

## Preah Vihear (Cambodia)

No 1224

*Official name as proposed by the State Party:* The Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear

*Location:* Kantuot Commune, Choam Ksan District, Kingdom of Cambodia

*Brief description:*

The buildings that make up this sanctuary dedicated to Shiva, located on the edge of a plateau that dominates the plain of Cambodia, were built in the first half of the 11th century AD and form the most important sanctuary built during the reign of King Sūryavarman I (1002–50), who seized power at Angkor around 1006.

*Category of property:*

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a site.

### 1. BASIC DATA

*Included in the Tentative List:* 1 September 1992

*International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination* No

*Date received by the World Heritage Centre:* 30 January 2006  
28 January 2008

*Background:* This nomination was examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 31<sup>st</sup> session (Christchurch, 2007).

The World Heritage Committee adopted the following decision (31 COM 8B.24):

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-07/31.COM/8B and WHC-07/31.COM/INF.8B.1,*

2. *Having taken note of the following statement by the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee which has been agreed to by the Delegation of Cambodia and the Delegation of Thailand:*

*“The State Party of Cambodia and the State Party of Thailand are in full agreement that the Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear has Outstanding Universal Value and must be inscribed on the World Heritage List as soon as possible. Accordingly, Cambodia and Thailand agree that Cambodia will propose the site for*

*formal inscription on the World Heritage List at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee in 2008 with the active support of Thailand.*

*They also agree that the site is in need of urgent attention and requires international financial and technical assistance and close cooperation between them. They further agree that it is essential to strengthen conservation and management at the site including by the development of an appropriate management plan, as required under paragraph 108 of the Operational Guidelines, which will ensure the future protection of this property. They understand, following consultation with the World Heritage Centre, that financial and technical assistance for the development of a management plan will be available through the World Heritage Centre’s International Assistance programme.”*

3. *Recognizes that the **Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear** is of great international significance and has Outstanding Universal Value on the basis of criteria (i), (iii) and (iv), agrees in principle that it should be inscribed on the World Heritage List and notes that the process for inscription is in progress;*

4. *Requests the State Party of Cambodia to strengthen conservation and management at the site by making progress in developing an appropriate management plan, which progress will enable its formal inscription by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008;*

5. *Further requests the State Party of Cambodia to submit a progress report to the World Heritage Centre, by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2008.*

On 28th January 2008, the State Party submitted documentation demonstrating the progress made with a Management Plan for the site. This included assessments of the extent of the property and its relationship with the surrounding landscape, and included comments on boundaries.

This documentation summarised specific advice from a number of experts from around the world and the outcome of an expert workshop in Cambodia from 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> January 2008. This workshop was organised in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008 the State Parties of Cambodia and Thailand submitted a joint Communique. This stated that:

1. *The Kingdom of Thailand supports the inscription, at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee (Quebec, Canada, July 2008), of the Temple of Preah Vihear on the World Heritage List proposed by the Kingdom of Cambodia, the perimeter of which is identified as N. 1 in the map prepared by the Cambodian authorities and herewith attached. The map also includes, identified as N.2, a buffer zone to the East and South of the Temple.*

2. *In the spirit of goodwill and conciliation, the Kingdom of Cambodia accepts that the Temple of Preah Vihear be nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List without at this stage a buffer zone on the northern and western areas of the Temple.*

3. The map mentioned in paragraph 1 above shall supersede the maps concerning and including the "Schéma Directeur pour le Zonage de Preah Vihear" as well as all the graphic references indicating the "core zone" and other zoning (zonage) of the Temple of Preah Vihear site in Cambodia's nomination file;

4. Pending the results of the work of the Joint Commission for Land Boundary (JBC) concerning the northern and western areas surrounding the Temple of Preah Vihear, which are identified as N. 3 in the map mentioned in paragraph 1 above, the management plan of these areas will be prepared in a concerted manner between the Cambodian and Thai authorities in conformity with the international conservation standards with a view to maintain the outstanding universal value of the property. Such management plan will be included in the final management plan for the Temple and its surrounding areas to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre by 1st February 2010 for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010;

5. The inscription of the Temple of Preah Vihear on the World Heritage List shall be without prejudice to the rights of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Kingdom of Thailand on the demarcation works of the Joint Commission for Land Boundary (JBC) of the two countries;

The map referred to in the above Communiqué was received on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

This defines the core area (N.1) as being the monument and the immediate area surrounding it and is thus considerably smaller than the area originally nominated as core. It excludes much of the promontory on which the main monument sits, including the caves in its cliffs and the monumental staircase to the east. On the map, only a general area, with no boundaries, is indicated for the buffer zone (N.2) and for the area of joint management (N.3). It is not clear if the buffer zone to south and east is as extensive as that proposed in the original nomination, as the new map does not cover the extent of those areas.

