

MARKETING HERITAGE

Archaeology and the
Consumption of the Past



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Archaeological Research and Cultural Heritage Management in Cambodia's Mekong Delta: The Search for the "Cradle of Khmer Civilization"

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MORE THAN A CENTURY AFTER ITS BIRTH as a professional discipline, archaeology has grown beyond its conventional boundaries. One direction of this growth involves the development of international cultural heritage management, and another lies in the growing recognition that political and social factors constrain archaeological practice (see Kohl 1998 for review). Nationalism and heritage management have shaped the nature of much archaeological research in Southeast Asia (e.g., Bray and Glover 1987; Glover 1986, 1993, 1999; Peterson 1982–1983). Nowhere is this linkage between nationalism and heritage management more evident than in Cambodia, a country wracked by political instability for nearly five decades. Angkor Wat, and its many associated temples, has provided a powerful icon for Cambodia's colonial administrators, for its royal leaders, for its communist cadres, and for the current government under Hun Sen. To the Khmers, Cambodia is Angkor, and their Angkorian heritage is their future.

Of growing importance to Khmers today is the Mekong delta of southern Cambodia, where some of the earliest Khmer archaeological sites have been found. Since 1996, the Lower Mekong Archaeological Project (hereafter LOMAP) has worked at the site of Angkor Borei. This site has produced the earliest dated Khmer inscription and a distinctive art style that scholars associate with pre-Angkorian Khmer. To many Cambodians, Angkor Borei represents the cradle of Khmer civilization. But it is also a living community, and looting its archaeological resources has provided many residents with supplemental income.

This chapter examines tensions inherent in archaeological research and cultural heritage management in Cambodia at both the national and local levels. We begin by discussing the importance of archaeology in heritage management in Southeast Asia, and its connection with cultural tourism. We will then focus on Cambodia

and its history of archaeological research. Archaeological research is intimately tied to marketing heritage in Cambodia, and today involves two components: (1) the development of historical (archaeological) sites as destinations for cultural tourism and (2) the illicit trafficking in antiquities. The archaeological site of Angkor Borei, where the Lower Mekong Archaeological Project has worked since 1996, provides a case study for discussing some of these issues.

Heritage Management and Archaeology in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is one of the world's more culturally diverse geographic regions, with hundreds of languages and all of the world's major religions. The region's archaeological heritage is equally diverse, with roots in the Paleolithic and involvement in world trade systems as early as the Roman era, and expressions of most social and political formations (kingdoms, states, and empires) for centuries before European contact (for reviews, see Bellwood 1997; Hall 1985; Higham 1989).

Most archaeological work undertaken today across Southeast Asia involves the identification, investigation, conservation, restoration, and management of archaeological sites. Each country now has a centralized governmental agency that administers heritage management, although countries vary in the size and effectiveness of their heritage management agencies. Four countries have outstanding examples of heritage management organizations, with well-trained archaeologists and (at least until recently) adequate funding: Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

One regional organization, SPAFA (SEAMEO [Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization] Program in Archaeology and the Fine Arts), is responsible for integrating human and material resources for heritage management across the ten countries of Southeast Asia. SEAMEO reestablished the Applied Research Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (ARCAFA) in 1978 as the SEAMEO Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA), essentially maintaining the goals of ARCAFA as guidelines for action. Since then, the government of Thailand has hosted SPAFA, and this organization runs regional training workshops in aspects of heritage management. Other international organizations, such as UNESCO, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), and World Monuments Fund also contribute funding and expertise to managing the region's cultural resources.

The bulk of heritage management attention is devoted to religious monuments of the second millennium A.D., when classical states arose throughout the mainland and in some areas of island Southeast Asia. Disarticulating nationalist interests from tourism concerns in Southeast Asian heritage management is thus difficult,

since national and international visitors routinely include visits to historic monuments as part of their tourist itineraries to these Southeast Asian countries. Cambodia epitomizes this situation, since tourism revenue comprises at least 30 percent of its national economy. The magnet for most international tourism to Cambodia lies in the country's northwest, where Angkor Wat and more than 250 other temples that date from the Angkorian era (A.D. 802–1432) are found (map 8.1). The following section provides a historical framework for understanding the development of a linkage between archaeology and marketing heritage in Cambodia.

