

TOMB RAIDING ANGKOR: A CLASH OF CULTURES

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Introduction

The World Heritage Site of Angkor, in Cambodia, is currently one of Asia's fastest growing tourist destinations. In response to this new era, Angkor's management authorities are actively attempting to resist the 'detrimental effects of mass tourism' by promoting a desired form of 'cultural tourism'.

Yet in November 2000, filming of the ultimate post-modern concoction, '*Tomb raider—the movie*', took place at Angkor. The temples became one of the key locations for a production firmly rooted in a genre of 'Hollywood blockbusters'; a film genre that eschews any aspirations of 'high culture' or claims of representational integrity.

This paper explores this contradictory clash of imaginary 'cultures', one embedded in the superficial, reductive and aesthetically driven paradigm of Hollywood cinematography, and the other being a notion of heritage built around largely modernist distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture. In so doing, it examines the contextual factors that allowed the project to take place; illuminating the ways in which Angkor is presently conceived and managed by both the Cambodian authorities and the attendant international community. In considering some of the implications for Angkor, understood as a site of touristic production, attention is also given to how Tomb Raider creates new narratives for tourists; ones that undermine the efforts of conservation agencies looking to formalise 'serious, cultural tourism' across the site. Accordingly, by examining the discursive origins of the site's administrative framework, the case of *Tomb raider* indicates how a prevailing reductive materialism inadequately appreciates the need for protecting an *imagined* Angkor. The article also highlights how the internationally roaming rhetoric of cultural tourism is particularized, rearticulated and even subverted within the fragile and challenging context of Cambodia's political economy. The paper draws on the work of Crouch and Philips to consider the touristic encounter as a form of spatial practice interwoven by particular narratives, representations and metaphorical imaginings. Finally, it will be seen that the issues addressed here raise important concerns regarding media representations and World Heritage Sites in an age of increasingly pervasive tourism.

Angkor

In Angkor—a geographical region, an archaeological site and a cultural concept—lies much of Cambodia's future (UNESCO, 1996:165).

The World Heritage Site of Angkor occupies around 400km² of flat plains in north-west Cambodia. The landscape incorporates four main elements: tropical forest; areas of cultivated land; a number of isolated villages and the architectural legacy of the Angkorian period. Although assigning precise dates to 'The Angkor period' remains a subject of debate amongst historians, it is generally recognized that the kingdom emerged as a major seat of power early in the ninth century CE and lasted until the

capital's abandonment in the mid decades of the fifteenth century (Chandler, 1996). Indeed, today's architectural remains testify to both the scale and wealth of South-East Asia's greatest empire historically, covering much of what is today Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and of course Cambodia.

Between the second and fifth Centuries CE, South-East Asia was the recipient of what is frequently termed an 'Indianization process' (Chandler, 1996). As the region absorbed the cultural luggage of early Indian travellers, traders and priests, most notably Hinduism and Buddhism, integration steadily took place between these Indian religions and the indigenous animistic belief systems that had already become geographically widespread (Vickery, 1998). This synthesis produced a system of beliefs that transformed Jayavarman II, popularly regarded as the first Angkorian king, into a '*Devaraja*', or god king, on his ascension to the throne in 802 C.E.

In proclaiming himself the kingdom's first 'universal monarch', Jayavarman II laid the foundations for a religious cult driven by extensive temple construction. As subsequent rulers aspired to surpass the architectural achievements of earlier kings, large-scale monumental architecture soon emerged as a defining feature of the Angkorian period. The real significance of Jayavarman's legacy, however, lies in his reign over the first unified and centrally governed state, one that would later become Cambodia.

Although a number of Angkorian kings built little or nothing, those who enjoyed prolonged periods of prosperity and peace typically followed a three-stage construction programme: an initial irrigation network often including vast reservoirs; the subsequent creation of statues in honour of deceased parents or ancestors; and finally, the construction of a mountain temple dedicated to the ruling king himself.¹ This tradition culminated in Jayavarman VII's vastly extravagant thirteenth century Angkor Thom city complex. Not surprisingly though, the demands of Jayavarman's vast architectural programme are often cited by historians as a major contributory factor to the empire's eventual decline around the mid-fifteenth century (Jacques and Freeman, 1997).

