NOTES
NOTES ON ANGKOR WAT
S. SIVARAKSA*

In March 1982 I went to Phnom Penh and proceeded to Angkor by car. I had
been to Phnom Penh before in 1972, 1980 and 1981, but 1982 was the first time that I
had ever visited Angkor. I may perhaps claim that I was the first Thai to visit Angkor
properly since the break-down of the diplomatic relationship between Siam and Cam-
bodia during Sihanouk’s period in the 1950s. During Lon Nol’s regime, although the
Thai and the Khmer Governments had good diplomatic relations, neither could visit
Angkor, which was under the control of the Khmer Rouge.

During Pol Pot’s regime, there were a few flights from Bangkok directly to
Siamriep for a brief visit of Angkor, but that was only for tourists, who only had a
few hours to look at the ancient monuments.

For my part, I took a Thai cameraman with me. We travelled by car, from
Phnom Penh, with a chauffeur as well as a Khmer interpreter. It took us over 11
hours to reach Battambang where we had to spend our first night before we proceeded
to Siamriep the next day. At Siamriep we stayed at the Grand Hotel which was very
much run down. Hardly was there any electricity and we had to bathe in the klong
nearby. Yet the Khmer Government charged us as if we were in a first class hotel.
We also had to pay for the car, interpreter, guide etc. It cost me and my cameraman
a fortune, as we are not rich Americans or Japanese. However, we had the ancient
monuments to ourselves. We spent three nights in Siamriep and two nights in Battam-
bang, and we had a good look at many temples in Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom and the
environs. Of course we needed at least a week more to do justice to the great
monuments, yet, since I felt so privileged I asked my photographer to take time in
photographing what I thought to be very important to us historically, especially the
inscriptions at Angkor Wat on Suriyavoraman II’s troops to fight the Cham, particularly:

(1) เนื้อ ซ้าย ถูก (ณ แฟ้มถูก)
(2) อนุฎ ราชกฤণ ภาค ปราชญ เพลง ฉลาด ด น้า ซ้าย ถูก (ข้าราชการราชกฤณ
แห่งเมืองเชียงใหม่ ชื่อ ราชกฤณ)
(3) พระ หมู่ เซ้ง อุย ศรี ชัยสิริ พระชนม์ ก้าลุ กิ่ง น้า ฟล โด (พระกรมเก่ง อุย
ศรี ชัยสิริ พระชนม์ โนปปั้น น้า ฟลตลอด)

* Asian Cultural Forum on Development, Bangkok.
Figure 1. The author at Angkor Wat, March 1982.

Figure 2. "Siamese leader" with his troops joining Suryavaraman II's army against the Chams.
Figure 3. Detail of "Siamese troops"

Figure 4. Inscription next to the 'Siamese troops'
Figure 5. Inscription ฉันทุ ราชถวายสมย ภาค ปิ่น
แย่ง มาล ค นา สร้าง ขุน

Figure 6. Inscription พระ ภูมิลิ้น อุบ คุ้ใน ชัยสิ่ง
มหาภูภูมิ กำลัง ไพร นา ฟล โตว
Figure 8. The author being interviewed by USSR television at Angkor Wat, February 1983, about destruction and conservation of the historic monuments.

Figure 7. The author at Angkor in February 1983 pointing at the នំំ សំរៃ កោះ inscription which had been destroyed in June 1982.
On my return to Bangkok, I had the slides shown to accompany my lectures at the Siam Society in Thai once and in English once. I also had a Thai book published (อนุสัตจานันควัต โดย ส. ศิวภักข์ ศุภชัย คัดปั่นโทษศิลป์ ภ้ายา наук ศุภ์พัฒน์วัฒนธรรมแห่งวังนารีจัตุริม� ณ เดือนที่ 2924).

In February 1983, I was again invited to attend a Peace Conference in Phnom Penh. Without any expectation, we were all flown to Siamriep one day for a brief visit of Angkor Wat. I thought I would enjoy the magnificent monuments again. Unfortunately when I inspected the inscriptions on ปรา่ เสิร์ม (s., it was badly damaged, apparently by wanton gunshots. This time there were three other Thai journalists present as well as others. So I made a great fuss and they took my photograph pointing at the damage. The Russian television man interviewed me on the spot so I complained bitterly that more care should be given by all concerned in preserving such important monuments.

On my way home via Hanoi, again I pleaded with the Deputy Vietnamese Foreign Minister as well as with the Vice Chairman of the National Committee of Social Sciences about better conservation of Angkor. Both agreed with me and said they would pass my concerns to the appropriate authorities in the area.

Unfortunately what has been lost can never again be replaced. Let us hope that other inscriptions will be well preserved for future generations of mankind.