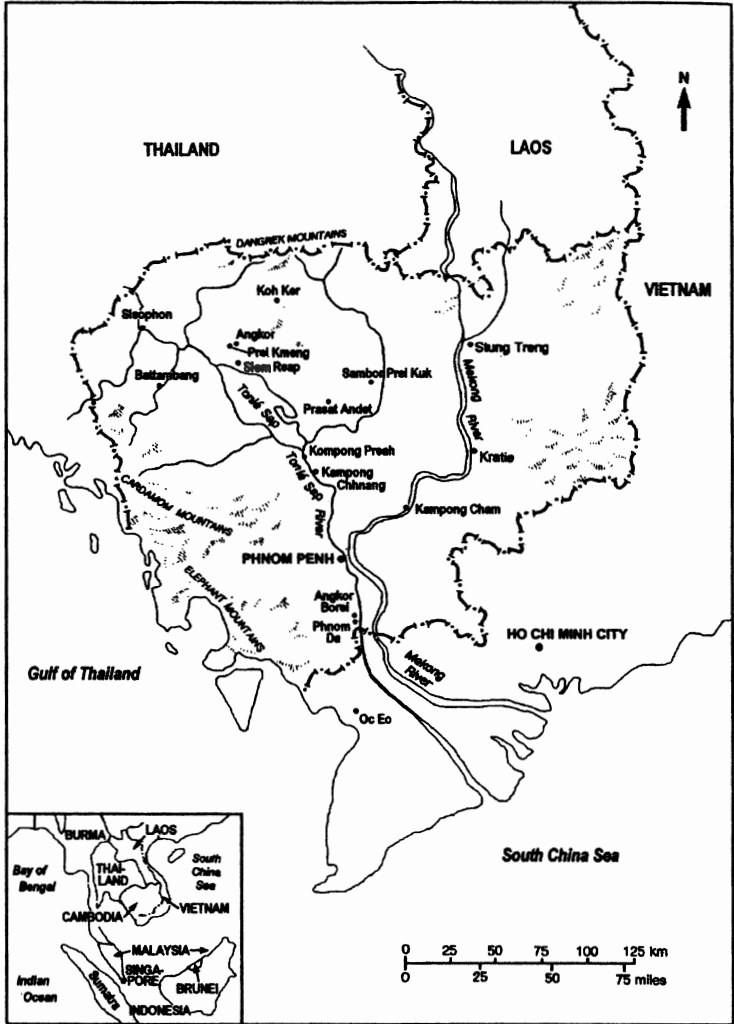
History of Heritage Management in Cambodia

The French Colonial Period, 1861–1953

To say that Cambodian archaeology equals Angkorian archaeology is no exaggeration. At the beginning of the French period in Indochina, nineteenth-century colonial administrators considered most things Cambodian to be culturally depauperate and economically uninteresting in contrast with neighboring Vietnam in all ways but one: the extraordinary archaeological ruins that represented Cambodia's magnificent past (see also Stark 2001). The wealth of archaeological ruins inspired the French to develop a research institute for the Far East, or *L'École Française d'Extrême Orient* (or EFEO), in 1898. This institute focused on conserving and restoring ruined Khmer (Cambodia, Laos) and Cham (Vietnam) monuments of Indochina (for reviews of the French colonial period, see Bezacier 1959; Coedès 1951; Grousset 1951; Malleret 1969).

In Cambodia, the roots of heritage management (and its marketing) took hold during the early twentieth century. In 1907, France signed a treaty with Siam that assured the return of three western provinces of Cambodia containing Angkor and its associated monuments. In 1908, EFEO launched its systematic program of conservation and restoration of Khmer monuments. EFEO founding directors Louis Finot and Alfred Foucher also established the *Service Archéologique* as one arm of the institution. The French also began restoration and conservation activities at the temples of Angkor. The primary goal of work at Angkor lay in conservation of the monuments: the *Conservation d'Angkor* was created in 1908. When Siam returned Cambodia's three western provinces, and the *Archaeological Service of Angkor* was established in 1926.

Developing museums and exhibiting artifacts is one effective tool for marketing heritage. French colonials were also busy collecting Cambodia's archaeological heritage, with a particular interest in the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian period. The objects they found curated at Buddhist temples across southern Indochina. In 1879, French industrialist Emile Guimet established a museum in Lyon to



Map 8.1. Cambodia, principal cities, and key pre-Angkorian Khmer sites.

house his extensive Asian collections. When he subsequently established a museum in Paris in 1899, it was named the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet (hereafter Musée Guimet). French explorer Louis Delaporte's journeys in Siam and Cambodia had already provided a valuable collection of Khmer art that formed the nucleus of collections in the Paris Musée Indochinois at the Trocadéro, founded in 1882. In Cambodia, Georges Groslier founded the first museum of Khmer art in 1920 in Phnom Penh and named it the Musée Albert Sarraut. Renamed the National Museum of Cambodia, the museum serves as the

repository for Khmer sculptures, inscriptions, and other Cambodian antiquities. By the time that France granted judicial powers and technical responsibilities to countries in its former colony in 1951, EFEO had identified 1,256 monuments: 780 in Cambodia, 401 in Vietnam, and 75 in Laos.

From Independence to War, 1953–1975

Cambodia's independence from France brought with it attendant problems of administering its cultural heritage. Although Cambodians assumed responsibility for running their country, French colonial institutions continued heritage management work in the country. Bernard-Philippe Groslier became the conservator at Angkor by 1956, and this era witnessed an acceleration of conservation and research on the country's heritage (Stark 2001). Although few Cambodians pursued academic training in archaeology, Angkor Park had a large contingent of trained Cambodian professionals on staff. In fact, the origins of Southeast Asia's regional organization, SPAFA, can be traced back to 1971, when the Khmer Republic of Cambodia initiated ARCAFA. Based in Phnom Penh, the urgent priority of ARCAFA was to discover and preserve the cultural heritage of Southeast Asia. The operation of a two-year interim phase (1975–1977) was planned, but political instability in Indochina prevented implementation of this plan. With the rise to power of the Khmer Rouge in April 1975, Cambodia's archaeological heritage fell into disarray.

The Khmer Rouge Period, 1975–1979

Although the Khmer Rouge took control of Phnom Penh in April 1975, their ideology and practice began to damage Cambodia's heritage management by 1970. With the onset of widespread civil war, all archaeological research activities ceased. Political instability during the next five years ultimately forced the closure of Conservation d'Angkor in 1972, the end of its preservation work in 1973, and the departure of its staff. The Khmer Rouge used Angkor to commemorate a former glory, and spared the ruins from destruction that they wrought on Buddhist temples throughout the country. Angkor was completely abandoned until the end of the Pol Pot regime in 1978, and forces of nature undid much of the clearing work EFEO undertook to protect the monuments from destruction.

