

reflections from the **Phnom Penh** Workshop
Cambodia
January 2000



SIGUS - Special Interest Group in Urban Settlement
Massachusetts - Institute - of - Technology

Martin Knyland Spencer Wasserman Safai Goethert



The MIT team

Tunua Lasso Lin Bianca Srinivasan

© SIGUS 2000
SIGUS - Special Interest Group in Urban Settlement
School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139 USA
sigus@mit.edu

All photographs are by the authors unless otherwise noted.

*T*able of contents

Foreword 5
Reinhard Goethert

About the authors 7

Where do the poor live in Phnom Penh? 9
Overview of the workshop study areas

Globalization: Women, Poverty and the Garment Industry 29
Shanna Wasserman

Apsara in Sculpture. 40
Ana M. Lasso

Women and the Informal Sector. 46
Paul J. Martin

Reading, Writing, and Riches: Formal Education of Young Women. 54
Tina Lin

Blok Tanpa: A Case Study in the Economics of Relocation 62
Kirk Nyland

Safeguarding History and Development 72
Bianca Maria Nardella

Remains of Traditions 85
Kavita Srinivasan

Local Motion 94
Ahsha Ali Safai

Art, Culture, and Skills for Survival 100
Chris Spencer

*F*oreword

This booklet contains the impressions from the MIT participants who participated in a 2-week workshop in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The workshop tackled issues and problems facing low income communities throughout Phnom Penh. Seven types of communities were of interest: makeshift roadside huts, riveredge squatters, squatters settled on and around railroad tracks, roof-top squatters, squatters in invaded areas, 'hidden' communities, and a resettlement project. These settlements represent the range of housing options available to the low income.

The methods for exploring the issues and identifying interventions were based on a 'community action planning' approach which is community driven, participatory, fast and adaptive. Interdisciplinary teams were formed, each with responsibility to search for creative ways of tackling the more urgent problems facing communities as well as their underlying causes. These teams worked directly with the communities during the 2-weeks and were charged with presenting their findings to the community and to outside professionals. Many of the ideas proved to be very workable and some of the projects have continued toward implementation.

Several principles guided the workshop:

- Hands-on testing of methods for participatory planning and field surveys, while working in multidisciplinary and multicultural groups.
- Ways of identifying community leaders and other stakeholders as working partners for project development and implementation.
- Reflection on the concept of community and on the relationship between 'outsider' and 'insider' when deciding interventions.
- Identification of an effective institutional framework for project development and to look at ways of influencing policy through community-level projects.

- Development of presentation skills to suit a variety of settings and audiences.

This workshop is part of a series 'Building Communities' involving architects, planners, social scientists, lawyers, nurses and engineers. This workshop was a collaborative effort of SIGUS-MIT, CENDEP (Centre for Development and Emergency Practice), Oxford Brookes University, England, and the ACHR (Asian Coalition for Housing Rights), Thailand.

We would like to thank our hosts – the AHCR: Asian Coalition for Housing Rights and the director Somsook Boonyabancha – for the generous support which contributed to the success of the workshop. We especially appreciate the kindness and extra effort of Patama whose participation made the workshop enjoyable as well as successful!

– *Reinhard Goethert*

SIGUS – Special Interest Group in Urban Settlement – offers an umbrella for research support, workshops, and courses focused on low income communities, stressing participatory method in promoting affordable and equitable housing. A key goal is to explore and define the new professionalism emerging from the challenges of today and tomorrow. Established in 1984, SIGUS grew out of the rethinking of method, practice, and teaching in the housing field driven by the concerns of the rapidly expanding informal sector in developing countries.

SIGUS is directed by Dr.-Ing. Reinhard Goethert, assisted by graduate assistants from the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies. In its activities it draws on faculty from throughout MIT and from national and international agencies in exploring the new professionalism.

About the authors

Kirk Nyland is a Master of Science in Real Estate Development student at MIT's Center for Real Estate. He is from Seattle, Washington, and following graduation plans to develop large-scale, urban residential and mixed-use projects on the west coast of North America.

Shanna Wasserman is completing her first year as a candidate for a Master of City Planning at MIT. Her research and academic interests are in community based economic development with low income communities. She plans on working in economic development at the community or public sector level after graduation.

Ana Maria Lasso is a first year Master of City Planning student from Los Angeles, California. She is part of the City Design and Development group. Ms. Lasso is interested in cultural arts policy, public art, and researching the role of the arts in cities.

Chris Spencer is a second-year Master of City Planning student in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, in the City Design and Development Group. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Historic Preservation from Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island. His focus is the revitalization of post-industrial cities through the integration of preservation, adaptive-use, and new development.

Bianca Maria Nardella is a first year candidate in the Master of Science in Architecture Studies in Architecture and Culture, Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture. She is interested in development strategies related with cultural heritage conservation and sustainable cultural tourism.

Tina Lin is a sophomore undergraduate at MIT working towards a bachelor's degree in architectural design. Originally from Orange County, California, Tina would like to return there after graduation and complete graduate studies in architecture.

Kavita Srinivasan is in the her second year of the Master of Architecture program, and is a dual-degree candidate for the Master of City Planning degree. Her interests are in housing, slum redevelopment and the use of technology and vernacular in design.

Paul Martin is a 1st year Master of City Planning student originally from Miami, Florida. He is involved in a World Bank project to study water and sanitation delivery in South Asia, and he will spend the summer in India conducting field work. He hopes to continue working in economic and social development in Asia and Latin America after graduation.

Ahsha Ali Safai is from Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is a second year Masters student in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Ahsha plans to return to the political arena, in where he was working before attending MIT.

Living in Phnom Penh | **COMMUNITIES**

Where do families live?

What do their environments look like?

What is important to them,

What would they keep and what would they change?

How can we help?

remembering that we are

– and always will be –

outsiders?

And we always must remember: “Cities are for everyone.”

The workshop focused on eight low income communities in Phnom Penh over a two-week period. The families were housed in a variety of ways, ranging from seemingly temporary roadside shelters, to elaborate rooftop communities. Teams of students worked with each of the communities and were challenged to explore ways to improve the situation.

Seven different types – in physical terms – were identified as representing the wide range of housing options available to the low income. All are squatters in some sense, except for the resettled community which has a recognized legal tenure.

Roadside shelters (2 communities)

Riveredge communities (2 communities)

Railroad squatters

Roof-top communities

Invaded housing estates

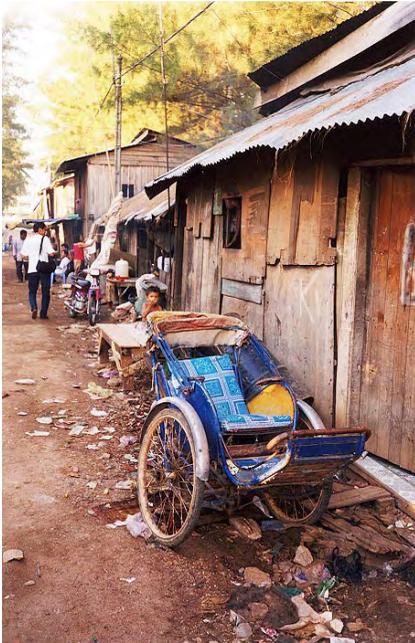
‘Hidden’ communities

Resettled communities

Roadside Communities



Wat Phnom was a roadside squatter settlement in an advantageous central location close to Wat Phnom, a major Buddhist temple. 22 shacks with 70 residents formed the community, and only two had a regular income. Half were a part of a savings group to pay for relocation, but their very low income made this a remote possibility. was not available, and water was purchased at a very high cost. Toilets??? (Note: the community was evicted soon after the workshop.)



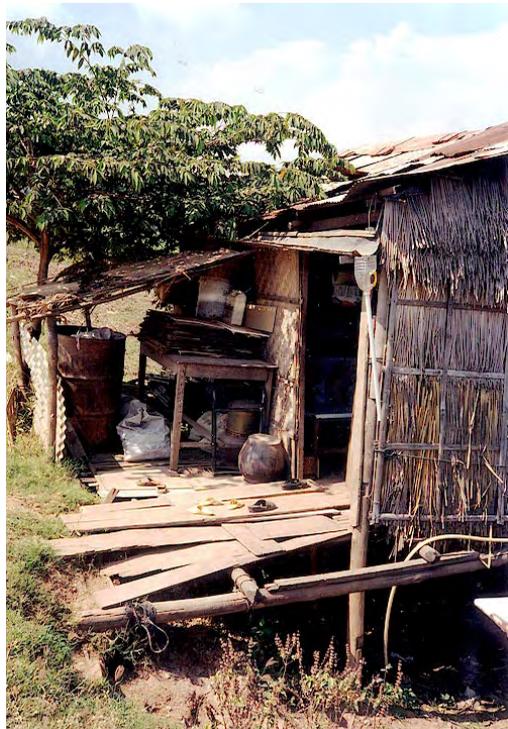
Riveredge Squatter Communities



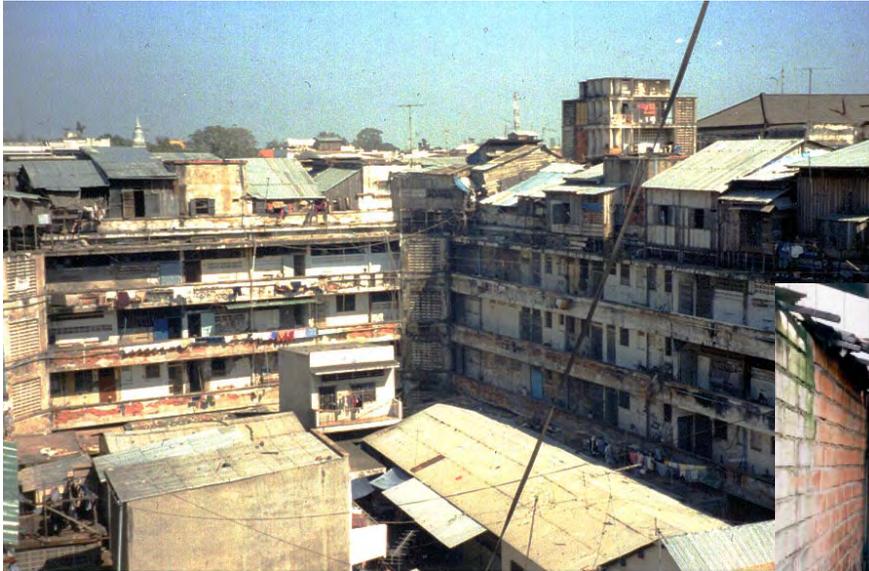
Basaac Tum Nop, one of the riverside communities in Phnom Penh, is comprised of over 6,000 urban poor families. Like many other urban squatter settlements, Basaac faces the threat of removal by the municipality of Phnom Penh on a daily basis. One of the strongest motivating factors is that Basaac is the only green space on the map of Phnom Penh. Ironic, however, because in reality it is densely populated by small one story wooden homes.

The community is highly functional and contains such things as a citizens council, a local school, a movie house, a local market, and a majority of working families. Most men of Basaac drive 'motos', and most women are either self-employed or work in near by industries. Basaac also houses a small Vietnamese minority who are somewhat ostracized from the majority of ethnic Cambodians.

