Churning of the Ocean of Milk, at Southern wing of Eastern gallery of Angkor Wat
ANM-BULLETIN Committee

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Angkor National Museum Bulletin 03
The Battle of Lanka
(Northern wing of the western 3rd gallery of Angkor Wat)

Nep Chanleaksmy

The Ramayana is a great Indian epic narrating the life adventures of Rama, the seventh avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu. Hindu sage and poet Valmiki composed the original text, which spans seven volumes and 24,000 verses. Written in India, there is ongoing debate regarding when the poem was originally penned. Archaeologists and historians have surmised that the seven volumes of The Ramayana were begun during the 8th or 7th century BC and completed during the 4th or 3rd century BC. In the 6th century AD, The Ramayana spread widely to other countries, including Cambodia. Since then, this epic tale has deeply influenced Khmer art and literature and is venerated as a valued sacred story in Khmer traditional customs. Archaeological evidence reflects the importance of this text in Khmer culture; according to Inscription K.359 from Veal Kantel (located to the west of the Mekong river near Stung Treng) a group of Brahman priests recited the entirety of The Ramayana daily, except during days devoted to the practice of Harivamsha or other ancient scriptures. Additionally, a Phnom Da-style statue of Rama dating to the 6th century AD was found in Angkor Borei district, Ta Keo province.

Later, in the Angkorian period (early 9th century to the early 15th century AD), The Ramayana was depicted profusely on Khmer temples, for example, at Angkor Wat. Even though a complete episode of The Ramayana has not yet been discovered, select parts of the epic are portrayed on a large panel spanning 51.25 m in the northern wing of the western 3rd gallery of Angkor Wat. The scene includes other important commanders, such as Kumbha, Nikumbha, Mahodara, and others. Rama’s troops are mostly shown on foot, and the troops on Ravana’s side are shown upon horse-pulled war chariots adorned with Naga head and lion ornamentation. Interestingly, there is only one depiction of an elephant, which is identifiable as a vehicle of Mahodara. The monkey troops are presented brandishing weapons of rock and tree branches.

01 នេះ ពីរឿង, ប្រទេសមុខសក្តរភាព, ពេញ៧, កាលស្រីស្រាប់ក្រៅរដ្ឋាភិបាល, សង្ឃឹមថ្មី ម្រេះ៣០
Besides stone and branch weaponry, Rama’s monkey army is depicted using their teeth, limbs, and tails as additional weapons, inflicting heavy casualties upon Ravana’s army. The troops on Ravana’s side are well outfitted with decorative shields and weapons of sticks, swords, bows, spears, and long handled knives. In the center of this long panel is a figure of Rama standing on Hanuman’s; his left hand holds a bow and his right hand wields an arrow. Hanuman is carved in a dynamic bipedal leaping posture; his left hand is pointing and his right hand holds a throwing rock (Fig. 1).

![Fig. 1: Rama on Hanuman and accompanied by Lakshmana and Vibhishana.](image)

To the left of Hanuman and Rama is a standing figure of Laksmana, who holds a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right; Vibhishana stands just behind Laksmana, bearing a stick or a whip with a wooden handle. Vibhishana and Laksmana are standing amidst the monkey army, which is adorned with parasols, battle flags, and fans.

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55 Phkeak, in Khmer, is a type of weapon consisting of a curved iron blade affixed to a long handle, similar to a scythe for cutting or clearing. (Samdach Sang Chourn Nath dictionary).
56 Rama is the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, who descended to Earth to defeat Ravana. Rama is the first son of King Dasaratha of Ayutthaya. Rama and his wife Sita lived in the forest for fourteen years in exile until her abduction by Ravana. Rama’s quest to rescue Sita was the catalyst for the Battle of Lanka. des cambodgiennes. Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient 29, no. 1 (1929): 289-330.
57 Hanuman is hailed and venerated as the Monkey King, son of Vayu and Anjani. Hanuman plays an important role in The Ramayana, assisting Rama in the battle against Ravana. For his devoted service, Hanuman received from Rama the boon of immortality.
58 Lakshmana is Rama’s loyal younger half-brother. When Rama was exiled from the royal palace to the forest, Lakshmana agreed to always accompany and serve him.
Continuing further down the panel from the Rama image is Ravana the demon king, who is depicted with ten heads, twenty arms, and four legs (Fig. 2). This depiction of Ravana is unusual in the fact that Ravana’s ten heads appear in three ascending tiers, as opposed to the more common representation of his heads in singular parallel. The twenty arms of Ravana are carrying arrows, swords, axes, a long handle-knife, and two bows; he stands energetically on a Naga-adorned warrior chariot pulled by two lions; a seated charioteer holds a lash. In this battlefield depiction, Hanuman, with Rama atop him, is leaping towards Ravana in combat. Ravana is shown in large-scale relief wielding multiple weapons. The size of the Ravana image is notably larger than Hanuman; the background is decorated with battle flags and parasols.

Fig. 2: Ravana on war chariot in combat with Hanuman and Sugriva.

Another section of the same Angkor Wat bas-relief panel illustrates Nila, the monkey chieftain of Rama’s army, in combat with Prahasta, Ravana’s son and commander of Ravana’s army (Fig. 3). Several other combatants are depicted: Angada battling Mahodara (Fig. 4), Sugriva in combat with Kumbha (Fig. 5), and Hanuman fighting Nikumbha (Fig. 6).

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Ravana, the demon king (raksha) of Lanka, is the son of Vishrava and Kaikesi. Ravana performed an intense penance to Shiva for many years, and as reward he received a boon from Shiva of complete in vulnerability from and supremacy over all celestial beings and animals. Ravana abducted Rama’s wife Sita and held her captive in Lanka, resulting in the war between Rama and Ravana; Rama vanquished Ravana by shooting him in the chest with a magical arrow given by Indra.
Fig. 3: Nila engaged in combat with Prahasta.

Fig. 4: Angada in combat with Mahortor.