Like their predecessors, the Khmer Rouge used Cambodia's cultural heritage to support their vision of the perfect society (also see Chandler 1993). As Lindsay French (1999, 179) notes, the Angkor temples were seen as examples of a golden age of Khmer political and cultural supremacy, and were put forward as symbols of highest Cambodian achievement. Massive irrigation projects by the Khmer Rouge were fueled, in part, by an effort to restore the hydraulic society that

they believed characterized Angkor (following work by Groslier). The Angkorian temples were among the few religious monuments left standing in the country; Khmer Rouge officials destroyed Buddhist temples and statues in their quest to eradicate religion from the countryside. Most of Cambodia's trained archaeologists and technical experts also perished between 1975 and 1978 as part of the Khmer Rouge plan to eliminate educated elements of the society.

So perhaps it is no surprise that the entry of Vietnamese soldiers in 1979, as part of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, involved the destruction of Angkor's antiquities (McDonald 1999). Subsequently, a variety of Angkorian artifacts (sculpture, architectural elements, artifacts) flooded the international antiquities market. Cambodian archaeology continued to suffer through the 1980s, as the country struggled to recover from the Khmer Rouge era and to cope with the Vietnamese occupation. Civil war continued in the northern and western portions of the country, in areas with high densities of Angkorian era monuments. Only one international conservation team, from India, dared return to Angkor Wat soon after 1979, when fighting continued in the region between the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge.

Following the Vietnamese withdrawal in 1989, Cambodian archaeology witnessed a gradual resurgence that began with conservation activities in the Angkor region. Such work has been difficult because fighting between government troops and the Khmer Rouge continued in parts of northern Cambodia for nearly a decade after the Vietnamese left. In 1989, after a hurricane ripped through the Angkor region, the Cambodian government appealed to international agencies to help with restoration efforts. And so work resumed in the Siem Reap area, after a hiatus of more than fifteen years. In 1992, Angkor Wat was added to the World Heritage list. Since that time, some international organizations like UNESCO have launched projects in the region, and the influx of major development support by the UNESCO Japanese Trust Fund (Japanese Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor, or JSA) at Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom has revitalized the region. So, too, has Sophia University's ongoing work at Banteay Kdei. In all, more than thirty countries are now engaged in conservation efforts in the area; these include France (EFEO), Hungary, the United Kingdom, Italy, Indonesia, China, and the United States (World Monuments Fund and the Center for Khmer Studies). A useful review of recent activities is found in Bhandari (1995, 105–44).

Legacy of Angkor Today

After the U.N.-sponsored elections in 1993, the royal government resumed power in a coalition government (see also French 1999). Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who was elected prime minister during those elections, noted that "unity is the only way to the survival of our nation. There is no other symbol for that unity ex-

cept Angkor Wat temple" (Fairclough 1995, 38). This national pride in Cambodia's cultural heritage is a major catalyst behind efforts to resume archaeological work throughout the country and also to showcase its heritage on the international scene. During this time, the Cambodian government helped mount two international art exhibitions of Khmer art: one in Canberra, Australia (1992) and a grand exhibition that toured the United States, France, and Japan in 1997 entitled "Millennium of Glory: Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia" (Jessup and Zephir 1997).

The Cambodian governmental has also taken political steps to preserve its country's national heritage since 1993. A governmental organization, with the acronym APSARA (Autorité pour la Protection du Site et l'Aménagement de la Région d'Angkor), was created in 1995 to assume responsibility for managing the Angkor area. Sites located in the remainder of the country are administered by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts in Phnom Penh. On January 25, 1996, the Cambodian National Assembly passed the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Sok 1998). APSARA and UNESCO worked jointly with UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) to produce a zoning and management plan for the Angkor region (APSARA 1996). Since 1999, a force of nearly three hundred French-trained "heritage police" has patrolled the Angkor Archaeological Park (Gittings 2001).

Today archaeology provides one of the greatest sources of tourism revenues in Cambodia, and the politics of heritage management are highly complex: the volume of visitation to the Angkor Archaeological Park has quadrupled since 1998, with 171,000 foreign visitors in 2000 (Gittings 2001). The first half of 2002 saw an even more marked increase, one of about 75 percent. Foreign tourists numbered some 212,690. Japanese are reported to be the most numerous, followed by Americans (Puy 2002). Cambodia's archaeological heritage today is thus important on two fronts: as a symbol of national pride and unity and as a source of economic revenue. Each year, the Archaeology Faculty of the Royal University of Fine Arts accepts approximately thirty students into its five-year program to pursue degrees in archaeology.

Beginning in late 1999, local tourism began to increase. By 2001 the Angkor Archaeological Park was, during national holidays, deluged by Khmer tourists from all but the poorest walks of life. People arrive by airplanes, speedboats, private cars, and even by trucks, coming from Phnom Penh, Battambang, and towns throughout the country. The growing middle class is especially in evidence (photo 8.2). Unlike most foreigners, Khmer visitors are coming with a great sense of heritage and identity, but few have a sense of care of the monuments and the cultural landscape.



Photo 8.1. Crowds at the interior entrance of Angkor Wat. Photo by P. Bion Griffin.



