



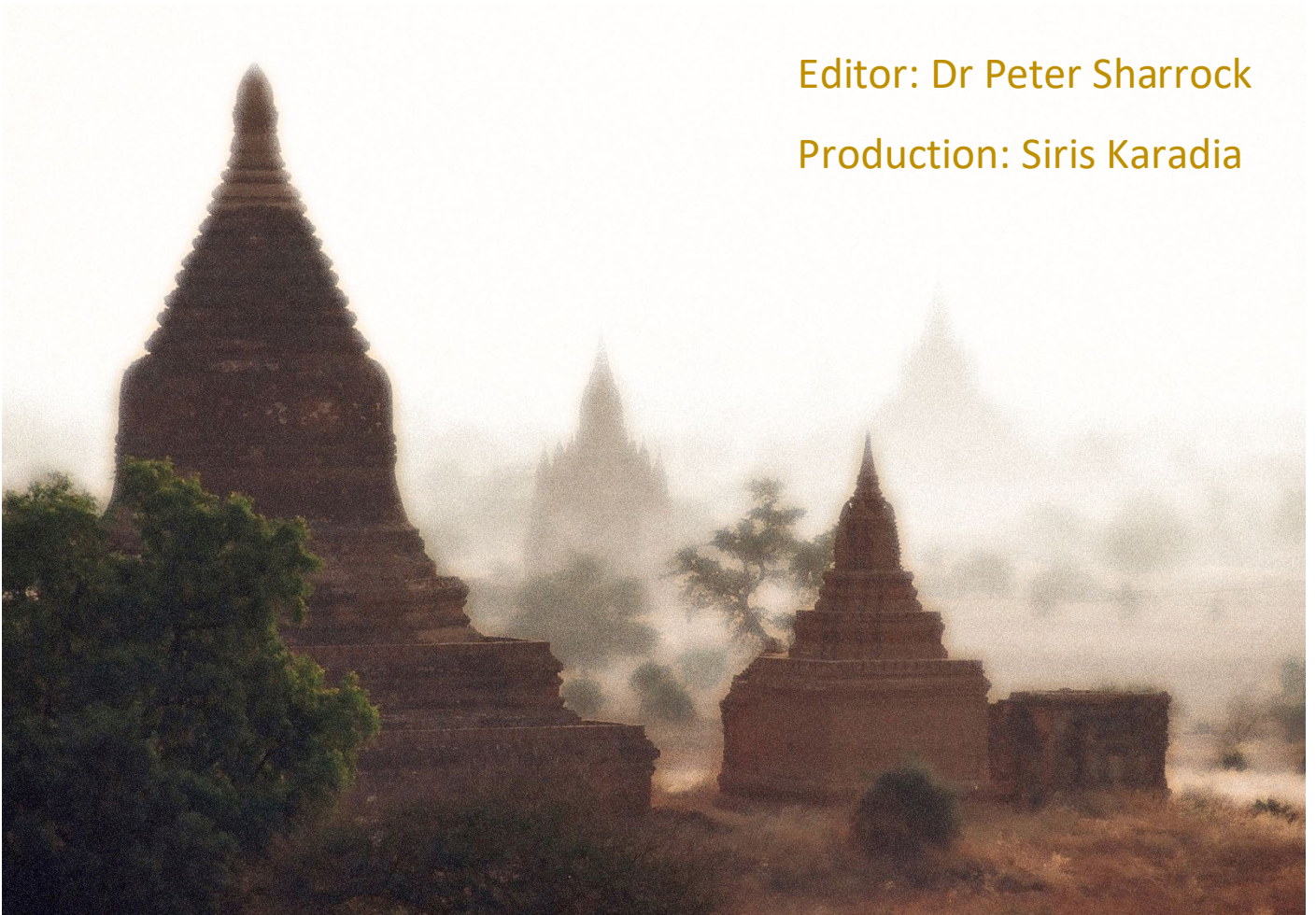
SOAS
University of London

**Southeast Asian
Art Academic
Programme**

2021-22 Newsletter

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Letter from the Editor

In 2013, the Alphawood Foundation in Chicago signed an agreement with SOAS to engage more deeply in the art history of Southeast Asia by supporting a new generation of regional leaders to develop new scholarship across the field. The aim was to take a prominent place among the top universities active in this region in the US, Sydney, Leiden, Paris and Singapore. We tried then to envisage what might eventuate in 5 or ten years' time and penned a full-page advertisement for *The Art Newspaper* for applicants for three new endowed teaching posts. At that stage we could only describe the new Programme framework in general terms:

'Designed to create a profound and long-lasting impact, the Programme also provides resources to enable SOAS to build networks with likeminded institutions in Southeast Asia to develop and encourage expertise, and to establish conferences, symposia and masterclasses in the region and in London.'

What actually happened in the years that followed is in part graphically recorded here in up-close, reality-soaked detail from the field, in this 13th edition of the SAAAP Newsletter. The more than 100 Alphawood alumni, who have returned home after studying in SOAS, have taken up influential positions in the art and archaeological institutions in their countries and are now actively contributing to research and analysis that feed into museum archives and catalogues (the latter invariably the first full-scale ones since those written a century ago in the colonial period) and other collaborative publications covering the SAAAP-defined remit studying the ancient to premodern Buddhist and Hindu art and archaeology of the Region.

This edition of the Newsletter visits excavations and restorations being undertaken by our alumni in Cambodia. It tracks a series of museum webinars from Singapore and the production of collaborative museum catalogues from Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Indonesia. Academic research highlights are found in new anthologies inspired by SAAAP summer schools in Indonesia, that are reaching deeper into the long-underestimated historical role of the Region in innovating in statecraft and Buddhist and Hindu state protection rituals. The scale of the dense urbanization in the first millennium within these new rice empires, interconnected by the burgeoning maritime trade in high value ceramic and iron products, as well as spices and forest goods, between China, India and Europe, has now been gauged by LiDAR remote sensing as being on a scale only then found in China. Given this powerful new economic base, we can now read a richer account of the culture and influence of these fast-developing early states in the 9th-14th centuries through the major innovations in massive sacred monuments and state ceremonial centres, notably in Java, Angkor and Bagan. Contributions to this enriched view of the Region appear here in a brief account of the 2-volume SOAS-Alphawood anthology *The Creative South* and in reports on the doctoral research by alumni Sonetra Seng in Cambodia, Panngah Ardiyansyah in Indonesia and Pipad Krajaejun in Thailand. All point towards future works that will join the growing array of SAAAP publications.

International moves to repatriate artworks trafficked from the Region through the secretive international art market into western museums and private collections, are also drawing on the expertise of Alphawood alumni. Sopheap Meas, now Vice Head of the Bureau of Antiquities management data in the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, and Muong Chanraksmeay from the Phnom Penh National Museum, are members of an international team negotiating with the big museums for the repatriation of Cambodian statues looted from unrestored and unprotected temples sites before, during and after the devastating Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s.

The 20 Alphawood alumni in Myanmar faced major difficulties on their return home after the military junta overthrew the government of Aung San Suu Kyi, cancelled passports, ousted teachers and curators and severely restricted internal travel. Some are still managing to work on a catalogue for the new museum opened in Bagan, and some contribute to online seminars and SOAS online postgraduate Diploma modules. A few hope to be allowed to attend the large IPPA archaeological conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand in November. Alumna Theint Theint Aung, a gifted lacquer painter in her family's business in Bagan, tells us how she is surviving by distributing a new range of lacquer ornaments over the internet. And despite all the difficulties in accessing research materials and in travel, Alphawood Alumna Yamin Htay, recounts her discoveries of unique temple ruins along the Irrawaddy river in Myanmar.

In London, SAAAP introduced into SOAS the now highly popular curating and museology modules to. Pratapaditya Pal Senior Lecturer Stephen Murphy, an archaeologist with extended curating experience in New York and Singapore, has led the demonstration to the School of the new hands-on exhibition skills of SOAS students in a Curating Cultures Exhibition in the Wolfson Gallery of the SOAS Library. This focused on objects from Southeast Asia, many of them donated by Emeritus Professor Elizabeth Moore, who continues her crucial ongoing support of our Myanmar alumni.

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Bob Annibale Chairs SAAAP Programme Board

By: Bob Annibale

It was an honour to be invited to join the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme (SAAAP) project as Chair. I greatly appreciate the former Chair's, Dr Tamsyn Barton, assistance in making for such a smooth transition and for her years of service to the project and to SOAS in general. Professor Shane McCausland, former Head of the School of Arts, who has provided important senior leadership positioning the programme within the School of Arts, has provided me with invaluable guidance and friendship, for which I am very grateful.

Over the last months I have been introduced to all the faculty and current Alphawood scholars, attended several events, dinners, symposiums, and as a novice to the geographic and historical areas of focus of the programme, appreciated being directed to readings and other materials to learn more.

I had the opportunity to visit Chicago and the Alphawood Foundation a few months ago and to learn from its founder, Fred Eychaner, himself a SOAS graduate, about the history of the programme and its remit. I also met and want to thank Jim McDonald, who has very recently retired as Executive Director and legal counsel to the Foundation. He has worked closely with SOAS since the inception of the programme and provided invaluable guidance and counsel. Chirag Badlani has succeeded Jim and brings a wealth of philanthropic, community advocacy and legal experience. I look forward to working closely with Chirag and Fred as we enter the next stage of the programme.



Chirag G. Badlani, Executive Director and Jim McDonough at the Alphawood Foundation Chicago

As illustrated in reports in this newsletter, authored by students, alumni, and faculty, the SAAAP programme is unique in supporting and developing leaders and scholarship across the field in the target countries included in the programme, including in academia, museology and national heritage. I hope that I will have an opportunity to travel to the region and to meet some of our distinguished alumni, view great collections and visit important historic sites.