Once Angkor had been looted in about 1432 C.E., the locus of regional power shifted towards Siam, heralding the beginning of an undistinguished period in Cambodian history that would last for over 400 years. No longer the seat of South-East Asia's greatest military power, Angkor's much reduced population distilled into a collection of rural villages focused around Theravada Buddhist monastic communities. As the centuries passed, Angkor's intense tropical climate and surrounding forest savagely attacked any abandoned wooden vernacular architecture as well as the more resilient religious stone structures. As a consequence, by the time the first European explorers reached Angkor in the mid-nineteenth century, most famously the French botanist Henri Mouhot in 1860, they encountered a labyrinth of monumental structures entangled with tree roots and lichen. Despite the presence of numerous local villages, it was the very aesthetics of Angkor's seemingly abandoned, wild landscape that fuelled Mouhot's largely mythical account of 'discovering' Angkor as a 'lost' civilization.

While Mouhot's claims of discovery have come to be seen as highly dubious in the light of reports from earlier Asian, Spanish and Portuguese travellers, he did awaken the interest of Europe to the existence of Angkor; an interest that eventually led to the formation of the research body *École Française d'Étrême Orient* (EFEO) in 1901.² As a scholarly appendage to the French protectorate, EFEO created a conservation and development programme for Angkor that was to last for well over half a century.

Framed by the context of a colonial administration, the French reinforced the sense of Angkor as an abandoned landscape in order to represent the post-Angkorian period in terms of decline and decay, and Khmer culture as lost, even as dead.³ By forging an

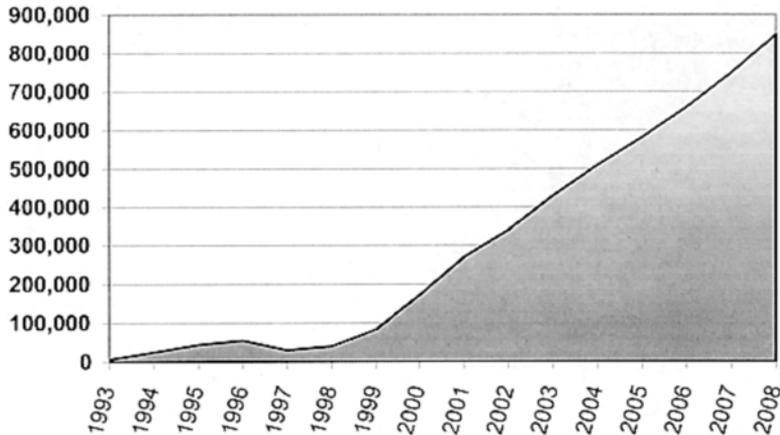


Figure 1. Graph of current and predicted Angkor ticket sales
(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2000)

historiography around the activities of monumental conservation and archaeology at Angkor, the French legitimated their colonial presence via promises of restoring the Khmer race, nation and culture to its former glory.⁴ Interestingly, this account of the country's history still pervades the Khmer psyche and sense of national identity today. Indeed, for perhaps more than any country in the world, it is hard to overestimate the deeply symbolic national significance of Angkor within contemporary Cambodia, not least because of the suffering endured in recent decades.

As Cambodia remained largely closed to outside expertise under the totalitarian regime of Pol Pot and the Vietnamese socialist occupation of the 1980s, Angkor's conservation programme only regained the momentum of EFEO's earlier efforts during the early 1990s.⁵ As Angkor formally came under the umbrella of the World Heritage Committee in December 1992, the International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of Angkor (ICC) was created in order to oversee the international efforts to protect this newly listed world heritage site.

