

The Director's Note

by Dr. Philippe Peycam

The end of 2001 marked the conclusion of the Center's third year of institution building. It was also marked by renewed efforts to build on the legitimacy gained by our successful Workshop held in January 2001.

The Center team focused its attention on three main directions:

- Starting up the Center's operations
- Reinforcing the Center's team and internal organization
- Gaining recognition for CKS in Cambodia and abroad

Starting up the Center's operations

The Center's operational activities consist to a large extent in helping its 'core programs' to operate. These programs are: the Library, the conference hall, the houses of residence, and our publications department, (mainly comprised of our newsletter and website). I have chosen in this note to focus on them because they represent such an important part of the Center's 'personality'.

Thanks to the energy of the library's director, Mr. Chheng Pharin and with his assistant Mrs. Oum Daraneth, the library has succeeded in turning itself into a solid trilingual academic collection on Khmer studies, which is also a vibrant public space in the community of Siem Reap.

I cannot enumerate here all the small successes associated with this enterprise, but every day, a small community representing the diverse society of Siem Reap, come to Wat Damnak to read. Monks, high school teachers and students, tour guides, overseas visitors and local people join to seek knowledge and understanding through our books. Cambodian readers and researchers find themselves in contact with their foreign counterparts. Those of us, myself included, who may have doubted that a library of academic publications made accessible to the public at large would ever 'work' in Siem Reap, have been positively surprised.

We want to continue to build on this success because we see our library (and our newsletter/website) as essential to the Center's mission of 'public service'.

At the moment, the Library is almost entirely supported by the generosity of private and institutional benefactors. Some have donated one essential tome, others entire collections or money for book acquisition. We would like to thank them all for their help, making our library more than the sum of its

parts. And we welcome those who want to help us to sustain this challenging venture.

Siksācaker, the Center's newsletter, is another crucial element of the Center's life. Launched two years ago by Dr. Michel Rethy Antelme, the well known Cambodian French linguist, *Siksācaker* continues to publish two issues a year, and it has succeeded in becoming a well known forum for scholars and others interested in Khmer studies. We have been very pleased to see an increasing level of interest on the parts of scholars, with written contributions pouring in.

We are also building our less tangible (but no less essential) presence on the internet, which has begun even before Siem Reap had acquired efficient internet connections (a situation fast changing). Thanks to Alessandra Kim in New York, and later to Danh Hong and John Weeks, CKS has developed a trilingual website which presents the Center and its activities. The challenge of presenting Khmer language material on the internet is an intellectual and technical challenge in and of itself.

Increasingly *Siksācaker* and our site (www.khmerstudies.org) help disseminate research being done in collaboration with the Center, and promote activities of our consortium members. Both also serve as a unique trilingual connection between scholars of different countries, disciplines, and generations. We hope to develop it into a "networking resource" serving the community of scholars wherever they may be.

Of course, much more needs to be done in terms of diffusion, mailing, and in terms of translation capability. As with the library, *Siksācaker* and the Center's website need support in order to continue to deliver and to expand their services to the community of Khmer studies. For these two projects, the Center receives generous financial assistance from the Van Waveren Foundation in New York.

Other core projects that the Center is eager to develop are the Conference hall, its building development, and its houses of residence. In keeping with our mission of public service, we are developing our Conference Hall as a public space benefiting learning and the arts. For 2002 we plan an ambitious schedule of academic meetings, exhibitions, and performances. Of particular note will be two workshops, one on Pre-Angkorean Studies, and another on Performing Arts, and an exhibition on Khmer Vernacular Architecture. January 2003 will also see the hall house our biennial Workshop on Khmer Studies.

One of our less obvious (but still significant) projects is the operation of two houses of residence, in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. These provide space for staff, visiting scholars, and friends of the Center. At the moment two of our Center Fellows are in residence. The availability of these domiciles provides an opportunity for our visitors to maximize their time and experience in Cambodia, and also helps coalesce a sense of community between the diverse individuals involved with the Center.