The family of nearly 100 or so students that were and are Alphawood scholars is remarkable. They form a multi-generational network of leaders preserving and promoting the understanding of pre-modern Buddhist and Hindu art and architecture across Southeast Asia. I know of no other such programme that has supported so many students, at different stages of their careers, with academic and hands-on and field experience, to pursue both Postgraduate Diploma and MA/PhD degrees in the arts. I look forward to supporting them and the programme in any way that I can in the years ahead.

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SOAS alumni back home in Cambodia are taking on major roles in conserving the extraordinarily rich Khmer cultural heritage and communicating it to the world

By: Chhum Menghong

Since being appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the Cambodian National Commission for UNESCO (CamboNac), I have been engaged in projects promoting the enormous cultural heritage of Cambodia. This work opens opportunities for engaging Cambodian scholars, and notably those who graduated from SOAS, in teamwork. Recently, for example, three Alphawood alumni joined me in collating technical research to support a declaration of the Universal Value of the Banteay Chhmar temple, a vast and only partially restored 12th-13th century CE Mahayana Buddhist temple near the modern border with Thailand. This work is key to preparing the nomination dossier for proposing Banteay Chhmar as a UNESCO world heritage site. In addition, our commission has implemented a cultural education programme aimed at promoting the value of Khmer culture to students in high schools and other educational institutions. For this project, we plan to publish a guidebook in 2022 entitled *Understanding Cambodian World Heritage sites*. The book will have 12 articles on the extant tangible and intangible world heritage sites in Cambodia and those on the tentative list. CamboNac has invited nine Alphawood scholars (5 are alumni now back home and 4 are still studying in SOAS) to contribute articles for this guidebook.

As part of my SAAAP alumni liaison role in Cambodia, I have also gathered support for a panel at the conference of the **Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association (IPPA) conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand in November 2022**. The panel is on 'Khmer Ancient Urban Planning and Water Management' with six panel members, among them are 4 SOAS alumni.

Some 40 Khmer alumni have returned to Cambodia after graduating from SOAS. They work at different institutions including the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MCFA), the APSARA national restoration authority, the Preah Vihear temple authority, the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh (NMCP) and so on. Some have become project managers of culture conservation and restoration sites in the country fast expanding cultural heritage management programme (Photo 1). Their work will eventually be shared with scholars both local and international.



Photo 1: SOAS alumni at Angkor Thom gateway: from left, (1) Chhay Rachana, (2) Tho Thorn, (3) Vitou Phirum, (4) Chhum Menghong, (5) Phoeung Dara

The future activities of the SOAS Alumni Liaison group in Cambodia will focus on two main areas:

- (1) Regular alumni meetings and presentations every three months. Members will be invited to share their research projects in person or online. It is an opportunity for SOAS students to meet up regularly in a professional study circle focused on conserving the country's rich art and architectural heritage.
- (2) Sharing research projects with SOAS alumni engaged in similar work across the Region. This will help us all to extend our horizon to what is happening in our field across the borders. Eventually we hope to find joint research projects together.

Excavations

Photo 2 shows Chhay Rachna and Vitou Phirum, now senior archaeologists in the Angkor International Center of Research and Documentation of the APSARA National Authority. They are currently co-directing the excavation of the large Thvea Dei Chhnang Kiln close to the northern gate of the ancient capital Angkor Thom. Here potters produced roof tiles and domestic earthenware for urban Angkor, now known from LiDAR remote-sensing to have been as large as the Chinese capital in the 12th century. At the Ceramic Study Office in APSARA National Authority, they have an important role in investigating the Angkorian political economy based on the Social Organization of Khmer producers and consumers. Chhay Rachana and Vitou Phirum are the leading kiln site excavators in Angkor.



Photo 2: Chhay Rachna and Vitou Phirum



Photo 3: Tho Thorn, expert of APSARA Authority graduated from SOAS in 2018

Tho Thorn, another Alphawood alumnus, is engaged in the archaeological excavations of the ancient capital near the eastern part of Phnom Bakheng, the first temple built in Angkor on a natural hill, which in pre-Covid days was packed with thousands of tourists taking photos of the Angkor Plain and the distant but still massive towers of Angkor Wat temple protruding through the forest. This project combines excavation and LiDAR mapping of the Bakheng temple.

Alphawood alumnus Phoeung Dara (photo 4), is leading the research work at Prasat Ta Phrom Kel hospital site in Angkor built as one of a chain of 102 hospitals built under Buddhist King Jayavarman VII in the world's first government-funded national health service that was free for all citizens.

He reports: 'After returning to Cambodia in 2020 I resumed my work in the APSARA National Authority as a senior archaeologist in Angkor. I surveyed the complex water system at the Neak Poan temple to prepare the landfill for two dikes and to replace an ancient staircase by the French conservator Jean Laur in 1956. My work excavating the Ta Prohm Kel chapel hospital in the late 12th century A.D in the reign of King Jayavarman VII. This temple is challenging because the southwest corner is partially collapsed. The first phase is to discover the foundation system of the main tower where the structural deformation is believed to be caused by subsidence and then to stabilise the tower.



Photo 4: Phoeung Dara

Based on my MA dissertation in SOAS I have also published a book entitled *The hunting bas-reliefs on doorframes at Angkor Vat*. I am now writing another book entitled *Tiny bas-reliefs on the Khmer temples*, which will be published by Yosothor, an independent Cambodian institution promoting research on Cambodian culture, nationally and internationally.



Photo 5: Sathal Khun at the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh

Museums

Alumna Khun Sathal was one of the first Alphawood scholars to study in SOAS. Sathal reports: 'Since coming back from SOAS at the end of 2016, I have worked at the Department of Museums and in 2020, I was promoted to become the Deputy Director of the Department of Museums in charge of the inventory works of the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh (NMCP) and the provincial museums.

'In September 2021, the Department of Museums began a project to assist the provincial museums in Cambodia which was entitled "Provincial museum collection database project",

funded by the US Embassy in Phnom Penh. I was assigned as Project Advisor. The project ran from September 2021 to August 2022. It will extend the database system I long worked on at the NMCP to the provincial museums. The first six provincial museums selected to manage their collection inventory with a numbering system approved by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MCFA) will achieve a scientific storage in a database system with long-term security and accessibility. At the same time, these important provincial museum collections will be searchable online internationally, as those of the NMCP have been since their launch in 2014.'

Alumnus Muong Chanraksmeay works with Sathal. 'On my return to Cambodia in 2019 after graduating from SOAS, I joined the National Museum of Cambodia and was made responsible for international cooperation with international exhibitions of Khmer art. Since I began, 10 exhibition projects have been undertaken. Two were completed, two were permitted to extend and two are being installed. The three others will be take place this year and in the coming years. The biggest difficulty we have faced came with the Covid pandemic, when all our projects were postponed because of social distancing regulations. However, most of the projects are now underway again.



Photo 6: Muong Chanraksmeay at NMCP

Heritage as accumulation: how ancient Hindu-Buddhist sacred sites were repurposed and reused in premodern Islamic Java and Sumatra. A fieldwork report during the Covid-19 pandemic.

By: Alphawood PhD Scholar Panggah Ardiyansyah



Structures at the high terrace of Suku Temple, Mount Lawu, Java

During my travels across Java and Sumatra, adhering to the strict national health protocols, here's an update on my doctoral fieldwork. My project focuses on how ancient Hindu-Buddhist materials in Indonesia, produced between the 4th and 15th centuries, were repurposed and reused during the period ranging from the 16th to 18th centuries, often labelled the premodern Islamic period. I investigate how the first sacred meanings of the imposing Hindu-Buddhist monuments and sculpture took on new resonances in recollection and reinterpretation, depending on the evolution of each socio-religious context, or that were, at times and over time, lost or only lingered obscurely in the collective memory.

Two sets of data are collected. The first contains the architectural remains at Hindu-Buddhist sites and any signs of how they were selectively included within the religio-political matrix of local society as it evolved between the 15th and 18th centuries. The second comprises selected Hindu-Buddhist iconographies that were used, adapted, and repurposed within the local increasingly Islamic structures. Such data on the appropriations of Hindu-Buddhist narratives yield new understandings of how the Javanese royal courts from the 15th century secured spiritual links back to the ancient Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms. For example, the persistence of the iconography of celestial eagle Garuda (or winged figure/motif) across different religious architectures, including within the Islamic courts. Geographically, the materials come from Java and Sumatra as these two large islands developed the most pronounced Hindu-Buddhist cultures in Indonesia.

As I was planning my fieldwork in July 2021, Indonesia was hit by a massive wave of the Delta variant of Covid-19, so I was forced to postpone my departure and seek a suitable window for entering the country safely. Unable to travel, I turned my attention to online resources and found that the transliterated editions of the Javanese manuscripts are available online through at <https://www.sastra.org/>.

The website is managed by *Sastra Lestari*, a Solo-based independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to the rescue, preservation, and dissemination of local works of literature from Indonesia. Other manuscripts I am reading are kept in the Leiden University, of which digital copies can be requested at affordable rates. Aside from reading textual sources, I delved into the Digital Collections of Leiden University Libraries to look for old photos and Dutch colonial archaeological reports of the archaeological sites I am investigating. Working with these materials kept me fully occupied before departing to Indonesia in late October 2021.



Panggah documenting Kethek Temple in Mount Lawu



Stone assemblies at Cetho Temple, Mount Lawu, projecting a garuda imagery

I completed the first stint of my fieldwork on Mount Lawu in central Java at the end of November 2021. This was focused on the 15th-century Suku Temple, whose artistic expressions have been utilised by scholars to signpost the end of the Hindu-Buddhist period in Java. Nonetheless, my research found that the site was still actively imagined as part of a sacred Javanese landscape in the manuscripts from later Javanese local courts. I managed to see a Bhima statue at Dalem Hardjanegaran, a royal-affiliated private house in nearby Solo, after tracking its movement from the site of Suku, to Pesanggrahan Srikaton (a resting place for local Mangkunegaran court) in the late 19th century, to the Mangkunegaran palace in the first half of the 20th century, and finally in the 1960s to its current location. In

addition, I visited other temples in Lawu, including Cetho, Kethek, Planggatan, and Menggung, which date to the same period and whose arts are similar in style to Suku.