Photo 8.2. Affluent Khmer tourist at Angkor Wat, posing on a photographer's pony. The water tank is the location of the village scene in the film *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*. Photo by P. Bion Griffin.



Photo 8.3. Khmer tourists unloading at Banteay Srei, Angkor. Photo by P. Bion Griffin.

Given the lack of sanitation facilities, the trashing of the sites is increasing. Institutional interest in development of facilities remains oriented toward the paying foreigners.

In Cambodia, heritage management is big politics and big business. The administration of the Angkor Archaeological Park exemplifies this linkage: in 1999, the Sokha Hotel company (a unit of the politically well-connected Sokimex oil and gas firm) cut a deal with Prime Minister Hun Sen to handle gate receipts from the park. Under this arrangement, Sokimex gives US\$1 million each year of ticket revenues to APSARA. In its first year of operation (1999–2000), Sokimex collected almost \$3.9 million from ticket sales; more than half that amount was clear profit for the company. Recent and growing criticism with this arrangement may prompt a renegotiation of the contract, so that more ticket revenues go into the hands of the management organizations that preserve and protect Cambodia's archaeological past (Turnbull 2000).

Marketing Heritage: Looting and Archaeology in Cambodia's New Millennium

When Cambodia opened Angkor Wat for tourism, antiquities became one of the country's greatest attractions (Shoocondej 1999, 38). Antiquities looting has a long tradition in Cambodia, and the first large-scale looting was done by French explorer André Malraux, who removed nearly a ton of stones from Angkor Wat in 1909 (Sengseng 1995, 105–6). Struggles between the Khmer Rouge and the central Cambodian government from 1979 to 1997 involved people, land, and antiquities. The Khmer Rouge moved precious gems and antiquities across the Thai border to finance their war efforts (e.g., Wilkinson 1999). The shift in government control in 1997 (during which Hun Sen assumed control of the country)

led to the demobilization of the Khmer Rouge. The collapse of the Khmer Rouge has led to a surge of unbridled looting in the country's remote provinces (e.g., Mydans 1999). Since 1990, once sacred Khmer temples and sculptures have been transformed into commodities in the international (and illicit) antiquities market. Virtually no Khmer temple is left unscathed (French 1999, 171).

In the past decade, interest in Asian antiquities has grown substantially in the West (Vincent 1996). For example, Asian sales for Sotheby's worldwide reached \$112.6 million in 1997—nearly double the sales only two years previously (McCord 1999, 34). Cambodia's ancient sculptures and ceramics are considered among Southeast Asia's finest, and can be compared to the value of Egyptian or Roman or Chinese antiquities on today's art market (Shoocondej 1999, 37). This demand for antiquities is widespread, and illicit Khmer art has been found in the collections of major museums, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art (ICOM 1997, 11) and the Honolulu Academy of Art (see below).

Great profit comes from marketing Cambodia's heritage, and looters are willing to take great risks. In 1993, perhaps as many as three hundred well-armed bandits used rockets to blast their way into the Angkor Conservancy; they took eleven statues worth up to US\$1 million on the international art market. As early as 1996, a single Khmer sculpture could net \$100,000 on the international art market, and even ancient Buddhist and Hindu amulets go for \$20,000 to \$30,000 (Vincent 1996, 138–39). By 1997, international presses carried stories of the seizure of vast shipments of Khmer antiquities from ancient temples beyond the reach of the international police—from sites in northern Cambodia, in northeastern Thailand, in Laos, and even in Vietnam.

The scale of this looting ranges from the mundane to the truly breathtaking. One recent report (McCarthy 2002) describes villagers near Siem Reap who excavate and sell Khmer glazed ceramics (likely dating from the ninth to twelfth centuries) along the road to Phnom Kulen, a newly de-mined tourist destination for Khmers and foreigners alike.

Take, for example, the seventh-century Bodhisattva statue from Vietnam that the Musée Guimet acquired in 1990 through a Paris dealer: the price was the equivalent of US\$1 million. Or consider the hoard of sixty-one Khmer sandstone sculptures and friezes that the Cambodian military confiscated in 1997. These sculptures come from the twelfth-century mountaintop temple of Preah Vihear, near the Thai border (Doole 1999; Ker 1997), and were part of the private collection of a top Khmer Rouge leader named Ta Mok.

One of the most remarkable cases of looting was discovered in 1999 and implicates both the Cambodian and Thai military. In January, Thai police seized a tractor trailer full of 117 stone carvings in Prachinburi province near the Cambodian border. The director of heritage protection at the Ministry of Culture,

Uong Von, noted that pneumatic drills had been used to dismantle tons of stone bas-relief at the temple (Mydans 1999). Sources said that allegedly six hundred Cambodian soldiers spent a month loading the wall segments onto trucks for cross-border transport (McPhillips 2001). One of the leading scholars in Khmer history, Claude Jacques, believes that the seizure recovered perhaps half of the missing material from this Angkorian site (ABC interview, January 27, 1999). These carvings, when reassembled, constitute an eleven-meter-long breach in the wall around the twelfth-century temple of Banteay Chhmar, which is valued at more than US\$1 million on the international art market (McCarthy 2002).