The community is slowly being evicted by the city to make room for commercial development along the prime riverfront land.



Roof-top Communities

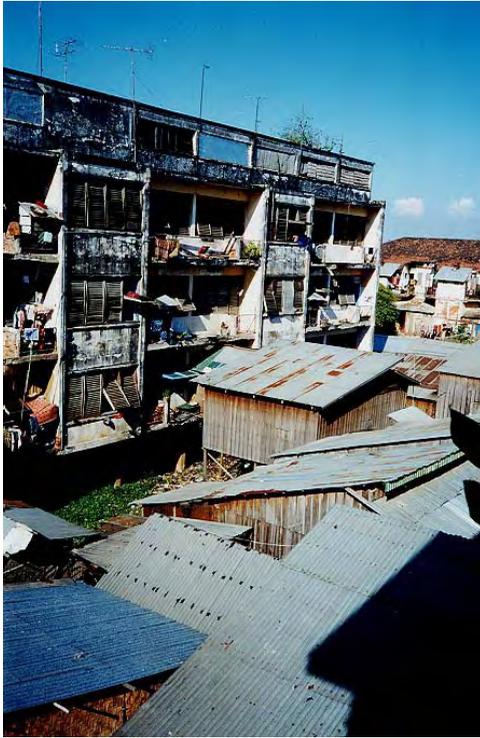


Two rooftop squatter communities were studied in the workshop: *Angkor Meanchy* has been housed on a 6-story former hotel since 1989. Apparently are not concerned with their legal right to stay, they identified access to clean and inexpensive water as their main problem: they were paying exorbitant amounts of money for water, which was not connected to their rooms. Establishing a fund to connect to the Municipal water supply, which is both cheaper and more easily accessible, is a possible solution.

Blok Tanpa was founded in 1981, when six families living in the four-level apartment block below opted to sell their units in the structure and relocate to the project's rooftop. Today there are 235 families (1070 people) living in 215 dwellings in an area of roughly 58,000 square feet (1.3 acres). Though the settlement functions well and it is advantageously located by the central market and employment, its residents fear resettlement due to political pressure and safety concerns from fire.



Invaded Housing Estates



Borei Kamakor literally translates into "Place of the Electricity Workers". This high density settlement consists of three disintegrating concrete buildings surrounded by wooden houses. Both wooden and concrete structures are on stilts, which hold the houses above an exposed sewage and drainage system and mounds of garbage. After the Khmer Rouge era, former workers of the Electricity Department returned to live on this site, and were joined by other Cambodians. Today, there exists a serious problem of land rights and the threat of eviction. The community's strength lies in its savings scheme, the potential for strong leadership, and the high incidence of employment. However, they are confronted with collapsing concrete buildings, garbage, and stagnant water from sewage and drainage. The workshop team proposed to organise and activate the community around a catalyst garbage collection scheme, which could then lead to more substantial projects.

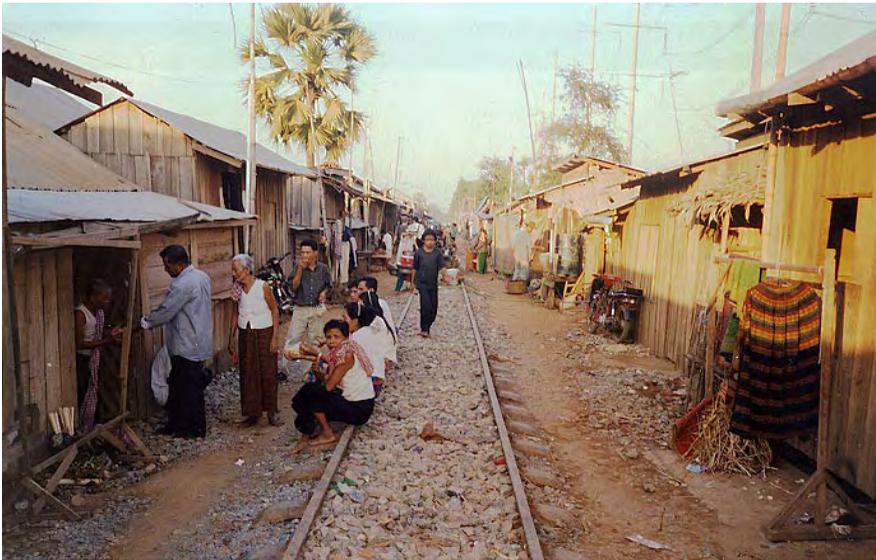
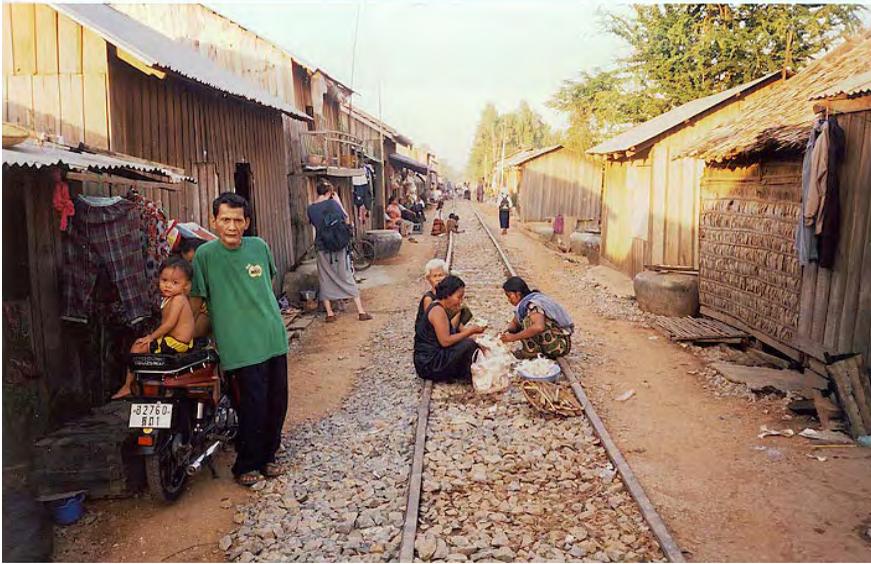


Railroad Squatters



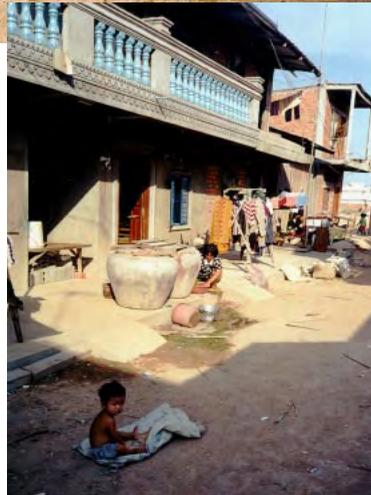
Toul Sanke community is comprised of 100 households along the railway track that runs north from Phnom Penh. It was established just after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1981. The location offers very good access to job opportunities at shoe factories nearby and in the booming informal sector in the city center.

Currently menaced with the threat of eviction due to foreign investment in the transportation infrastructure of Cambodia, members of the community are saving and working for a plan successful relocation. An immediate daily problem of the community is the high cost of water, which represents about 1/4 of the daily income. The workshop team devised a scheme for bringing lower-cost water to residents while generating modest savings to be used for possible relocation.



Resettled Communities





The *Veng Sreng resettlement project* provided land security to squatters removed from roadsides in the city. 128 families reside here on 45 sq.m. plots. The site – on the outskirts of the city – required 1.7m of land fill to prevent flooding during the rainy season. Wells were dug with UN funds and pit latrines were community contracted. Interior laterite roads and drains were provided, and electricity is offered by a community leader who rents a generator and sells electricity. Loans were offered for the self-designed/self-built houses, which were quickly built in a matter of months. A community center, pre-school and healthcare unit are yet to be built. Throughout the process, the community took a leading role through community committees and community contracting. This pilot project was considered a clear success, but future resettlement projects will have less outside funding and require more reliance on community efforts. And the debate remains: should the emphasis be on expensive relocation or on strengthening the upgrading process to reintegrate communities into the city.

'Hidden' squatters



The *Rasmei Samaki Community* contains about 65 structures in a densely settled area of Phnom Penh, surrounded by small workshops, businesses, a large elementary school, and a number of newly constructed and very expensive homes. The squatter community is comprised of small wooden structures built on stilts over a stagnant, man-made lake which was formed by the excavation of earth for surrounding developments. The lake is a primary source of difficulty and health problems for the residents. The lack of drainage causes the area to fill with raw sewage which residents then cap with household garbage in an attempt to cover the smell and in hopes of filling the area. Draining and filling this "lake" would allow these residents to build-out and improve their homes, strengthen the community, and improve their chances of obtaining secure land tenure from the government.



Top: The inside community.
Above and right: The outside 'public' face of the community.

Reflections from the **PHMON PENH** workshop

Globalization in Phnom Penh: Women, Poverty and the **Garment Industry**

– *Shanna Wasserman*



Cambodia is considered to be one of the poorest countries in the world. Using the United Nation's 1997 Human Development Index (HDI), which tracks a nation's ability to consume basic food and shelter, as well as life expectancy, educational attainment, and standard of living, Cambodia ranks 140th out of 153 countries. 36 percent of Cambodians live below the poverty line according to a 1997 socio-economic survey. Using this measure, the poverty line is defined in terms of summing the cost of consuming 2,100 calories per day in food and purchasing minimal non-food products. Furthermore, Cambodians have a per capita income of \$260 a year, and, on average, they spend 69 percent of their income on food. However, the above statistics do not tell the entire story behind the obstacles to economic improvement facing the people of Cambodia.

Having worked with the some of the poorest communities in Phnom Penh, I saw first hand how difficult it is for a working class family to lift themselves out of poverty. In order to understand the barriers to economic growth in Cambodia is it necessary to delve into the history of the Cambodian population. From 1975 – 1979, under the guise of the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot drove the population from Phnom Penh, while murdering between two and three million people. One particular group that was targeted for execution was the educated, whose absence continues to pose obstacles to development. Furthermore, due to the consistent fighting that has plagued Cambodia since the seventies, a significant portion of the male population has deceased. As a result, approximately one quarter of households in Cambodia are headed by women. These demographics shape the strategies and focus of economic development in Cambodia.

My impression of the socioeconomic situation in Phnom Penh resonates with the above statistics. In the community I worked in, residents earned on average one dollar a day. There were numerous female headed households, and after consuming the basic necessities, families were left with little, if anything, to save for future investments, such as education, health care, or retirement. I was particularly concerned with the economic opportunities of the women in Cambodia. Given that there are a large number of female-headed households in Phnom Penh, I was interested in building a development agenda that supported the economic opportunities of women. This led me to begin researching the garment industry, which employs primarily females. My goal in examining the garment industry was to determine whether work in the garment factories could pull women headed households out of poverty.