At the time of writing, February 2022, I am focusing on the second round of sites in Cirebon, western Java, and Banda Aceh, northern Sumatra, to compare and contrast the architecture within supposedly Islamic courts with the earlier Hindu-Buddhist iconography and decoration. In between those two cities, I will also visit Jakarta to access manuscripts in the National Library of Indonesia and the glass plate negatives collection kept by the heritage preservation directorate in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. My final will be visiting sites in East Java, particularly Sendang Duwur in Lamongan.

Apart from being attentive to the frequently changing regulations, travelling amid the Covid-19 pandemic requires following strict national health protocols. To travel by train and plane within Indonesia one must furnish negative test results.

I am grateful that this fieldwork is fully supported by SAAAP.



Garuda with snake wrapping around its upper body at Sunyaragi, Cirebon

Fieldwork experience during 2020-21 pandemic

By: Alphawood Scholar Sonetra Seng



Meeting traditional weaver in Takeo province



Observing holes from deteriorated hooks on the wall of Damrei Krab temple on Phnom Kulen



Curtains hanging on a boat, Angkor Wat temple



Modern concrete and wooden construction inside a brick temple in Prey Veng province

The second year of my PhD (2020-2021) was devoted to fieldwork that I initially planned to conduct largely in Cambodia but with some work also in Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Myanmar as well as India, China and France. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19, I could not achieve my plan as some countries' borders were closed and regulations on border crossing required complicated procedures and significant costs. I ultimately was able to go to Cambodia with relatively little cost and disruption pre- and post-arrival.

Cambodia is where Angkor Wat, the main focus of my study, is located. Officially, this fieldwork should have started in September 2020 and ended in July 2022 but due to the above-mentioned disruption, delays in approval of my fieldwork application and continuous outbreaks in Cambodia I could begin my work only in March 2021 and I had to finish it in October 2021. During the fieldwork I had to take constant precautions. This included a safety green check before entering nearly any temple precinct, any accommodation or restaurant. We were also obliged to get tested to cross some provincial border where there were serious cases.

The visits to some monuments were restricted at the first half of 2021 but later were possible due to diminishing Covid cases in the country. The visits to libraries and museums were not easy. Some institutions had been obliged to shut down temporarily to prevent the spread of the virus. However, certain museums were kind enough to provide me private visits during lockdown, which was really amazing. Most main temples such as Angkor Wat, Bayon, Ta Prohm, Banteay Srei and Preah Khan etc. were closed for the first few months of 2021 and were later opened up again with some precaution measures against the virus.

The main goal of the work was to examine textile adornment on Angkor Wat temple. The key task was to study, photograph and make schematic drawings carvings and architectural elements of the temple that are related to textile use. Furthermore, visits to various brick and stone temples across Cambodia also enabled me to track the development of those elements throughout time. Starting by visiting earlier temples built of brick in the 7th and 8th centuries in Sambor Prei Kuk (central Cambodia), I then continued to Phnom Kulen and later to the temples in the Angkor complex (northern Cambodia), and finished at Banteay Chhmar temple (Northwest Cambodia). After that, I visited Buddhist monasteries across the country to record their classic mural paintings and to compare to both traditional textile use and ancient low reliefs. Last but not least, I made visits to museums, weaving villages, village houses and local markets were made to

develop understandings of what could possibly have continued or discontinued from the past. As some of the ancient usage evidenced in ancient temples are not obvious in the present day, I sought to determine how they may have evolved over time.

To understand the function of some architectural elements in the temples in the ancient time I also made time to meet with architects, art historians, textile conservators, villagers, weavers etc. Extra caution had to be used for such social exchanges given the Covid situation.

The fieldwork was fruitful for my research as I got the chance to observe and confirm the limited references to ancient textiles in the academic literature, allowing me to clarify some obscurities. The fieldwork enabled me for example to get a much clearer understanding of the many forms of hooks inside the temples, which might have different functions other than holding canopies alone, and to confirm how pillar holes on the floor of some temples in the 12th and 13th centuries were likely related to suspending textiles. I was also able to network with weavers, textile conservators, art historians and archaeologists working at the temples, in the museums and in many Provincial Departments of Culture and Fine Arts. Despite being an obstacle, Covid also helped me to some wonderful viewing experience at the temples. There were nearly no tourists; the temples were populated only by temple guards and a few local worshippers. Never had I expected to have such undisturbed open access to the reliefs.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Alphawood Foundation for their generous support for my fieldwork. My sincere thanks also go to all friends and colleagues who have helped me throughout my fieldwork from the beginning. I thank the APSARA Authority for granting me permission to do my research at the temple compound in Angkor. Many thanks also go to the EFEO Siem Reap for providing comfortable accommodation and material in their library during my stay. My thanks go to my lead supervisor, Professor Ashley Thompson, for her feedback and guidance throughout the fieldwork process.



A Buddha shrine in Angkor Wat, 2021



Pillar holes on the floor, Angkor Wat 2021



SOAS Masters students demonstrate their exhibition skills in a Curating Cultures Exhibition

By: Dr Stephen Murphy



Students from the Curating Cultures A cohort installing their showcases



Kezia Permata and her group presenting their exhibition to Dr. Alexandra Green and their fellow students

Over nine weeks – from October to December 2021 – MA students on the 'Curating Cultures module convened by Stephen A Murphy (Pratapaditya Pal Senior Lecturer in Curating and Museology of Asian Art) in the School of Arts developed exhibitions using the History of Art and Archaeology Department's teaching collections. Much of this collection comprises donations from Elizabeth Moore. It consists primarily of Southeast Asian material, and Burmese objects in particular. Two of this year's Alphawood MA scholars, Kezia Permata (Indonesia) and Thaw Zin Latt (Myanmar), were enrolled in this module.

Each group of students was allocated one showcase and tasked with developing an exhibition theme, researching the objects, writing and producing the label texts and envisioning the overall design. This culminated in their exhibitions being displayed in the Wolfson Gallery of the SOAS Library from 14th December 2021 to 14th January 2022.

The exhibitions explored a range of themes and issues about representing cultures and were assessed as part of the coursework. On the day they opened, the students had the opportunity to present their exhibitions to Alexandra Green, Henry Ginsburg Curator for Southeast Asia at the British Museum, who provided insightful feedback and advise on each one.



Photo 1. The Curating Cultures exhibition space. A Mother's Morning Prayer is located in the far right showcase.



Photo 3. A Mother's Morning Prayer display.



Photo 5. Thaw Zin Latt and his group presenting their exhibition to Alexandra Green and their fellow students.

Thaw Zin Latt and his fellow students, Hannah Olukoga, Cai Fengnian, Aisha Khan and Ricky Miles designed an exhibition titled, *A Mother's Morning Prayer*. (Photos 1, 3 & 5). In their words '...[it] emphasises the role and significance of mothers in Southeast Asian homes, based mainly on Southeast Asian artefacts...All the artefacts displayed in this exhibition relate to the morning ritual of a typical Southeast Asian mother, which was often started by a morning prayer. In the display, we offer a series of artefacts which are categorised under three headings: religious, functional and decorative'.



Photo 2. *Vessels of Life: Pottery & Ceramics* is located in the front right showcase.



Photo 4. *Vessels of Life: Pottery & Ceramics* display

Kezia Permata fellow students, Nur Amira, Yuning Liu and Shangyu Wang designed an exhibition titled, *Vessels of Life: Pottery & Ceramics* (Photos 2, 4). As they state in their introductory text panel from the exhibition '...[it] aims to display the meaning of everyday objects used in the past and present which signify human life... This exhibition showcases a variety of vessels from teacups and teapots from China which represent the tea drinking culture in Chinese traditions, to pots from Africa that are used to store food, milk and beer. Beyond their functional use, these vessels carry aesthetic meaning with the intricate and unique designs presented on the surfaces, such as the paintings and calligraphic poems present on ceramic Chinese cups or the carved designs on the clay African pots'.

The Curating Cultures module gave Kezia Permata and Thaw Zin Latt the opportunity to deepen their understating of museological theory and curatorial practices, to share their Southeast Asian perspectives with their fellow students from diverse backgrounds, to work in groups to conceptualise and execute an exhibition, and to receive invaluable feedback from British Museum curator Alexandra Green. It is hoped the skills and knowledge gained throughout this module will help them upon their return to their respective countries in realising their future career goals.



The Curating Cultures A 2021/22 cohort with Elizabeth Moore (backrow, far left), Alexandra Green (backrow, far right) and Stephen Murphy (backrow, third right).

SOAS SAAAP CSEAS Symposium: Biographies and Restitution of Hindu and Buddhist Objects from Java, Sumatra and Bali.

By: **Lesley S Pullen PhD, Convenor**

This Symposium was first proposed to SAAAP in late 2018 for delivery in May 2020. However, due to the protracted Covid-19 pandemic, and an insistence by the Convenor that it be delivered in-person, it was twice deferred, initially to May 2021, then finally until 18 May 2022. Although also available on-line, this Symposium was the first full day event to be held in-person at SOAS since before the pandemic.

