

## Friends of Khmer Culture 2013 Exciting Discoveries, Vibrant Celebration

This past year has seen exciting events for Cambodia on both ancient and contemporary fronts. “Lost city found in the jungle” was the headline that many of you may have seen, when archaeologists discovered evidence of an entire Khmer city more than 300 years older than Angkor Wat. Archaeology and restoration projects—leading to new insights in Khmer history—are thus very much alive and well in Cambodia, and FOKCI has been pleased to play its part.

### Banteay Chmar restoration...vast ceramics center unearthed at Cheung Ek

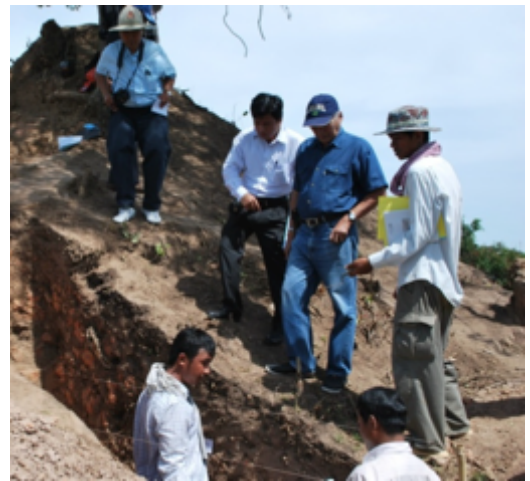


A milestone was reached at Banteay Chmar, the great 12<sup>th</sup> century temple in northwestern Cambodia, with the completion of a feasibility study funded by FOKCI for the conservation and restoration of the western enclosure wall and its famous bas reliefs (a portion of the wall is pictured at left). The next step will be to seek funding for the multi-year project to restore key portions of this magnificent temple.

FOKCI also helped underwrite excavation at Cheung Ek, which you may well recognize as the site of one of the infamous

Killing Fields. But it is also a site of important archaeological value and has been threatened by encroaching commercial development.

Time being of the essence, FOKCI joined in support of an outstanding team of Cambodian archaeologists and researchers whose now completed study has revealed that the 67 kilns discovered to date may make this the oldest kiln site in Southeast Asia. As a production center, Cheung Ek may have provided ceramics for a wide region across the lower Mekong River floodplain in pre-Angkorian times. (right, a pot reconstructed from sherds at one of the kilns; Secretary of State at the Cambodian Ministry of Culture, wearing cap, and others visiting the site)



### Festival of Cambodian arts and culture



Contemporary Cambodia was showcased brilliantly this past spring in the Season of Cambodia celebration in New York City, organized by Cambodian Living Arts. The festival brought dancers, artists, performances, and exhibitions to New York City, to great critical acclaim.

(at left, a scene from *A Bend in the River*, a new dance work with puppets created by renowned visual artist Sopheap Pich, photo by Cambodian Living Arts)

***(Season of Cambodia, continued)*** FOKCI was proud to lend its support to the communications of festival events back to Cambodia, and to Season of Cambodia's Living Arts Fellows program, whose graduates will bring their knowledge back to the wider Cambodian arts sector. (at right, three of the Fellows at a strategic planning workshop)



## **To the rescue at the National Museum of Cambodia**

From the never a dull moment department: the National Museum in Phnom Penh, like all venerable buildings in Cambodia, needs constant maintenance, and this year the problem was a horrendous attack of termites. We will spare you the gruesome pictures, but suffice it to say that FOKCI and other generous donors came to the rescue, so that the termites could be eradicated and the vulnerable items in the collection could be saved.

It is moments like these that make us all the more grateful for your support, and, in turn, show us once again what a vital role FOKCI plays in preserving as well as celebrating Cambodia's heritage.

## **Battambang—a splendid museum in need of repair**



One project you will be hearing more about is the Battambang Museum. This past year, a number of FOKCI Board and Advisory Council members revisited this incredible repository in Battambang, Cambodia's second largest city. The Museum, included in a provincial museums survey that FOKCI funded some years back, is an impressive work of Khmer-style architecture but is now greatly in



need of repair and improved installation of its major collection (pictures left and right). FOKCI has begun seeking major funding for this important project, and will make it one of the top priorities for the coming year.

We would be remiss if we didn't also mention that this past spring FOKCI's founder and president, Helen Jessup, was honored by Friends Without A Border with the Healing Cambodia Award for her and FOKCI's work in the service of Cambodians and Cambodian cultural heritage.

Next on the calendar is FOKCI's biennial board meeting in Phnom Penh, this coming January. While many Board members spend a good deal of time in Cambodia, this is a special opportunity to gather together along with the recipients of FOKCI grants, to see them face-to-face, hear of their accomplishments, and—on behalf of all of you who support FOKCI and these exceptional Cambodian scholars, archaeologists, researchers, conservators, authors, and artists—we will applaud their progress.

**For more details about FOKCI projects or to give online:**

**[www.khmerculture.net/howyoucanhelp.htm](http://www.khmerculture.net/howyoucanhelp.htm).**

**Or write to Friends of Khmer Culture, PO Box 164, Norfolk, CT 06058-0164**