I was able to tour June Textiles Company. June Textiles is an impressive building that stands out amidst the sordid structures that compose the majority of Phnom Penh's built environment. Despite the iron gates and armed security guards meant to keep passersby from entering the factory, my translator Chanly and I were escorted hospitably into the building to meet the shipping manager, Yi Sokhom. Immediately after entering the main door, I noticed stacks of Fruit-of-the-Loom boxes waiting to be shipped from the factory. This surprised me because I have always associated Fruit-of-the-Loom with American manufacturing, yet these garments were now being produced in Cambodia. At the same time, I was immediately impressed with the building's interior given that it was air conditioned, appeared spacious and clean, and included a garden that lined the center of the structure.



Next, I was led to Yi's office, which was fully equipped with a computer and various modern workforce necessities. From Yi I learned that June Textiles employs 3,341 women and 94 men. The men work in transfer and security, while the women labor on the sewing and cutting machines. Yi explained that a company based out of Singapore owns June Textiles, and it has significant western investors, including American money. June Textiles manufactures various brands including the Fruit-of-the-Loom products I saw in the entrance and ships them to the United States and the European



Union. Yi explained that the Cambodian government provided tax incentives for the firm to locate there. He went on to reveal that the cheap cost of labor in Phnom Penh was really the driving force behind June Textiles' location decision. Yi stated that the women are paid \$40 per month, with potential for a pay increase to \$50 per month depending on longevity. According to Yi, the women are required to work six days a week for eight hours a day, and they receive additional money if they are needed

for over time. When asked whether June Textiles was profitable or not, Yi replied that with cheap labor costs like those in Phnom Penh, the company was very profitable. Yi mentioned that the company maintains a doctor on site, and they provide health care for the women if they are hurt on the job; however, they cannot access this care if they are ill due to non-work related causes. In Yi's opinion, the women are happy to work at June Textiles, and he believes that they are receiving a fair salary given that the majority of them have just moved into Phnom Penh from the rural provinces.



Yi's account of life in June Textiles appeared rather encouraging. Nonetheless, I still wanted to see the working conditions for myself, and Yi was happy to give me a tour of the factory. We started in the cutting division, where I once again noted that the environment appeared clean and safe. Wanting to hear a version of working at June Textiles from an employee, I interviewed Em Srey Poas, a woman working in the cutting

department. Em appeared extremely nervous and kept glancing at Yi as Chanley translated my questions into Khymer. I did not have much time to speak with Em, but in my short encounter with her, she informed me that the women are often forced to work over time with no compensation. Her last words to me were that things are not as good as Yi makes them seem: “we have few choices in where we work because we have no skills.”



My overall impression of June Textiles was mixed. I felt the working conditions, in terms of the physical environment, were decent and Yi appeared to be rather amicable and fair. Nonetheless, Em’s reaction suggested that work at June Textiles was less than ideal. Given that I was searching for answers as to whether working in the garment industry could pull women out of poverty, I still needed more information. For example, what was the standard of living for these women? How much could \$40

buy them? I also wanted to research another factory in order to compare the conditions I witnessed at June Textiles. This led me to visit K & P Cambodia Garments Limited.

K & P is a small structure in comparison to June Textiles. However, I was unable to tour the inside of the building because the security guards claimed



that their boss would not let us in. The guards did state that we could return the next day to interview the women before their 7:30am shift. On return the next morning, I was directed toward the leader of the workers (who wishes to remain anonymous and will be referred to as C.T.). C.T. informed me that the factory operates on one shift from 7:30 am until 5:00 pm with a lunch break from 11:30 am until 1:00. The women receive \$40 a month for these hours but can work more hours if they desire. When I asked C.T. about the conditions of the work environment, she mentioned

that they are not so good. She pointed out that the women have no choice because most of them arrived in the city with little to no skills besides farming and sewing. C.T. mentioned that K & P employees about 500 women and exports all kinds of clothing. After having my picture taken with C.T., she approached me and in a hushed voice asked that I come by her home and bring her a copy of the picture. Finally, she informed me that she wanted to tell me more about the factory, but she could not because she would be dismissed.



After developing the pictures, Chanly and I visited C.T.'s home. She was excited to see me and we sat in her bedroom, which also doubled as her living room, discussing life at the factory. C.T. informed me that the women receive no health care and no time off for sick leave or maternity leave. I asked C.T. about her ability to pull herself out of poverty. She replied by describing her family situation. C.T. and her husband together make \$90 a month and have three children to feed. However, the family's bills are \$150 per month. Consequently, in order to make ends meet, C.T.'s

husband finds odd jobs when he can to supplement the family income. C.T. mentioned that many times they do not have enough money to buy everything they need. When asked about whether the women at the factory have ever thought about forming a union, she did not comprehend the concept. Later Chanly informed me that Cambodian law does not allow for people to organize into unions. Interestingly enough, C.T. is considered to be the leader of the workers, which requires her to ask the boss for a raise. She stated that she does this once every two months, but her employer consistently says no. C.T. mentioned to me that even though the women are supposedly allowed to leave at 5:30 everyday, many times they are required to stay longer and often they do not receive additional pay.

When I was about to leave, C.T. told me a story about a human right's organization that came to the factory in order to inspect the conditions. Two days prior to their arrival, the boss ordered all the women to clean the factory and ameliorate the fire hazards. C.T. told me that the women could not speak freely to the human rights organization about their working conditions because they would have been dismissed. She wanted to tell the human rights organization additional information about the factory, but she was afraid. C.T. indicated that she was frustrated because the organization never tried to contact her at home. C.T. thanked me for taking the time to speak with her away from the factory, and she asked that I tell America how hard it is to be poor in Cambodia.

My journey through two garment factories in Phnom Penh convoluted my opinions on globalization and strengthened my existing belief that left unbridled, global capitalism will continue to exploit the weak. I have always been concerned about the effects of global capitalism on the American workforce. My great-grandmother got her start as a Russian immigrant in

the garment factories of New York City. Her colleagues and her fought for workers' rights and women's suffrage. They put considerable effort into creating the benefits and standards received by American workers today. Consequently, it is frustrating for me to see jobs leave the country in search of lower labor standards. Nonetheless, women in Cambodia should be allowed access to industry. Ultimately, the decision of whether the garment factories are good for Cambodia should lie in the ability of these jobs to lift the women out of poverty and to do so within the construct of universal human rights. Nothing I witnessed in Phnom Penh led me to believe that the women could support a family on their wage, while most everything I saw led me to believe that these women were not being granted minimum labor and human rights. K & P's explicit threats of dismissal to women who spoke out, its unwillingness to let foreigners in for a tour, and C.T.'s concerns regarding the way the women are treated did not breed confidence in what K & P has to offer. Furthermore, while June Textiles appeared physically acceptable, Em's nervous reaction to Yi's presence, her comments on the forced extra hours, and the meager pay provided to the workforce led me to believe June Textiles is just as guilty of exploitation as K & P.

This story has no simple conclusions. Without the factories, the women would have fewer options and those options would be in the informal economy that yields less stable work. Yet, even working in the factories, the women still cannot manage to live above poverty. Furthermore, the women cannot speak out about their working conditions, nor can they organize in order to negotiate for better conditions. The Cambodian government does provide the women with a legal fabric by which to make changes in their economic situation. Global capitalism will continue to expand production in search of cheaper labor and larger markets. However, international organizations must take a more active role in securing univer-

sal labor rights in order to mitigate the adverse impacts of global capitalism on both developing and developed countries. While the interactions of actors in the global capitalism drama are complex, and the results of economic internationalization are difficult to measure, the moral is still clear. Women like Em and C.T., who work at least 40 hours per week in a multinational, profitable garment factory, should be paid enough to move their families out of poverty.



Apsara* in Sculpture

- Ana M. Lasso

Access to one's history is vital in creating community identity. It isn't surprising though, that the arts are disregarded as a crucial element in the intellectual as well as emotional growth of any citizen when the immediate issues at hand deal with infrastructure and economic development. Nevertheless, when making decisions over economic development that will directly influence the infrastructure of Third World countries, cultural traditions of the deprived societies are oftentimes overlooked.



*Apsara:



To better understand the problems affecting an economically deprived and war-torn country, such as Cambodia, one must analyze and comprehend its past. For a country where only a privileged few have access to an education and thus have the ability to read, cultural and oral traditions become the only type of education that a child learns. These traditions commonly portrayed through creative traditions not only speak about this culture's history, but also the civil unrest and barriers facing the community.

For centuries the performing arts have been an integral part of Cambodian life. Classical ballet has been practiced since 800AD, recounting stories of myth and legend. There are eighteen known forms of traditional Khmer performing arts. Because many artists perished during the Pol Pot regime many of these forms have been lost, some possibly forever. Artistic techniques were handed down through oral and visual traditions because for countless years the artists rarely focused their efforts on documenting the various forms of Khmer dance. Today for example, classical Khmer dancers

mostly perform excerpts from two pieces, either the *Ramayana*, or the *Preah Chan Koroup*. Before the war there were twenty different pieces, which the Classical Ballet performed; after the war in 1979 radio announcements were made soliciting the aid of any surviving performers with the intention of creating a festival in 1980. Finally nine forms were resurrected from the original eighteen.

During the 1980s, the performing arts began to thrive once again in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capitol city. This all changed in the late 1980s and more specifically came to an end after the elections of 1993. The National Theater, also known as the Department of Performing Arts and Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts continued to exist on the most basic level. Unfortunately, though, the National Theater housed at the Tonle Basac came to the



end when the stage and seating areas were destroyed in a fire. Despite these bleak conditions over 300 artists and staff members combined continue working for the National Theater, officially known as The Ministry of Culture. However, the present economic state of the Ministry is in desperate need of aid. In January 2000, during my visit to Phnom Penh I spoke with key members from The Ministry of Culture, The Royal Academy of Beaux Arts, and the UN volunteer working for UNESCO, in order to investigate the present and future situation of the performing arts in Cambodia.



UNESCO is diligently involved in writing grant proposals to support the development of the Cambodian National Theater and to create ongoing popular performance series. Their goal is to provide some financial support to the highly motivated and committed administration of the National Theater. This support would provide technical as well as professional infrastructure needs such as equipment, costumes, rental of performance space, and monetary support to the artists. UNESCO's dedication is

coming to fruition as a calendar of events for the following year has been finalized and will be underway throughout this year. Moreover, a group of Classical Khmer performers are presently being trained for a national and international traveling show.

Dance is indispensable and a high-profile aspect of Cambodian life, whether as part of national ceremonies, religious rites, or local entertainment. The proliferation of the arts throughout Cambodia and abroad can only help stimulate solidarity amongst a culture, which has suffered a strenuous



history of devastating war. The survival and preservation of the Classical Khmer Dance is a testimony to how much these artists have achieved under the direst circumstances. More inspiring are the large groups of young children and teenagers being trained as professional performers at the Royal Academy of Beaux Art. This future generation collaborates with the National Theater in conducting performances. Some of the young students at the Royal Academy of Beaux Art desire to continue preserving the tradi-

tional dance forms, as well as discovering the lost forms of Khmer Dance. The traditional arts of Cambodia have undergone a tumultuous experience in these past thirty years. Nevertheless, the fervent dedication from national and international artists continues to keep the flame of national dance burning. There is no doubt that the classical Khmer dance traditions will continue to survive and evolve as younger generations learn from their teachers and cultural history. Like the sculptural magnificence of Angkor, classical Khmer dance will endure the evolution of time.