For details of the Symposium programme, together with the full names and positions of the nine speakers, and including a full audio-visual recording of the day, please refer to the following link:

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/cseas/events/18may2022-biographies-and-restitution-of-hindu-and-buddhist-objects-from-java-sumatra-and-bali.html>

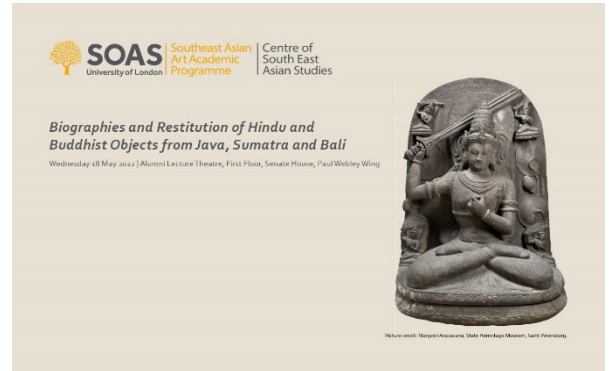
Professor Shane McCausland commenced his formal opening of this Symposium with the following remarks: "This event exemplifies the intensity of the research at the School of Arts and the Centre of Southeast Asia Studies at SOAS, especially in Heritage and Restitution, and Hindu Buddhist Studies. Furthermore, by addressing the restitution of ancient Indonesian objects, this event further supports the importance of the SOAS agenda of decolonisation."

At the conclusion to her own opening remarks, the Convenor posed the following sensitive question: "whilst it's clear predominantly Hindu India is pressing for the return of their ancient Hindu objects, and predominantly Buddhist Cambodia is pressing for the return of their ancient Buddhist objects, is predominantly Moslem Indonesia pressing equally for the restitution of their ancient Hindu Buddhist objects?"

The Keynote Address by Professor Pieter ter Keurs from Leiden addressed the Indonesia Dutch relationship, the negotiations for object loans, the cultural cooperation, and a shared focus on research and colonial collecting between the Dutch and Indonesian governments.

This address was followed by Panel 1, which included two speakers from Java who had travelled to London. The first online paper discussed the story of the Sangguran stone from Java to Scotland; the second summarized the current research on the provenance of the Resnik-Wilkens collection in the Sonobodoyo Museum in Yogyakarta; and the third constituted an overview of the Buddhist bronzes being found in Bula Cina in North Sumatra.

Panel 2 followed the lunch break in the Senate House Atrium, which began with a London-based speaker on the biography of Mañjuśrī Arapacana from Java to Russia—followed by two speakers from Germany. First, we discussed the Afterlives of Gold Antiquities from Java, followed by glimpses into the biography of Balinese Copperplate inscriptions, sacred heirlooms to antiquities.



The last Panel 3 followed a tea break and featured two speakers from The Netherlands. The first presentation gave the audience an overview of the provenance of the Central Javanese stone sculptures in the Rijksmuseum, followed by a discussion on the moral geographies of Greater India with an observation of two portable Buddhaheads.

The day concluded with closing remarks from Professor Ashley Thompson, who also thanked the organising team and the speakers for travelling to London and for their energy in staying the course over the last three years.

She talked of the paradigms of Hindu Buddhist Art and the shared questions of restitution with Cambodia, her field of speciality. She suggested that perhaps we need to look at the term 'belonging' which is probably more appropriate in the thinking about the place of objects today and the ownership and the subject of private property.

The day's events concluded with a well attended drinks reception in the Atrium of Senate House, followed by a SAAAP funded private dinner for the speakers, their spouses and the event volunteer team.



The Convenor wishes to record her thanks to Heidi Tan and the many other SOAS colleagues and students who continued to work over the past three years to deliver this highly successful full day event.

Alumni hit the conference circuit with lectures at SEAMEO SPAFA and Temasek and are preparing for two panels at the big IPPA conference in Thailand in November 2022

By: Professor Elizabeth Moore, In-Region Liaison

The Alphawood alumni have been active in recent invited conferences and webinars broadcast from Singapore and Bangkok, and they now plan panels at the IPPA (Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association) Conference to be held in November 2022 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

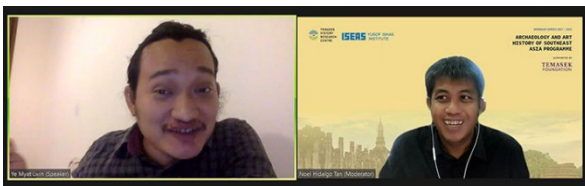


Photo 1. Ye Myat Lwin and Noel Tan, THRC ISEAS

THRC ISEAS

During late 2020 and early 2022, Temasek Historical Research Centre (THRC ISEAS) Singapore, conducted a series entitled 'Archaeology and Art History of Southeast Asia'. Three Alphawood alumni were invited to participate, with summaries and videos of the talks online (Photo 1):

- 1) Ye Myat Lwin on 'Archaeological Evidence of Bagan and Arakan in the Early 2nd Millennium CE' on 18 August
- 2) Alumni Eko Bastiawan and Heidi Tan, joined by Mathilde Mechling in an 'Introduction to Ceramics in Southeast Asia' & 'An Introduction to Buddhist and Hindu Bronze Sculpture in Southeast Asia, with a Case Study on Javanese Bronzes (6th-15th century)'. (Photo 2)

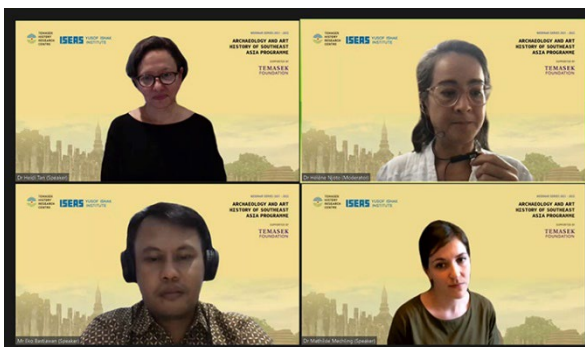


Photo 2. Heidi Tan and Eko Bastiawan, THRC ISEAS

The series can be found at

<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/events/workshops/workshops-2021/archaeology-and-art-history-of-southeast-asia-programme/>; and the videos <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/category/media/video-gallery/>

SEAMEO SPAFACON21

In December 2021, three Alphawood alumni and current scholars, with Elizabeth Moore participated in the SEAMEO SPAFACON21 conference, broadcast live and on Zoom with the proceedings published online:

- 1) Chaw Ye Saw, *The Rock Art in Kinta Valley, West Malaysia: A synthesis*
- 2) Thaw Zin Latt, *New Archaeological Discoveries: Gates and Turrets of 16th Burmese Royal Capital of Harṁsāvati*
- 3) Theint Theint Aung, *Myinkaba village Bagan: The Resilience of Traditional Knowledge and Culture*

Elizabeth Moore, The Mt. Popa Watershed and Bagan's Bronze-Iron Age

SPAFACON 2021: Papers from the SEAMEO SPAFA International Conference on Southeast Asian Archaeology and Fine Arts, 13-17 December 2021

<https://publications.spafajournal.org/index.php/spafapub/catalog/book/40>



Photo 3. Pwint Phyu Maung and Sulatt Win at SPAFA Sesh

SEAMEO SPAFA Sesh

In January 2022, two Myanmar Alumni participated in a SEAMEO SPAFA Sesh titled *Recent Research in Myanmar: Bagan Sculpture and Art* with the talks put online drawing on sculptures included in the ongoing *Bagan Archaeological Museum Catalogue of Bronze and Stone Sculpture*:

- 1) Pwint Phyu Maung, 'The Reflections Of Pyinsaloha (Five Metals Casting) in Bagan And Successive Periods'
- 2) **Su Latt Win**, 'Reflecting on an unusual depiction of the Birth of the Buddha from 12th century Bagan'. (Photo 3)

The presentations and videos are available online through the SEAMEO SPAFA Facebook and YouTube pages:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_Dt_dpV1x8 and

IPPA

The forerunner of the IPPA was founded in 1929, with a congress held every four years, the last having been in Hué, Vietnam attended by a number of Alphawood Alumni. For the forthcoming IPPA, Alphawood Alumni are presenting papers in any of the 60 panels, with a number in (1) *Issues in the Curating and Museology of Southeast Asia* (S34) convened by Alumni Heidi Tan and S. Murphy, (2) *Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Burma 11th to 19th Century* convened by E. Moore (S47), (3) *Promoting Diverse Perspectives in Southeast Asian Archaeology* (S55) co-Chaired by Nandar Yuki and Alumni May Su Ko, and (4) *Khmer Ancient Urban Planning and Water Management* (S60) co-Chaired by Alumni Chhum Menghong, E. Moore and P. Sharrock (S55).

Summaries and abstracts of all the panels and papers are found on the conference website

<https://www.ippasecretariat.org/22nd-ippa-congress/sessions>

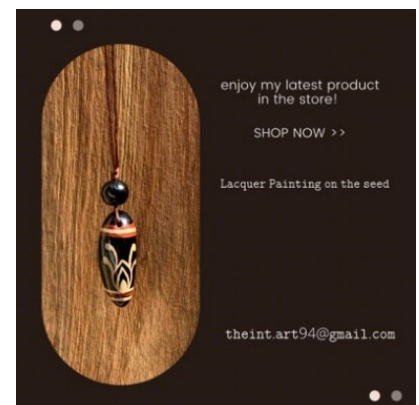
SAAAP alumna creates a lacquer brand in Bagan, where the tourists have stopped coming

By: Theint Theint Aung



I have created a new lacquer brand called 'Laksharas – Art & lacquer From Bagan' <https://www.facebook.com/chezkhinmakyi>. I focus on lacquer painting on different materials and the use of natural pigments, introducing lacquer earrings and necklaces with the name of 'Akshara Series' in 2021. These used the shapes of ancient Bagan scripts from stone inscriptions with collection called the 'Akshara' from Sanskrit and meaning scripts in Burmese. For another line, I used the long raffia palm seed more than an inch in length that makes a perfect natural base for the lacquer sap. I paint it with a raw black from the lacquer sap and then apply sap mixed with cow dung and three layers of black. Each layer must dry and then be finished with abrasive paper; natural charcoal is used for polishing. Then the colours are painted: red from cinnabar, greens, purple and white. I can buy a local red powder though the best is brought from India. For dark green, the preferred pigment is 'English green' imported from England or a local *Dota* green, and sometimes mixed with red and blue to make purple. Yellow is *Saydan* or orpiment and light yellow (orpiment *arsenic trisulphide*) from Indi. This I use especially for engraving. The best yellow is from Japan for lacquer painting, I can get it with the help of U Soe Min Khaing, who completed lacquer training in Japan and this year imported it through Alphawood Alumni Hninn Wut Yee Latt's new enterprise. White I make by just grinding eggshell and white pigments.