Cambodia's cultural heritage is leaving the country through all its borders, but much of the antiquities traffic moves from Cambodia to Thailand with the assistance of the Thai and Cambodian military (Wilkinson 1999). Today one of the biggest markets for Khmer antiquities is Bangkok (Thailand), where art stores carry not only Khmer antiquities, but also catalogs of intact architectural elements at Khmer temples that can be removed (i.e., looted) to order. Compounding the problem is the fact that antiquities trafficking is not illegal in Singapore, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. Khmer antiquities freely flow through these cities, which are free ports with minimal regulations on exports (Polk 2001). Since the Thai government has not yet signed the 1970 UNESCO Convention against trafficking in antiquities (Thosarat 2001), Thailand is one of the leading transit points for trafficking in Cambodian antiquities. Only recently has UNESCO developed a website that inventories Khmer artifacts, detailing their nature, in order that illicit



Photo 8.4. Aspara beheaded by looters, Angkor Wat. Photo by P. Bion Griffin.



Photo 8.5. Aspara damaged by time, not vandals, Ta Nei, Angkor.
Photo by P. Bion Griffin.

commerce may be hindered (Shoocongdej 1999). Looted antiquities “rediscovered” in western locations, especially museums, are slowly beginning to be repatriated. The Honolulu Academy of Art, for example, in May 2002 returned two pieces of statuary to the National Museum in Phnom Penh. Previously donated to the museum, their recognition led to de-accessioning, and with great fanfare, a ceremonial journey home.

Vast numbers of people are involved in the illicit and highly lucrative antiquities trade. Thieves handle the objects, and secure Cambodian police or military protection to guard the transport of stolen goods through military-controlled territory. Thieves smuggle these goods out of Cambodia, to Singapore, Thailand, or Hong Kong, overland or by sea. Some sell the goods immediately, while others store them in unlikely places; in July 1999, officials dredged the ponds of Thailand’s ancient capital of Ayutthaya and recovered forty tons of stone carvings thought to have been smuggled from Cambodia. Others ship sculptures out of southern Cambodia to Singapore, and then to Bangkok to sell to dealers whose shops are found in fashionable shopping malls in Bangkok like River City. Thai authorities periodically undertake—and publicize—crackdowns on these shops, but the scale and tempo of trafficking in Khmer antiquities continues unabated.

The Cambodian and international public generally associates archaeology with Angkor, because of its splendid monuments and because the Angkor region has experienced the greatest investment of energy and funding for restoration and preservation in the country. Yet the Angkor area—which consists of a rather

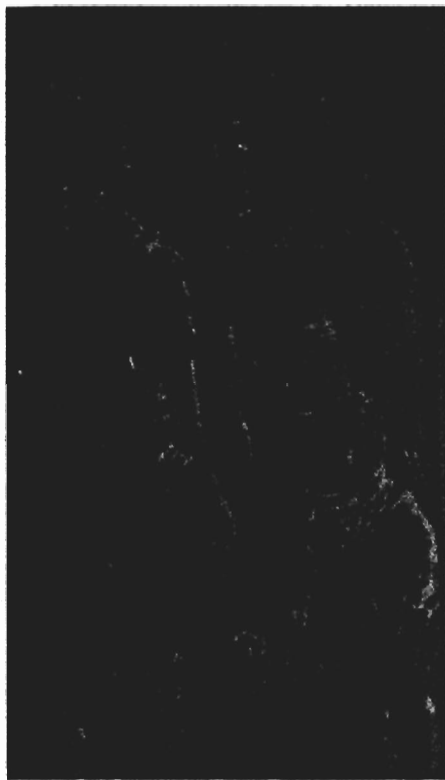


Photo 8.6. Aspara damaged by oil from people's hands, Angkor Wat. Photo by P. Bion Griffin.

bordered area around the northern end of the Tonle Sap Lake—represents a small section of the country's archaeological resources. The Khmer empire's historic monuments stretch south to the Vietnamese border in Takeo province (Phnom Kracheh), east to at least central Cambodia, north into Laos (Wat Phu), and west into central Thailand (Lopburi).

Equally impressive are the many archaeological sites that predate the eighth century A.D., and that are scattered around Cambodia along its major rivers and secondary tributaries. Civil war and its lingering effects (particularly land mines) have limited archaeological survey in many of these areas, so we still have a poor understanding of the distribution of sites for different time periods. As new sites are discovered through development projects or by archaeologists, the logistics of heritage management become equally harrowing to those associated with the Angkorian monuments. One recent example, from the northern Cambodian province of Banteay Meanchey, involves the Iron Age site of Phum Snay (Pottier 2000). Exposed



Photo 8.7. Reconstructed aspara at Ta Prohm, Angkor. Photo by P. Bion Griffin.

through road construction activities in 2000, this Iron Age site once contained a huge cemetery and represents the only documented site of its time period in the country. Despite numerous visits to the site by representatives of Cambodia's heritage management agencies and the installation of military police at the site, looting continues at such a vast scale that the site resembles a lunar landscape (also see

Thosarat 2001). Salvage excavations in 2000 and 2001 recovered a range of important archaeological material, but it is not clear whether research at the site will be possible in the future because of the wholesale looting by local villagers, for sale to foreign collectors in the United States, Europe, Singapore, and Japan.

One important region that the French described during the heyday of the colonial era is now undergoing archaeological investigation and political negotiation: Cambodia's Mekong delta. The next section of this chapter briefly introduces the region and uses the archaeological site of Angkor Borei (Takeo province) as a case study for exploring global goods and Cambodia's endangered past.

