



SPEAKER 1: MR IM SOKRITHY
FROM LIVING ANGKOR ROAD PROJECT (LARP)
TO
THE CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP STUDY OF MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA RESEARCH CENTER
(CRMA):

CROSS CULTURE AND CROSS BORDER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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3rd Seminar at Tapraya: Khmer-Thai students jointly restores broken pottery

**WORKSHOP ON
THE HERITAGE OF ANCIENT AND URBAN SITES:
GIVING VOICE TO LOCAL PRIORITIES
14-15 MARCH 2016
SINGAPORE**

ABSTRACT

The Living Angkor Roads Project (LARP), a joint research between Thailand and Cambodia, uses the results of its work as a didactic tool to teach secondary school students of Cambodia and Thailand. This enables them to know and appreciate their heritage. It also facilitates their ability to conduct supportive fieldwork in their own communities. The LARP team trains the students how to conduct a socio-cultural survey, how to interview various people in the communities and how to do the research on their own. Equipment to help them learning quickly and more efficiently such as computers, recorders, cameras and GPS units are provided. Since 2007, six heritage education sessions have been organized by the LARP team for the benefits of young Cambodian and Thai students in the provinces containing the Angkor-Phimay road in Cambodia and Thailand. Four sessions have been conducted in Thailand and two in Cambodia. The latest session included the 6th edition of heritage education in Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia, and Sdok Kak Thom, Thailand from 16-18 November 2014.

The project successfully inculcated a love for heritage and cultural roots in the children. Our ancestors have created our heritage and it's our duty to train our children to protect and to preserve it. We aim to spread the idea of motivating everybody in the community to participate in the conservation of heritage. Of course, we have government, ministries and departments to provide teams and resources, but if the community contributes as well (local inclusion and empowerment), then it becomes more efficient and effective. Locals become more active stakeholders, take ownership of stewardship, and become more responsible. Moreover, the project aims to engage the youth in learning the history of both countries with the aim that appreciation and increased understanding of shared cultural roots will enhance ties between the two nations.

BIODATA

Mr Im Sokrithy is an archaeologist and historian, having actively worked on numerous projects covering archaeology, history, anthropology and related fields. Since 2004, he has been the Senior Researcher for Cultural Research Projects with APSARA Authority. He is a Senior Lecturer and Thesis Supervisor at the Royal University of Fine Arts. One of the more prominent projects he co-directs is the Living Angkor Road Project (LARP: 2004-2014), a Joint Khmer-Thai Research Project which has provided a wealth of archaeologist, ethno-historic, ethnographic and GIS information. It has been tremendously successful step towards overcoming political, cultural and linguistic borders to lay the foundations for successful international cooperative research efforts among ASEAN countries. Mr Im earned his university degree in Archaeology at the Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia (1995), a second degree in at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociales (EHSS), University of Paris VI, France, and a postgraduate Diploma at EHSS in 1998.

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CROSS CULTURE AND CROSS BORDER EDUCATION PROGRAM:

From Living Angkor Road Project (LARP) to the Cultural Relationship Study of
Mainland Southeast Asia Research Center (CRMA)

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Abstract

The Living Angkor Roads Project (LARP), a joint research between Thailand and Cambodia, uses the results of its work as a didactic tool to teach secondary school students of Cambodia and Thailand. This enables them to know and appreciate their heritage. It also facilitates their ability to conduct supportive fieldwork in their own communities. The LARP team trains the students how to conduct a socio-cultural survey, how to interview various people in the communities and how to do the research on their own. Equipment to help them learning quickly and more efficiently such as computers, recorders, cameras and GPS units are provided. Since 2007, six heritage education sessions have been organized by the LARP team for the benefits of young Cambodian and Thai students in the provinces containing the Angkor-Phimay road in Cambodia and Thailand. Four sessions have been conducted in Thailand and two in Cambodia. The latest session included the 6th edition of heritage education in Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia, and Sdok Kak Thom, Thailand from 16-18 November 2014.