No revisions have been received to the Nomination dossier to reflect these changes to the boundaries.

*Consultations:* ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management.

*Literature consulted (selection):*

Jacques, C, *L'empire khmer, cités et sanctuaires*, Paris, 2004.

*Technical Evaluation Mission:* 23–29 October 2006. No further mission has been undertaken.

*Additional information requested and received from the State Party:* ICOMOS sent a letter to the State party on 15 December 2006, and the State party submitted information on 3 January 2007.

*Date of ICOMOS approval of this report:*

25 June 2008

## 2. THE PROPERTY

The text in this section was given in the 2007 ICOMOS evaluation report.

### *Description*

#### *The architecture*

The property is situated on a promontory of the Dangrek Range, 547m above the Cambodian Plain, known as Phnom Preah Vihear (Sacred Hermitage Mountain), close to the modern border with Thailand. It is roughly triangular in shape, defined by steep cliffs. The southern extremity of the promontory juts out to form a natural recess that is a sacred place, commanding a vast panorama, the wide expanse of land lying to the south up to Mount Koulên, the cradle of the Khmer civilisation.

The northern part of the property is an almost horizontal sandstone platform, c.100m long north–south and 50m wide, which gives access to the Temple and to the village of Phnom Kulên.

Like many Cambodian monuments, this sanctuary consists of a succession of courtyards on a common axis (though the north-south axis here is somewhat unusual). The sandstone blocks that were used posed enormous handling problems, and there is some indication that the entire south-west part of the property was in effect worked as a quarry.

Access is now by means of a steep, recently constructed track through the forest from the village, which houses soldiers and their families, as well as some Buddhist monks living at the pagoda, which also serves as a school. From here two paths lead to the temple, one passing through a village (Pjum Prasat), wholly dedicated to shops and other facilities for visitors; some 550 people live there.

Preah Vihear shares certain characteristics with other monuments in the north and east of Cambodia:

- It has an axial plan 800m long in which *gopuras* (gateway towers) and streets succeed one another on the way to the temple.
- It comprises outer buildings that are much larger than the sanctuary itself.
- There is considerable use of light materials such as tiled timber roofs.

To the north a 54m monumental stairway with 159 steps leads to a 25m long pavement flanked by enormous rampant *nâgas* (snakes). From here three steps reach the first of the *gopuras* (No. 5). This is cruciform in plan and originally had a pitched wooden roof supported on pillars. Two paths join here – one from Thailand, by means of the monumental stairway, and one from the Cambodian plain, by means of the rock-cut eastern stairway (10m wide, dropping some 400m steeply on the eastern flank of the promontory), now excluded from the core area.

From *Gopura* No. 5 another long pavement rises to *Gopura* No. 4 (similar in form to No. 5), with a large rock-cut water tank with steps around. There is another, smaller tank beside the pavement leading to *Gopura* No. 3. This, too, is cruciform in plan. On either side of the main gateway there are symmetrical U-shaped galleries ending in a long hall of a type known from other sites. Their function is unknown; the custom has grown up of calling them ‘palaces,’ although they were in all probability monastic.

*Gopura* No. 2 is reached at the end of another pavement, also lined with *nāgas*. It is similar in form to No. 3, but without the ‘palaces.’ It opens on to a large rectangular hall with rooms on either side, designated ‘libraries’, built in sandstone with a brick vaulted roof.

The sanctuary is enclosed by two groups of galleries laid out in cloister form, foreshadowing the ‘cruciform cloisters’ of Angkor Vat. The central enclosure is accessible only by the three passages coming from *Gopura* No. 1 and two small openings to east and west. The southern side is closed by *Gopura* No. 1 and the northern side by a structure which is in effect a false gate. Instead of opening out on the vast spaces of the Cambodian plain, it presents a blank face. The layout thus presents an increasingly closed aspect, until at the end all that is visible is the sky.

#### *The architectural decoration*

The finest decoration is to be found on the *gopuras*, many of which are in an excellent state of conservation and clearly visible. The compositions of the sculptures on the lintels, pillars, pilasters, and elsewhere are varied, complex, highly detailed, and harmonious, representing Hindu gods and other religious figures such as Shiva, Vishnu, Indra, and Krishna.