The ICC currently consists of 13 member countries and with UNESCO serving as its standing secretariat the committee incorporates all the major international and domestic organizations involved in Angkor's management. In meeting twice a year to review both technical and strategic issues relating to Angkor, the ICC's remit revolves around two closely integrated goals: first, the conservation of the temples and surrounding area; and second, the development of the site particularly in relation to a rapidly expanding tourism industry.

Indeed, despite a political coup in 1997, Cambodia's tourism industry has been steadily accelerating from its embryonic levels of the early 1990s. Around 85 per cent of all tourists entering the country visit Angkor and recent ticket sales figures indicate a staggering 30 per cent growth year on year with a similar pattern predicted for the future, as indicated below.⁶

Perhaps somewhat belatedly, UNESCO and other transnational bodies such as the World Tourism Organization (WTO) have recently brought to Cambodia a language of 'Cultural Tourism' as a response to this new era. In essence, a framework of cultural tourism represents an attempt to bring together the cultural resources of a country with the economic benefits of tourism in a mutually beneficial relationship. It endeavours to

reap the optimum social and financial rewards of tourism whilst affording protection to the cultural assets it draws upon. For this reason, there is a common association with ideas of 'quality tourism'. In an effort to minimize any negative socio-cultural impacts, a framework of cultural tourism creates both quantitative and qualitative boundaries of exclusion. For example, there is an implicit resistance to large numbers of 'low quality' visitors, as indicated in a recent UNESCO publication:

The challenge will be to improve the quality of the experience, while increasing the capacity of the sites to meet the demand and to develop facilities for cultural tourism so as to prevent the onslaught of low quality mass tourism provoking irreversible destruction of Angkor's cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO, 1996:157).

Although this statement refers to the need to improve 'the quality of the [tourist] experience' and safeguard a 'natural heritage', the discursive inclinations of the ICC have led to cultural tourism policies overwhelmingly prioritizing the protection of Angkor's monumental culture. In constructing subsequent tourism strategies around a somewhat vague notion of a 'high quality' destination, there is an inadequate appreciation of the need to protect how the site is imagined, practiced and valued by tourists today. As Soja states, a realist illusion exists where culture is reduced to an 'objective materialism' because the 'imagined' is 'unseen, unmeasurable and therefore unknowable' (1996:64).

Some of the implications emanating from these limitations and ambiguities surrounding a cultural tourism framework will be explored in greater detail shortly. However, at this stage it can be acknowledged that such rhetoric aims to strengthen the social, political, and physical foundations of Cambodia's booming tourism industry, foundations that have been fundamentally undermined by the events of recent decades. It was within this delicate context that permission was controversially granted for the filming of the action movie *Tomb raider*.

Tomb raider

As a Tomb Raider she found a way of life, not a profession ... (Official Tomb Raider Website).⁷

In November 2000 the site of Angkor was used as a key location for the one hundred million dollar Paramount Pictures film production: *Tomb raider*. The film is based on the world's most popular computer game of the same name, the success of which has largely emanated from the popularity of the central character Lara Croft: 'a 21st century superwoman' (Mahesh, 2001). In their conception, both the game and the film are firmly rooted in the realms of a computer generated virtual world, catering for the demands of instantaneous, 'spectacular' entertainment. In its style of 'Indiana Jones meets James Bond with a female protagonist' (Berardinelli, 2001) *Tomb raider* firmly locates itself in this long established and successful 'Hollywood' film genre.

More radically though, the film producers reversed the game's original process of mimicking the physical world in the game's virtual environment. In re-humanizing the computer-generated *cyborg*, Lara Croft, she was given both superhuman movements and physical proportions. Moreover, as one of the film's set designers stated 'we had to create a reality that didn't actually exist'.⁸ True to its post-modern conceptualization,

Tomb raider not only dissolved the boundaries between the physical and virtual, but also rejected any distinctions between high and mass culture, something clearly evident in the film's portrayal of Angkor.