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1. Introduction

1-1. The Living Angkor Road Project (LARP)

The *Living Angkor Road Project* (LARP) is a Khmer-Thai joint research project supported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and APSARA-Authority. LARP is a cross-border multi-disciplinary research effort aimed, firstly, to identify all the remaining portions of ancient roads radiating from the Angkor capital to different provinces of the ancient Khmer Empire, in view of an overall mapping of the network known to date (Figure 1). Secondly, the project is designed to identify and describe infrastructures existing along the roads: bridges, canals, temples, rest-houses, hospitals, architectural features, landscape features, and water features (LARP 2007).

Since initiation of the work, the core concept was enlarged. The project targets not only the archaeological remains but also present-day communities along the axis. The argument is simple and clear: although normal evolution, abrupt changes, and special historical events, there are significant continuities, linkages and connections between current cultures and the heritage; much of which have common shared elements equally important for current identities. These communities are not alienated from the Angkor past. In addition, they still use, respect and hold religious practices at the historic sites and remains. Therefore the team conducts ethnographic surveys in the two countries.

The first step was assessment of the Angkor-Phimay road (Figure 2). For the following steps we studied the continuation of the Angkor-Phimay road further from the capital; such as, the Angkor-Sdok Kok Thom road (the West road) and its continuation to eastern Thailand; the Angkor-Vat Phu segment (the North-East road); and the Angkor-Vijaya segment (the East road) (LARP 2008). The team benefited from the results of remote sensing surveys that significantly helped systematic ground trusting conducted during several campaigns in Cambodia, Thailand and Laos. Several sites were excavated using modern methods to include geo-informatics and geo-physics surveys (Im 2008a & 2008b).



