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Discourses and Practices on Tradition and World Heritage-Making in Angkor

In nearly two decades after the inscription of Angkor on the World Heritage List, the focus of attention in Angkor by the Cambodian government and the international community shifted from the rescue operation of monuments and sites to how to effectively utilize the heritage for economic development of the country, mainly through tourism development. It also meant how to control people's presence and activities in Angkor, which necessitated the restriction of some of 'traditional' practices conducted by local inhabitants. Many of the restrictions were imposed on them for the sake of tourism development and the assumed ideal conditions of World Heritage to be maintained. There then emerged discourses on which tradition to respect and maintain, and which one to be disregarded or restricted. At the same time new traditions were invented to suit the era of tourism development. This paper considers divergent and somewhat contradictory discourses and practices on 'tradition' and 'World Heritage-making' in Angkor demonstrated by various social actors; local, national and international.



A by-gone view of cattle in the moat and bank of Angkor Wat: banned in 2000.



Sokha Hotels's yellow balloon seen in the sky beyond the moat of Angkor Wat: a new tradition.



Young models clad in traditional costumes for tourists' snap shots at Bayon temple: a new tradition.

Biography

Keiko Miura had worked in the Culture Unit of UNESCO Office in Cambodia from 1992 to 1998, with approximately 6-month interval working with UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust project (JSA) for archaeological and anthropological work. After resigning UNESCO, she became engaged in a Ph. D research on the relationship between Angkor heritage and local communities at the Dept. of Social Anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. On completing her Ph. D in 2004 she has been teaching at several Japanese universities while conducting a follow-up research in Angkor and a Balinese agriculture and rituals.

List of recent publications related to the presentation topic:

- 2010 World Heritage Sites in South-East Asia: Angkor and Beyond. Michael Hitchcock, Victor T. King, and Michael Parnwell (eds.) *Heritage Tourism in South East Asia*. Copenhagen, Nias; Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press.
- 2008 Needs for Anthropological Approaches to Conservation and Management of Living Heritage Sites: From a Case Study of Angkor, Cambodia. Elizabeth A. Bacus, Ian C. Glover and Peter D. Sharrock (eds.) *Interpreting Southeast Asia's Past: Monument, Image and Text*. Singapore: National University of Singapore.
- 2005 Conservation of a 'Living Heritage Site': A Contradiction in Terms? A Case Study of Angkor World Heritage Site. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites (CMAS)*. 7(1): 3-18.
- 2004 *Contested Heritage. People of Angkor*. Ph.D. thesis. London: SOAS, University of London.
- 2000 The People of Angkor: Living with a World Heritage Site. *CKS Newsletter*, 2: 15-20.