Archaeological Work at Angkor Borei

Heritage management and archaeological research are intimately linked on the Lower Mekong Archaeological Project, which was a direct outgrowth of the University of Hawaii/East-West Center/Royal University of Fine Arts Cambodia Project. That broader project was begun in 1994 by the East-West Center (Honolulu, Hawaii) as a form of capacity building for Cambodia's heritage community (for review of project, see Griffin et al. 1999). This broader Cambodia project was instigated to provide training to graduates of the Royal University of Fine Arts (Phnom Penh) in archaeology, art history, and historic preservation in a research context (Griffin et al. 1996; Griffin et al. 1999). The Lower Mekong Archaeological Project was established to study the early historic period of southern Cambodia, from 500 B.C. to A.D. 500 (Stark et al. 1999).

At the invitation of Cambodia's Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, LOMAP has concentrated most of its archaeological research on the archaeological site of Angkor Borei. Our fieldwork combines archaeological research and training and a variety of field techniques, from excavation and survey to geoarchaeological prospecting and coring. Several American students from the University of Hawaii, more than twenty graduates from the Archaeology Faculty of the Royal University of Fine Arts have participated in LOMAP fieldwork since 1996.

Southern Cambodia contains a rich yet poorly understood record of early historic period occupation, from approximately 500 B.C. to approximately A.D. 500. Archaeological research in the last two decades suggests that the Mekong delta experienced extensive settlement and human land use that predated the Angkorian period before about A.D. 802. Historians and art historians have identified the beginning of the early historic period about A.D. 500, when we see the emergence of writing, and a more complex political organization that may have been legitimated through religious ideology (Coedès 1968; Vickery 1998).

The archaeological importance of Angkor Borei lies in its historical role as an early center of Cambodia's earliest state, which Chinese emissaries called "Fuchai" (see reviews in Hall 1985; Stark 1998; Stark and Bong 2001). Founded in

the late centuries B.C., the settlement grew into a major population center by the early first millennium A.D. and housed sizable populations. Perhaps as early as A.D. 100, people began to dig a series of canals that radiated southward from the settlement and ultimately connected most major first millennium settlements in the delta. At some point later in the sequence, the people of Angkor Borei erected a massive earthen and brick masonry wall around its borders; we see the construction of brick monuments and stone statuary in the later first millennium A.D., and the earliest dated Khmer inscription (Stark et al. 1999).

Archaeological, bioarchaeological, and geoarchaeological research continues at and around the site of Angkor Borei to trace its occupational history and relative importance through time (Stark and Bong 2001). At its apex during the first millennium A.D., Angkor Borei was at least three hundred hectares in area, housed more than a dozen brick structures that served either as Indic shrines housing stone sculptures, or as mortuary monuments that contained cremation ashes and associated grave goods. At its peak, the settlement could have housed several thousand inhabitants (as it does today) and helped integrate the northern delta both politically and economically (Stark 1998). Cambodians view Angkor Borei as the cradle of their civilization, and researchers are still in the process of defining the site's historical role in the development of complex society in the Mekong delta.

Angkor Borei as a Contemporary Community and a Heritage Site

Unlike the abandoned tells of the Near East, the archaeological site of Angkor Borei is located beneath an eponymous district. At the western edge of the Mekong delta, Angkor Borei today has approximately 6,000 inhabitants who live within its walled boundaries; about 22,000 others live within the general area. Cambodian political boundaries operate at several levels: the village (the *phum*), the subdistrict (*khum*), and district (*srok*), and the province (*ket*). Angkor Borei's population is a mixture of Khmers and Vietnamese. The southeasternmost subdistrict of the Angkor Borei district is called Khok Thlok, and its southern boundary abuts the Vietnamese border.

Khmers associate Khok Thlok district in particular, and this area in general, with the origin story of Preah Thaong or Nagi Soma (Gaudes 1993; Ledgerwood 1996). In the origin story that Funan residents recounted to visiting Chinese emissaries in the third through sixth centuries A.D., an Indian Brahmin priest named Preah Thaong (or Kaundinya) left India for Southeast Asia and arrived at the shores of the Mekong delta. There he saw a beautiful local princess, named Soma, on the shore. She was the daughter of the king of the *nagas*, serpents that lived beneath the ocean. Preah Thaong and Nagi Soma battled each other for control of the region; he defeated her, they fell in love, and married. It is said that

King Preah Thaong introduced Hindu customs, legal traditions, and the Sanskrit language to the population. Nagi Soma's father "drank the waters" that covered the land (this might have involved draining parts of the delta for farming) and gave the people a kingdom that he called Kambuja (also see Gaudes 1993).

Southern Cambodia, including Takeo province, was largely under the control of the Khmer Rouge between 1970 and 1974 (Quinn 1976, 4). Takeo province was known as Area I3 to the Khmer Rouge (Quinn 1976, 19). Vietnamese residents occupied the area associated with the archaeological site of Angkor Borei until 1970 (Boua and Kiernan 1989, 3). Some of the population abandoned this area during the early 1970s because of American bombing and Khmer Rouge-imposed restrictions on clothing and on activities such as cross-border movement (Quinn 1976, 15). The Cambodian government organized a variety of development projects in this region after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge in 1979. Land reclamation schemes developed by the provincial administrators established Angkor Borei as a district in 1982, and settlers from across the province have moved into the region in the past twenty years (Boua and Kiernan 1989).