Figure 1: Elevation Map of the Road network

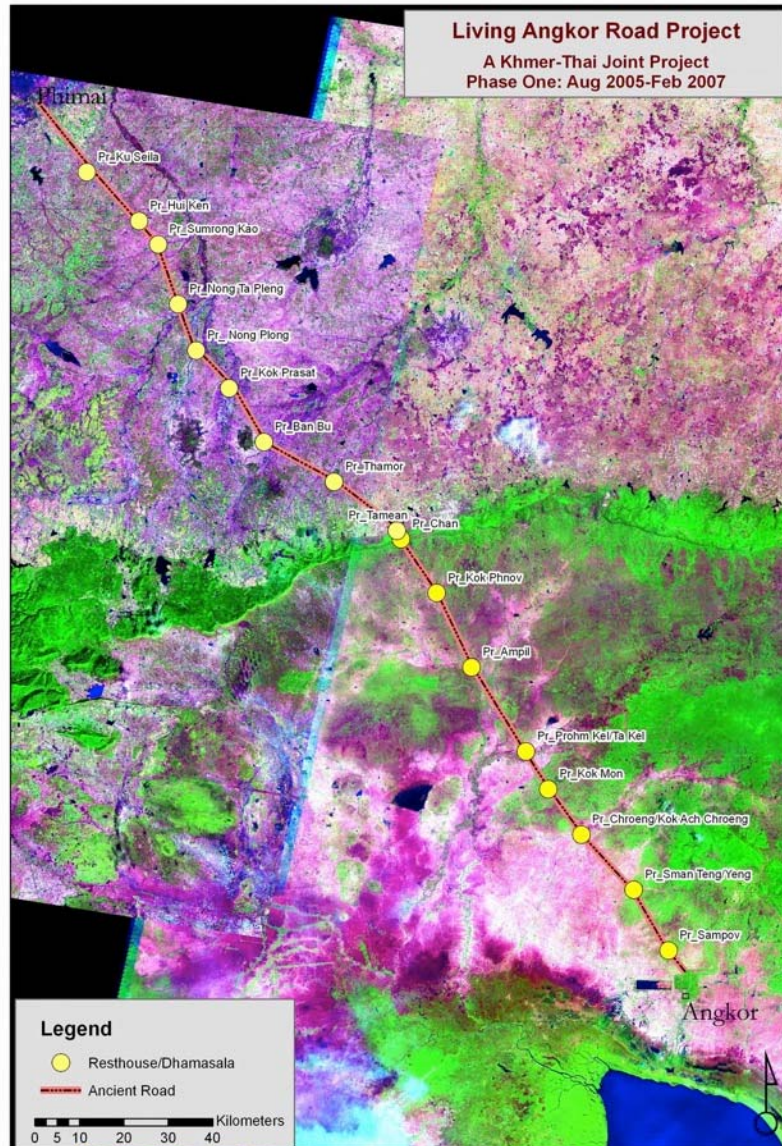


Figure 2: The Satellite Map of the Royal Road from Angkor to Phimai

1-2. The Cultural Relationship Study of Mainland Southeast Asia Project (CRMA)

The project is an extension the LARP. The study focuses on the impacts affecting cultural change in order to visualize the relationship of culture at regional scale in the past to discover the relevance and coherence that impacted on society and culture as a whole and cultural development until the present (Lertlum 2016).

Firstly, the project aims to study the impact and cultural change in Southeast Asia, and to trace evidence of linkages and cultural relations resulting from extending transport systems from the early state to the 17th centuries. Secondly, we study the process of cultural adaptation from evidence of cultural objects (material culture). This can indicate knowledge and production technology that continues until present. Thirdly, from the research results we will develop an information database to disseminate to the public. Finally, we utilize the research results in various ways, particularly for regional youth education and enhancing relationships between the countries (promoting international partnerships). This is a primary focus of this paper.

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2. The Heritage Education Program: An Application of the Research Results

In general, archaeologists conduct research including field activities and publish their results. The primary purpose is to understand past cultures. Most of the sites that are test excavated are filled after the research. In a few cases, the excavated sites are displayed for the public, often under protection in a site museum or hall. In some cases, archaeologists invite local people to participate in the field work. These cases are often deemed “Community Archaeology”.

The LARP team and then CRMA act differently. The team uses the results of its work as a tool to train and educate high school students in Cambodia and Thailand. This approach enables students to gain knowledge and skills. We train them how to study their heritage and encourage them to study their own culture in communities on their own initiative. The project also aims to build relationships among the young generation. We encourage them to form networks and support groups; work as teams. It is believed that the strained relations between Thailand and Cambodia can be eased through better mutual understanding of shared cultural ties. The earlier the understanding is fostered, the better. This connectivity will strengthen the ties between the two nations. We have already witnessed positive results.

The Heritage Education Program is a joint project between Thailand and Cambodia under the umbrella of the joint research project entitled the *ASEAN Youth Research Program*. The project is supported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and APSARA Authority. The program includes high schools located in the border areas of both countries and located within the study area of the research project. The curriculum of the ASEAN Youth Research Program was developed from the knowledge and expertise of the LARP and CRMA.

Basic methodology of the research activities such as archaeology, anthropology, remote sensing and GIS are taught to the students by the research team (for more detail see points 3 and 4 below). Ten students from each high school have been selected for the program. Each school team is led by a principal and a teacher. The implementation of the project follows the established objectives and plans. All schools are motivated to participate in the activities of the project. The main initial task of the project is to lead the students to study and research effectively so they more thoroughly understand their local culture—especially shared culture and heritage. This requires the conscious attention of the youth. We motivate them to use initial guidance and learn on their own with mutual support from each other.

In addition to the local culture, we also conduct research about local plants and ecology. This initiative was inspired by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The botanical and ecological knowledge is useful to the local communities, our research and environment conservation. The data collected from each school has been analysed to identify several common cultural aspects shared among Cambodia and Thailand. The results of the students’ studies from each school will be presented at student seminars planned for one or two years from now.