During 2021 and into 2022, I have successfully marketed my goods through social media and I am able to employ local artists who are suffering, as no tourists are coming to Bagan. Before my new designs, many of these artists helped me in making plain lacquer, working for daily wages to apply the colour. In my new lines, the design and creation are my responsibility. I am a native of Myinkaba village in Bagan, where my family has a lacquer shop. One of my goals is to be a lacquer specialist linking present lacquer back to former times. Thus, I always consider designs that relate to ancient murals and inscriptions and makes them into contemporary ones.



The SAAAP collaboration with Vietnam's History Museum, long delayed by Covid, heads towards publication as Thailand relaxes travel restrictions and allows in the art photographer.

By: Dr Peter Sharrock

With Thailand easing its Covid restrictions on travel on 15 March our art photographer can at last fly to Ho Chi Minh City to capture images of the 100 masterpieces of the collection of the Museum of Vietnamese History. SOAS Postgrad Diploma alumnus Saran Suebsantiwongse will head the photography project.

SAAAP is collaborating with the Museum to produce the first full-length catalogue of the collection entitled *From the Red River to the Mekong Delta: Masterpieces of the Museum of Vietnamese History Ho Chi Minh City*. The HCMC Museum is the pre-eminent museum in the world for the Hindu and Buddhist art of the 4th-6th century Óc Eo culture in the Mekong Delta. Yet it also has objects ranging from the prehistoric Đông Sơn culture in northern Vietnam (photo 1) to the final Nguyễn dynasty that began in 1802 in the Delta and ended with the abdication of Emperor Boa Dai in 1945.

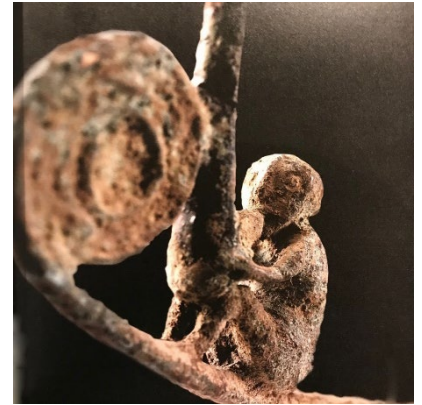


Photo 1. Đông Sơn bronze ladle handle with miniature musician c. 500 BCE



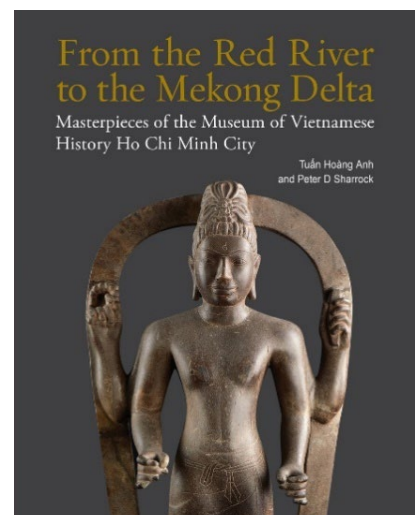
Photo 2. Nine planets pedestal 10th century Trà Kiệu, Quảng Nam province, Việt Nam

The collection also holds an important collection of Cam sacred art from central Vietnam like the Hindu nine planets pedestal in photo 2. One of the 20 papers in the catalogue 'Introduction' includes ground-breaking research by Alphawood alumna Nguyễn Thị Tú Anh and historian Trần Kỳ Phương into the Esoteric Buddhist goddesses known in this

Region only from the strictly matrilineal Cam society and from 13th century Java. These include Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, consort of Amitābha, Jina of the western universe (photo 4) and Vajratārā, an emanation of Jina Ratnasambhava, a yellow goddess with four heads.



Photo 3, 4. Esoteric Buddhist goddess Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, consort of Amitābha, Jina of the western universe



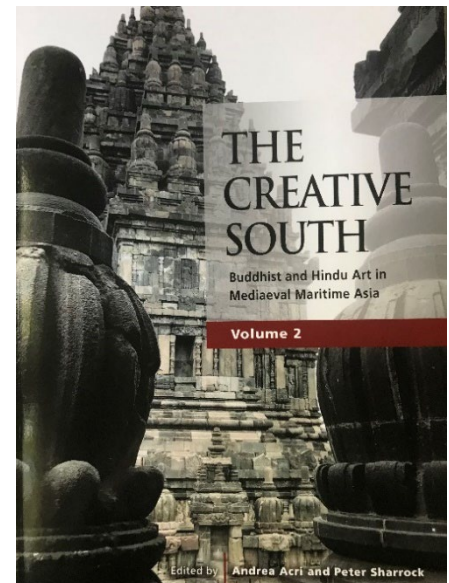
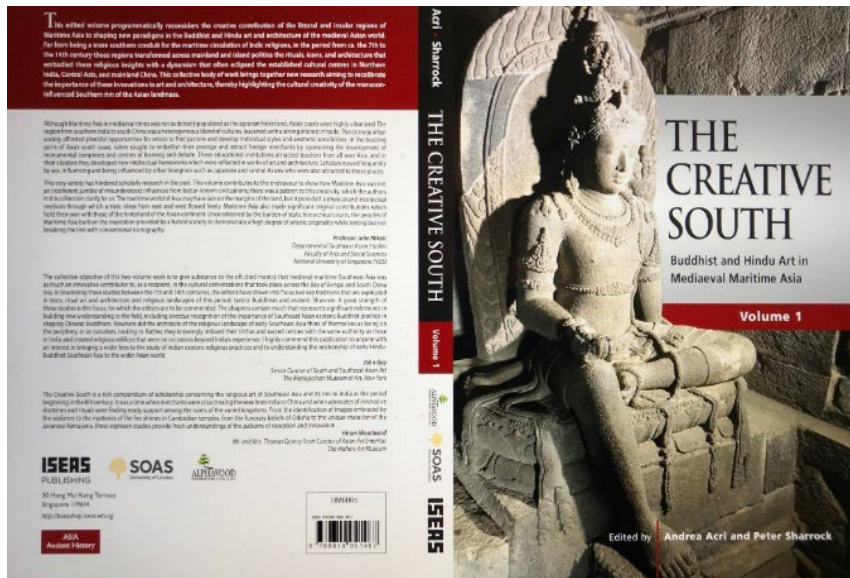
We are looking to complete editing and proof-reading and go to press by the end of the final quarter. The Introduction includes the following papers:



CONTENTS

1. The History of BTLS- TP.HCM: Nguyen Khac Xuan Thi (BTLS)
2. Pre-history southern Vietnam: Nguyễn Khánh Trung Kiên (HCMC Archaeology)
3. The Art of Óc Eo culture with special reference to Đồng Tháp Mười style: Lê Thị Liên (AA Vietnam)
4. 'Funan' and 'Zhenla' in Chinese annals: Andrew Chittick (Eckerd College)
5. Óc Eo Culture's Rise and Fall: John Miksic (NUS)
6. Gold in Óc Eo culture: Bùi Thị Thúy, Nguyễn Thị Tú Anh (Alphawood alumna), Nguyễn Hoàng Bách Linh
7. Cakras in the Mekong Delta: Pinna Indorf (independent)
8. Viṣṇu of the Delta: Paul Lavy (Hawaii)
9. Buddhist icons of the Delta: Pierre Baptiste (Musée Guimet)
10. Early Saivism in the Mekong Delta and its Hinterland: John Guy (NYMET)
11. Cam ritual objects: Anne-Valéry Schweyer (CNRS, Paris)
12. Khmer inscriptions in the Mekong Delta: Arlo Griffiths (EFEO), Kunthea Chhom (APSARA)
13. Ancient Ornaments in Southern Vietnam: Nguyễn Kim Dung (Archaeology)
14. Vietnamese ceramics 11th century to the 19th century: Phạm Ngọc Uyên (BTLS)
15. Vietnamese ceramics: a vibrant, untrammelled tradition: John Stevenson (independent)
16. The South and Nagara Campā: John Whitmore (Michigan State)
17. Esoteric Buddhist goddesses of the Campā Vijaya state: Trần Kỳ Phương (Independent) Nguyễn Thị Tú Anh (Alphawood alumna & HCMC university)
18. Campā kiln site and ceramics: Bùi Minh Trí
19. The Nguyễn Delta: Vũ Hồng Liên (SOAS)
20. Art of the Nguyễn Dynasty: Director Hoàng Anh Tuấn (BTLS-TP.HCM)

SAAAP contributes to the ongoing radical revision of the major role played by the states and cultures of Maritime Asia in the 8th to 14th centuries



By: Dr Peter Sharrock

The anthology in two volumes of papers from the SAAAP Summer Programmes in Java, attended by many Alphawood alumni, were published by ISEAS Publishing, Singapore. The nine chapters in volume one stake a claim for a radical revision of the historical role of mediaeval Maritime Asia. Hiram Woodward's blurb calls it 'A rich compendium of scholarship concerning the religious art of Southeast Asia and its ties to India beginning in the 8th century.' Woodward, the current doyen of SEA art historians, later called the work 'a true accomplishment and a lasting contribution'. John Guy of the NY MET wrote: 'The collective objective of this two-volume work is to give substance to the oft cited mantra that mediaeval maritime Asia was as much an innovator contributor to, as a recipient, in the cultural conversations that took place across the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea...Nowhere did the architects of the religious landscape of Southeast Asia think of themselves as being on the periphery, or as outsiders, looking in. Rather, they knowingly imbued their tirthas and sacred centres with the same authority as those of India and created religious edifices that were on occasion beyond India's experience'. John Miksic of Singapore National University added: 'Maritime Asia also made significant original contributions which hold their own with those of the hinterland of the Asian continent. Unconstrained by the burden of static hierarchical courts, the peoples of Maritime Asia built on the inspiration provided by a hybrid society to demonstrate a high degree of artistic originality while testing but not breaking the link with conventional iconography'. Volume 2 appeared in mid-2022

SAAAP teams up with Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) in a six week webinar series on 'Decolonising Curating and the Museum in Southeast Asia'

By: Conan Cheong

From October to November last year, SAAAP ran a weekly webinar series on 'Decolonising Curating and the Museum in Southeast Asia' with Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) [Photo 1]. ACM saw this as another step to re-assess colonial collecting residues in its collection histories, after completing a multi-year revamp of its galleries in 2020. The SAAAP programme was organised by alumnus Conan Cheong (Photo 3), who is now Curator for Southeast Asia in ACM, and Stephen Murphy, now Pratapaditya Pal Senior Lecturer in Curating and Museology of Asian Art in SOAS, and a former ACM curator. This opened an exploration of Southeast Asian perspectives on what it means to 'decolonise' museums and university curricula.

