

Cultural Property Advisory Committee  
Cultural Heritage Center  
Department of State, Annex 44  
3014th Street, SW.  
Washington, DC 20547  
Fax (202) 453- 8803

February 4, 2013

Dear Members of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee,

I am writing in support of the extension of the *Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia Concerning the Imposition of Import Restrictions on Khmer Archaeological Material* ("MOU"). I am an academic archaeologist who has conducted research in Thailand since 2008. While this MOU does not directly apply to the archaeological sites and materials that I study in Thailand, it helps to establish a standard of cultural heritage protection for countries throughout the region.

As economic development expands throughout Southeast Asia, irreplaceable archaeological resources continue to be particularly susceptible to destruction through looting and development. The U.S. is one of the primary markets for antiquities from Cambodia and its neighbors in Southeast Asia. This demand has helped fuel the destruction of archaeological sites in order to obtain objects for trade. Once destroyed, these archaeological sites cannot be replaced, and the information they contained is lost forever. Only through controlled study by archaeologists and art historians can the irreplaceable information and artifacts from these sites be documented for future generations. Restrictions placed on the import and export of antiquities do not obstruct the study of these sites and objects by archaeologists and art historians; instead, they take measures for the protection of existing collections and undocumented cultural resources for continued study.

For Cambodia and its neighboring countries archaeological and cultural heritage provide important sources of tourism as well as national pride. The U.S. can support Cambodia's efforts to protect its archaeological and cultural heritage through restricting the import of antiquities, as well as encouraging measures within Cambodia to document and protect these resources. These activities should include systematic inventories of objects in museums and archaeological sites. Additionally, it is imperative that the U.S. support the training of Cambodians working in heritage management and museums in order to provide them with the tools to protect their country's cultural resources and help raise the general public's awareness of the importance of these irreplaceable resources. Such training can be accomplished through short-term training

programs in Cambodia, as well as Fulbright support for Cambodians to receive graduate training in archaeology and historic preservation in the US.

I strongly suggest that the committee support the extension of the MOU. By extending the MOU, the U.S. will continue to join Cambodia in efforts to protect important sources of long-term economic and cultural development for Cambodians, as well as irreplaceable world heritage for us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MDG", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew D. Gallon

Director, Kamphaeng Saen Archaeology Project  
PhD Candidate in Anthropology

1109 Geddes Ave.  
Museum of Anthropology  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109