Fig. 5: Sugriva in battle against Kumbha.
The massive Angkor Wat bas-relief scene appears to be narrating the Yudhdha Kāṇḍa or Lanka Kāṇḍa (Book of War), the sixth of seven Kāṇḍas (books) of The Ramayana. Because this relief does not include two important Ramayana characters, Indrajit \(^{10}\) and Kumbhakarna \(^{11}\), both of who fought on Ravana’s side, it is surmised that the panel narrates the final moments of the battle, as both Indrajit and Kumbhakarna had been slain prior to the scenes depicted. Vittorio and Coedès have concluded that the rendition of the Battle of Lanka in Angkor Wat’s gallery differs from Valmiki’s Ramayana, as the artist portrayed the monkey troops in dynamic postures characteristic of Khmer artistic style.

*The Ramayana* became very well known in Cambodia, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Lao, China and Japan and strongly influenced traditional customs and religious rites. After the decline of Angkor’s golden era, a number of Hindu scriptures, epics, myths and other early cultural influences were forgotten; however, *The Ramayana* remained well remembered and perpetuated in Khmer culture. During the 17th century AD *The Ramayana* was popularly known in Cambodia as *Reamker* and is slightly different from Valmiki’s *Ramayana* \(^{12}\).

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\(^{10}\) Indrajit is a son of Ravana. He was killed in battle by Lakshmana’s aindrastra, a magical arrow, and was then beheaded.

\(^{11}\) Kumbhakarna is the younger brother of Ravana whose tongue had been tied by Saraswati. When Kumbhakarna tried to request from Brahma a boon of Nirdevatam (annihilation of the Devas), but instead asked for Nidravatam (eternal sleep). Brahma granted his boon. Ravana requested that Brahma amend the boon. Brahma conceded, allowing Kumbhakarna to.

The Historic Procession
(Western wing of the Southern gallery)

Sok Keosovannara

The bas-relief of the southern gallery, western wing of Angkor Wat temple is thought to be the historical review of King Suryavarman II and his royal servants, court and entourage. The scene depicts the King with his Guru, high officers, army leaders, and his family. The relief on the southern part of the west wing depicts the army in front of King Suryavarman II, who is giving orders, and who is shown a second time amidst his troops. Maxwell emphasizes that this scene is representative of the last of four eras called the Kaliyuga period. The south gallery’s wall scene, in which Suryavarman II is portrayed sitting on Mount Sivapada with his officials and religious specialists, is a visual representation of Suryavarman II’s oath of allegiance. Suryavarman II’s oath required the presence of two groups of religious specialists, Brahmins and Acarya, and both are represented on the south gallery wall. The Acarya are the more ascetic-looking group and are shown in another scene in the south gallery carrying the rajahota (Rājahota or head priest) in a palanquin and ringing bells. Further on, the great military parade wends its way, and is a device to show a series of portraits of the mightiest generals, the lords of the empire, and a further portrait of the king on his elephant, with minuscule inscriptions to record their names. This bas-relief is divided into two main scenes. The first scene is in the western part, measuring about fifteen meters long from the west to east and separated into two parts; the second scene illustrates a parade of the King and his troops and nineteen other army leaders. The upper part of the first scene shows an image of the king sitting on his throne and likely talking to his three principal officers and four other officers who probably work as justices. The lower part of this scene depicts the queens and ladies-in-waiting and their children.

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Short inscriptions are carved near important scenes and describe the activities and the names of the king and his persons. King Suryavarman II is shown in sitting on his throne and faces to the left, in his right hand is a twisting rope or string; his left hand holds a handkerchief and points to the three principal officers and four justices. To the right of the King are his group of Gurus and Brahmans. One of the Brahmans, standing and pointing to other Brahmans, is probably the King’s highest Guru (Fig.1), and is bringing a large offering to king, as he holds title as a high officer according to an inscription near his image (tārīvāyakamrateraṇaṅpaṇḍit).

![Image of a scene with King Suryavarman II and his attendants]

Fig. 1: The king’s highest Guru brings a large offering.

Another to an inscription near the umbrella over the king says that the King is on Mount Sivapāda and sending down his troops (samdacvraḥpādakamrateraṇaṅparama vishnu-lokanāstacauvnāmsivapāda pi paṅcuhvala).

In Figure 2, King Suryavarman II meets with his high officers, the first named Vraḥkamrateraṇaṅcrīvasinha vāravarārāvarava (Fig.3), who is believed to be the highest officer because he sits closely to the king and is carrying a wooden flat or list. Two other officers are named Kamrateraṇaṅitamulačrīvaddhand Kamrateraṇaṅdhanāṇijaya (Fig.4). The other four officers are justices (vraḥkamrateraṇaṅgunadosa ta pavan) (Fig.5). The lower part of this scene shows the King’s group of queens, concubines, children, and servants. Five women adored with luxurious ornaments and sitting on ox carts are thought to be the queens, while six others are presumed to be concubines as they sit only on hammock-like litters. There are no narrative inscriptions about these queens and concubines.

The next scene begins with a depiction of the troops walking down from Mount Sivapada to join the battle. In all, there are twenty troop leaders including King Suryavarman II, who is in the twelfth range of the troop review (Fig.6). Additionally, short inscriptions name the King and each leader.
Fig. 2: King Suryavaman II meets his high officers.

Fig. 3: ग्रीवरसिंहावर्मा, the first name of king’s officers

Fig. 4: Two other officers

Fig. 5: Other four officers

1- Vraḥ Kamratreṇaṇaṇḍījayendravarmma

2- Vraḥ KamratreṇaṇḍīVirendradhipativarmanmacokvakula

3- Anak saṇījakkalaspryaktihauVraḥKamratreṇaṇḍīVirayudhavarmma

4- Anak saṇījak pat gnaṇtihauVraḥKamratreṇaṇḍīJayāyudhavarmma
5- Vraḥ Kamrateṇaṇḍī驷Mahipatindravarmmacanlattai
6- Anak sañjakvidyāgramatihaivraṃKamrateṇaṇḍīRanvaViravarma
7- Anak sañjakvrajayatihaivrakamrateṇaṇḍīRājaSiṁhavarma
8- AnaksasñjakasoviyaphāṇṭitihaivraṃKamrateṇaṇḍīViredhrādhipatīvarma
9- Anak sañjakanakciḥtihaivraṃKamrateṇaṇḍīNarapatiṇḍravarma
10- Anak sañjakvrisatratitihaivraṃKamrateṇaṇḍīCūrādhipatīvarma
11- Kamrateṇa añiṇDhanaṇjaya
12- Vraḥ pādaKamrateṇaṇḍīParamaVishnuloka
13- ................................................... (Illegible inscription)
14- KamrateṇaṇḍaṃuḷaṇḍīVārddhana
15- AnaksasñjakasolassignitihaivraṃKamrateṇaṇḍīRājendravarma
16- AnaksasñjaktravāṃsvāyatihaivraṃKamrateṇaṇḍīPṛthivinarendra
17- AnaksasñjakKaviṣvaratihaivraṃKamrateṇaṇḍīMahāsenāpatiṇḍīViredhravarma
18- VraḥKamrateṇaṇḍī................................varmma (partially illegible)
19- VraḥKamrateṇaṇḍīJayasingharvarmmakṣaṇulūṇvrinaṇmvalavo
20- NeśSyaṃKuk