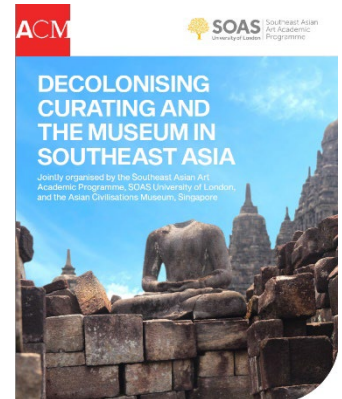


Photo 1. SAAAP/ACM Lecture series banner



Photo 2. Burmese monks blessing the arrival of a Buddha image during the ACM installation of *Cities and Kings: Treasures from Ancient Myanmar* held at the ACM (2 December 2016 to 5 March 2017), which was visited by Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar.

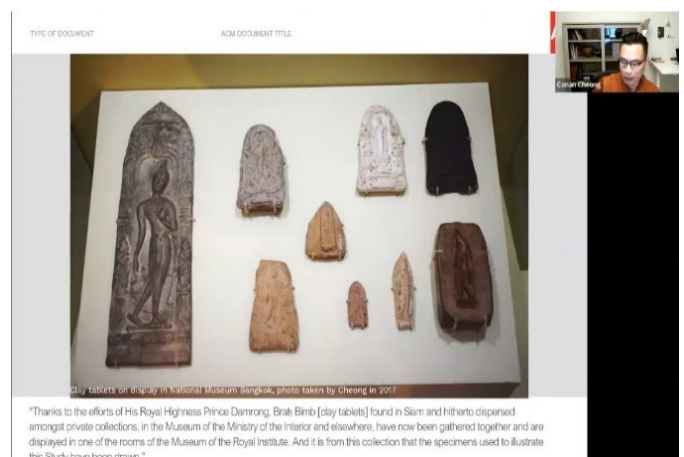


Photo 3. ACM curator and Alphawood alumnus Conan Cheong presenting his lecture

The series sought to problematise the idea of decolonisation and emphasised the need for specificity when applying this concept and process in Southeast Asian contexts. This was reflected in the approaches and case studies covered by the speakers and the questions posed by the audience. There was lively discussion in the chat rooms and the Q&A box that fed into the moderated discussions and helped to stimulate, and at times challenge, the positions taken by the speakers. Presenters and the audience alike also reflected on whether all museums need to decolonise equally or even at all? And if so, what form would decolonised curatorial practice take? Speakers covered a range of topics, including the display of Buddhist and Hindu sculpture, ethnographic and colonial collections, contemporary art, and the use and exhibition of Southeast Asian material in western museums. It was very well attended with each lecture having about 200-250 viewers on average. In total, 1,940 people attended over the 6 weeks.

The first lecture in the series was entitled *What does decolonial curatorial practice look like in a Global and Southeast Asian?* by Stephen Murphy. He noted the increasing calls worldwide to decolonise museums and discussed initiatives that have attempted to decolonise curatorial practice in both a global and Southeast Asian context. He was joined by discussant Pattaratorn Chirapravati (Asian Art History and Curatorial Studies, California State University, Sacramento) and they spoke about the recent cases of art object repatriation, in particular the return to Thailand of two temple lintels from the Asian Art Museum San Francisco.

Next came *Mining the Museum: Contemporary Art and Decolonial Practice in Southeast Asia*, given former SOAS lecturer Pamela N. Corey (now at the Fulbright University, Vietnam) and SAAAP PhD candidate Vera Mey. They considered ways in which contemporary Southeast Asian artists have approached decolonising in specific exhibitions and they were joined by Shabbir Hussain Mustafa (Senior Curator, National Gallery Singapore).

Third in the series was *Must We Decolonise the Museum? Sacred and Ritual Art and the Raffles Collection in Singapore* by Conan Cheong and ACM curator Muhammad Faisal Husni. They showed how the ACM has recently re-presented objects in Singapore's National Collection which were collected in the colonial period. A case study was presented on how past research on Hindu-Buddhist clay sealings still encapsulated patterns of British scholarship in the Malay Peninsula.

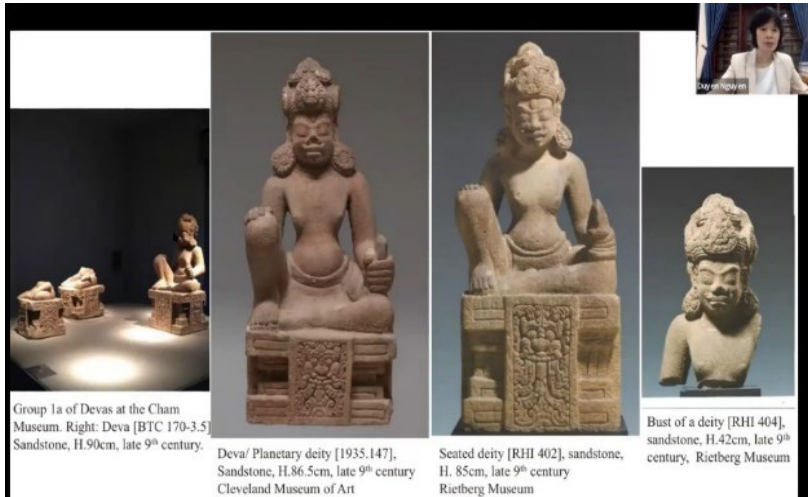


Photo 4. Duyen Nguyen, Alphawood PhD and staff member of the Museum of Cham Sculpture in Vietnam presenting her lecture on the Đồng Dương Buddhist gallery

Alphawood doctoral scholar Duyen Nguyen gave the fourth lecture on *(Re)contextualising the Dong Duong Buddhist Art Gallery at the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture* (Photo 4).

Duyen analysed how the current display in the refurbished Đồng Dương Buddhist gallery at the Museum of Cham Sculpture in Da Nang still reflected curatorial decisions made in the colonial or the early post-war period.

Ricky Punzalan discussed his work on the Filipino collections at his University of Michigan in the fifth lecture on *Decolonization in Colonial Institutions:*

Reparative Approaches to Philippine Collections in a U.S. University. He was joined by Cristina Martinez-Juan, head of Philippine Studies at SOAS, as they discussed community engagement to better represent Indigenous communities and knowledge.

The final lecture in the series was *The politics of Greater India and Indonesian collections in museums of 'Asian Art'* was by Marieke Bloembergen of KITLV, Netherlands and the Institute of History at Leiden and independent researcher Mathilde Mechling. They examined how the old colonial paradigms of 'Greater India' impacted scholarship and museum displays in Indonesia. They were joined by SOAS doctoral scholar Panggah Ardiyansyah on discussing how such paradigms could be deconstructed. All lectures were recorded [here](#) on the SOAS Centre for Southeast Asian Studies website.

Update from the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art

By: Dr Malcolm McNeill

2021-2022 has been an exciting and productive year for the SOAS Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art. Our team have been delighted to welcome four Alphawood Scholars onto the programme: Khin Kyi Phyu Thant from Myanmar, and Morokoth Ing, Siphanna Leak and Meychean Phuy from Cambodia.

Our Alphawood Scholars studied our Indian Art module in term one with convenors Dr Emily Shovelton and Sandra Sattler, Chinese Art with Dr Elaine Buck and Dr Malcolm McNeill in term two, and are currently in their third term studying our Southeast Asian Art module with Dr Peter Sharrock and Pia Conti. The current cohort have benefitted from our move to hybrid delivery after the fully online programme in 2020-2021, meeting classmates and convenors face to face and attending co-curricular events in London and Oxford. They have been engaged and thoughtful students throughout the year, actively participating in Q&A sessions with lecturers, enriching object discussion in review lessons, and bringing distinctive insights to co-curricular visits to museums and galleries – particularly on a recent visit to Oxford to view Southeast Asian material at the Ashmolean Museum.



Dr Malcolm McNeill, Director, Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art, Senior Lecturer in Arts Education

It has been a pleasure to work with Khin, Meychean, Morokoth, and Siphanna throughout the course of this year, both as their course director and as their module convenor for Chinese Art. Their increasing confidence and ability have been evident in their essays and assignments, in our meetings and conversations, and in their enthusiastic participation in all elements of the programme – whether appraising a Khmer sculpture, or posing questions to a contemporary Hong Kong ink artist. I would like to thank all the convenors on the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art for the dedicated support, guidance and encouragement they offered the 2021-2022 cohort of Alphawood Scholars, in particular Dr Peter Sharrock in his dual role as co-convenor of our Southeast Asian Art module, and SAAAP Outreach Officer.