#### *Constructional techniques and materials*

The principal material of all the buildings at Preah Vihear is sandstone from the site itself. Structurally they have load-bearing outer walls integrated with alignments of monolithic columns linked by monolithic lintels that are decorated with religious or mythical scenes.

Laterite blocks faced with sandstone are used where foundations were needed for columns. Where the ground had to be raised because of the steep slopes, sandstone rubble was used.

Brick was also used at Preah Vihear because it was easier to bring up from the plains on the Cambodian side than the sandstone from the site itself. Small bricks were used for the construction of corbelled vaulting.

Apart from the central sanctuary, all the buildings had wooden roofs covered with fired tiles.

#### *History and development*

At the outset Preah Vihear housed an eremitic community. On the cliffs some caves in which the hermits lived, a feature of the Khmer landscape, can still be seen there. The foundation of the hermitage is often

associated with the erection of a sanctuary by Prince Indrāyudha, son of King Jayavarman II, at the command of Shiva at the beginning of the 9th century. He installed there a portion of the great *lingam* from Vat Phou. However, the origins of Preah Vihear were probably earlier. Indrāyudha’s building was a modest wooden structure, on the site of the existing stone building, and only minor modifications were made by successive Khmer rulers in the 10th century.

There are four Khmer and Sanskrit inscriptions from the property that provide valuable dating material, confirming the close association of King Sūryavarman I with the erection of the present complex. He erected engraved pillars (*lingams*) at various points in his extensive lands, bearing his name and title, *Sūryavarmeshvara* (Lord Sūryavarman), and one of these was raised at Preah Vihear at the beginning of the 11th century, again at the command of Shiva. This was sited next to the earlier temple, which was soon rebuilt in sandstone as part of the overall campaign of extension and improvement of the temple.

By around 1050 new construction had reached *Gopura* No. 3, but it then proceeded more slowly, partly because of the difficult nature of the land and frequent landslips. The complex was not completed until the 12th century, when King Sūryavarman II entrusted the work to one of his best architects, Divākarapandita.

Ownership of the property was the subject of considerable negotiation in the 19th and early 20th centuries between the French and Thai Governments. A treaty of 1904 assigned it to France, of which Cambodia was at that time a protectorate. It was reclaimed by Thailand in 1934 and occupied six years later. It was not until 1962 that the International Court of Justice in The Hague confirmed ownership by the newly independent state of Cambodia.

The site was closed from the 1970s because of the troubled history of Cambodia during more than two decades. Fortunately, its remoteness meant that Preah Vihear suffered very little damage over that period, even though it had been mined by the Khmer Rouge, who did not move out until 1998.

### **3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY**

#### *Integrity and Authenticity*

##### *Integrity*

The original plan of the Temple of Preah Vihear developed in the 9th–12th centuries, and all its component parts have survived to the present day so that it is possible to trace its complex history. Some parts, such as the Sanctuary, have partially collapsed as a result of natural phenomena, especially erosion by water, but the architecture has retained all its original characteristics. The natural panorama has not changed from what the hermits saw a thousand years ago.

In its 2007 evaluation, ICOMOS considered that the nominated property included all elements that express the

values of the property. The revised boundaries mean that while the whole of the linear temple complex is within the nominated area, the monumental rock staircase to the east is excluded as is most of the rock promontory on which the temple sits, although part to the east is included in the buffer zone. As is expressed in the nomination, Preah Vihear is inseparable from its surrounding landscape. Its values relate to its strategic position on the promontory of Phnom Preah Vihear (Sacred Hermitage Mountain), rising dramatically out of the Cambodian plain.

ICOMOS considers that the property has survived almost without change; it considers that the promontory on which the temple sits should be considered as part of the attributes of the property and thus integrity is to a degree compromised by its absence.

#### *Authenticity*

The evolution of the buildings and the techniques used in their construction are reflected in the materials used – wood, then sandstone, brick and laterite. No restoration of any magnitude has taken place at Preah Vihear since the clearance work of Henri Parmentier in 1929–30.

ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the property has survived intact.

#### *Comparative analysis*

According to the State Party, the monumental ensemble of Preah Vihear, which is inseparable from its surrounding landscape, can be differentiated from other Khmer monuments already on the World Heritage List.