Another inscription (AnakṛyakāryabhāgapanamaṇijaṇjhālataṇaṁSyaṃkuk) confirmsthe
Name of a man who was a hunter from a place called Jenjhal and a leader of troops. He became a royal dignitary of King Suryavarman II and was tasked with leading a troop known as Syamkuk (Fig. 7). Between the fifteenth and the sixteenth ranges of the two dignitary groups there are two short inscriptions about the royal priest who is in charge of sacrifices and invoking the gods (Rājahota) and the sacred fire (Vrah Vreñ) (Fig. 8).

King Suryavarman II was thought to be a new prince from another dynasty in the northwestern Angkor region called the Mahidhara dynasty; this dynasty reigned until the great King Jayavarman VII. According to the 1113 AD inscription of Preah Vihear temple, King Suryavarman II ascended the throne and invited his Vrah Guru (Royal Brahmin), named Tivākarapandita, to conduct the royal anointment. After the death of the King Jayavarman VI, King Suryavarman II ruled part of the kingdom, most likely the northwest, until he conquered his maternal uncle and ruled at Angkor.

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He is depicted reviewing his armies and giving audience. The bas-relief gives glimpses of Khmer warfare, one scene showing Jayasimhavarma, general of the troops of Lopburi, seated on the back of a great war elephant. The military procession resumes with a troop (identified by pleated skirts with floral pattern; belts with long pendants; plaited hair; headdresses with plumes, and short moustaches) led by their commander or a contingent conscripted to the Khmer army from the province of Louvo (today called Lopburi). Some inscriptions state that King Suryavarman II proceeded to unify the empire, which had previously been divided into two parts – the Angkor region being controlled by King Dharanidravarman I and the other region ruled by King Suryavarman II. He then joined with Champa to fight against and conquer the Dai Viet; he then fought against Champa and seized power over the Champa region. King Suryavarman II was known as a great temple builder, as well as a warrior and a religious reformer, but there were not many inscriptions written during his reign. His posthumous name is known as Parama Vishnuloka, according to the inscription included in the scene showing the King sitting on Mount Sivapada (Vnăm Sivapāda), as well as scenes in the southwest wing of the southern gallery of Angkor Wat temple that depict him riding on elephants. These inscriptions were probably carved after King Suryavarman II died, as is traditional with the giving of posthumous names. Coedès had studied and compared some inscriptions consisting of dignitaries’ names and found them similar to the names found on the bas-relief at Angkor Wat. He emphasized that the writing of the inscriptions on the bas-relief was done later, possibly during the reign of the King Jayavarman VII.

26 In this article, Coedès had probably confused the name of King Jayavarman VII with Jayavarman II.
Heavens and Hells
(Eastern wing of Angkor Wat’s southern gallery)

Tiev Vicheth

Every nation has different beliefs regarding birth, death and rebirth, each in accordance with respective cultural and religious perceptions and influences. In both Brahmanism and Buddhism, the realms are similarly divided according to their cosmic view. It is believed that after death humans are reborn into one of three realms – the heavens, the human realm, or the hells – based on their karma (action).

Being Khmer culture and beliefs were influenced by Brahmanism and Buddhism, the Khmer believe that good actions will result in rebirth in the heavens and bad actions will culminate in rebirth in the hells of great suffering. According to ancient Khmer inscriptions, narrations about the heavens and hells motivated people to keep oaths, make offerings, and respect the temple’s assets and royal prescription regarding ritual worship and other ceremonies. For example, Face B of pre-Angkorian Inscription K.46 on a stele at Phnom Nok narrates an offering from the mṛtaṇḍyajamāna and poṇi jñānakūra – two high-ranking officials – to the deity Śrī Upaneśvara; the last part of the inscription mentions that those who steal foundational offerings shall be reborn in the hell realms. Section D of the pre-Angkorian Thagn Tieng inscription K.518, (Taining province) states that those who force the temple’s servants to eschew working for the deity, will, along with their families, spend 10,000 kalpas in the hell realms (one kalpa is almost seventeen million years), because they defied the temple’s ritual worship prescription. In Inscription K.341 at Neak Bous temple, in the northern doorway of Sanctuary L, the King had offered a plot of land and other offerings to Śrī Śivapāda (the deity Shiva); those who remove offerings, steal or cheat will be reborn into the brutal tortures of the hell realms until the last of sun and moon. Thnot Chum Inscription K.143, section B, tells of a Vraṭ Guru who came to pay homage to the king and ask for praśasta (praise or approval) for a prescription of blessing and curse relating to the land; the curse of rebirth in the hells would be affected upon those who cheated others or defiled the land.

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27 This study will give only some inscriptions that mention Hell and Heaven. In Inscriptions related to blessings and curses is the word “varāṣapa,” which means “blessing/curse.”