Visiting individuals (usually from our Consortium Universities) have regularly taken advantage of these facilities, and the Phnom Penh house also serves as an office space for researchers of the CKS-Rockefeller program.

Beyond these core elements the Center also operates a growing number of academic programs. These have been developed from our January 2001 Workshop's recommendations, thanks to the interest and support of several foundations. An important test for us has been to define the style and specificity of the Center's academic programs, drawing from its tripartite mission of Research, Teaching and Public Service, and its commitment to inclusiveness. Further in this issue of *Siksācākṛ*, François Tainturier describes one of our largest programs, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Reinforcement of the Center's internal organization

To 'service' these different programs, and by extension, the Center's mission towards its consortium, the Center has had to reinforce its operational capacities, both in term of management and in term of organization.

Building a larger team in Siem Reap and outside was deemed necessary. A year ago, the Center employed 5 full-time positions. This figure has jumped to 9 (without counting the people who are conducting programs). Two main responsibilities have been identified, both requiring full time positions: Human Resource and Operation on the one hand, and Program and Development on the other. John Weeks, the Center's Assistant Director for Human Resources and Operations, has compiled a Personnel Manual to coordinate our further growth. Similarly, François Tainturier, Assistant Director for Program and Development, is developing guidelines to smoothly manage the growing number of diverse programs sponsored by the Center. The Center has also benefited from the help of volunteers from several countries who have come to Siem Reap to assist our staff in various ways. I here would like to thank Charis Gresser, Barnaby Hall and Monique Leroux for their valuable input in 2001. A formalized internship program for the Center is currently being prepared. It will provide an exciting experience for students and staff from our institutional Consortium members and at the same time, enable us to extend our mission even further.

Our efforts to improve the Center's operational capacity are an important challenge for any young organization, as most of our funding relates to projects. To serve its projects and remain faithful to its original mission, the Center will also benefit from the generosity of private donors who appreciate its long-term objectives. With the benevolent involvement of Dr. Olivier Bernier from New York, we are strengthening the Center's fund-raising capacity, especially by developing a network of benefactors.

This last year has indeed been very successful. But for us to continue I must reiterate my previous requests for assistance and funding. I also want to sincerely thank those who have provided support to the Center this year - without whom our operation and expansion would have not been possible.

The Center and the Khmer studies communities

I cannot end this note without an update in the Center's effort to constructively establish itself as a part of the larger cultural and educational environment, in Cambodia and abroad.

Senior Advisor David Chandler's trip to Japan in August 2001 merits special attention. During this trip, he gave a seminar in the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and had detailed discussions with Dr. Tomoko Okada and Dr. Hiromi Ueda from this university. Dr. Chandler also had the opportunity to discuss the future of Khmer studies and the Center with representatives of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, the Japan Foundation, the Toyota Foundation and the Sasekawa Foundation. He had private meetings with a number of eminent individuals, particularly Prof. Yoshiaki Ishizawa of Sophia University and Prof. Yoneo Ishii of Kanda University of International Studies. We are grateful to Dr. Alan Feinstein from Toyota Foundation for helping arrange Dr. Chandler's visit. Besides the more traditional Center connections with American and European universities, its integration into the Asian educational community would be lacking without a strong link to the Japanese institutions, many of which are already active in Cambodia.

The Center's role was also enhanced in Cambodia itself. In Phnom Penh our programs are underway leading to fruitful new experiences of collaborative works with our local partners. In Siem Reap, at the International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding of Angkor, I was able to update the participants on the Center's growth and progress. On that same occasion we were honored to welcome a visit to Wat Damnak of Prof. Azedine Beschouch, Scientific Advisor at the Cultural Sector, UNESCO.

So we are closing this third year of activity full of hopes, in the expectation that the exceptional growth that has so far characterized the Center will continue. I will make this opportunity to thank the growing community of those who are contributing to make this project possible.