



DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON

MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706-1393 U.S.A.

Cultural Property Advisory Committee
Cultural Heritage Center
Department of State, Annex 44
301 4th Street, SW
Washington DC 20547

February 2, 2013

Dear Colleagues:

I am an archaeologist who has worked primarily in Vietnam since 2005. As a researcher with active interests in the Southeast Asian region, I am writing to support the extension of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the US and the Kingdom of Cambodia in regards to the imposition of import restrictions on Khmer archaeological materials. There is no question that the MOU has helped to protect the cultural heritage of Cambodia and its people, and its extension would surely continue to provide the same sorts of needed protection into the future.

The cultural patrimony of Cambodia has been in jeopardy in recent years due to looting activities, much of which has been deeply impacted by the rapid pace of economic change and development. Heritage officials and ministries in Cambodia have been actively collaborating with foreign parties to address these looting issues. The application of the MOU's import restrictions has had a positive impact, reducing the stream of antiquities that have left the country since 1999. Despite these efforts, the US is still a major market for Khmer antiquities. The demand for the import of these materials thus has significant and negative consequences for Cambodian cultural patrimony. Extending the restrictions outlined in the MOU will serve to safeguard Cambodian cultural heritage in the coming years. Moreover, the MOU has arguably strengthened ties between researchers in the US and Cambodia in collaborative and joint projects.

In addition, the very same issues related to the looting and destruction of invaluable archaeological sites in Cambodia today can be seen all throughout the wider region. Beyond Cambodia, how the US addresses this particular set of concerns will have a bearing on the management of cultural heritage in other countries of the region as well, affecting how the US is perceived by the national entities charged with the management of cultural materials and properties in their respective countries.

For all of these reasons, I urge the Department of State to renew and extend the MOU. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Nam C. Kim
Assistant Professor