28 Coedès, George. "Inscriptions du Cambodge (vol. 6)." (1954): 36

29 Coedès, George. "Inscriptions du Cambodge (vol. 2)." (1942): 75-76

30 In the text of the inscriptions: $\sqrt{\text{Sak}}$ (Sak) $\sqrt{\text{Ivac}}$ (Ivac) and $\sqrt{\text{Iv}er}$ (Ivarep)


32 Ibid. Pp. 220,222
Inscription K.878 at Prâsàt Pradak describes the consecration ceremony of the temple, (Śrī Yasodharavarṣadhvaja). The inscription describes land and servants being granted to Mratānī Khlofrudra by the King in 896 and 818 AD for offering to the divinity, Śrī Rudrasvāmi. The inscription finalizes in a routine admonition that those who do not follow this prescription will be cursed to the hell realms along with their seven generations until the sun and moon disappear. At Sambor Prei Kuk, Inscription K.127 of Trapānī Prei speaks of offerings made to Śrī Amareśvara Suvarmlinga and Maniśiva. Twice in the inscription blessings of the heavens are promised for those who overcome ignorance, and eternal damnation in the hell realm of Mahāraurva is vowed for those who misappropriate chattel or desecrate temple premises, along with seven generation of their families. Inscription K.726 at Târī Krali, narrates the purchase of rice fields. Generally, such records include the names of the purchasers; however, in this inscription the buyers remain unnamed. Prior to describing the above information, the inscription narrates in Sanskrit about Navagraha (the nine planet divinities) and promises that those who revoke their land offerings or steal the offerings of others will be condemned to the Hell of Aviṣi along with their parents and ancestors. Inscription K.351, dated 992 AD and located at the southern doorjamb of the northwest tower of Prâsàt Thuń Čhuk, is regarding gifts from steñ Śikhāntarācārya to Nārāyaṇa (the Vedā supreme god), along with a previous endowment of rice fields. The inscription contains the routine varaśāpa (blessing/curse) that those who violate the kalpanā (prescription) for worshiping at the temple or stealing a rice field offering shall, upon death, descend into the thirty-two hells; those who create prosperity and abide in ethical conduct will be reborn in the heavenly realms along with their relatives. Inscription K.561 at Tūol An Tnūt, of which the first six lines are in Sanskrit and the rest in Khmer, records the offerings of poñ Bhavacandra to Lord Khanaśalinga (Śiva). The inscription contains admonitions for those who steal offerings, primarily the threat of the Great Hell of Aviṣi for wrongdoers, including their ancestors and parents. Line 6 speaks in Sanskrit about the Tâmisra hell realm, and lines 20 through 22 promise in Khmer an eternal dwelling in Aviṣi hell for offenders. Inscription K.190 at Phnom Sandak records land ownership in the towns of Śivalinga and Śivapura, and the gift of rice land to two aspects of Śiva.

The inscription states that anyone who attempts to steal offerings of rice lands shall be condemned to the hell realms along with their relatives. In the first inscription, a Lord Śīkhaṇḍinā makes offerings to the High Lord of the World, Śri Śikhaṇḍiśvāra. The second inscription is poorly preserved; however, the third inscription details a royal order from King Udayādityavarman I to engrave temple prescription on a stele for servants and slaves at Chōk Gargyar. Those who violated the prescription were doomed to spend eternity in the hell realms along with all of their past and future relatives; those who respected and adhered to the prescription would be reborn in the blissful heavenly realms where they will remain along with all of their relatives, past and future, for eternity. Inscription K.70 on the Stele of Bāsāk in Sruk Romduol is engraved in Sanskrit and speaks of the restoration of Yaśodharapura and the lands surrounding the eastern Mebon temple. And in Khmer narrates an offering to Vrah Kamrāteṅ Nṛpendrāyudhasvāmi; the inscription contains a varaśāpa warning that those who stole offerings or did not behave according to temple prescription would, along with their parents and ten generations of future and past relatives, descend into all the hells, beginning with Raurava hell then moving through the other hell realms. Their journey through the hells shall continue until the end of the sun, the moon, the Navagrahas (Nine influencers) and the Naksatra (the lunar mansion in Hindu astrology). Conversely, those who refrain from stealing and create prosperity will be reborn in the heavens. Inscription K.659 at Prasāṭ Ō Romduol refers to a royal directive granting vāp Paramacāya the right to set up a śivalinga on his land as a holy offering. The inscription states that pāṇḍitas and devotees who conduct ritual worship will go to the heavenly realms; those who try to interfere with others' ritual worship will be reborn in the hell realms. In lines 31 and 32, the engraving states that those who steal or defile sacred the property shall, along with their relatives, be reborn in Raurava and other narakas (hells). The 994 AD inscription K.742 on the southern doorjamb of the northern tower of Kūk Prasāṭ in Svay Chek District presents a list of endorsement properties and servants to a temple of Śiva; the inscription further states that those who steal will fall into the thirty-two hells and those who make ritual offerings will go to the heavenly realms. Inscription K.933 on the Stele of Prasāṭ Śrāṅgān speaks of a grant by King to Śrī Vāgiśvarādihipatīvarman of an Aśrama Śrībhadreśvaranivāsa in Hariharalaya. Lines 15 through 18 comprise management provisions and state that those who do not comply with the prescription shall be deemed a criminal, and upon death they will dwell for all eternity in the thirty-two hells.

