

Phnom Bakheng Update February 2011



On February 12, 2011 Glenn Boornazian, Director of Projects at Angkor for World Monuments Fund, joined United States Ambassador to Cambodia Carol A. Rodley and her guests at Phnom Bakheng to review conservation work in progress. The US Department of State is the most significant funder of WMF's Phnom Bakheng project, which is undertaken in close coordination with APSARA Authority. Since the Ambassador's last visit in 2010 much has been accomplished.



Aerial View Phnom Bakheng circa 1920



Current WMF Worksite at Phnom Bakheng



Glenn Boornazian describing work in progress

WMF employs more than 100 Cambodians made up of professionals, administrators and craftsmen at three project sites: Phnom Bakheng, Angkor Wat, and Preah Khan. The Ambassador's visit was an opportunity for Cambodian craftspeople and professionals working on the site to explain current activities at Phnom Bakheng and demonstrate the expertise required to undertake the work and the range of training activities that have been organized in concert with the ongoing conservation program.



APSARA Authority and UNESCO's Ad Hoc Experts Committee for Angkor have approved WMF's methodology and use of materials at the site. A crane installed in an earlier phase of the project continues to be essential to the smooth maintenance of the work plan. The ingenuity that was necessary to have the crane arrive on top of the hill safely remains one of the most exciting moments of the project.

Crane in use

Vincent Liot, an international expert working with WMF, trains WMF staff to install the water-proof membrane to prevent water infiltration of support stones at Phnom Bakheng. The water-proof membrane will not be visible once the work is complete. It is also fully reversible.



In February 2011, WMF carried out the second phase of its Brick Shrine Workshop, initiated in June 2010. Assisted by UNESCO Ad Hoc member Giorgio Croci, a distinguished preservation engineer who has worked at Angkor for more than a decade, great progress was made to develop effective procedures for structural stabilization and conservation of brick shrines, which are an important feature of the Phnom Bakheng temple complex. What we learn here will be applied to other brick shrines in the Angkor Archaeological Park, as similar brick shrines are present throughout the ancient city of Angkor.



Giorgio Croci adjusts the jacking system



Jacks installed to reposition displaced masonry



Giorgio Croci inspects results of repositioned masonry

Working closely with the APSARA Authority, WMF is developing a preliminary tourist management plan; the first phase of which will be implemented later in 2011 to protect the monument from being overwhelmed by large numbers of tourists who visit the site each day to see the sunset. The intent is to encourage more frequent visits to the site by visitors throughout the day, rather than only arriving during the last hour of daylight.