Women and the Informal Sector

- *Paul J. Martin*

Cambodia represents a unique case in economic development due to its peculiar history. While most developing nations have been experiencing rapid urbanization over the past half century, Cambodia has begun to urbanize in the past 10 years. During the reign of the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s, Cambodia underwent an opposite phenomenon of urban-to-rural exodus as city dwellers were forced by Pol Pot and his crew to evacuate cities and towns and live the ideal peasant life. As a result, the population on Phnom Penh dropped from 1.5 million in 1975 to less than 500,000 in 1980. As power shifted out of red control, migration to cities has reemerged.

Along with this trend of urban migration comes the emergence of informal sector economic activity. This is income generation that occurs outside of privately-organized or state-run enterprises which pay wages. The reasons for job creation outside of formal entities are numerous. The large structural cause is lack of employment opportunities in these “official” companies. Simply put the supply of available workers outstrips the formal sector’s demand. Therefore, city inhabitants create other means for generating income.

Important to recent literature on informal sector is the understanding that these jobs are not always second-best to wage jobs. Often times, individuals choose to forgo opportunities of formal employment in order to

enjoy increased benefits of entrepreneurship. These include flexible work hours, greater earnings and ability to relocate easily. These advantages can especially accrue to women who often time have other pressures of household maintenance and childcare. So working on the “margins” is a highly rational and calculated decision.

Another recently dispelled myth is the understanding that informal labor is unproductive or redundant. Because many of these jobs are related to services, they are seen as having no “added value”. But in fact, many of the services provided by the poor directly help the poor. For example, street side vendors often provide goods that are repackaged in smaller quantities to make the product affordable to the poor on a daily basis. When persons are living from one day’s earnings to the next, the ability to buy just the amount of oil needed for that day’s meal makes a big difference. If it were not for these “informal” intermediaries, many in the poor’s population would have to do without goods that others take for granted.



The situation in Phnom Penh

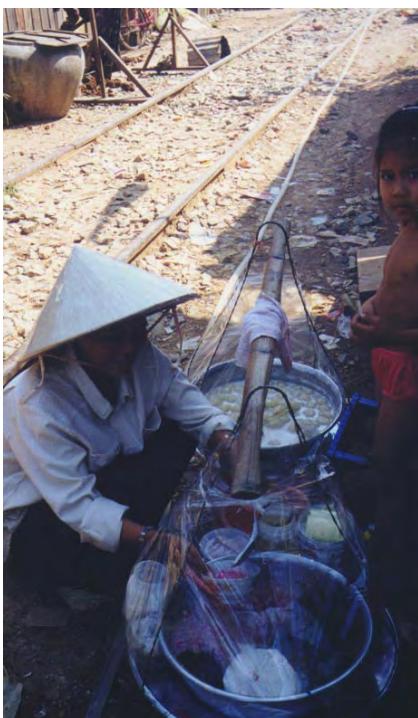
The informal sector is especially large in Phnom Penh, which has experienced huge population growth, but has not yet attracted so many firms due to continued political instability and inadequacy of “institutions” which foster industrial development. As the political horizon maintains its steadiness in the coming years, investors are slowly moving in. Many clothes and shoe manufacturing firms are being established on the outskirts of the city. Interestingly, these “great” opportunities for employment only result in wages of about 4,000 riel/day* .

Evidence of the informal sector was ample in the community of Toul Sanke A. This informal settlement along the railway tracks is comprised of 100 households, and it was one of a chain of diverse communities that spanned the length of the rail system. The establishment of the settlement dates back to the beginning of the 80s, when persons dared to enter the forbidden urban areas again.

Five Stories

I will briefly describe the work of five women living in the community. I obtained information from interviews with these individuals, to whom I am extremely grateful. I have chosen not to use their names, but will refer to them by profession.

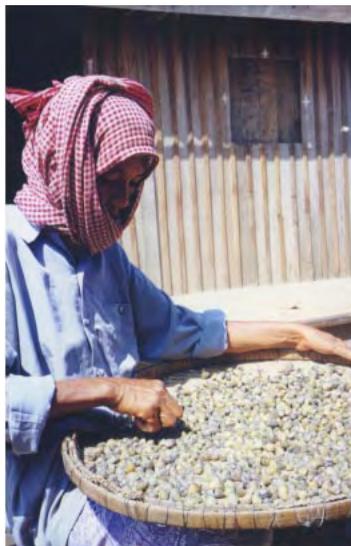
A woman sells *desserts* on the roadside and from house to house. She is part of a large group of woman I saw on the street selling cooked and processed foods to laborers and moto-dubs (motorcycle-taxi drivers). She sells about 20,000 riel worth of food a day, but it costs her 15,000 riel to make it. Her effective earnings are 5,000 riel daily. She wakes up about 5 am daily to begin cooking her food and goes out in the mid-day heat to sell



for about 4 hours. Since she has two sons to care for, this time suits her well, as one attends school during the midday so she only has to take the younger one with her. Her husband is a mechanic without a steady job. He finds work when he can, but relies on her to pay for household expenses.

Another woman with similar work sells *snack shellfish* on the streets. As a divorced woman, she worked to support herself, her 78 year old mother and son, who attends school. She started selling food on the streets over 6 years ago. Earning only 3,000 riel daily, she must work 7 days a week just to earn enough to eat. Although she suffers from a foot injury, she continues to walk from settlement to settlement, several kilometers, until she sells all of her product. Since she has no savings or extra cash, she

buys her goods on credit, spending any leftover income on the necessities for that day. Before her current enterprise, she was a shop-owner, but unforeseen circumstances required her to sell her investment. Since then, she hasn't had the capital to start up another shop.



In fact, *shopkeeping* is a popular activity for women. It affords the flexibility of being able to stay at home and watch children and accomplish other chores while earning cash. Everyone of the 9 shops in Toul Sanke A are run by women from their home. One shopkeeper had her business for 5 years. She opened the shop while her husband was pursuing a university degree. But the shop became a necessity when her husband died 3 years ago from poisoning. She keeps the shop open from 6am to 7pm in order to maximize her earnings. This means that to buy supplies for her business, she often has to go to the suppliers at 4am. She supports her son and brother on the earnings of her enterprise.



A *nurse* practices traditional Vietnamese medicine city-wide. She began her career over 20 years again when she had just arrived to Phnom Penh. Living with her unemployed, alcoholic husband during the first 5 years, she struggled to support her daughter and son single-handedly. After his death in 1985, she continued alone. She charges about 5,000 riel per visit and she makes about 20 visits per week on average. Because of her fame in this particular medicinal technique, she travels far outside her community to work.



Another older widow makes *ties* or “string” from the fibrous stalks of pond leaves. Although she lives with her daughter, she works in order to give money to the pagoda and help out in the house. Her work, though not a daily necessity, is arduous. She spends 5 hours picking about 100-150 leaves from the pond. During the rainy season, she often has to wade up to her chest in fecally and chemically contaminated water. Each leaf results in 2 ties. She sells 10 bundles of 15 ties each for a mere 100 riel. She makes about 2,000 riel every 15 days. These ties can be used in various ways, from transport of goods to building construction.



Conclusions

A number of patterns emerge from interviews with these women. First, many of them are the primary bread-winners in the household. This confirms the idea that woman's income contributes much more to total household maintenance than their male counterparts. Especially the daily needs of water, food and schooling seem to be financed through the woman's earnings. As a corollary to this point, many of the woman do so out of economic necessity. Either they are widowed, divorced, or cannot rely on their husband to provide a steady income.

The necessity not only exists for income generation, but also to meet the needs of fellow city dwellers. These women provide products and services to other members within their communities and other poor. By creating cheap building materials, affordable healthcare, and accessible consumer goods, all of these women provide to a market normally neglected by modern industries. The poorest can advance in part thanks to these entrepreneurs.

The point of this essay was to give particular dimension to these ideas about the informal sector through five stories. There are many other lives in this community of 100 families and across the 100s of communities in Phnom Penh which are maintained by the entrepreneurship of women; I have just scratched the surface. As the urban population in Cambodia is just now on the upswing, the informal sector will further increase in its importance to contributing to the welfare of the city and its families.

** Current exchange rate: US\$1 = 3,700 riel*

Reading, Writing, and Riches: Formal Education of **Young Women**

-Tina Lin

In a developing country like Cambodia, the skills and resources of the entire population are important. I am interested in the education of young people, particularly young women. The extent to which these women contribute to society in the future depends on the knowledge they receive now in the formal education system. Here, I evaluate the educational opportunities of young women in Phnom Penh, including the barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential.



Sotheros Primary School

My first visit was to a local primary school near the poor informal settlements of the Bassac River. It was just before school ended for the day at 5pm, and within the gates of the French colonial compound, the students were lined up in preparation for the final bell that would dismiss them. I stood among family members outside who were waiting to pick up their children. After the students streamed through the gates, excited to be done



with school, I met with the principal of the school to find out the basics of primary school education in Phnom Penh. At Sotheros, they learn social studies, natural science, mathematics, and language from 105 teachers and staff, 6 of which have Bachelor's degrees.



Poverty in the surrounding neighborhoods has a significant impact on this local “free” public school. Students at all schools must pay a fee for the initial application form. The principal insisted that the 400 riel fee to attend Sotheros was inexpensive compared to other schools. This fee, however, is significant for neighboring families that usually make only 2000 riel a day to barely feed their children. Once in school, many students do not attend regularly because they need to make money to help support their families. To partially alleviate the problem, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been aiding students in the first and second grades to attend Sotheros. Yet, still over 200 students drop out before the 4th grade because education can no longer be a priority for a family that is living day by day.

When a family cannot pay for all their children to go to school, often a male child is sent over a female child. One Cambodian waitress I met in Phnom Penh was forced to leave school after the 6th grade because her father would not let her continue. He did not consider the education of women important beyond the basics. Her sister encountered the same predicament graduating from elementary school and it was a British school teacher who later supported them and paid for their education. Cultural views that women should stay at home and do not need a formal education are still common, especially in the rural areas of Cambodia, and in the poorer neighborhoods of Phnom Penh.

Department of Education, Phnom Penh

To get a more official perspective on what is supposed to happen in public schools, my next visit was to the Department of Education for Phnom Penh. After attempting a conversation in broken French, I finally met with Mr. Meas Ngeek, Deputy Director. In all the publications I received about

the education system, separate statistics about women were always included by category. I was surprised by this statistical attention given to young women, and found that it had been a recent issue in public schooling. These statistics were calculated because of an international political interest by such groups as UNESCO. As I discovered, the learning opportunities between men and women is comparable to rates in any first world country. The balance of opportunity is possibly even better because of the need of skilled workers to improve economic growth. Through further investigation, I learned that the more disparaging factor in levels of education occur because of poverty rather than gender bias.

Preah Sisowath High School

Having already visited an elementary school in a poor neighborhood, I wanted to see what was on the other end of the wealth scale. Residents of the city directed me to one of the best public high schools in the city, Preah Sisowath High School. Most the students at Sisowath come from the upper middle class of Phnom Penh. Waiting outside at the gate, this time at 7am before school started, I met a young lady named Toch Soda who spoke some broken English. I was surprised that before I mentioned anything



about my research, she told me directly that I must be lucky to study in the United States because there were probably more opportunities for women. When I entered school grounds, she introduced me to her friends and teachers. Of course, I disrupted every class as soon as I walked in. Each person I met, their interest in me was in the fact that I was from the United States and spoke English. They saw me as an opportunity to practice their English, which was clearly the most important goal of their education.