Since 2007, the student seminars have been organized six times already. The first and second seminars were in 2007 and 2009. We assembled at Phnom Rung Heritage park in Thailand where we had twenty students from the city high school at Uddor Meanchey province and thirty students from Buriram, Surin and southern Thailand (Figures 3 and 4). Many high officials from both countries attended the seminars. For the third and fourth, seminars we organized at Banteay Chhmar temple complex and Sdok Kak Thom temple in 2011 and 2012 respectively. The schools included Tappraya Pittaya School in Non Soong district, Sakaeo province and Soong Noen School in

Soong Noen district, Nakorn Ratchasima. In Cambodia, students from Banteay Chhmar School in Banteay Meanchey province were selected for the program. Twenty students from both countries participated into the program (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 3: 1st Khmer-Thai Student Seminar at Phnom Rung



Figure 4: 2nd Seminar for Khmer-Thai students: training in an excavation pit at an Iron Smelting Site



Figure 5: 3rd Seminar at Tapraya: Khmer-Thai students jointly restores broken pottery



Figure 6: 4th Seminar at Banteay Chhmar: A bond of friendship between Khmer-Thai students is depicted.

The fifth event was held in 2013. That same year Cambodia hosted the International Youth Forum and the 37th Session of World Heritage Committee. The Khmer-Thai student seminar held in Siem Reap was received with the special attention. The students from Kampong Chheuteal School in Kampong Thom province joined the event. An equal number of students from both countries attended the seminar. Due to the diligent work of the students new archaeological sites were discovered, such as the discovery of the ancient road near Muang Sema (identified by Soong Noen students); the discovery of the ancient Khmer temple site in Ta Phraya district (identified by students from Tappraya Pittaya); the discovery of prehistoric archaeological sites in Banteay Chhmar; and understanding ancient urban and irrigation systems in Sambor Prei Kuk (identified by Kompong Chheuteal students).

The Khmer-Thai Student Seminar in Siem Reap-Angkor (15-18 March 2013) was a forum where students presented their discoveries and exchanged experiences. They actively built good relations between people in both countries (Figures 7-9).



Figure 7: Opening of the 5th Heritage Education Program



Figure 8: Lecture for Khmer-Thai Students at Angkor Vat



Figure 9: Lecture for Khmer-Thai Students at Bayon

2-1. The Implementation of the Heritage Education Program in Thailand

In order to synchronize the implementation of the student research in Cambodian and Thai schools, all approaches, implementation, and equipment were standardized for all schools. The heritage education program for Thai students is planned and implemented in a systematic way that enable students to learn about their local heritage and culture together with the ability to identify Khmer and Thai common culture (Figure 10). In addition, the students learned how to utilize the technologies such as digital cameras with Global Position System (GPS) capabilities and web map service to support their research.



Figure 10: Sample activity from the student surveys at Tappraya Pittaya School

2-1-1. Implementation Plan

The details of the implementation plan is as follow:

- Meeting to discuss about the research topic and area of study
- Gather all local knowledge about the local culture
- Gather all information about archaeological sites in the study area
- Meeting to share and analyze the local heritage and culture together with the ability to identify Khmer and Thai common culture.

2-1-2. The Outcome

Due to excellent motivation of the participating students, the implementation of the project achieved all objectives and goals. Students learned from the research steps directed by Dr. Surat Lertlum, which led to the discoveries made by the students (Figures 11 and 12). In the aspect of archaeology study, the main achievement can be illustrated by the discovery of the ancient road near Muang Sema ancient city from Soong Noen students and the discovery of the ancient Khmer sites in Ta Phraya district from the students from Tappraya Pittaya. In addition, they learned about their local culture in their area. Some of the activities they had never known before the implementation of the program. The information they gathered was also useful for the locals to understand their heritage—some of which are disappearing due to lack of preservation and continuation by the local community.