As scenes of Angkor combined real and fictitious sets, the temples succumbed to a flow of free floating, disembedded imaginary texts through the familiar 'Hollywood' stereotyping of ancient civilizations. The use of 'Egyptian style' hieroglyphic reliefs and secret underground crypts housing lost treasure—something completely alien to Angkor's architecture—demonstrated little concern for a representational integrity of Angkor's cultural and historical particularities. With the film's central characters travelling to 'dangerous and mysterious locales around the globe in search of rare, lost crypts and long-forgotten empires',⁹ both Angkor and Cambodian Theravada Buddhist culture were rendered from a superficial and Orientalist palette.

In situating Angkor in the country's recent history, a number of themes explored in the film also proved to be highly contentious. The portrayal of temple destruction, the presence of guns, and the film's core concept of tomb raiding—an ironic coincidence considering Angkor's past history of looting—were all issues raised in the Cambodian media prior to filming.¹⁰

One scene, supposedly set in a crypt under the partially ruined temple of Ta Prohm, involves stone guardians becoming sword bearing demons by way of life restoring water, only to be subsequently shot and massacred by the 'bad guys' as well as the film's heroine Lara Croft. In response to this scene, one Cambodian viewer responded, 'for the first time Angkor has been brought to life for the world to see, only to be chopped down again'.

Accordingly, it is suggested here that the fusion of the Angkor site and the film into an 'action packed fantasy that will please thrill-seekers of every ilk'¹¹ is far from congruous with the aspirations of developing Angkor as a site of 'high quality, cultural tourism' referred to earlier. Having established such a contradiction between *Tomb raider* and the underlying vision for Angkor's future, the factors which allowed such a project to take place illuminate many aspects of the site's management and the fragility of its broader context, as I shall now indicate.

Managing Angkor

Having illuminated the clash of 'cultures' between *Tomb raider* and visions of cultural tourism, I now turn to the contributory factors that facilitated the inclusion of Angkor in the film. It will be seen that certain structural and bureaucratic particularities within both local and internationally based institutions, along with Cambodia's broader political and economic circumstances, enabled the project to go ahead.

One of the key conditions of world heritage listing laid down by the World Heritage Committee was a designated Cambodian run management body: namely APSARA (Authority for the Protection and Safeguarding of the Angkor Region).¹² Conceived from within the ICC's framework for Angkor, APSARA reflected both the disciplinary and structural strengths and weaknesses of the ICC. Indeed, the focus of both organizations was primarily architecture, archaeology and mostly significantly, a concern for the physical conservation of the temples themselves.

In the case of APSARA, although three separate departments were created,—Culture and Monuments, Urban Development and Tourism—it was clear that the resources and organizational power lay with the former. Moreover, the organization's disposition was forged from the top downwards with architects consistently employed in the position of

executive director; more recently this being His Excellency Vann Molyvann, undoubtedly Cambodia's most prominent, but ageing, architect of the twentieth century. Such an organizational culture was undoubtedly justifiable in the early 1990s when the priority was emergency conservation. However, by the year 2000, the case of *Tomb raider* clearly illustrated the severe limitations of APSARA's management capacity for coping with a new era of international interest, whether that be in the form of tourism or film production companies.

As indicated above, conservation was the pivotal concept for APSARA. Crucially though, it was an understanding of conservation framed by a discourse of architectural restoration. By implication, this rooted conservation in the realms of the physical, with an inadequate appreciation of the imaginary dimensions of Angkor's protection. Although certain criteria were insisted upon, such as Cambodia being actually named, APSARA had little control over Angkor's representation and remained unsure as to how it would be portrayed in the film.¹³ This was compounded by the fact that any copyright laws that could protect the *image* of Angkor, as they do at other world heritage sites, have yet to reach Cambodia.