Later in the day, I was escorted to more classrooms by Mr. Sauvth, an English teacher at Preah Sisowath. I expected a strict school system that would not allow visitors to classrooms, but the principal ordered Mr. Sauvth to end his class early that day to talk to me. He allowed his students outside, but all the girls remained inside the classroom, continuing their studying. One young woman, South Sophea, took the initiative to take advantage of my presence and practiced what they had just learned in class. She also gave me her email address, promising to write. Mr. Sauvth has eleven classes, which he sees once a week for one hour. French and English are the two



language elective options, though more students choose English now because of the demand in the marketplace. For this teaching time and the extra time for preparation and grading papers, he is paid only \$21 a month. Even in Cambodia, where cost of living is much lower, this is nowhere near enough to support himself, his wife, and their 4-year old son. So, Mr. Sauvth teaches at a private English language tutoring school just two hours a week. As a second income, the private school pays \$100 a month, allowing his wife to stay at home with his son. Though not every teacher at Sisowath partakes in this practice, at least half teach at private tutoring companies to increase income. Yet, a much higher percentage of the *students* at Sisowath attend these private tutoring classes after school hours because they can afford them. The poorer students who are unable to afford private tutoring rarely can get ahead in their classes on their own. High school in Cambodia subscribes to student ranking, and while the first student in the class is evenly split between males and females, invariably it is a student with the means to have private tutors.

Since my 17-year old friend Toch Soda attends a private English tutoring class every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30–8:30pm, I decided to join her one day. Phnom Penh has private educational centers for all subjects, but those teaching solely English are the most popular and consequently, make the most money. I expected a posh office building, but instead I arrived at a dingy gate in the north of Phnom Penh that





evening. An old concrete building with wood additions, the amenities of the classroom opening to the courtyard included a flickering fluorescent light and six long benches with tables. The Headway School is named after the popular English textbook series that most tutors use. I met the director, a



man in his twenties named Sou Uuthea, who administrates 10 hours a day and does not even bother with teaching in the public schools; he knows the pay is little. He managed, however, to keep his income a secret. Surprisingly, this small English tutoring school is

larger than most, having three classrooms, 7 teachers, and 157 students. Half of his students are female. It is in these makeshift storefront schools where most of the real education in Phnom Penh is done, and only the wealthy can afford them—an interesting juxtaposition with the poor students who receive a lower quality education in beautiful, government owned, French colonial buildings.



From my interviews in the urban capital city, young women with sufficient family wealth and able to attend school had almost the same opportunity as men of equal economic status in the formal schooling system. This is not to say that gender bias in education does not exist or that it should not be closely examined. However, differences in class shows a larger disparity in educational opportunity than difference in gender. Improvements need to be made on both issues of poverty and gender bias in education for Cambodia to fully utilize their human resources.

Blok Tanpa Rooftop:
A Case Study in the Economics of Relocation

– Kirk Nyland

***T*he rooftop squatter settlement in Phnom Penh known as Blok Tanpa began in 1981, when six families living in the four-level apartment block below opted to sell their units and relocate to the project's rooftop. By 1983 there were 19 families living in the rooftop settlement. Today there are 235 families (1070 people) living in 215 dwellings in an area of roughly 58,000 square feet (1.3 acres). Why the squatters were permitted to live on the rooftop is a story that could perhaps have only unfolded in Phnom Penh.**

A Brief History

In 1975, when the Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia, the entire population of Phnom Penh was forcibly relocated to the countryside to work in agrarian cooperatives. Those who were not relocated were killed, as was the case with the owner of Blok Tanpa.

When the Vietnamese came to power in 1979, replacing the Khmer Rouge, Phnom Penh was opened for resettlement. By that time, however, most property records had been destroyed and many of the original inhabitants of Phnom Penh had been killed. As Cambodians migrated from the countryside they claimed whatever housing was available. In the case of Blok Tanpa, the apartments were settled first and then resold by their

“owners” to new immigrants to the city.

Over the past 20 years the municipal government has cleaned up most of the title issues surrounding the resettled apartment blocks. The government has not, however, recognized title to any of the dwellings comprising the rooftop squatter settlement aside from the 19 units that were occupied as of 1983. The city government does not have plans to issue legal title to the other 196 squatter units and has said for some time that the bulk of the rooftop community will eventually have to be relocated.

In 1985 the son of Blok Tanpa’s original owner visited the site and expressed interest in purchasing the building. A compromise could not be reached with the tenants and no subsequent inquiries have been made. The position taken by the city is that the building’s legal owners are those who occupy the lower-level apartment block and the 19 residences on the rooftop.

Current living conditions at Blok Tanpa

As stated above, the rooftop community at Blok Tanpa is comprised of 1070 people (235 families) occupying a rooftop with a surface area of roughly 58,000 square feet. Subtracting 11,000 square feet of circulation and open space leaves roughly 47,000 square feet in enclosed living area. Living space per person is calculated to be roughly 44 square feet. Put another way, the average household of 4-5 persons occupies a one-room dwelling slightly larger than 14 feet square.

Living conditions for rooftop inhabitants vary widely across the socio-economic spectrum. Relatively high quality brick-and-stucco construction complete with tile floors, modern appliances, and fully functioning water and sewer connections sits alongside low cost wooden housing with bare

concrete floors and no toilet. For the most part, though, all houses have access to electricity and running water (there are 5 elevated tanks that assure a constant water supply), and around 20% have their own individual indoor toilets. Those without indoor toilets can pay around \$.06 to use one of the two functioning community toilets.

The ethnic makeup of the rooftop community is not homogenous. Approximately 75% of its inhabitants are Cambodian, the remaining 25% Vietnamese. Though the two groups in general get along quite well, there have been occasional instances of ethnic tension. Most inhabitants, though, attribute these flare-ups as much to poverty and the sheer density of the settlement as they do to ethnic division.

Most in the settlement consider its location to be very good. Access to schools and available work is outstanding. Other nearby amenities include government institutions, health care facilities, and Phnom Penh's central market.

Some shortcomings of the settlement that bear mentioning are the significant fire hazard it poses to its inhabitants and its lack of adequate ingress and egress. Given that open space totals less than 20% of the rooftop and that shoulder-to-shoulder dwellings, many of them wooden construction with charcoal ovens, occupy the remaining area, there is great potential for loss of life in the event of a fire. This is compounded by the fact that the only means of access is via two narrow and poorly lit stairwells. In addition to being inadequate for mass emergency egress, the stairwells are also difficult for the elderly and handicapped to navigate on a regular basis.

Relocation

There are two relocation sites identified by the municipality as viable

options for the Blok Tanpa rooftop community. The first of the two is a large plot of land located 200km to the south of Phnom Penh, on the highway to the coastal city of Sihanoukville. The community has so far shown little enthusiasm for this option as it would necessitate finding new jobs in an area without a significant population base or plentiful sources of employment. A more positive aspect of the site is that individual plots would be large enough to cultivate food, thus alleviating some of the pressure to secure income..

The second site is a smaller plot of land near the city's airport, perhaps a 20 minute drive from the current site of Blok Tanpa. Individual plots at this location would not be large enough to cultivate, but would be large enough to construct a 400 square foot dwelling on, which in many cases would mean a doubling of livable square feet per household. Average plot size would be around 540 square feet, and all plot-owners would have shared access to several community wells and pit latrines.

Smaller dwelling clusters and good road access make both sites superior to the existing one in terms of fire safety. Lower population densities should help with hygiene and sanitation issues as well. Though accessibility of employment would be diminished, in one case drastically, access to education would likely remain stable, as there are schools near both of the relocation sites.

The Economics of Blok Tanpa

When work is available, the inhabitants of Blok Tanpa take home an average of 4,000-5,000 riels per day (\$1.18). This they earn through work as construction workers, day laborers, factory workers, cyclo drivers, motorcycle taxi (motodop) drivers, seamstresses, hairdressers, small food vendors,

government workers, laundry workers, etc. If there are an average of 1.5 of workers in each household (5 persons) fully employed 6 days per week in each family, average household income comes to \$1.52 per day.

After the costs of food and shelter, one of the largest household expenses at Blok Tanpa is water. Because the municipality will not provide a connection to the Phnom Penh water supply, the settlement must purchase water privately from an outside vendor. This results in water costs of \$0.14 per day per household, nearly five times the amount charged by the municipality.

The average selling price of a dwelling at Blok Tanpa is estimated to be somewhere in the vicinity of \$700. Sales price varies according to dwelling size, construction type, level of amenity and to a lesser extent location, but an average is useful for calculating a typical Blok Tanpa mortgage payment. Assuming an interest rate of 10%, a loan amount of 80%, and a 10 year repayment term, this mortgage payment comes to \$0.25 per day, or roughly 16% of average daily household income. Adding in household water expense brings this percentage to 25% of average daily household income.

Because Blok Tanpa is an informal settlement and the vast majority of its dwellings lack title, it is likely that most indebted homeowners in the settlement pay much more than 10% interest on their home loans. A figure in the range of 20-40 percent seems more realistic given the risk associated with the repayment of the loans and the uncertain tenure of those loans' collateral. If we assume interest accumulates at 20% per year, the mortgage and water payments as a percentage of daily income stands at 33%. At 30% interest per year, this rises to 41%. At 40% interest per year, more than half of average daily household income is expended on housing and water.

The Economics of Relocation

It's safe to assume that relocation to the resettlement site near the airport would probably lead to diminished access to employment and a subsequent drop in income for many of the Blok Tanpa residents. The move would probably also lead to higher overall transportation costs per household. An assumption that income would drop by 20% produces an adjusted average daily household income of \$1.22 per day.

Overall, the daily cost of shelter and water would probably remain fairly stable. Because the government owns the relocation site and is willing to give it to the Blok Tanpa community, there would be no land cost associated with the development. Site work and construction costs, though substantial (a projected total of around \$157,000) would come to somewhere near \$2.76 per dwelling square foot, less than the \$3.21 per square foot that homes sell for on the rooftop. Water costs at the relocation site would be virtually nil, the only associated expense being the routine maintenance of the wells.

Because dwellings would be larger at the relocation site (400 square feet vs. 218 square feet at Blok Tanpa), average dwelling cost would rise (\$1,105 vs. \$700 at Blok Tanpa). Assuming an interest rate of 10%, a loan amount of 80%, and a 10 year repayment term, a mortgage payment on the new dwelling comes to \$0.39 per day, or roughly 32% of the adjusted average daily household income of \$1.22 per day. A substantial percentage, but probably manageable, especially when the end result is a greater than 80% increase in living space.

But the biggest financial burden of relocation would likely not be the challenge of meeting the monthly mortgage. It would be the much greater challenge of making the 20% down payment (\$221). If annual household income at Blok Tanpa is \$556 (\$1.52 per day) and residents save at a 15% rate annually, it will take almost three years to save enough for the down payment. If financing can be obtained that requires only a 10% down payment, that time frame can be reduced to 18 months, the tradeoff being that the mortgage expense under this scenario rises to 36% of average household income.