I would also like to thank our colleagues, the endowed Alphawood postholders Prof Ashley Thompson, Dr Christian Luczantiz, and Dr Stephen Murphy, for their multiple contributions to our various modules this year. Their insights and observations have been particularly valuable to our students. Dr Luczantiz's provided a thorough and immersive introduction to Himalayan material and visual culture on our Indian Art module. Dr Murphy's has made multiple contributions to our Chinese Art and Southeast Asian Art modules, from acting as a curatorial interlocutor for Jessica Harrison-Hall of the British Museum discussing Ming: 50 years that changed China, to thought provoking takes on current methods and approaches to archaeology in Southeast Asia. Prof Thompson's forthcoming lecture exploring gendered art histories of Southeast Asia is eagerly anticipated by current students on the module.

We are particularly delighted that Alphawood Alumni in Myanmar working on the Bagan Catalogue project with Prof. Elizabeth Moore have once again generously offered to update our students on their work. We all look forward to hearing from Alphawood alumni: Theint Theint Aung, Ye Myat Lwin, Saw Tun Lin, Nan Htaik, Win Myat Aung, Yamin Htay, Hninn Wut Yee, and Sulatt Win, who will present various aspects of the architecture, archaeology and iconography of Bagan. The Postgraduate Diploma team and I are deeply grateful for their tenacity and commitment in delivering this online session under such difficult circumstances.

Looking ahead to 2022-2023, we are excited to announce an expansion of our programme's offering. The four new Alphawood Scholars scheduled to join our programme in 2021-2022 will benefit from two new supporting courses on the Postgraduate Diploma – Analysing and Exploring the Arts, and an Independent Study Project in Asian Art History.

Analysing and Exploring the Arts is a study-skills and vocationally orientated course, structured around focused case studies. It develops foundational skills that will support Alphawood scholars' adaptation to UK based postgraduate

study, while also encouraging scholars to reflect on how they will apply what they learn on this programme to their future employment. By offering clear and structured support, tailored specifically to the learning environment and assessments on the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art, we are confident this new course will enrich the experience of our incoming cohort Alphawood Scholars.

The Independent Study Project in Asian Art History will allow the incoming Alphawood Scholars to develop a focused research project on a single topic in Asian Art history, consolidating the skills and approaches they have developed throughout their programme. Students can choose to produce an essay, an exhibition proposal with selected object captions, an extended presentation, or a guided tour of a museum gallery. They will work with a supervisor to select a topic, develop a formative proposal, and select and appraise appropriate sources, before researching and delivering a final output. This is an opportunity for students to pursue a focused project, communicating and consolidating their understanding, passion and critical engagement with the content of the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art programme.

A further addition to the SOAS Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art in 2022-2023 is the launch of our first fully online module – Asia's Art Histories. This module introduces students to the latest ideas, concepts and approaches shaping art history today through focused case studies from across Asia. Through a combination of pre-recorded lectures, online discussion fora, and weekly online tutorials and seminars, students on this module will gain an immersive and engaging introduction to the diverse approaches to Asia's art histories today. We are particularly grateful that the SAAAP Project Board have supported the development of this new module, funding filming with the British Museum of a forthcoming exhibition, and supporting the post of a co-convenor specialising in the Southeast Asia to work alongside programme director Dr Malcolm McNeill in delivering this new offering. We look forward to working closely with SAAAP post holders to develop the SOAS School of Arts' strategy in for online programme delivery.

Puzzling out the ‘maze’ temples of ancient Innwa

By: Yamin Htay

In my ongoing documentation of the ancient Myanmar architecture, I have studied two so-called ‘maze temples’ at Innwa (Ava).

Innwa is situated on the southern bank of the Irrawaddy river and the western bank of Myitnge river. No other city was repeatedly selected as the capital of Myanmar but Innwa was the capital of four successive dynasties. There are around 624 monuments and historic buildings there including monasteries, stupas and temples. My research is focused on the reign of King Tanningway (Thiripawara Mahadhammarazadipati – r. 1714-1733), the second last king of second dynasty of the Nyaung Yan period. This period can be described as an era of groundbreaking innovation with very distinctive iconography and a unique architectural style that is quite different from Bagan.



Photo 1. Kyaung Lain temple, Innwa



Photo 2. Winkaba Temple, Innwa

Only two temples are established in the maze form: namely the Kyaung Lain temple Taung-Lay-Lone (‘four mountains’) [Photo 1] and the Win-Ka-Bar (‘maze’) [Photo 2]. Normally, the approach to a temple’s shrines is straightforward from the entrance. But these two-story temples have rooms open to the four cardinal directions but their entrances do not lead directly to these rooms. Plus there are no Buddha thrones nor evidence of places for Buddha images inside the rooms.

The name Taung-Lay-Lone may refer to the Hindu Mount Meru with a central square building connected to the four-square buildings symbolizing Mandrachala Mountain to the east, Suparshva Mountain to the west, Kumuda Mountain to the north and Kailasa to the south. The latter is the square building, and the central room is surrounded by two corridors with stairways inside the temple walls.

Some scholars have argued that kings built these temples to illustrate for devotees the complex path to liberation from the samsara phenomenal world of repeated existences. Others have seen the temples as attuned to astrological rites aimed at safeguarding their positions of power.

These two temples may be linked to compared with have its own identity when compared to the Myint-Mo-Taung stupa built by King Maha-Dhamma-Yarzar-Dipadi, the son of the King Tanningway.

The significance of the temples is believed to be somehow connected with cosmology, but the drawings in the inventory book published by the Department of Archaeology are not very helpful. A proper Innwa inventory book with clearly explained drawings and the descriptions of the monuments is a clear need.



Photo 3. Yamin Htay (in hat) before the Myint-Mo-Taung at Innwa

Cambodia invites SAAAP to join research into the network of 102 well-supplied hospitals erected in the 12th century as the world's first recorded free national health system

By: Dr Peter Sharrock

In January, the SOAS Centre for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) broadcast a webinar with SAAAP, the Puthisastra University (Medical Services) in Phnom Penh, and the APSARA restoration Authority in Siem Reap on Buddhism & Medicine.

This promises to open a new field of research into comparative Asian pharmacology and health systems. Cambodia's first Buddhist king Jayavarman VII constructed the world's first free national health system in the late 12th century. Khmer inscriptions give details of the medicinal herbs used and temple reliefs show herb consecration rituals (photo 1) and working doctors taking the pulse of patients. Further insights into the shared transnational Buddhist texts for rituals and mantras, which were understood to empower medicinal herbs gathered in the mountains, can be gleaned from Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan texts. Further data comes from anthropologists recording large, modern herb-blessing rituals in Tibet and China. The Buddhist medicine specialists on the panel said the subject covers



Photo 1. A relief in Banteay Chhmar temple shows King Jayavarman (upper right) making an offering in a ritual focused on a pile of sacks of medicinal herbs

such a swathe of geography and cultures that it is treated in silos, with almost no cross-fertilization like that broached in the webinar. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX6zHlnBqzk>. Taking an Asia-wide perspective amounts to a new field of research. Recent scholarship has looked at post-Gupta ayurvedic medicine in the Ganges Valley, at orthodox Christian monks delivering medical services in Byzantium, and at Tang Empress Wu ordering monks skilled in medicine to pool their scientific knowledge around the empire, but Cambodia appears to have created the first large-scale, fully-funded and meticulously administered free national health system.

Panel participants included Cambodia's leading medical archaeologist Rethy Chhem, now Minister Delegate in the Prime Minister's office, who invited the panel to hold a conference in Cambodia in July now that the APSARA restoration Authority is excavating and restoring the ancient hospital sites, including the Ta Prohm Kel hospital site in Angkor, which is under the supervision of SAAAP alumnus Dara Phoeung. Professor Chhem also invited the panel to visit Banteay Chhmar temple, which is thought to have been the key centre for collecting, blessing, and distributing herbs and minerals to the chain of 102 hospitals. The Banteay Chhmar study assists the work of alumnus Chhum Menghong, reported above, who is currently responsible for the application for UNESCO World Heritage Site status for Banteay Chhmar temple, whose system for distributing to the hospitals is considered of importance to its claim of universal value.



Photo 2. A once-in-a-decade ceremony with Bon monks blessing herbs in Nepal witnessed by webinar participant Colin Millard of Newcastle University UK

Traditional Medicine Containers

By: Sulatt Win

The history of Burmese traditional medicine has records going back to the early second millennium Bagan era and was no doubt much older. The medical systems used today suggest connections to India, Tibet, Nepal and Sri Lanka that were blended over time. Today traditional medicine is sold in shops everywhere, in powdered form and in plastic packets. At the Zayakabar Museum, where I am curator, we preserve rare lacquer and seed of palmyra containers for traditional medicine.



Photo 1. Lacquered Medicine Boxes
(Left H-35.5, D-49, Centre H 61, D 42,
Right H30, D 65)



Photo 2. Medicine box made from a palmyra seed
(H 9 cm, L 6.5 cm, W 3 cm)

Medicine boxes, or *Sei-bu* in Burmese, were widely used to store traditional medicine, spices, and herbs from the 1900s. Traditional medicine uses mixes of herbs for different treatments. The boxes are therefore normally composed of small compartments surrounding a larger middle one. (Photo 1) The small boxes probably stored the herbal powders and the large could contain medical leaves or roots. In the Zaykabar Museum collection, for example, most of the medicine boxes are made of woven bamboo and coated in lacquer and gilded gold. The most popular designs for the containers are *gyo-shit-lon* (eight planets) and the zoomorphic figures of the Burmese zodiac. The eight or twelve small boxes are all placed around the central one and on each there is an oval wooden top with a *Nat* (*Deva*) figure like a handle. The eight containers represent the days of the week in Myanmar (there are two for Wednesday), and the twelve refer to the twelve months of the year. The middle lid normally depicts a stupa-shape or a man grinding herbs. This traditional arrangement could be seen as very effective for the medicine because people believe in the protection of *Deva*. Another example of a medicine box is made from a carved seed of a *palmyra*. (Photo 2) Tiny by comparison, this medicine container is fitted with a bronze coated lid. The container stands on decorated bronze ring at the base.