Yet in understanding why a project such as *Tomb raider* was allowed to progress we also have to look further afield to the role of the international community. The autonomy enjoyed by APSARA, allowing it to sign such a contract, stems from the ICC's need to maintain a delicate paradigm of 'cooperation' in an advanced post-colonial context. Accordingly, throughout the 1990s UNESCO endeavoured to establish a Cambodian management authority that was self-funded, independent and autonomous; an empowered organization that represented a sustainable situation once the international community withdrew in the future. However, it was this very detached position that rendered UNESCO largely impotent regarding *Tomb raider*. The fact that UNESCO, both in France and Cambodia, learnt of the project through the media serves to illustrate this point. Moving quickly to condemn the project, UNESCO publicly warned, via the French press, of the possibility of Angkor being delisted as a World Heritage Site if any similar projects were undertaken in the future.¹⁴

However, had the ICC's and UNESCO's role at Angkor been configured differently it is quite possible their position as mere passive observers could have been avoided. With the ICC meeting just twice a year to discuss past, present and future projects there is an inadequate infrastructure in place to facilitate the ongoing monitoring of APSARA's activities beyond these biannual meetings. More significantly, the committee's domination by architects and conservationists fails to generate any substantive dialogue concerning issues such as Angkor's representation in the global media. Indeed, the lack of interest in such matters was conspicuous in the absence of *Tomb raider* from the schedules of the two ICC conferences held either side of filming.

The Cambodian context

In looking beyond Angkor's immediate management framework, it is also clear that endorsement for the project came from within the ranks of the Cambodian government. Two overarching reasons can be cited for their position. Firstly, it was widely understood that in being the first international film to be shot in Cambodia for over 30 years, *Tomb raider* would bring much needed global attention to the country. The presence of a major film production was seen as another landmark in the ongoing rejuvenation of Cambodia's image on the international stage, and a departure from the prevailing themes of Pol Pot, genocide and civil war of recent decades. Secondly, the various channels of direct

and indirect income the film would generate was a fact not lost on many high-ranking officials within the government.

Somewhat ironically, the Cambodian authorities also recognized the positive impact *Tomb raider* would have on the country's tourism industry; an impact quite simply measured through increased numbers of tourists entering the country. The Royal Government justifiably perceives large scale tourism as a revenue source which will substantially alleviate the country's financial burden and socio-economic problems; and in so doing, respond to the calls of multilateral donors such as the Asian Development Bank and World Bank for improvements in the country's overall development.

Addressing the fundamental bonds between national development and domestic political arrangements, recent donor community conferences held in Tokyo and Paris, have also placed an increasing emphasis on improved standards of governance, accountability and transparency within recipient governments.¹⁵ In response to these demands, the high-profile, tangible infrastructure and economic improvements brought about with tourism development neatly provide evidence for governmental claims of ever healthier systems of political governance within Cambodia.

In recognising the Royal Government's positive orientation towards large-scale tourism, it can thus be seen that any distinction made between 'mass tourism' and the more refined 'cultural tourism' largely remains an external imposition, primarily via the presence of UNESCO or the WTO. Crucially, it is the very weaknesses in the internationally prescribed conceptualizations of tourism, as highlighted earlier, that shape how these potentially conflicting visions of Angkor's future interact.

The rhetoric of past UNESCO conferences and documentation on tourism in Cambodia clearly indicate that defining what actually constitutes 'cultural' or 'quality' in the Cambodian context remains somewhat elusive. The resultant conceptual vacuum allows the country's political leaders to largely undermine the international vision when so desired, fostering ambiguities and inconsistencies in policy formulation. More specifically, the conceptually weak language of cultural tourism advanced by the international community is reappropriated within a Cambodian political system dominated by short-termism, shortfalls in accountability and transparency, and an absence of long term sustainable planning.

The failure of the ICC and UNESCO to fully appreciate and conceptualize Angkor in terms of its role as a source of revenue for a country in need of drastic economic development meant that no legislative or regulatory frameworks were put in place for controlling projects of *Tomb raider*'s nature. In essence, *Tomb raider* was able to quietly go ahead without it being flagged up as a glaring contradiction to the international community's aspirations of developing Cambodia through a more refined form of 'cultural tourism'.

In presenting this analysis it should be noted that there is no attempt here to secure a position within the moral debates concerning Angkor's role in the film per se; rather, this paper sets out merely to highlight the conflicting juxtaposition of a mass audience project which rejects any claims of 'high' cultural refinement alongside a prevailing discourse of tourism development resting on a terminology of 'high quality, cultural' experiences.