Another significant obstacle to relocation is the sunk investment that Blok Tanpa residents have in their existing dwellings. According to the local authority, when evicted, rooftop residents will not be reimbursed for their homes. This is not surprising, as the Phnom Penh municipal government has little funding and the total bill for reimbursements at Blok Tanpa would top \$150,000. Therefore it is very likely that even following eviction, many of the residents will continue to bear financial burdens associated with their former dwellings, at the same time trying to direct resources toward replacement housing.

Given all this, it is unlikely that the Blok Tanpa community can be resettled successfully without the intervention of either the Phnom Penh government or an NGO (non-governmental organization). In other successful community resettlements, NGOs have played a critical role in organizing community savings programs, providing either funding or bridge financing for construction of site infrastructure, and providing construction financing and permanent mortgages to relocated households. All of these components would be necessary if Blok Tanpa was to be relocated.

Conclusion

It's important to recognize that the critical element that the Blok Tanpa community lacks is not income, but credit. Though its households have reasonably stable income, they do not for the most part have permanent jobs. Though many residents have built the structures they live in with their own labor and have lived in them for more than a decade, they do not have legal ownership of their most significant asset.

What Blok Tanpa does not have is good collateral. Though its residents' rooftop dwellings have steadily increased in value year after year, overshadowing those gains is the question of whether or not the Phnom Penh government will one day be willing to officially recognize them. Until the municipality is willing to grant title to the dwellings or provide alternative assurances of continued tenure to Blok Tanpa residents, there is significant financial risk in ownership. That said, it may well be that squatters will at some point have the political wherewithal to demand legitimization. The Phnom Penh government is poorly staffed and overwhelmed; for the foreseeable future, this will not change. Given the political fallout (especially with Western donors) that forced eviction might entail, in time the government may come around to the position that legitimization is the easiest solution.

An alternative to legitimization, relocation offers Blok Tanpa residents an opportunity to build collateral. But relocation will only be possible if an outside entity provides the necessary credit. Infrastructure costs make up 66% of the relocation costs, or around \$730 per household. On average it would take each Blok Tanpa household nine years to save the money required for the infrastructure costs. It would take each household another four and half years to save enough money to construct its dwelling. Yet if the entire site work and construction amount were available to the community as a loan at 10% interest and with a 20-year term, the mortgage

amount required from each household would be less than 30% of overall household income.

Safeguarding History and Development

The Historic Site of Angkor and its Symbolic Value

- Bianca Maria Nardella

The first mental image that I have of Angkor is now one year old. At that time I lived in Bologna, my hometown in Italy and everyday, walking back from my workplace, I used to stop in front of the window of a small Eastern bookshop. One day, while I was dreaming about distant destinations, the covers of two publications on Angkor attracted my attention. I walked into the bookstore and the incredible pictures featured in the books fascinated me. I promised myself that one day I would travel there, but I didn't expect to have the chance to go to Cambodia anytime soon.



Angkor Wat from the surrounding moat. The temple was built in the 1200 to honor Vishnu and to be used as a funerary temple for the king, the central complex consist of the three stories that represents the most famous skyline of Cambodia.

I found that for Cambodian people Angkor represents much more than an archeological site; it embodies the rediscovery of a national cultural identity as well as hope for economic development.

Angkor is one of the main archaeological sites of South-East Asia. Stretching over some 400 square kilometers, including forested area, the Angkor Archeological Park contains the splendid remains of the various capitals of the Khmer Empire, from the 9th to the 15th centuries. The 100 or so temples constitute the sacred skeleton of a much larger and spectacular administrative and religious center whose houses, public buildings and palaces were constructed out of wood - now long decayed - because the right to dwell in structures of brick or stone was reserved for the gods.



Ta Prohm: 12th century Buddhist temple is one of the largest Khmer edifices of the Angkorian period. The jungle has slowly claimed it and today it has been left just as it looked when the first French explorers set eyes on it more than one century ago.



The World Monuments Fund (American NGO) is carrying on the conservation program of Preah Khan. Constructed as a monastery and teaching complex in 1191, it is unique in its sense of religious tolerance, with sections dedicated to Buddhism, ancestor worship, and the Hindu gods Shiva and Vishnu.

“ Archeological sites do have an economic value, but they also have scientific, symbolic, national, historic and aesthetic value. Moreover their social value may have been long overlooked. Proper long term development - of which conservation is the most important preliminary component - helps create community *pride*, a sense of *identity* and belonging, and provides educational opportunities.”

– G. Solar,

What is an “Archeological Site Management Plan”? WMF Newsletter



The Governmental Mission of Japan carries on the restoration and conservation of the Bayon Temple. Built around the 1200 in the exact center of the city Of Angkor Thom, on the third level features more than 200 icily smiling, gargantuan faces of Avalokitesvara staring down from 54 towers.

“The days of tragedy in Cambodia are receding into the past. Hope is springing forth and the beauty of Angkor persists. Buildings, stones, temples, statues and bas-reliefs silenced by the harshness of humankind and nature are ready to speak once more of the great civilization that they have known. Angkor, the city of the Khmer kings, is ready to become once again the *symbol* of its country. The values enshrined in the remains of a rich and glorious past are the key to the rebirth of the hope and the *identity* of the Khmer people. The challenge that UNESCO will be meeting, together with the Cambodian people, goes well beyond the simple task of restoring the vestiges of the past. By saving Angkor an entire people will rediscover its *pride*, its will to live and renewed strength to rebuild its country. The largest archaeological project in Asia “

– Appeal by Mr. Federico Mayor Director-General of UNESCO, Angkor, 30 November 1991.

In the beginning of the 90's, after decades of war, Cambodia started to consider its cultural heritage as something to protect as well as a vehicle for development. Prince Sihanouk requested that UNESCO establish an appropriate mechanism for the preservation and presentation of the Angkor site and to assist the Cambodian authorities in the reinforcement of national cultural institutions and the development of national human resources.

In 1992 Angkor was added to the UNESCO List of the World Heritage and the List of the World Heritage in Danger. Since 1993 the site's management has been shared between the International Co-ordinating Committee for the Safeguard and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor and the Cambodian APSARA Authority.

A very important point made by the Cambodian Delegation is that training activities, at all levels, will be systematically included in the program of rehabilitation and promotion of the site of Angkor to enable Cambodian people to enhance their own capacity to manage and preserve their heritage by themselves.

“To encourage the Cambodian people to promote their national culture, the local inhabitants living close to the monuments and forming an integral part of the cultural landscape of Angkor are now involved in the safeguarding of the cultural and natural environment of the site. With a view to reinforcing protection and development measures, and in response to the urban and rural development caused by the rapid influx of tourists, a general methodology for community development has been worked out. This methodology is not designed simply to promote socio-economic development and protect the local inhabitants from the harmful effects of tourism. It also aims at improving living standards, using a development approach that emphasized the promotion of traditional cultural practices. “
– Human Resources Development -UNESCO

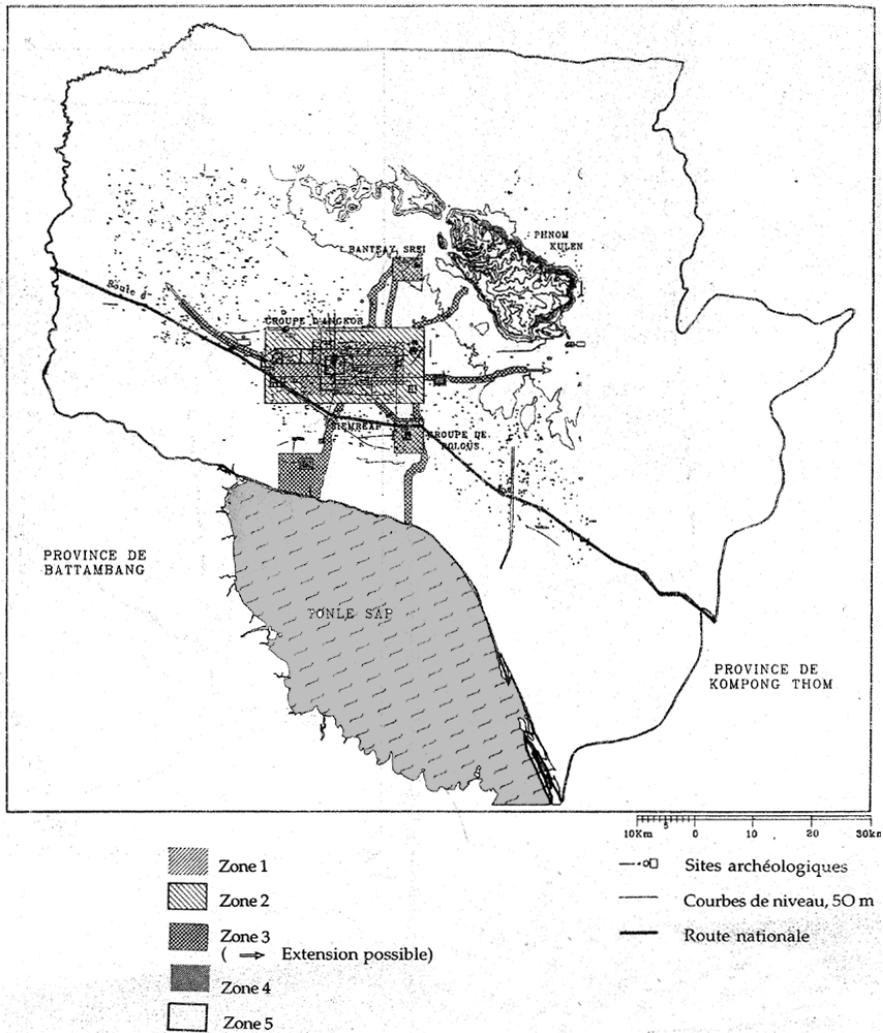


Figure 67 Zones protégées dans la région de Siem Reap / Angkor, vue générale de la province dans son ensemble.

*Protected zones in the region of Angkor/Siam Reap.
From "Angkor. A Manual for the Past, Present and Future" by APSARA
Authority.*

The archeological site of Angkor is for Cambodia a major source of income generation. Therefore tourism is considered a major priority.

As I arrived on the ferry from Phnom Penh, it was immediately clear to me that in Siam Reap no one doubts the role of tourism in the local economy, and everyone wants to take advantage of the visitors' financial resources.

Siam Reap is a pleasant place, much cleaner and quieter than the busy capital of Phnom Penh. One cannot escape the observation that tourism is the primary focus of the town's every activity. Guesthouses pop up like mushrooms, older establishments add additional stories to existing structures, and on the dwindling number of vacant plots new foundations are being poured. Guesthouse architecture is functional but without any local flavor; clearly the goal is to pack as many rooms as possible into a concrete-frame box.

Siam Reap's covered market has a section designated especially for tourists with standard Cambodian souvenirs, "You buy, you buy...cheap... two dollar!¹". But if you look beyond these first stalls there is still a local section with food, rich in colors and odors, fabrics and tailors, hair-dressers, beauty supplies and much more. The name of Angkor and its silhouette seem to be a lucky charm that promises to guarantee business success. You can see this icon on every sign or in any advertisement, beer billboards included!