41 Coedès, George. "Inscriptions du Cambodge (vol. 5.)" (1953): 143-146
42 Ibid. Pp. 160-163
Those who respect and comply with the prescription and refrain from any destructive activities will realize great bliss and honor in this life, and upon death they shall dwell for eternity in the heavenly realm of great bliss.\textsuperscript{43} Inscription K. 153, dated to 1001 AD, is located at Prâsât Roan Româs on the north side of Sambôr Prei Kûk. The inscription announces the set up of a sivalînga and offerings of land and slaves made by Śrî Somesvarapâñjita. The inscription concludes in a varaśâpa promising that those who are virtuous in dharma and make offerings will be glorified; those who destroy the prescription’s dharma will realize great suffering in this life and upon death will descend and cycle through the thirty-two hells for eternity, starting with brutal torture in Avîci hell and continuing from thereon.\textsuperscript{44} In Inscription K.598 on the Stele of Prâsât Trapôn Rûn in Siem Reap province, lines 59 through 61 on face B relate to Chief Lord Śrî Kâvîndrapâñjita, who embarked on a legal contest for a royal land endowment in Anûditapura to present as an offering. The inscription ends with a varaśâpa warning that those who violate temple prescription shall be treated as criminals; in the next life they will be punished by Yama and endure cyclic existence in the hells, starting with Avîci hell and moving through the other hells throughout eternity.\textsuperscript{45} Inscription K.693 of Stûn Črâp, engraved in 1003 AD during the reign of King Jayavîravarman, speaks of revalidation of the King’s title to land tracts and slaves and iterates temple prescription. The prescription, written in Sanskrit, states that those who steal offerings will go to Avîci hell and other hell realms; those who spoil or defy this prescription will transit through the thirty-two hells until the sun and moon are vanquished.\textsuperscript{46} Inscription K.37 of on the southern tower of Prâsât Nânh Khmau regards an offering to Yama; however, the inscription has been deliberately mutilated.\textsuperscript{47} Inscription K.292 at Prasat Phîmâñâkâs is an eight-part inscription bearing the Oath of Allegiance to Sûryavarman I. This inscription speaks of the four classes of tamrâc signatories who swore oaths of loyalty to the king; if they did not maintain their loyalty they would transit through the thirty-two hells until the end of the sun and moon.\textsuperscript{48} In the Middle Khmer period, most inscriptions speak about generosity in offerings for temple ceremony made by those who wish to attain the everlasting heavenly bliss of Nirvana. In order to protect ritual offerings most inscriptions contain varaśâpa, which promises a curse of the hell realms for theft of offerings and misconduct.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{43} Caedès, George. "Inscriptions du Cambodge (vol. 5)." (1952): 194-197.
\textsuperscript{44} Caedès, George. "Inscriptions du Cambodge (vol. 5)." (1953): 194-197.
\textsuperscript{46} Caedès, George. "Inscriptions du Cambodge (vol. 5)." (1953): 202-209.
\textsuperscript{47} Caedès, George. "Inscriptions du Cambodge (vol. 2)." (1942): 35.
\textsuperscript{49} អំពីនេះ មិត្តភាពអេស្សាធនរាជាសីហារ ប្រាថៃប្រការប្រារប្បាលប្រជាជនប្រទេស ២០០៣ ខែកក្កដា
The eastern wing of Angkor Wat's southern gallery depicts a large bas-relief panel illustrating the hells and heavens\(^{30}\) (Figure 1). There are short inscriptions throughout this carving that appear to be illustration titles; the west to east theme of this long panel is divided into three registers. Figure 2 depicts a path leading to the heavens and hells. The upper and middle registers depict virtuous people walking, some wearing crowns, riding on horses, and peacefully walking upward on the path; some ride in palanquins and hold fans, parasols and other accessories, some are accompanied by harmonious children. On the lower register there are many people walking with a large male figure looming over them; several animals are also depicted, with all moving towards a torture situation. On their journey of tortuous suffering, they experience being strung up with a rope through their noses or mouths, pulled along by their hair, their bodies tied up with a rope and hung upside down by their feet; they are cuffed, hit with sticks, and slashed with swords and knives. When they collapse, others trod upon them. According to Inscription K.299 at Angkor Wat, the lower path leads to the hells and the two upper paths lead to the heavens. Further along the relief is an important figure, Vrah Yama. The figure is identifiable by a short inscription beneath it (Figure 3). Yama is mounted on a buffalo; he is depicted with eighteen arms, one leg is rising and bent, and he is adorned with jewelry. Sixteen of his hands hold bats; of the other two hands, the left touches his thigh and the right holds an unidentifiable object\(^{52}\).

\(^{30}\) This gallery collapsed in 1947; restoration was completed in 1950.


In Hindu mythology, Yama is the god of death; amongst the Lokapala – the Guardians of the Directions – Yama is the guardian of the South\textsuperscript{53}. Other myths speak of Yama as being the first mortal ever to die; other myths claim the birth of Yama resulted in the phenomena of day and night\textsuperscript{54}. Yama rules as king over the dead, but also has influence over living persons as they will eventually die and be judged by Yama according to their Karma (action). Yama is also associated with the deity Kāla, the Sanskrit word for “time” or “death”\textsuperscript{55}.

Inscription K.299 speaks of the thirty-two hells and the activities of Dharma and Chitragupta. The corresponding bas-relief depicts Yama, with Dharma and Chitragupta as his assessors, listening without mercy to the pleas of two women prior to throwing them into the hell realms\textsuperscript{56}. The inscription also describes punishments doled out by Yamabhupalana, Yama’s kinkara (servants)\textsuperscript{57}. Moving further east down the relief, a pointing Yamabhupalana indicates a path to guide people carrying palanquins to the temple (Figure 4).

![Image of Yamabhupalana](image)

Fig. 4: Yamabhupalana guides the non-virtuous to the hells. Angkor Wat.

In Figure 5, a group of Yamabhupalana is throwing people to the ground. These two scenes appear to be the fate of the dead after Yama’s judgment of their karma; those who were virtuous and good go to the heavenly realms, those who committed non-virtuous deeds will be punished in the hells. In the upper register of Figure 6, people are enjoying a blissful state in a heavenly temple held aloft by Garuda. This scene shows nineteen people who appeared in the previously mentioned images\textsuperscript{58}.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. p. 515.
\textsuperscript{54} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.\textsuperscript{55}\textsuperscript{56} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.\textsuperscript{57} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.\textsuperscript{58} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.

\textsuperscript{54} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.\textsuperscript{55} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.\textsuperscript{56} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.\textsuperscript{57} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.\textsuperscript{58} For a brief explanation regarding the birth of Yama, please read.