The tourist encounter

While there are undoubtedly a wealth of examples illustrating how *Tomb raider* has already reconfigured the Angkorian tourist encounter, the aim here is briefly to explore

the film's impact on the practice of tourism at one of Angkor's main temple sites: Preah Khan.

Along with the similar Ta Prohm, where scenes of *Tomb raider* were actually shot, Preah Khan is one of two sites at Angkor actively being conserved as a partial ruin. Under the joint management of APSARA and the World Monument Fund (WMF), the temple is being prepared for increased levels of tourism in the coming years. To this end, the WMF project director is considering creating specific routes for tourists across the site in order for them:

... to experience Preah Khan the way it should be experienced. In an effort to both protect the fragile structure of the temple and improve the quality of the experience for the visitor, we are considering directing tourists through the temple in the correct order of East to West.¹⁶

Clearly, in addition to monumental conservation, the WMF are attempting to improve the 'quality of the tourist's experience'¹⁷ by invoking a more authentic spatial narrative across the site via imposed routing. However, post *Tomb raider* interviews conducted with tourists illustrate how the film has generated competing narratives. In his discussion of tourism as practice, Crouch (1999) has recently emphasized the intrinsic relationship between the physical and imaginary realms of the tourist encounter. Crucially, viewing tourists as subjects 'rather than, say, consumers' (1999:1) means tourism is a process of agency involving complex social relations and negotiations rather than a product fixed in time or space. In this light, tourism at Angkor becomes 'an encounter, an encounter between people, between people and space' (ibid.:1), but also an encounter between material and imagined spaces. As Crouch puts it;

Tourism happens in spaces. That space may be material, concrete and surround our own bodies ... [but it] may also be metaphorical and even imaginative (ibid.:2).

Rather than seeing tourists at Preah Khan as passive consumers of a 'cultural heritage site', understanding the tourist encounter as practice illuminates the ways in which spatial consumption is an act of reflexive, creative production; one that is framed by disparate and layered 'imagined geographies' (Edensor, 1998).

Inspired by narratives of nineteenth century colonial exploration, modern-day tourism at Angkor is often framed by visions of discovery and adventure. Lara Croft's virtual role as an adventurous, all-conquering heroine reinvents that vision, playfully informing the tourist's encounter with the site of Preah Khan. In explaining why she climbed over the temple's delicate rooftops, one Canadian tourist explained it made her 'feel like Lara Croft exploring the jungled ruins of Angkor'. As Philips (1999) suggests, spaces of consumption are made meaningful through particular 'popular' narratives and stories. The exploits of Lara Croft created a new spatial narrative for that tourist, a narrative which not only undermines the more restrained routings desired by the World Monument Fund, but one that also contests their ideological notions of a 'quality experience'.

As local guides proudly incorporate *Tomb raider* stories and routes into their tours around Angkor, the production of space that is tourism practice, is rendered a fusion of diverse, interweaving spatial and imaginary texts, some of which are far from consistent with APSARA's, WMF's or the ICC's aspirations of 'high quality, cultural tourism.' Moreover, as the site enters an arena of global tourist 'spectacles', where the boundaries between authenticities, realities and fantasies become increasingly blurred, Philips' claim that 'the stories that theme parks tell are those of the empire and of

colonial adventure' (1999:106) reminds us of the strong parallels between the world of Disney and the narratives surrounding Angkor. MacCannell's (1992) concerns for today's World Heritage Sites eroding into 'empty meeting grounds' through a subversive discourse of commodified tourism seem particularly pertinent in the case of a post *Tomb raider* Angkor.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explore the contradiction between ideas of heritage as an imaginary vision of Angkor's management and the reduction of the site to a culturally and historically disembedded visual spectacle. The arguments presented here highlight the impact of media representations on World Heritage Sites, understood as practiced tourist spaces, in an age of playful, ironic and post-authentic tourism encounters.

