects. Also contributing to contemporary visual arts, Dr. Saphan has exhibited original works in "1975" and "Interlace".



**Kheang Un** is professor of political science and an associate of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Northern Illinois University. Dr. Un is author and co-author of a number of books, journal articles, and book chapters, including *Cambodia: Return to Authoritarianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), *Cambodia's Economic Transformation* (NIAS, 2011), co-edited with Dr. Caroline Hughes. In collaboration with Prof. Judy Ledgerwood, Prof. Un is currently completing a book, entitled *Cambodia's Mosaic: Suffering and Resilience*, to be published by Cornell University Press.



**Allan Zheng** is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Riverside. His dissertation, entitled, "Music, Dance, Queerness: An Ethnography of Cambodian Performing Arts," explores the intersection between sound, movement, and the body. He is interested in how gay performers and artists may express "queerness" through the performing arts. His project explores how "queer" creative work may potentially contribute to ways of reconciling with the aftermaths of genocide and imperialism, as well as generate a new future for Cambodia.

## French Fellows



**Noemi Didu** is a PhD candidate in social and visual anthropology and teaching assistant at the University of Marseille/Aix-en-Provence. Her research focuses on the relationship between history, and collective and individual memory in the Cambodian diaspora in France. She is interested in the mechanisms of the transmission of social memory, its representations, and the modalities of transferring this social memory into narrative and images.



**Mélina McDonald** is a PhD candidate in law at Université Paris II Assas. She holds master's degrees in art history and international law from the Université de Toulouse and the Sorbonne Paris IV. Her topic, "The Legal Protection of Cambodian Cultural Heritage" traces the protection of Cambodian cultural heritage (tangible, intangible and underwater) from the French mandate to the present day. In addition to providing a comprehensive list of applicable national and international legislation, her project will also examine the effectiveness of their enforcement.



**Hector Pécheur** is a doctoral student at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), in Paris. He is deeply interested in the consequences of Chinese immigration and their networks in Cambodia since the 1990s. His thesis will focus on Chinese-Khmer and Chinese businessmen in areas of business sociability. He will conduct interviews with businessmen in areas of social affiliation, such as chambers of commerce, associations and clubs, deriving a group portrait of contemporary business elites and describing their practices.



JRFP students and instructor visiting Taprom Temple, Siem Reap, Cambodia



# Cambodian Fellows



**Dr. Channary Khun**, Ph.D., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, is a researcher and consultant. She has published in journals, such as Economic Inquiry, Economic Modelling, Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance, and Journal of International Trade and Economic Development. Her study “The Effect of Market Participation on Productivity: Evidence from Cambodian Rice Farmers” will explore the issues underlying low productivity, and whether increasing market participation plays a role in improving it. The study will offer added perspectives on the issue and hopefully contribute to potential policy reforms.



**Thida Kim** is a PhD candidate in social psychology at the University of Hong Kong. Her topic, “The Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma among Cambodian Migrant Households,” explores the transmission of transgenerational trauma within migrant households, especially among skipped-generation households, where grandparents are the primary caregivers of left-behind children. It considers the dual trauma of the first-generation (grandparents), including Khmer Rouge-related trauma; and current trauma (migration and Covid-19). It also explores the offspring’s psychological well-being and caregiver-child attachment, as the intergenerational effects of trauma.



**Dr. Vicheth Sen** teaches in the Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada. His research focuses on how colonial experience influences education policy and subjective attitudes in ‘postcolonial’ societies. His project, “Educated Locals and Higher Education Policymaking in ‘Postcolonial’ Cambodia,” examines the discourse underlying higher education policy in Cambodia and the subjective input of educated Cambodians working in positions that enable them to influence higher education policy in ‘postcolonial’ Cambodia. The project aims to promote onto-epistemic justice in education development and knowledge production.



Statues in Banteay Srey Temple, Siem Reap, Cambodia

# From Cambodian Countryside to Cultural Anthropologist

I was born in the Cambodian countryside, where most of the inhabitants are farmers, especially rice farmers, my parents included. The people there are friendly and have good relationships with their neighbors. Everyone knows and visits each other almost every day and assists one another to cultivate rice. In 2009, I moved to Phnom Penh to continue my studies at in the Faculty of Archeology of the Royal University of Fine Arts. It was a culture shock. The city is crowded, and generally, people are less friendly and have less social contact. I had to adapt to the new way of life.

Throughout my studies, I have always been interested in cultural anthropology, a subject that is not widely known by Cambodians. For instance, while there have been many western researchers studying Cambodian society and in particular its evolution after the war, only a few Cambodians show interest. So, why is this the case? To change this pattern, I decided to focus my research on rice farming in rural Cambodia. It plays a major role in the Cambodian village’s social organization and economy. In the past, the rice cycle was the backbone of village life. I hope to establish whether it still plays this role today and if it is still valued as part of the Khmer identity.

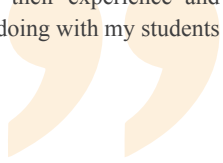
In 2018, I conducted my first ethnographic field research in a rural village in Siem Reap province, the center of the Khmer Empire until the 14th century. The tradition of rice cultivation has left a strong imprint on the collective memory of Khmers and their neighbors. Having grown up as part of this rice farming society, I thought that I knew everything about it. In the midst of my field research, however, I realized that my knowledge and understanding were quite limited. The livelihoods of Cambodians have changed dramatically in recent



CKS Research Fellow  
Sopheak Youk

years. Although most villagers are still farmers, they now devote very little time to rice cultivation. But though rice farming has been modernized, the mutual assistance during the rice cycle continues to take place. However, now it is carried out almost exclusively between relatives or family members. Rice is grown for family consumption and is rarely sold commercially. Rice is no longer seen as the staple of the "family economy". Families prefer to supplement their income in other ways. Villagers give it up completely, though, even if they suffer a bad harvest. This finding made my research even more interesting. I was learning about my own society.

I am deeply grateful for CKS’s Dissertation Research Fellowship Program which allowed me to pursue my field research. I hope this program continues to promote young Cambodian scholars to probe their own society and that of their neighbors. With their experiences and findings, they should continue to share their experience and findings with the next generation, as I am now doing with my students at the Royal University of Fine Arts.



**Sopheak YOUK** is a PhD candidate in Cultural Anthropology at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris. His research topic is: “From Rice Cultivation Rituals to Cultural Identity: Practice and Value of the Khmer Rice Field”. His research seeks to understand how the enormous importance that Cambodia places on rice culture is currently evolving. At the village level, he will examine the influence that rice cultivation has had on social organization, kinship, religion, and politics over time.

People celebrating rice ritual after harvest season.





Photo: CKS

*Chairman Jacques Hennessy, Minister of Education H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Narong (center), former Trustee H.E. Dr. Rethy Chhem (left) with CKS senior staff at CKS annual reception in Phnom Penh, May 2022.*

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