Observing these activities, the first questions that came to my mind were: who is going to take advantage of this situation? How does one make sure that financial benefit filters through to the local population?

More and more people are attracted to Angkor from neighboring countries that are already major tourist destinations. Recently the local airport has become an international one and beach tourists from Thailand are flying directly to Siam Reap without passing through Phnom Penh or the rest of



Drivers (above) of scooters and mini-vans are eager to ferry tourists into town and, of course, each tout has a favorite guesthouse: Smiley, Mom's, Garden, Sunrise, Popular and numerous others named after Angkor's main temples.

The name of Angkor and its silhouette seem to be a lucky charm that promises to guarantee business success. You can see this icon on every sign or in any advertisement. (below)



Cambodia. As direct access to the site becomes easier, it becomes more and more important that a tourist management plan be implemented. There are two perspectives on this recent tourism explosion: on one hand, it seems that having a high number of tourists concentrated in one area might protect the remainder of the country from uncontrolled development; on the other hand, it's possible that the income-generation benefits of tourism might be limited to just one small area of the country.

Local authorities feel the need for new hotel facilities and one of the plans is to transform the area between the archeological site and Siam Reap in a tourist park zone "to protect the urban fabric and delimitate interference with the traditional spatial pattern". Again if you look at it from another perspective the implementation of this plan might deprive the small businesses in town of an important commercial window because tourism would flow directly into Angkor.

At the moment the major economic activity in the archeological area is the informal selling of handicrafts and beverages as well as tour-guiding at the major monument sites. Many children with surprisingly good English-speaking abilities are working in this sector; it would be interesting to evaluate whether their encounters with foreigners, who come from all over the world and speak many different languages, has in itself an educational value that might be further developed into a program for informal learning on site.

Note: The period of the United Nation Transitory Authority in Cambodia has left behind a strong association with the American dollar, resulting in a dual-currency economy.



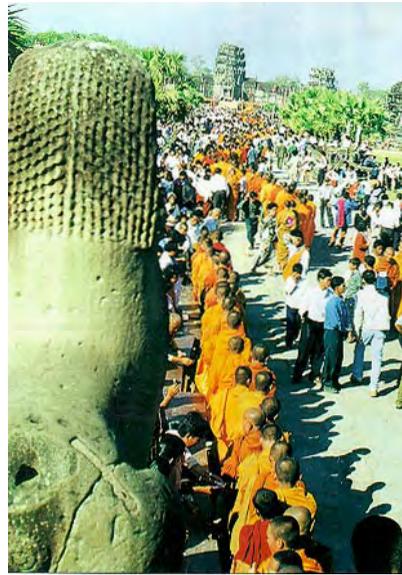
Children washing clothes and playing in one of the water tanks in Angkor Thom.





Today the historic site of Angkor is the primary symbol of Cambodia because it speaks to both the country's past, in that it is home to the Khmer civilization, as well as its future, in that it embodies the hope of socio-economic development connected with conservation efforts and cultural tourism.





The temples of Angkor are still objects of everyday devotion rituals for Cambodian Buddhists, as well as the setting of major festivals; such as the one held at the turn of the new millennium. The religious practices and the temple ensemble are important to the many Cambodians who make the pilgrimage to Angkor.





The symbol of past, present and future.

Remains | of Traditions

- *Kavita Srinivasan*

***T*here seems to be three generations of housing in Cambodia. The first is the “traditional housing” typically found in rural settings. The second is the “hybrid” type, characterized by a shifting from traditional to modern and found in squatter-villages and modern houses of wealthier persons in the urban environment. The third generation is the “neo-traditional” house. With the recent flood of foreigners into Cambodia, the outside world’s attention on Cambodian culture has provoked a reemergence of Cambodian products. Today, it is very common to witness large developments (such as private hotels) carrying obvious references to traditional architecture. This renewed external interest in Cambodia’s culture has instigated the re-appearance of traditional architecture in the urban environment, with the consequence that the poor aspire to shape their lifestyles after the rich through their building practices.**

What I expected

I am interested in how people with different socio-economic backgrounds use traditional architecture. The Cambodia IAP workshop was an opportunity to investigate my hypothesis - that squatters use more elements of traditional architecture than wealthier city inhabitants. Thus, I expected to see many elements of traditional architecture in squatter settlements in Phnom Penh. This seemed a reasonable expectation because:

- Traditional architecture is fine-tuned over a long period of time in order to adapt in specific ways to the particular environment (climate, culture etc.) in which it is located. Its utility has been time-tested.
- Traditional architecture provides low-tech and low-cost solutions. Take for example the need for ventilation, and protection against heat gain, in Phnom Penh. One way that traditional architecture addresses these problems is through the use of porous materials that allow wind but not sunlight to enter the house. In contrast, modern design usually requires appliances such as electric fans or air-conditioning. Economy is key for poor squatters, and thus, traditional designs are usually favored.
- A large number of squatters in Phnom Penh have migrated from rural Cambodia, where they would have been exposed to the benefits of traditional architecture. Their preservation of traditional architecture stems from their familiarity with it, and an appreciation for what it can offer them.



What I found

I found that squatters do use traditional architecture. Also, they use more elements of traditional architecture than wealthier city residents do. However, the incidence of traditional architecture, even in squatter settlements, was far less than I had expected.

Specifically, squatter houses differ substantially from traditional Khmer houses with regard to building materials, roof structure, roof sculpture, and the lack of porches.

However, there were four traditional elements that persisted in squatters:

1) Stilts/elevated houses



Stilts are elements of traditional Khmer architecture. Traditionally, they served the purpose of elevating the house to protect it from snakes and floods. Today, they protect squatters in Phnom Penh from garbage and sewage/

drainage waters, and flooding during the rainy season. However, they also provide a shaded, well-ventilated place for people to gather and talk during the day. Since the temperature in Phnom Penh tends to remain around 31 degrees Celsius throughout the year, this is an important function for people as they spend a lot of time outdoors

2) Roof ventilation

Traditional roofs in Cambodian houses are 2 levels of pitched roofs. The ends of these roofs are kept open so that hot air can rise and escape through the top, and cool air can circulate. Air can also escape through the gap between the first and second levels of pitched roofs. Since Cambodia receives rain for many months every year, pitched roofs are vital for keeping homes dry.



These roofs have *not* been preserved in *form*, but in *function*. What is prevalent in Phnom Penh squatter settlements is popularly known as “American-style house”, where



there is only one level of pitched roof. The 2 long sides of the roof do not meet at a common edge, but one goes above the other, leaving a gap in the middle for ventilation and air circulation, just as in traditional roofs. Again, the pitch of these roofs is used to drain rain. The edge of the side of the roof that is above the other is extended a little beyond the other so that rain cannot penetrate the roof opening. However, there is only one opening for the air to escape, and thus it is not as effective as the traditional roofs in ventilating the house. It is easier for dust and external pollution/ rain to enter the American-style roofs than traditional ones because of the angle of the roof on either side of the gap.

3) Certain Materials

A lot of houses use a bamboo/wood structure with a straw/dried grass envelope. The use of these porous materials is very appropriate in this



climate because they allow the house to “breathe”, i.e. allowing air in without allowing light in.

4) Shutters

In many squatters, I saw the use of traditional shutters that are opened upwards and

outwards from within the house. This motion allows the wind to come in and also allows the shutter to act as a sun-shading device.

Despite these four elements, squatter houses were far from being traditional Khmer houses. As I looked at the squatters, a trifle disappointed that they bore little resemblance to traditional houses, I asked myself, why, after all the merits of traditional houses, have these people decided move away from them?

Why the discrepancy

I have summarized below, the reasons for which I believe there was a discrepancy between my expectations and my observations.

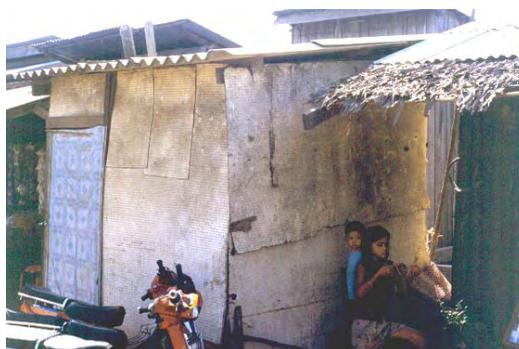
Traditional materials are more expensive. Materials that were traditionally used to build houses, namely clay roof tiles, bamboo, and wood, are expen-

sive for squatters. Due to the illegal felling of trees in Cambodia, wood is fast becoming a scarce commodity. Plus, bamboo requires high maintenance because it needs to be replaced every 3-4 years. Modern materials such as concrete, brick, aluminum, and even plastic, although not the best suited for the warm climate, are cheaper than bamboo/wood in the city. Compared to traditional materials, prices of modern materials vary greatly with quality.

Squatters can thus aim for the lowest priced material. These materials are more durable and easier to maintain than (traditionally used) organic materials. This makes them even more inexpensive in the long run. Metal, plastic and textiles are often

salvaged from garbage – in which case, they are absolutely free. In my original reasoning, I overestimated the prices, and underestimated the durability of modern materials vis-à-vis traditional ones.

Learning this, I became interested in the connection between squatters' financial resources and their choice of construction. Do they depart from traditional architecture for plainly economic reasons? Would more squatters



build in traditional ways if they had more money, or if the cost was subsidized? I am lead to believe that economic consideration, although important, is only secondary to identity and status considerations when constructing one's house.



People in squatters want to create a modern identity for themselves. People who come to Phnom Penh seek an urban way of life. Thus, it is not surprising that they would want to embrace modernity and move away from traditional elements (not just architecturally, but otherwise too). Using modern materials and design is seen as being progressive, and indicates a higher financial and social status.

There seems to be a powerful psychological underpinning to one's decision to live in 'modern' houses, even though they might not be optimal in terms of utility (given the hot and humid climate).

Using modern, durable materials signifies permanence and stability. This symbolism stems from the physical durability of modern materials over traditional materials. To squatters, who often face an unstable future because of the threat of eviction, this provides a sense of security. It is more difficult and expensive to demolish concrete buildings than wooden ones. A

house made out of more durable materials may reinforce the inhabitants' sense of legitimate claims (property rights) to the land.

*Precedents play a big role
in individuals' decisions*

When new squatters come to a settlement, they tend to accept, rather than question pre-existing trends. Standards are already established, and the newcomers, in order to integrate



with the community, follow these same standards. To explain this point, I will tell you about a squatter community we visited. This community had been relocated onto new land and had built all of their houses out of concrete and brick – something that wasn't done in other squatters. Curious, I asked about this overriding preference for these materials. I was told that their leader had been the first one to build on the new site, and had built his house out of concrete and brick. This set the example for the rest of the community, who saw this as signifying a new (and better) life-style. In contrast, a community I had visited outside of Phnom Penh showed no signs of using brick or concrete in their homes. When new wealth was acquired, houses were expanded spatially, but in the traditional architectural style. One might even say, from these examples, that the density of the city is not conducive to expanding one's home, and thus, modern materials and styles of building are used as new expression of increased wealth.