As noted earlier, the analysis here is not a critique of Angkor's role in *Tomb raider* per se, rather it sets out to raise the contentious juxtaposition of a media project which dispenses with any aspirations of 'high' cultural refinement alongside a prevailing discourse of tourism development resting on a terminology of 'high quality, cultural' tourism. Accordingly, a number of important issues emanate from this analysis regarding Angkor's managerial and developmental frameworks, not to mention its delicate position within today's struggling Cambodia.

The arguments presented above have indicated how Angkor's management framework, both on a national and international level, is dominated by discourses of architectural conservation and archaeology. It has also been suggested that in its quest to safeguard the actual cultural resources and present a 'high quality' tourist experience, the 'objective materialism' of cultural tourism leaves little scope for nuanced understandings of how Angkor is valued and encountered by tourists. The brief look at the touristic encounter at Preah Khan temple serves to illustrate this point.

Furthermore, the paper has suggested that a situation of detached cooperation by attendant international bodies such as UNESCO means visions of conservation and tourism development are prone to subversion by competing localized agendas. Indeed, it has been indicated how Angkor's largely autonomous management body operates within a domestic political environment with a less than ideal system of governance and one that is driven by the needs of country-wide socio-economic development.

The case of *Tomb raider* illustrates how Angkor, as a contested landscape in conceptual, imaginary and pragmatic terms, is subject to forces and agendas that somewhat elude the regulatory frameworks of the various bodies currently overseeing its development.¹⁸

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Notes

1. See Chandler, (1996:36) for description of the three phase construction programme instigated by Indravarman I from 877 C.E.
2. For a detailed account of various previous encounters with Angkor by both European

and Asian travellers and activities of EFEO see Dagens (1995), *Angkor: heart of an Asian empire*.

3. For an insightful account of the invention and construction of Khmer culture during the decades of the French Protectorate see Groslier (1986), *L'image d'Angkor dans la conscience Khmère*.

4. For detailed account of the politicized relationship between race, nation, and culture within the French construction of Cambodia see Edwards (1999), *Cambodge: the cultivation of a nation 1860–1945*.

5. It is worth noting that the 1980s also witnessed the restoration efforts, albeit on a significantly smaller scale, of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). See Ciochin and James (1994), *The glory that was Angkor*.

6. Data revealing the high percentage of tourists that enter Cambodia visiting Angkor have been taken from: Ministry of Tourism, *Cambodia Tourism Statistical Report 2000*, Phnom Penh: Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia, 2000.

7. Available at: <http://www.tombraidermovie.com> on 10/10/01.

8. Quoted from MTV Documentary, *Tomb raider: making the movie*, MTV Asia: Aired May-June, 2001.

9. Official Tomb Raider Website, available at: <http://www.tombraidermovie.com> on 10/10/01.

10. See P. Kyne, Jolie and 'Tomb raider' set to storm Angkor Wat, *Phnom Penh Post* 9 (18), 01/09/00.

11. Quoted from Official Tomb Raider Press Release, Siem Reap, December 2000.

12. English version translated from the French original: Autorité pour la sauvegarde et l'aménagement de la région d'Angkor.

13. For further details see T. Winter, Surviving the raiders of Angkor Wat, *Phnom Penh Post*, 9 (25), 08/12/00.

14. In a letter addressed to H.E. Vann Molyvann, UNESCO's Deputy Director of Culture, M. Bouchenaki stated: 'I wish to bring to your attention the violent and warrior-like character of Lara Croft, the heroine of [the *Tomb raider* video game], which has little connection with the image of Angkor that Cambodian authorities, the international community and UNESCO plan to present to the world'. Cited in *Asiaweek*, 27 (8), 02/03/01.

15. Reference here is made to recent Consultative Group Meetings held for Cambodia in June 2000, Paris and Tokyo 2001. See www.worldbank.org for further information on issues of Cambodian governance and international aid.

16. Interview with J. Sanday (WMF Project Director), Siem Reap, Cambodia 10/03/01.

17. Op. cit.

18. A previous version of this paper was published in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 8 (4), 2002.

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