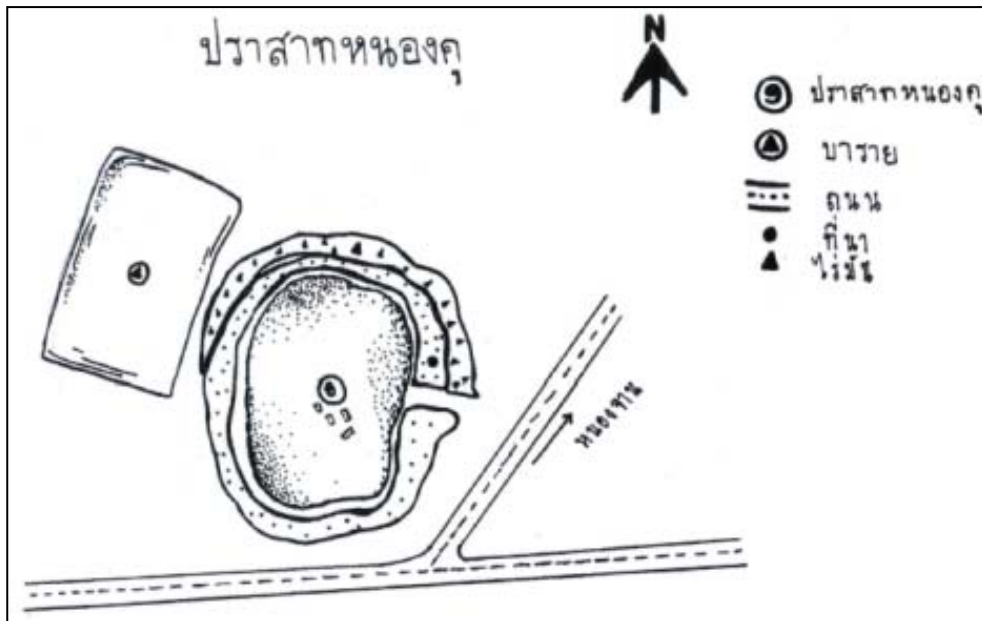


Figure 11: Sample drawing (map) of a Khmer archaeological site from the student survey