At the scene’s lower register, many people are enduring torture in the hells. The upper register reliefs depicting the heavens do not illustrate much detail regarding heavenly activities; however, the lower register reliefs of the hell realms depict different tortures, the name of each hell, and the punishment that those who have lived a non-virtuous life will receive in accordance with their actions. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate examples of torture in the hells. Inscription K.299 describes the thirty-two hells and the actions that result in being cast in them as follows:
1. Avīci (Eternal Waveless Hell). People who have material wealth [yet] keep per petrating evil deeds for their living.
2. Kriminica (Heap of Maggots Hell). People who revile deities, the sacred Fire, gurus, great Brahmanic scholars, [who defame] those who teach justice, they or their mothers and fathers, and their friends who are Śiva devotees.
3. The River Vaitaraṇī (Vaitaraṇī River Hell). Those who avoid wise and virtuous counsel, who despise knowledge, who cheat others, who are thieves or rogues; those who destroy the taste of food (or the essence of things).
4. Kūṭaṣālmali (Thorny Bombax Tree Hell). People who reject the truth, righteousness, who are false witnesses.
5. Yugmaparvata (Twin Mountains Hell). People who dare to strike, chain and stab [other people], who annoy others, and cause others suffering in order to ensure their own living.
6. Nirucchvāsa (Breathless Hell). People who are foolish, violent, who destroy [other people’s] confidence, who kill women or children.
7. Ucchvāsa (Inspiration Hell). People who lead an unlawful life, complain about other people’s faults, or eat unpurified meat.
9. Taṃtalākṣāmaya (Burning Lake Hell). For those who set fire to others’ dwellings, who burn forests, who give poison to others.
10. Asthibhaṅga (The Hell of Smashing Bones). People who unlawfully destroy with weapons; who destroy gardens, houses, ponds, moats, wells and justice halls; people who destroy the tirthas of others.
12. Pūyaṇabhāradra (Pus-filled Pond Hell). For those who steal intoxicating drinks, steal others’ wives, who touch their Guru’s wife.
13. Asṛṇabhāradra (Tear-filled Pond Hell). Those who steal meat, others’ wives, who take the Guru’s wife, or molest their Guru.
14. Medodrada (Pond of Fat Hell). Those who covet plantations, who take advantage of people who are physically handicapped.
15. Tikṣṇāyastunda (Sharp Iron Beak Hell). Those who take what is not given to them, those who steal rice.
16. Arṅgārancicaya (Heap of Cinders Hell). Those who set fire to villages, towns, stables of the sacred cows; those who urinate and defecate in the gods’ residences.
17. Ambariṣa (Frying Pan Hell). Those who kill embryos, taking them from [the womb] of other people’s wives; those who touch the wives of their best friends.
18. Kumbhipāka (Pot Baking Hell). People who are entrusted with the most difficult tasks by the king [then] steal property of the Guru; carry out wicked actions, steal belongings of the poor, steal from the destitute, steal from the learned Brahmans.
20. Kṣuradhāra (Spiky Mountain Hell). Those who steal elephants, horses, carts, and foot-soldiers (i.e. the army), who touch Brahmans with their feet, who treat Pāṇḍīts with contempt, who touch any instrument of sacrifice with their feet.

21. Santāpana (Burning Penance Hell). Those who torment other people, who revile them, who steal umbrellas and sandals.


23. Kālasūtra (Burning Copper Hell). Those who betray and abandon their king, who lust after riches, who kill a Brahman.

24. Mahāpadma (Hell of the Great Crimson Lotus). Partially obliterated. Those who take away flowers from...

25. Padma (Hell of the Crimson Lotus). Those who steal floral arrangements, who remove them from Śiva’s gardens and enjoy keeping them in their huts.

26. Saññīvāna (Reviving Hell). Partially obliterated. All the great criminals....all the great criminals.

27. through 28 – not legible.

29. Śīta (Sharp Hell). Those who steal anything to keep themselves from the cold.

30. Sāndratamaḥ (Thick Darkness Hell). Those who steal torches, who are unclean and false.

31. Mahāaurava (Great Howling Hell). Those who maintain their own body by causing harm to others.

32. Raurava (Howling Hell). Those who are degraded; those who live on things rejected, who steal alms, who cultivate non-virtuous thoughts, who do not pay back debts.

In Khmer culture, belief in going to a heaven or hell realm in the afterlife resultant of karma began well before the introduction of Theravada Buddhism. The ancient Khmer did not know with certainty the number of Hindu heavens and hells; however, Khmer cosmology evolved to consist of thirty-three heavens and 32 hells. The inscriptions of Angkor Wat speak primarily of blessings and curses regarding the heavens and hells, though the information relating to the hells offers greater detail than that relating to the heavens. Inscription K.299 gives narration about thirty-two hells, along with their names, such as Avīci, Raurava, Mahāaurava, Tāmisra, and so on. It appears that the ancient Khmer were seriously intent on stressing the words of curses more than blessings in an effort to discourage people from non-virtuous actions or violating temple prescriptions.

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59 According to the Bhagavata Purana, the number of Hells is twenty-eight or more, though near the end of the text it states that in the province of Yamaraja there are hundreds of thousands of hellish planets. See in Vyaśa, K. "The Srimad-Bhagavatam (Vol. I). (JM Sanyal, Trans.) New Delhi." India: Munshiram Manoharlal (2000): 263-266
It is presumed that ancient Khmer society was more versed in stories of the hells rather than the heavens\textsuperscript{60}. Lending to this supposition is that Yama, one of the most popular and well-known Khmer gods, is the god of death and reigned supreme over the hell realms, and belief in Yama subsequently introduced strong influences into Khmer ritual ceremonies. Yama’s duty is to judge the deceased according to their karma, and it is his decision whether they go to the hells, the human world, or the heavens\textsuperscript{61}.

\textsuperscript{60} Nowadays local people know the names of each Hell, but not the names of each Heaven (i.e. Avici).

\textsuperscript{61} This role was called Dhammaraja. In ancient times, those who worked as ministers of justice were called U癫ayamaraja (ဗုဒ္ဓရာဇီဖြင့်).
Churning of the Ocean of Milk
(Southern Wing of the Eastern Gallery)

Ven Sophorn

The Churning of the Ocean of Milk is one of the most well known myths in Hinduism. For centuries, it has been told in several ancient texts; such as the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Vishnupurana and Bhagavata Purana.

In Khmer art, the narration of Churning of the Ocean of Milk is popularly depicted in hundreds of relief on the ancient Khmer temples. The earliest example of this narrative relief probably appears on a lintel at Prasat Ein Kosei, from the mid-10th century AD. Later, it was broadly depicted on the Angkorian temples in the 11th-12th century. This narrative can be seen on Prasat Sneng, Preah Vihear, Wat Ek, Beng Mealea, Prasat Ta Prohm Tonle Bati, Ta Som, Thomannon, Chao Say Tevoda, Angkor Wat, Banteay Samre, Bayon, Banteay Chhmar, Phimai, Wat Phu, Preah Pithu, Mangalartha and Phnom Chisor.

The most spectacular representation of the Churning of Ocean of Milk is depicted on the 12th century-Angkor Wat temple (figure 1), located in a long Southern Wing of the 3rd Eastern Gallery (48.45 meters long).