Space is scarce in the city. Space is scarce, and thus expensive, in the dense city squatters. This simple fact explains why shaded porches, a distinct element of traditional architecture, are missing in Phnom Penh's squatter houses.



Housing in Cambodia is continually undergoing transformation driven by a multitude of factors. The Khmer Rouge regime wiped out a whole generation of Cambodians who would have been vital in passing down traditions. Today, with the outside interest in Cambodia's culture, Cambodians are looking back to their traditions as a way to move forward.



Local **Motion**

- *Ahsha Ali Safai*

Every morning as the crow of the rooster woke my slumber I was immediately intrigued by what lay ahead of me in Phnom Penh. Sometimes my watch read 4:20 a.m., other times it read 5:15 a.m., it all depended upon how the rooster felt that morning. One thing that did remain constant, however, was the excitement that lay outside our door.

“Moto!” “Moto, sir!” “Sir, moto?”



Each day the word *moto* was on the tip of my tongue as I stepped into the vibrant streets, alleys, and dirt roads. As any resident or visitor of Phnom Penh quickly realizes, the mode by which people travel is the *moto*. In Khmer, the official language, *moto-dub*, a derivative of the French word *moto-double*, is the word commonly used to refer to a motorbike for two people. And around every corner there is another batch of young men,

mainly 18-30 years old, waiting to drive another customer to their next destination.

As I traveled throughout the capital, mainly on *motos* and foot, I was struck by the absence of automobiles. I am sure automobiles are prohibitively expensive, for motos already cost \$300-800, a princely sum in Cambodia. I was impressed by the multitude of transportation methods used by the average Cambodian, both in the city center, and on the periphery. The lack of cars was more evident to me because on my journey to Cambodia, I spent two days in Los Angeles, and four days in Bangkok, arguably two of the world's most automobile dependent cities.



To document the varied modes of transportation I went to the Central Market, the Mekong River docks, both Chairman Mao and Charles De Gaulle Boulevard's, the park in front of the Grand Palace, the urban poor settlements all over the city, and the periphery of the city. One theme remained constant: goods and people are transported throughout Phnom Penh by an unconventional and varied collage of "informal" modes of

transportation. On the outskirts of the capital, however, I was able to document more traditional forms of transportation that are no longer prevalent in the city center.

As I spent more time in the capital I was soon to find out that there is a paucity of automotive taxis, and no formal public transportation. The most common methods used by the average Cambodian are forms that are no longer prevalent in our society, and maybe never were. In and around the capital it is not uncommon to see mule carts, cycle rickshaws, motor rickshaws, cyclos, push-carts, wagons, bicycles, headloaders, back-loaders, boats, and of course, motos! Cars, trucks, and vans are present, but do not dominate.



Only twenty short years ago the most common form of transportation for goods and people was the bicycle *cyclo*, a three-wheeled cycle with the driver on a high seat behind a basket-like seat for the passenger. Today the *cyclo* is used mainly to transport goods and materials. It has been rapidly replaced by the *moto* in a very short time. This dramatic shift is quite significant in a city that today numbers around one million people. In recent population growth projections, the city is growing at a rate of 5.6% annually. It is projected that in the year 2005, the city will number over 2 million people. It is not hard to imagine some of the traffic nightmares faced by neighboring Thailand edging their way into Cambodia. In Bangkok transportation has taken on an entirely new definition: auto-avoidance!



I was fortunate enough to ride in a *cyclo*. The ride was bumpy, slow, and I inhaled a mouthful of dust and pollution from the road. But on this ride I thought about when times were less hectic, when society moved slower, and when people stopped to smile and to notice the smaller details in life. So much of the Cambodian culture seemed to be changing before my eyes. People were concerned about rapid transportation, and less concerned about preserving older methods of transport!



One caution for Cambodia, however, is as nations become wealthier, and as individuals accumulate more disposable income, automobile usage tends to increase rapidly. The automobile as a mode of transportation might be more time efficient, but it imposes negative effects on the environment, and it increases traffic, noise levels, and pollution. One is left asking the question: “What types of transportation lie in the future for Phnom Penh?”

Art, Culture, and Skills for **Survival**

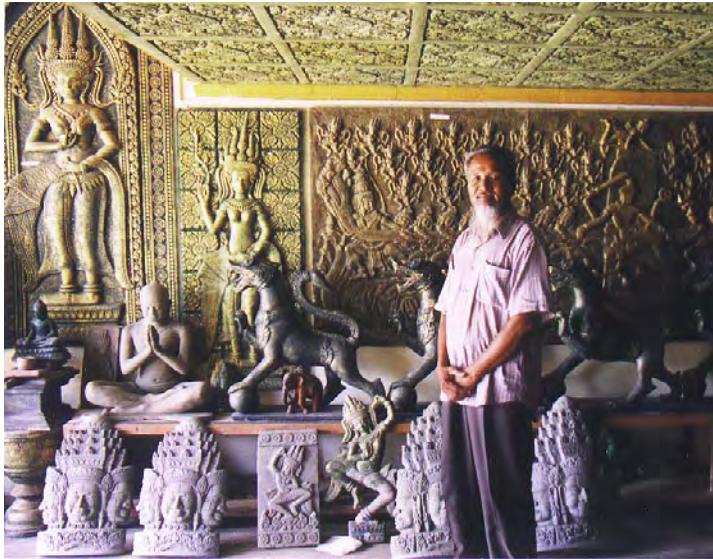
- *Chris Spencer*



“ Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

Pablo Picasso

***I*n most countries, art and culture provide the vital link between past, present, and future. In Cambodia, this link was nearly severed in the mid-1970s during the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror. For those artists who survived by concealing their talents, now is a time for proudly displaying and passing them on. Art, once a liability and threat to their lives, is now a primary means for survival. Other skills such as furniture making, ornamental ironwork, and architectural woodworking—rendered meaningless in the face of Pol Pot's regressive agrarian policies—have also found new value. All over the city, there are signs of hope for those with marketable skills or talent, and lingering doubts for those with none.**





Not far from the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, an artist studio spills out onto the street, overflowing with Angkorian-styled art. The bas relief Apsara Dancers, heads from the Bayon temples, and Buddha statues are rendered in almost every medium from bronze to stone. Chan Sim, the proprietor, is a distin-

guished looking sixty-year old man and former professor from the University. His kind face, soft voice, and warm smile tell little of the atrocities he has seen and been through. During the Khmer Rouge era, he had to destroy all his work and hide any evidence of his talents. His brushes and chisels were replaced by shovels and picks. No longer improving life through art, he was forced to shovel fertilizer and human waste into compost piles for later use in the fields. In most respects, he was one of the lucky ones—he survived. “If the Khmer Rouge had



discovered my real profession,” he explains, “I would have been immediately executed.” During that period so many were killed that Khmer culture and art almost disappeared. Determined not to let this happen again, Sim is doing all he can to “restore Khmer culture, art and heritage back to its former glory” by passing his skills to the next generation.



Cultural art, skills, and crafts are transferred in Cambodia through informal apprenticeships. In Sim’s studio the apprentices are paid through the sales of their own products. His own children however, are not among his apprentices. His oldest son is a lawyer, another has just finished high school, and the youngest two are studying English and Chinese in addition to regular classes. Like many Cambodians, they realize that fluency in another language is vital to their success, especially with the growth of tourism. For



Sim, encouraging his own children to pursue their own dreams is as important to him and as much a source of pride as his own work. He does however have apprentices who are ready to continue the Khmer culture through the ancient art forms he teaches them and are appreciative for the opportunity to study under such a talented and knowledgeable artist.



Nearby at the Royal University, students of all ages are busy learning the intricacies of Khmer art from a number of accomplished masters. They work in sheds, under trees, on verandas, and out in the open. They learn to carve in wood, soapstone, and granite and make molds for doing work in

bronze and other metals. One sixteen year-old boy who had just started said that although he has never had a formal education and does not read or write, he aspires to be an artist, and feels quite lucky to have this opportunity to work with such fine teachers. The



cost for attending this University is covered through the returns on the sales of what the apprentices or students produce. For these students, it is an opportunity for a better life, and a chance to ensure that Khmer culture and art continues. For most, the pay is modest but the rewards are great.



In another part of town, along a street lined with a seemingly endless row of woodworking, welding, and machine shops, a middle-aged furniture maker continues a tradition passed down from his father. Simphat, who was making school desks the day I stopped by, has been assembling, sanding, and finishing furniture for 15 years. He seldom knows where his work will end up, but crafts each piece as if it was going in his own home. Like so



many other craftsmen along this strip in Phnom Penh, he is passing his trade on to younger relatives, in this case, his nephews. Typical of these informal arrangements, he buys their tools, feeds them, and gives them a little money. Most work for half a day and go to school for the other half. Usually as Simphat explains, only 3 or 4 out of ten students are very good. “When they are good,” he says, “they will get a regular salary.”

A few shops down the road, a twenty year old welder named Ngourn has been operating his own shop for the past year specializing in ornamental ironwork. The gates he is working on this day will likely grace the front of one of the many pretentious palaces that seem to be sprouting up all over Phnom Penh. He has been practicing his trade for six years and now has a certificate for teaching it. All of the eight people working or apprenticing with him are nephews. “The clever ones,” he says, “pick up the work in 8 months,” but for some it takes more than two years. He works seven days a week and often has to hire people who are already skilled in order to keep up with the demand. There are many shops like his all over the city, and as Ngourn has noticed, as the demand grows, so does the competition, making it increasingly more difficult to get a good price for his work.

For some shops, it is not the growing competition but the increased wealth and growing imports that are hurting their business. Toeng, a 67 years old metal worker, and Kimva, a machinist have both noticed their work slowing over the past few years. When Toeng was 17 his father taught him about metal work. Since moving back to the city in 1980, he has been repairing the metal on banged up cars. But “now that people have more money, they just seem to buy new parts” he says. For Kimva, who operates his machine shop across the street from Toeng, the economic reality is quite similar.

Although he has six employees, work has slowed considerably. He says “today, work is not so busy because people can just buy new (parts).” At 43, the future for Kimva and his four children remains uncertain.

For those living in squatters communities the future is even less certain. In addition to the precarious and quite muddled land tenure situation, few of the people in these settlements have any skills. In the Rasmei Samaki community that I worked with for three weeks, people with no skills typically either sell cake or drive a moto. Despite the low pay and stiff competition, they have few other opportunities and are glad to be working at all. Many would like to learn a more marketable and profitable skill, but have no one to teach them. Many of the people living in these poor communities come from families that were driven into the countryside and forced to farm during the Khmer Rouge era. Crafts and skills that were handed down through the generations were lost during this time. Their farming knowledge has little worth in an urban context. For most, their choices are few, their pay is low, and life is a constant struggle just to survive.

In the coming years, with the growing economy, rebuilding of the capital city and great influx of tourist capital and foreign investment, those with talents and skills, especially related to tourism, will continue to advance. As many Cambodians have realized, skills, knowledge, and a second language provide the best hope for survival. And for those with few skills, cake selling and moto driving will enable them to survive, but just barely. For them, the dust of everyday life will continue to settle—with little to wash it away.