Looting at Angkor Borei

Cambodia's heritage officials selected Angkor Borei for LOMAP because of its historical importance, political stability, and accessibility from Phnom Penh. Work at this site, however, underscores the intimate relationship between heritage management and preservation, on the one hand, and heritage destruction (looting) and cultural tourism on the other. The site of Angkor Borei is located a few kilometers from Cambodia's border with Vietnam. Riverine traffic between Vietnam and Cambodia is continuous: people, their animals, and their goods move into and out of this Angkor Borei en route to (or arriving from) Vietnam. The community's key location and large size makes it ideal for trafficking goods, both legal and contraband. According to interviews with local villagers and with officials, the looting of the settlement's archaeological past extends back at least a decade.

Before 1970, antiquities were revered in Cambodia: Indic statues and artifacts were stored and venerated in Buddhist temples across the country. French collectors visited these temples in the 1930s and took most seventh- and eighth-century (pre-Angkorian) Indic statues from Cambodian communities for curation in the National Museum (Phnom Penh) and in France. With the conclusion of the UN-sponsored elections in 1993 and the resumption of relative stability in the country, more statuary moved onto the international art market. After the 1993 elections, local people report that outsiders began to visit Angkor Borei in search of antiquities. The rising demand for antiquities was irresistible to the military troops stationed in the region, and villagers report that they were given

screens to use in their excavations of areas that might yield gold. In interviews with LOMAP members in 1999, the head monk of the Buddhist temple at Phnom Da (the hill with temples south of Angkor Borei) reported that he was approached by armed villagers and ordered to relinquish antiquities that were stored at his temple. Today, Angkor Borei/Phnom Da-style sculptures are now available for purchase on the web through vendors in Asia and Europe.

The fact that Angkor Borei is a regular destination for field trips from the Royal University of Fine Arts may aggravate the local looting situation. For a few days each February and March, busloads of college students descend on the district office at Angkor Borei to camp out, visit the ruins with their teachers, and learn about Cambodia's pre-Angkorian past. Faculty members from the Royal University are also members of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, and various faculty members involved with these trips have regular contact with the district (local) officials. Periodically, Royal University faculty members talk with local officials about site preservation concerns. While this contact minimizes visible looting activities at all levels of local government, our interviews with villagers suggest that the level of looting activity may have actually escalated between 1993 and 1999: the very period during which field trips had taken place.

In 1999 and 2000, LOMAP was privileged to excavate the first documented pre-Angkorian cemetery in the country. This cemetery was exposed through illicit excavations south of the Buddhist temple called Wat Komnou, and the landowners responsible for those excavations reported finding and selling numerous artifacts (particularly whole earthenware vessels and beads). Through the two-year period that fieldwork involved, villagers approached us repeatedly in efforts to sell their artifacts to us. By the end of the 1999 field season, we learned enough about the local antiquities trade to ascertain that many district officials were involved. The district governor, for example, was busy making his own collections of local antiquities during the 1999–2000 period. It was also said that the provincial governor had a substantial collection of pre-Angkorian statuary in the province's capital. With political reorganization in 2000, many of these officials have been given new assignments elsewhere.

LOMAP efforts to halt trafficking in antiquities were admirable but limited. We were only able to persuade the landowners to stop looting the excavation area through monthly compensation for "guarding" the area. The month that our funding stopped in January 2001, landowners resumed their digging. Moreover, 2001 reports from the markets in Phnom Penh, and from web searches that turn up pre-Angkorian statuary from southern Cambodia, suggest that looting of Angkor Borei continues.

Threats to the archaeological resources in the region stem as much from economic development activities that cause unintentional damage as from active ef

forts by local residents to mine the site for antiquities for sale. With settlement and land reclamation in the region has come landscape modification, which includes opening new fields for cultivation and animal husbandry. Efforts since 1998 by the European Union's development program, called PRASAC (*Le Programme de Réhabilitation et de l'Appui au Secteur Agricole du Cambodge*), involve canalization projects in the area. These new canals irrigate new fields and facilitate transportation but occasionally cut through archaeological sites. The region floods annually, and these floods destroy local unpaved roads. Repairing local roads requires road fill, and in 1996 the Angkor Borei district governor authorized local villagers to dismantle one of the largest standing brick monuments on the site to grind its bricks into road fill. Angkor Borei is thus under imminent threat of destruction from all angles, from villagers digging their gardens to massive construction activities that eradicate ancient brick monuments.

LOMAP members have participated in three activities that may help to stem the problem: regular meetings with members of Cambodia's heritage ministry, public outreach, and the development of a local museum. Meetings throughout the 1999 and 2000 field seasons brought the highest ministry members to Angkor Borei, where they talked with district officials. We also met with the deputy provincial governor at the end of 1999 to discuss methods for both protecting the site and encouraging tourist visitation. Work continues to find funding to develop a zoning and management plan that might afford Angkor Borei (and its environs) some protection against a range of factors that threaten the integrity of its archaeological resources. A second, and perhaps equally effective, strategy involved public outreach.

Public Outreach

LOMAP field investigations from 1996 to the present have attracted great attention to the area by its local inhabitants, and the proximity of our excavation unit to one of the community's two Buddhist temples meant that many of the area's residents took an intense interest in our work. So, too, did villagers living near the area, schoolteachers, and leaders of the temple community, who often stopped by several times a week to observe our progress. This work offered public education for community members, as well as for a number of Khmer and foreign visitors to the ongoing excavations. Dr. Miriam Stark and Mr. Bong Sovath visited the Angkor Borei high school to make a presentation on our research and to answer questions, and we explained our work to various village leaders at Wat Komnou throughout the archaeological field season.