By comparing these medicine boxes, the lacquer containers are probably used by the doctor and the palmyra seed container was probably kept in households.

Alphawood scholars contribute to trying to solve an ancient mystery of Southeast Asia

By: Pipad Krajaejun

Suvaṇṇabhūmi (Pāli), Suvarṇabhūmi (Skt) 'Land of Gold' is one of the fascinating mysteries of Southeast Asia. The name is recorded in many texts in several languages and is associated with the Buddha, India's first Buddhist emperor Aśoka, early Myanmar, a district of northeast Thailand (Suwannaphum) and Bangkok's big new airport. The Land of Gold clearly had an important role on the early Maritime trade route, yet its location has yet to be determined.

I am currently conducting a research project in Thailand entitled 'The Assessment of Suvarnabhumi Knowledge Status Project.' This is funded by the Suvarnabhumi Studies Centre at the Thailand Academy of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts (TASSHA), and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation.

Our aim is to assess and revise knowledge about Suvarnabhumi in the fields of history, archaeology, art, and anthropology from primary and secondary sources as well as from modern academic works written in a wide range of languages.

I have invited SAAAP scholar Saw Tun Lynn, to join my project in order to assess the Myanmar sources on Suvaṇṇabhūmi, which is often cited as an early name for Burma.

We would be very pleased to receive additional help from SAAAP alumni to participate and demonstrate the growing imprint of SAAAP scholarships in the Region.



Pipad Krajaejun

Southeast Asia's Art Histories II Study Tour

By: Professor Ashley Thompson

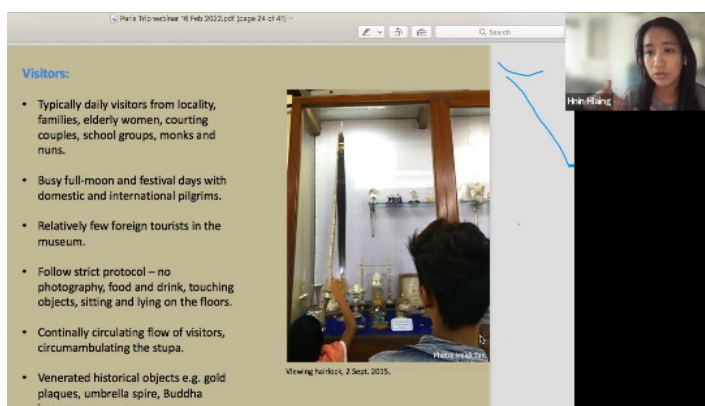
The five-day Study Tour at the heart of the MA module 'Southeast Asia's Art Histories II' integrated a wide range of visits to Southeast Asian institutions and archaeological sites - all impressively hosted by Alphawood alumni and colleagues. We maximised the opportunities offered by online platforms to compensate for our usual visits to Southeast Asian museum collections and research archives in France and the Netherlands, with online explorations in Phnom Penh, Sambor Prei Kuk, Đà Nẵng, Mỹ Sơn, peninsular Thailand, the Shwezigon of Yangon, Malaysia's Bujang Valley, Singapore and Java. A number of our hosts experimented with delivery by walking and talking us (live!) through archival collections, new museum installations and inside ancient temple sanctuaries. Others narrated videos or PowerPoints and animated discussions. Everyone – hosts, students and teachers - gave generously of their time and knowledge to make for a marathon of collective learning. The virtual juxtaposition of visits to Europe and Southeast Asia was thought-provoking in many ways, pushing us all to consider complex histories of object fragmentation and dissemination, to measure the importance of site in object interpretation and to discern paths for further collaborative research in the Southeast Asian art historical, archaeological and museological fields.



Nguyen Duyen sits us down with Vietnamese students drawing 7th-century sculpture from the site of My Son in the Da Nang Museum of Cham art.



Khun Sathal takes us inside the National Museum of Cambodia's new installation of statuary from the ancient capital of Koh Ker. Sathal explains how the monumental pieces were stolen from the site in the post-war period, and recently returned from Sotheby's NY and US museums.



Hnin Oo Hlaing responds to Heidi Tan's exploration of offerings made to Buddha images and shrines at the Shwezigon temple, Yangon, held now held in a site museum.



Panggah Ardiyansyah responds to a challenging query from the group: 'Can I answer that once I've finished my dissertation?!'

The Tour was led by Professor Ashley Thompson with the invaluable support of Dr Joanna Wolfarth. Drs Stephen Murphy and Christian Luczanits made key contributions on maritime Southeast Asia and Esoteric Buddhist art and architecture. Alumni hosts included Khun Sathal (MA 2016), Deputy Director, Department of Museums, Cambodia; Nguyễn H. H. Duyên (MA 2015), Education Officer, Da Nang Museum of Cham Art, Vietnam and current Alphawood PhD scholar; Nguyễn Văn Thọ (PGDip 2018), Conservator, Management Board for Mỹ Sơn Cultural Heritage, Vietnam; Conan Cheong (MA 2018); Curator, Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore; Heidi Tan (PhD 2020), Senior Teaching Fellow and Postdoctoral Research Associate, SOAS; Panggah Ardiyansyah (MA 2017), Education Officer,

Borobudur Conservation Office, Indonesia, and current Alphawood PhD scholar). The current Alphawood MA scholars – Shahira Banu, Hnin Oo Hlaing, Thaw Zin Latt and Kezia Permata – infused the 16-student-strong group with their unique educational, professional and familial backgrounds. For the trip leaders it was deeply inspiring to work hand-in-hand with alumni to put our joint professional skills at the service of the dynamic 2022 student cohort.

Research News – Hiram W Woodward Chair of Southeast Asian Art

Professor Ashley Thompson is pleased to announce the publication of two long-awaited volumes.

First, a book in the SAAAP-NUS series: [*Early Theravādin Cambodia: Perspectives from Art and Archaeology*](#); and second, a volume emerging from her work as part of the Luce Foundation-funded Theravāda Civilisations group, [*The Routledge Handbook of Theravāda Buddhism*](#). She will be presenting new work at two upcoming events: a talk on the [*extraordinary iconographies of Angkor's Kulen mountains*](#) in the Courtauld Institute Arts of the Buddhist World series; and another on the sacred feminine at the Inaugural Conference of the Harvard University Collective on Gender, Religion and the Arts of Asia, in June 2022.

The repatriation of Khmer cultural heritage

By: Sopheap Meas

I am Sopheap Meas, an alumna of SOAS History of Art/Archaeology, an archaeologist and now a Vice Head of the Bureau of Antiquities management data, Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, Cambodia. I am also a member of a research team at the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts working on gathering evidence and background of looted Khmer cultural objects with view to repatriation.

A great number of Cambodian cultural artefacts were looted, especially between 1970 to 1985 during the Cambodian civil war, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime, and a consequent prolonged, high insecurity in society. Desperate villagers damaged ancient temple buildings and sliced down wall reliefs for selling for a little money to art traffickers. Statues were transferred whole or broken into pieces before being transferred from a temple site to the country's borders, where they entered the international art markets and were eventually sold for large sums at auction houses abroad to private collectors and museums.



Sopheap Meas



Based on recent interviews with villager-looters, most of the cultural objects were sold at very low prices just so that their families could survive the war, the Pol Pot regime and its aftermath. Occasionally, there was some cheating or corruption among the looters and between the brokers. For example, some objects were rejected as being of poor quality. Sometimes, a bag of hundreds of bronze objects was exchanged just for the cost of buying batteries for the radar penetrating machine that was used in finding buried objects by looters. Some looters risked their lives in climbing ruins. Most of the looters and their art market brokers have so far gone unpunished. But

our government is now making it very clear that looting activities, illegal trafficking, and illegal ownership of Khmer cultural heritage objects is considered a crime against humanity.



Under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the research team I am part of is researching all available documentation, investigating the looted sites, working with former looters, and cooperating with different institutions in order to collect information and evidence on looted Khmer cultural objects so their repatriation can be pursued. Repatriation is a big challenge for the Ministry. Many arguments are heard from abroad against the restitution of looted cultural heritage. But after some big successes, the Cambodian people are being drawn into restoring to their lives and that of their families, the beauty and power of the ancient art and the beliefs of our

ancestors that they embodied. The looted cultural artefacts were made with immense love, skill, respect and artistic power to serve the deep cultural purposes of the earlier societies. Therefore, it should not be puzzling that they would like to be reunited with them when they are brought home and brought back to life.

As a member of the research team, I would like to request collaboration and mutual understanding from individuals and institutions across the world to share information with us in order to return looted Khmer cultural heritage back to Cambodia, their country of origin.

Alphawood Scholars Meet & Greet

By: Dr Christian Luczanits



It has been great pleasure to finally meet all the current Alphawood students in person over dinner on February 9. The disruption through Covid meant that for the last two years the usual welcome dinner could not take place as usual early in term 1. It was a relief to learn how well they supported each other in their shared accommodation during this period. However, establishing a personal contact is extremely important to build the trust needed to contact us when required.

New SAAAP Administrative Team Member

By: Siris Karadia

SAAAP welcomes Siris Karadia, Projects Administrator to the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme at SOAS.

Previously based within a clinical trials unit at UCL and prior to this at McMillan Cancer Research, Siris joined SOAS in early January 2022. After graduating with an honours BA degree, Siris went on to complete an MA. At present Siris is committed to delivering the best possible service to everyone within the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme.

Away from the office Siris Karadia enjoys spending time with his family and friends, reading eastern literature and actively engaging in martial arts. Siris is currently learning the traditional art of Japanese calligraphy and reading; The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon.