Fig. 1: southern wing of eastern

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This large panel is divided into three registers. The top register consists of a hundred graceful Apsaras (figure 2). The bottom register contains a diverse marine life, where those creatures closest to the churning vortex are being cut to pieces (figure 3). In the central register, it consists of major figures of asuras and devas. According to Vittorio Roveda, there are ninety-two asuras on the left (figure 4) and eighty-eight devas (figure 5) on the right pulling the Naga Vasuki around the central churning pivot (Mandara mountain). According to Mannika, there are 91 asuras and 88 or 89 devas. The asuras are distinguished from the devas only by their headgear; each group led by three gigantic figures, the one holding Vasuki’s head is probably Bali or Ravana (figure 6), considering the Ramayana’s influence. The last figure, holding the tail of Vasuki, is a mighty crowned monkey, possibly Hanuman or Sugriva (figure 7). At the center of the main register (figure 8), the huge image of Vishnu with rich ornamentations: anklets, bangles, armlets, necklace, stylized garment and his unique stunning crown shape is different from asuras and devas. His four arms hold a discus and a sword in his upper two arms and his two lower arms hold the serpent Vasuki. Just above him, there is one small figure that can be identified as the god Indra (flying over the pivot). Below the feet of Lord Vishnu, a big turtle (Kurma) is adorned with beautiful floral decorations on its shell and a small crown on the head.

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63 Vittorio Roveda, Images of gods, Thailand, 2005, p.58
In the story narrated in Bhagavata Purana, asuras and devas have been fighting for ages. Tired and frustrated, they asked the Lord Vishnu for help. In order to get the “Amrita” (or the elixir of immortality). Asuras and devas were instructed to churn the ocean together, by using the Naga King, Vasuki, as a churning rope and Mount Mandara as a pivot. Meanwhile, the god Indra held the summit and the turtle king Kurma, who wears a crown, supported the bottom of the mountain on his shell. Asuras and devas churned back and forth for a thousand years, the salt water transformed into the milk, then into the elixir of immortality, known in Sankrit as Amrita. Before that occurred, there were numerous miraculous beings who emerged: the moon, the goddesses Lakshmi and Sura, the white horse called Uccaihshravas, the jewel named Kaustubha and also the celestial dancers, the Apsaras. Due to the length of time for the churning, the Naga were exhausted and vomited venom, which threatened all the creatures in the universe. The supreme god Shiva came to save them by swallowing the venom. Its poison turned his throat blue, but his courageous act helped strengthen the gods. The churning process was so violent, it caused the creatures in the sea and the underworld was destroyed. Therefore, the large panel in the Southern Wing of the 3rd Eastern Gallery of Angkor Wat well depicts the famous Hindu myth, the so-called Churning of the Ocean of Milk, in quest of immortality water (amrita). Its content is probably related more in Puranic version, and some additional leading figures in the reliefs are influenced in Ramayana. This large panel reflects an outstanding workmanship on a long panel of joined sandstone blocks. It contains very lively, dynamic detail of the pulling of the Naga by asuras and devas, and remarkably, the story of Churning of the Ocean of Milk is depicted on the Angkorian temple’s wall as the largest one in Khmer art.
In regards to this bas-relief, Mannikka\textsuperscript{64} explained that a measurement of 54 cubits on the side of the devas and 54 cubits on the side of the asuras repeats the numerology found on the western entrance bridge of Angkor Wat and on the bridges to Angkor Thom. This might be because 108 is the most auspicious number which occurred in Buddhist and Hindu texts and as well as is important in astrology and astronomy. Furthermore, Monnikka stressed that the position of the churning pivot would correspond to the position of the spring equinox, the 91 asuras in the south represent the 91 days from equinox to winter solstice, and the 88 or 89 devas represent days from the spring equinox counted from the first day of the new year to the summer solstice. As for the two snakes appearing in this relief, Codès noticed that the sculptor wanted to represent the moment before the churning when Vasuki was resting at the bottom of the ocean before being pulled out by the devas and asuras and was used as the churning rope. However, this large panel of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk was not completed at the center.

\textsuperscript{64} Eleanor Mannikka, Angkor Wat, Time, Space, and Kingship, United states of America, 1996, p.32-
The Victory of Vishnu over the Asuras
(Northern wing of 3rd eastern gallery)

Than Monomoyith

Most long narrative reliefs that are depicted on ancient Khmer temple walls, for instance, the Prasat Bayon, depict many scenes. Some are related to a battlefield with Cham armies while others tell the stories of various of Hindu myths or even depicts scenes from the daily lives of the people. The Prasat Baphoun also contains many small reliefs related to stories in Hindu mythology. Beyond the Angkor region, the Prasat Banteay Chhmar, in its external galleries, also displays similar content to that found on the wall of the Prasat Bayon. Of great historical significance is the story depicted on the walls of Angkor Wat. It was carved during the reign of King Suryavarman II (1002-1050) and is accompanied by other rich carvings throughout the temple including thousands of apsaras and other beautiful narrative reliefs found on the walls, lintels and pediments. The most wonderful and stunning of these is a collection of large panels in the 3rd gallery. This gallery surrounds the structure and is 2 meters in height and over 500 meters long. This 3rd gallery is divided into 8 panels and depicts a variety of different stories each associated with Lord Vishnu.

On the northeast wing of the 3rd gallery, we see the victory of Lord Vishnu over the Asura (an army of demons) (figure 1). While begun during the reign of King Suryavarman II in 12th century, this relief was not completed until the 16th century, during the reign of King Ang Chanraja (1546-1564).

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Fig. 1: location of the bas-relief of the Victory of Vishnu over Asuras

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Evidence of this may be found in the inscriptions of King Ang Chanraja which have been translated by G. Coedès\(^67\). The first inscription in 1546 speaks of the powerful King Mahavishnuloka who left incomplete two bas-reliefs in the northeast galleries. It also mentions Vrah Raja on kara Paramarajadhira Paramadhipati Paramacakravartiraja who, during his powerful reign, instructed Vrah Mahidhara, a royal artist, to carve a narrative relief in the 8th year of horse, full moon day on Wednesday, month of Bhadrapada. The second inscription in 1564 also speaks of the great king Mahavishnuloka and reiterates the fact that two bas-reliefs in northeast galleries had been left incomplete.

A bas-relief over 50 meters long in the northern wing of 3rd eastern gallery shows a dramatic scene from a battle between the armies of Vishnu and the Asuras. Of particular note is the depiction here of animals enlisted in battle. The armies of Asuras and Devas are seen gathering at a central point. Also shown is a large image of Vishnu riding the sacred bird, Garuda (figure 2). Here we also see more elephants adorned for use in battle as well as commanders holding shields, elephant handlers (known as mahouts) and infantries of soldiers (figure 3). Other scenes illustrate similar dynamic activity including infantry commanders bravely driving carts pulled by lions and horses into the battlefield while soldiers carry victory flags and parasols (figure 4).