| จังหวัด | อำเภอ | ตำบล | โบราณสถาน | ชื่อวัฒนธรรม | รายละเอียด | แหล่งอ้างอิง | ภาพประกอบ |
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| นครราชสีมา | สูงเนิน | เสมา | โบราณวัตถุ | พระพุทธรูปสำริด | เป็นพระพุทธรูปสลักจากหินทรายขนาดใหญ่ ศิลปะทวารวดี สร้างขึ้นราวพุทธศตวรรษที่ 13 ขนาดความยาว 13.50 เมตร สูง 2.80 เมตร ก้นพระเศียรไม่อาจเห็นได้ ลักษณะศิลปะเป็นทางศิลปะขอม ปราสาทหินอยู่ในอาคารก่ออิฐรูปสี่เหลี่ยมคางหมู สลักสลักนูนต่ำ ศิลปะขอมแสดงการดำรงชีพทางวัฒนธรรมของชุมชน ปัจจุบันจัดแสดงอยู่ที่วัดธรรมจักรสุรินทร์ ต.กัก | สมเดช อธิชาโนธรรม, เลขาธิการคณะกรรมการวัฒนธรรม โครงการสร้างจิตสำนึกอนุรักษ์มรดกทางศิลปวัฒนธรรม, 2551 | |
| | | เสมา | | ธรรมจักร | ธรรมจักรหินทรายศิลปะขอมเป็นคอนกลางของธรรมจักรมีลายสลักลึกลงหน้าหน้ามือ ศิลปะทวารวดี อายุราวพุทธศตวรรษที่ 13 สลักสลักนูนต่ำแสดงรูปเทพนาคเอชระขุฑมณี ปัจจุบันจัดแสดงที่วัดธรรมจักรสุรินทร์ ต.กัก | ศ.ดร.กาญจนา อธิชาโนธรรม, พวรรณีธรรมจักร, 2551 | |
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| | | เสมา | | ใบเสมาหินทราย | ลักษณะเป็นหินทรายสีเทาแดงอย่างสมบูรณ์ ไม่มีรอยแตกหักใดๆ พบบริเวณหน้าพื้นที่ และบริเวณรอบพระพุทธรูปสำริดและโบราณสถานภายในเมืองเสมา ต.กัก ใบเสมาที่ขุดขึ้นทั้งหมด | สมเดช อธิชาโนธรรม, เลขาธิการคณะกรรมการวัฒนธรรม โครงการสร้างจิตสำนึกอนุรักษ์มรดกทางศิลปวัฒนธรรม, 2551 | |
| | | เสมา | | ใบเสมาสลักภาพพระพุทธรูปและอุษุปโปถีย์ | ใบเสมาหินทรายสลักภาพพระพุทธรูปและอุษุปโปถีย์ พุทธศตวรรษที่ 13 พบ ณ เสด็จขึ้นบ้านแก้วแก้ว ร่มแก้วแก้ว ปัจจุบันเก็บรักษาอยู่ที่พิพิธภัณฑสถานแห่งชาติ ต.กัก | สมเดช อธิชาโนธรรม, เลขาธิการคณะกรรมการวัฒนธรรม โครงการสร้างจิตสำนึกอนุรักษ์มรดกทางศิลปวัฒนธรรม, 2551 | |
| | | เสมา | | เหรียญเงินโบราณ | เป็นเหรียญเงิน สลักสลักนูนต่ำ พบภายในเมืองเสมา | จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, เหรียญเงินโบราณบ้านแก้วแก้ว, ศ. เสมา ศ. สมณิน, ศ. น.ธรรมะสิริมา | |

Figure 12: Sample archaeological database from the Soong Noen students

2-2. Heritage Education Program Implementation in Cambodia

As stated, archaeologists conduct research including field activities and publish the results of their works. Most of the sites are filled after the research. In a few cases, the excavated sites are publically displayed (often under protection in a hall or structure). In some case, archaeologists invite local people to participate in the field works: "Community Archaeology".

The students have been trained with a researcher from APSARA Authority on the basics of the interviewing techniques and the basics of archaeological field research (Figures 13 and 14). The APSARA trainers provide a 4-page form (a check list) which covers items for note taking during surveys as follows: village information and statistics; archaeological sites; traditions and customs. In general, we interview four key people in each village: village chiefs, monks or priests, senior citizens and spiritual leaders/specialists. After collecting the information from the interview, we go to the field to check the archaeological sites guided by the village chief or someone who knows the sites (Figure 14-20).



Figure 13: Training session with students at local school



Figure 14: Training students in the field on how to obtain the geographical location point from the archaeological site

Students conduct their research after school, during weekends, during holiday periods, etc. The trainers pay visits to the students and track their progress. There is a focal person, the teacher or principal, at each school with whom the team leader will interface with as well.

Figure 15-16: Interview with a monk and village chief in Banteay Chhmar Monastery

Figure 17-18: Visiting the head spiritual specialist of the village and observing the rituals of a priest

Figure 19-20: Surveying recent looted burial sites

2-2-1. Summary of the Outcome:

2-2-1-1. Tangible Heritage:

Field surveys to archaeological sites have been conducted from village to village within the combined communities of 15 villages. There are 12 ancient temple buildings dated from 7th to 13th centuries and about 10 burial sites that have been studied. However, the archaeological sites have been seriously looted.

