

Friends of Khmer Culture: 2012 Highlights, Upcoming Events

The Bodhisattva of Compassion—major step forward for Banteay Chmar temple

The 12th-century temple of Banteay Chmar's western enclosure wall has reliefs of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara that are among Cambodia's most memorable images. Of the original eight, only two remain in situ, but two more lie buried and two, saved from looting, are temporarily in the National Museum. Two are missing.

FOKCI reached a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts to fund a feasibility survey, with engineers, archaeologists, architects and historians all contributing studies of the correct way to restore the stunning reliefs. Work is under way and on schedule.



Photo © John Gollings.

The Tokyo String Quartet dazzles FOKCI supporters

On October 9 the Tokyo String Quartet, in their final year before disbanding, brilliantly played Haydn and Bartok in the apartment of generous Manhattan friends to raise funds for FOKCI's commitment to the feasibility survey (see above) to restore the southwestern gallery of Banteay Chmar's third enclosure wall. It was thrilling to hear chamber music in the intimate setting for which it was composed, and the audience gave the quartet (Martin Beaver, Kikuei Ikeda, Clive Greensmith and Kazuhide Isomura) a standing ovation. The evening fulfilled the funding goal for the feasibility study, which so many of our loyal supporters had already contributed to, and sets this multi-year project on a firm footing. It was a wonderful fusion of multiple arts.



Photo © Mariko Ikehara.

Upgrading the professional skills of the Metals and Ceramics Conservation Laboratories in the National Museum, Phnom Penh

To our great delight, FOKCI was successful in applying for a grant from the Carpenter Foundation to sustain the labs for three years as part of a plan to develop their technical skills and financial independence. It was fortunate that we were able to engage one of the world's leading conservation experts, Dr. Paul Jett, recently retired as chief scientist at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution.

For a month Dr. Jett trained members of the Metals and Ceramics Conservation Laboratories and some from the Stone Conservation Workshop and the Textile Conservation Department. The latter is a new development for the National Museum, and FOKCI funded their curator's attendance at an important technical conference in Thailand.



Photo © Huot Samnang

Fostering Promising Young Cambodians: Conferences and Courses

From the earliest days FOKCI has supported students, both to attend special courses and to participate in international conferences. In 2012 we funded completion fieldwork for two Ph.D candidates and continued support for another. In addition we helped four students to attend the all-important bi-annual meeting of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeology, this year held in Dublin. Such conferences are vital in the exchange of ideas and the exposure of young scholars to the standards of excellence they aspire to.

On a larger scale, FOKCI joined L'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Center for Khmer Studies, APSARA (Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap) and the University of Sydney to support a conference on religion held in Siem Reap in June; we funded attendance for 26 students from the Royal University of Fine Arts. FOKCI will collaborate with the group again in 2013, having been invited to become a permanent member. These conferences focus on special topics and allow for in-depth research that more generalized meetings cannot provide. We will also be supporting the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association early in 2014. This will be the first time Cambodia has hosted such an important conference, and we are proud that it will be organized by Phon Kaseka, one of FOKCI's grantees.



Photo © Tep Sokha.

Exhibitions—new permanent display of ceramics

Following the successful permanent installation of *Ancestors of Angkor* in the Preah Norodom Sihanouk Angkor Museum in Siem Reap, FOKCI is sponsoring permanent exhibition there of artifacts excavated at Kok Patri. Including unusual ceramics from China, Japan and Thailand, the exhibition throws new light on post-Angkorian social conditions.

Lectures—upcoming series for 2013

FOKCI is committed to encouraging Cambodian students to hone their research and lecturing skills and to reach out to the general public with cultural education. In 2012 we sponsored two lectures at the Reyum Institute and we have been asked to support a series to be held at the Royal University of Fine Arts in 2013.

The Season of Cambodia, New York City 2013

An exciting series of cultural events will take place next April and May in New York. Organized by Cambodian Living Arts, this festival, presenting dance, drama, music, painting, sculpture, and a wide range of lectures and discussions, will bring awareness of Cambodia's exciting renaissance to one of the world's most vibrant centers of culture. FOKCI, long committed to nurturing such activities, looks forward to participating in this important project.

Congratulations!

FOKCI is happy to report the promotion of Madame Oun Phalline to a senior position in the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. Her replacement as Director of the National Museum of Cambodia will be Kong Vireak. We congratulate them both. Vireak has been FOKCI's Cambodia-based representative for more than three years and we are very proud of his achievement. We also extend warmest congratulations to Louise Cort, Curator for Ceramics at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution. Louise, one of FOKCI's most active Advisors, has received the Smithsonian Secretary's Distinguished Research Lecture Award.

Torp Chey Kiln discovery

The largest kiln site in Southeast Asia, Torp Chey demonstrates Cambodian innovation in kiln design and FOKCI is proud to have supported the excavation project led by Ea Darith of APSARA with the collaboration of noted kiln expert Don Hein.