Elsewhere, vehicles used in battle are adorned with images of Naga, the 5 headed serpent. In Khmer art, Naga is symbol of water and the vehicle of the god Varuna so, symbolically these battle vehicles depict the powerful image of Varuna mounted on the back of Naga with a bow in his right hand (figure 5). In another scene, in the upper and lower registers of the panel, we find the image of an exotic a bird with many heads. The creature, which has been likened to a cross between a goose or ostrich is accompanied by soldiers equipped with arms and shields (figure 6). In the main central part of the relief, Lord Vishnu is seen mounted on Garuda in intense combat with Asuras. His four hands hold his arsenal of powerful weapons: a conch shell, a wheel, a club and a sword. We also see the image of Vishnu turning to the south while Garuda turns northward in a dynamic depiction of violent fighting. In the lower registers of the relief just beneath Garuda and amid a mass of broken flags and parasols, we see many soldiers who have died in the battle. Elsewhere, defeated troops of soldiers as well as battle elephants and horses are seen in retreat. (figure 7).

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According to vittorio Roveda the legend of the asura king, Naraka as found in the Hrivamsa (CXXII). He is seen hiding in the city of Pragjyotisha after having stolen Aditis’ earrings (given to her by Indra) and originally produced by the Churning of the Ocean of Milk. The city was protected by nooses with razor sharp edges that were installed by the great demon, Mura. As Krishna (one of Lord Vishnu’s many incarnations) approaches with his army, Mura arises from the waters and rushes towards Krishna but he is killed by the Krishna’s chakra (his wheel, or discus shaped weapon). The same divine tool is used by Krishna to decapitate Naraka. Afterwards, Krishna enters Naraka’s personal apartments and releases 16,001 women who had been cruelly imprisoned by him. Krishna marries all of them, uproots with his mighty arms Mount Maniparvata where the women have been kept, places it on Garuda’s back and returns to Dvaraka. Thereafter, Krishna travels to heaven with the famous earrings and gives them back to Aditi.

As noted earlier, this long bas-relief in the northern wing of the 3rd eastern gallery was not completed during the time of King Suryavarman II in 12th century but rather during the much later reign of King Ang Chan in 16th century. While well intentioned in his orders to complete the earlier reliefs, the workmanship under this revered Buddhist king is seen as of lesser quality to the original 12th century efforts. Nonetheless, it represents an important later chapter in the extension and completion of what is duly recognized as a national treasure.

Tour Guide Seminar Training

Angkor National Museum has conducted a special educational programme under the Learning Experience with ANM project entitled Tour Guide Seminar Training. The seminar took place on July 22, 2015 at Angkor National Museum. This project generally happens every year and provides a significant offering for Tour Guides in Siem Reap.

The programme aims to enhance public awareness about Khmer culture and civilization, primarily focusing on strengthening knowledge of Khmer art and history reflective of Khmer civilization in the ancient Golden Era. The seminar attracted 39 Tour Guides, who attended the training.
The programme provided lessons in both theory and practice on the Golden Era which included:

- A brief Introduction to Angkor National Museum.
- Gallery of 1000 Buddha images.
- Gallery A: Khmer Civilization.
- Gallery B: Religion and Beliefs.
- Gallery C: The Great Khmer Kings.
- Gallery D: Angkor Wat.
- Gallery E: Angkor Thom
- Gallery F: Story from Stones
- Gallery G: Ancient Costume.
- Practice on site with extensive explanation

The participants listening attentively to the presentation.

Study tour inside the galleries, explained by ANM Curators.
The Breaking Time

This educational programme has been successfully completed. All the participating Tour Guides were very interested in the topics and in learning about Khmer art, culture, and history. They will in turn educate visitors from all over the world that come to visit the Angkor temples and Angkor National Museum about the Khmer Golden Era and its civilization.

Testify award after completing the training program
Learning Experience Offered for School Teachers in 2015

In a vision of inspiring further education of Khmer heritage and history, Angkor National Museum established in 2009 a charity project called *Learning Experience With Angkor National Museum*. Every year, ANM conducts activities in relation to the project; for instance, ANM approached schools in Siem Reap this year to present the project and explain the benefits for school teachers in participating with the project. This year’s project took place on June 11-12, 2015 under the coordination and leadership of Mr. Yok Pathormath and Mr. Ven Sophorn.

Good communication and strong support from school management resulted in 35 teachers from schools around Siem Reap attending the event at the world-class ANM Museum. They were fascinated and impressed when listening and learning about their own culture through Power Point presentations and touring the galleries with exclusive explanations by ANM’s distinguished staff. This project is part of the ANM vision, which is centered on assembling, conserving, and exhibiting more than 1,300 genuine artifacts reflecting ancient Khmer civilization.
Study tour inside the galleries, explained by ANM Curators.

This outcome of this year’s program was very fruitful, as evidenced by teachers’ comments admiring such an educational project and how it conveys the values of their culture and heritages to the community and academic society. With more students/teachers coming to visit the museum, ANM definitely stands strong as an educational venue in terms of culture and history.

Testify award after completing the training program
A Mystery of World Astro-Archaeological Architecture, Including Angkor.

This project was a very important part of the vision of the world-class Angkor National Museum, an aesthetic and cultural landmark. Objectives of the talk were to enrich awareness of culture, history, and other related topics and to gather scholars and local community together in sharing and commitment.

The participants listening attentively to the presentation.

The project took place on March 14, 2014. It was organized by the ANM under the coordination and leadership of Mr. Yok Pathormath, Mr. Ven Sophorn, and Dr. William Gutsch, Distinguished Professor of the College of Arts & Sciences at Saint Peter’s University (outside of New York City).
The "Special Talk" allowed attendees to gain comprehensive knowledge on ancient Khmer astronomy and archaeology through explanations by the Curator and Distinguished Professor. Presentations included Angkor civilization’s link with astrology, i.e. how past people understood, interpreted, and used observation of celestial phenomena and what role the cosmos played in their cultures. The audience consisted of 48 people, including 36 tour guides, two archaeologists, six community members, and four tourists.