2-2-1-2. Tradition and Beliefs

There are interesting traditional and ceremonial events performed at their communities. Normally, local communities strongly preserve their identity. Generally, there are two main categories of ceremonies. The first is concerned with *Rites of Passage*. Some rituals are associated with a fixed ceremonial calendar while some are special occasion events not bound to a specific calendar date (these can occur at any time). The second aspect is concerned with customs and performing arts, which are also considered to have a ritual component, and which contribute as part of events related to collecting, harvesting, planting or gathering crops. These are called: “Agrarian Rites”. Others include the “Traditional Ceremonies of Twelve Months” written in the Traditional Calendar; and the Practices of Animism, a homage to *Neak Ta*—a spiritual village protector (Ang 2007). The traditional Ceremonies of Twelve Months is perform similarly elsewhere in the Kingdom. Differences occur in the nuanced ways they are practices from one place to others.

2-2-3. The Customs

There are some performing arts which are considered as ritual gestures and contribute to the collective events. These can be categorized as follows: dances, singing, and music. Popular dances are indigenous activities related to chasing off evil, bad spirits, wild animals and forces which provoke misfortune to the communities. *Trot* is performed only during the New Year celebration for chasing off bad luck and misfortune. The tug-of-war is also played during the New Year days. This is symbolic for securing rain for the coming agriculture season (Im 2007).

3. Results and Conclusion

The project has successfully inculcated a love for nature and culture to the young generation. It is rooted in the minds of our children. Our ancestors created our heritage and it’s our children’s duty to protect and to preserve it. We aim to spread the idea of increased community participation in the conservation of heritage. Of course, we have the government, the ministries and departments to provide leadership, guidance and support, but if the community contributes as well, then it will become more effective and efficient.

More than that, the project aims to engage the young generation in learning the history of both countries in hopes that shared cultural roots will enhance ties between the two nations, especially since the recent quarrels over the Preah Vihear Temple. Instead of talking about fighting, they have learned that the borderline is for official reasons only and they now talk about how they come from the same cultural roots. They have similar folk games, traditional healing practices done through a medium, and rain-making prayers and rituals. They just call them by different names. For instance the praying-for-rain ritual in Thailand is called "Nang Maew Khor Fon", while in Khmer it is “Sot Trey Ros”. There is very little differences in these shared customs and rituals other than the pronunciation of their names.

It is believed that the strained relations between Thailand and Cambodia can be eased through better mutual understanding of shared cultural ties. And, the earlier the understanding is

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fostered, the better the outcome and the stronger the peaceful and productive friendships will be. This exchange will strengthen the ties between the two nations.

The experience between the youth in Thailand and Cambodia demonstrates that archaeology could be used as means to strengthen relations between nations. In fact, preliminary contacts have been made to include Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar in the LARP project. The program is in the best interest of ASEAN region.

Acknowledgements

The joint research project was supported by Thailand Research Fund and APSARA Authority. The Khmer-Thai Students Seminars was archived due to the additional support from all levels of the local government from both Thailand and Cambodia. Heritage Watch also provided support. We also wish to thank UNESCO for encouragement and support as well. The authors express utmost gratitude to the following people: For the Cambodian side: H.E. Bun Narith, former Director General of APSARA and H.E. Map Sum, Director General of APSARA, H.E. Khun Neay Khuon, Deputy Director General of APSARA, Professor Ang Choulean, Scientific Advisor to the Projects, and to all the APSARA staff who contributed directly to the Project; to H.E Phoeung Sakona, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, H.E Hab Touch, former Director General Heritage, H.E Prak Sonnara, Director General for Heritage, Mr Kong Vireak, Director of the National Museum of Cambodia; for the Thailand side: H.E. Tej Bunnag, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, General Vapirom Manasrunsi, Chair of Royal Project, Education Project under the Royal sponsorship Projects in the Kingdom of Cambodia, current and previous Presidents of Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy, current and previous Directors of Thailand Research Fund (TRF), Dr. Silaporn Buasai, Deputy Director, TRF, current and previous Director General, Thai Fine Arts Department, Mr. Pirapon Pisnupong, Deputy Director General, Thai Fine Arts Department, and to all the Thai team who contributed directly to the Projects.

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