In 1999, the Ministry of Culture also sent down a delegation in the second week of March to sanctify the site. This event drew many residents from Angkor Borei. In 1999 and 2000, LOMAP members also conducted tours to cohorts of

archaeology and architecture students from the Royal University of Fine Arts (Phnom Penh) throughout the field season. The tours provided a culture historical background to the site and then concentrated on findings from the cemetery. Audience members were encouraged to ask questions, and visitors (regardless of background) asked the same set of questions regarding the age of the deposits, the nature of the findings, and the relationship between the site of Angkor Borei and Cambodian oral traditions regarding Khmer origins.

Angkor Borei as Tourist Destination?

To the Cambodian government, the cultural resources of Angkor Borei may represent a potential source of economic revenue. Angkor Borei's proximity to Phnom Penh (if the roads are repaired) and its cultural significance to the Khmers make Angkor Borei an excellent candidate for protection and tourism development. The Department of Tourism has already begun to highlight Angkor Borei and Phnom Da as a tourist destination. The European Union's agricultural development program, PRASAC (*Programme de Réhabilitation et d'Appui au Secteur Agricole du Cambodge*), began an effort toward tourism development in 1997 by constructing an on-site museum at Angkor Borei. LOMAP members have assisted the European Union since 1997 in developing the on-site museum at Angkor Borei through photography, consultation on exhibits, and displays.

The Angkor Borei museum celebrated its official opening on May 5, 1999. Representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the Ministry of Tourism, PRASAC, the European Union, and the University of Hawaii attended the opening. For the first time, the museum was also opened to residents of Angkor Borei and several hundred people came to see the museum. Hundreds of visitors (foreign and Khmer) came to the Angkor Borei museum in 1999 and in 2000, based on the museum's visitor book. The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts continues to struggle with the Ministry of Tourism over control of the museum, and particularly over control of entrance fees. Local officials insist on running the museum, while provincial authorities express frustration over their lack of participation in the maintenance of the museum. Efforts to enhance the area's attractiveness to tourism continue as LOMAP works collaboratively with the European Union and with Cambodia's Ministry of Tourism and Fine Arts. Yet the looting continues at Angkor Borei.

Discussion and Conclusion

Heritage management, nationalism, and archaeological research are inextricably linked to marketing heritage in Cambodia, in a complex web of relationships that implicate people and organizations from the bottom up. Angkor Borei is one of

the largest, and certainly one of the oldest, early historic period sites in the Mekong delta on either side of the border. The fact that Cambodians today live in Vietnam's Mekong delta today (the Khmer Krom) adds fuel to the claim that the Mekong delta was Khmer for centuries or millennia before the Vietnamese took it from Cambodia in the seventeenth century. So, too, do chronometric dates produced through work by the Lower Mekong Archaeological Project (Stark et al. 1999; Stark and Bong 2001). The foregoing examples have illustrated how Cambodian archaeology, regardless of location or time period, has become a political arena. In the case of Angkor Borei, studying the origins of Angkor places research in a delicate position between identity politics and good scholarship.

We hope that the Angkor Borei example illustrates how economic development is associated with looting. At the local level, archaeological work and the establishment of a local museum pits community concerns against provincial interests in a struggle over private land ownership and tourism potential. At the national level, an ongoing dialogue involves both bureaucrats and scholars who disagree about the ownership, management, and meaning of this important archaeological site.

Archaeological resources in and around Angkor Borei comprise an important part of Cambodia's cultural heritage. Through our outreach efforts, LOMAP members and our colleagues in the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts seek to encourage a sense of stewardship among Angkor Borei residents that might transcend their preoccupation with Angkor Borei as a resource to be mined for its marketable heritage. Such community education efforts are best done regularly, and by an on-site staff. Cambodia is one of the world's poorest countries, and heritage management outside of Angkor is a luxury. No resources are thus available for such work at Angkor Borei, and the future of that archaeological site is in great jeopardy.

Grinding poverty, corrupt governmental officials, a poorly compensated military, and—most of all—a voracious international demand for Khmer antiquities all contribute to the continued looting of Cambodia's archaeological heritage. This taste for antiquities has been most publicized for Cambodia's Angkorian past because of the vast scale of destruction in recent years. Yet poor Cambodians, with few economic alternatives and powerful economic incentives, also view pre-Angkorian sites as potential gold mines both literally and figuratively. On March 6–9, 2001, Cambodia hosted the eleventh session of UNESCO'S Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origins. Perhaps such widespread international efforts can help Cambodians stem the flow of their past beyond the boundaries of their country.

Cambodia's archaeological heritage is vital to its people, and the archaeological heritage of Angkor Borei is valuable to many different constituencies. To archaeologists, its resources hold a story that describes the origins of the earliest

civilizations in the Mekong delta. To schoolteachers and educators, Angkor Borei represents the cradle of Khmer civilization and the Khok Thlok of oral traditions. To Cambodian and foreign tourists, Angkor Borei and Phnom Da represent an intriguing destination to learn about Cambodia's ancient past. The challenge now is to preserve it—and the artifacts from this site that appear on the global market—for Cambodia's future generations.

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