The site of Angkor (Cambodia), which in fact is a series of cities, symbolises the high point of the civilisation of which it was the capital from the 9th to the 14th century. Preah Vihear differs from Angkor by virtue of the way in which it is inextricably linked with its landscape. Preah Vihear also has some unique structural features, notably the use of tiled timber roofs.

The temple of Vat Phou (Laos) and its associated structures within the Champassak landscape bears exceptional witness to the formation of the pre-Angkor and Angkor civilisations in political and social as well as religious terms, whereas Preah Vihear is exclusively religious in nature.

ICOMOS considers that this analysis is valid. Preah Vihear vividly demonstrates the intimate link between site and landscape and between spiritual and natural values that is to be found at other properties on the World Heritage List such as Mont-Saint-Michel (France) or Meteora (Greece). All these properties illustrate the strong relationship between a religion and the material world by means of a powerful integration of architecture and its natural environment.

The above comparative analysis applies to the area originally nominated: the temple and its surrounding promontory. The justification for differentiating Preah Vihear as a religious ensemble from other Khmer monuments lies strongly in its relationship with its

surroundings. With the reduction in the nominated area to the temple alone, the analysis has been somewhat affected, as the setting of Preah Vihear is essential to understanding its values.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for inscription on the World Heritage List for the uniqueness of the relationship between the temple and the natural landscape.

#### *Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value*

The State Party considers that the property is of outstanding universal value for the following reasons:

- The Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear is distinguished by its exceptional natural environment, which is difficult of access and far away from major traffic arteries. This has permitted its 'natural' conservation up to the present time.
- This sacred ensemble is a rare example of the close relationship between a monument and its setting. In the 9th century it was a sheltered hermitage built in the caves of sheer 500m cliffs overlooking the plain of Cambodia. From the beginning of the 11th century, when it became a Royal temple, until at least the mid 12th century, it developed progressively into a long series of sanctuaries linked by over 800m of staircases and pavements.
- The Preah Vihear group is exceptional for three reasons. First, the natural site exhibits many contrasts – a promontory, sheer cliffs, a vast plain, a mountain range, and a natural environment stretching out of sight. Secondly, the quality of its architectural composition is adapted both to the constraints of the site and to religious traditions. Finally, the property is exceptional in terms of the quality of its carved stone ornamentation, which is based either on vegetation motifs or sometimes on scenes from Hindu mythology.

In the documentation received from the State Party in January 2008, the association with Hindu beliefs is further strengthened through the idea that the siting of the temple buildings on their massif in relation to mountain peaks to the east and west of the site, demonstrates an association with the Hindu divine triad of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. The vast Cambodian plain which spreads out in the foreground of the mountains is seen to unite these elements and provide the natural and spiritual setting of the monuments, essential for their understanding.

ICOMOS supports the justification put forward by the State Party. However, with the core zone being restricted to the temple and its immediate surroundings, and the temple thus being separated from its dramatic natural setting, the justification is no longer fully aligned with the boundaries put forward by the State Party and agreed by Thailand.

#### *Criteria under which inscription is proposed:*

The property is nominated on the basis of criteria (i), (iii), and (iv);

*Criterion (i): represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.*

The State Party justifies this criterion on the basis that The Temple of Preah Vihear is a unique architectural ensemble made up of a series of sanctuaries linked by a system of pavements and staircases on an axis c.800m long.

The site of the Temple and its environment today represent a particularly significant example of the Khmer genius for adapting monuments to their environment.

In its 2007 evaluation, ICOMOS concurred with the view that this ensemble, the broad composition of which is still especially clear, testifies to the Khmer genius for domesticating vast territories and adapting to the landscape. It went on to say that the property offers the visitor a magnificent landscape embracing nearly 360° of the plain below, a landscape opening out in front of the hermits' grottoes in the cliffs. Furthermore, ICOMOS considered that Preah Vihear is an outstanding masterpiece of Khmer architecture. It is very 'pure' both in plan and in the detail of its decoration.

With the revised boundaries, ICOMOS considers that this criterion could still be justified.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified.

*Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.*

The State Party justifies this criterion on the basis that the promontory at the end of the Dangrek Range dominating the plain is exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions of the hermitages. The caves in this 500m high cliff, which are accessible without too much danger from the crest of the promontory, enabled the hermits to settle there. Their presence led to the foundation of a sanctuary at the beginning of the 9th century on the promontory, from which the sacred ensemble visible today developed.

It is also suggested that the Preah Vihear ensemble bears exceptional witness to the capacity of the Khmer civilisation to make use of a difficult site over a long period as a settlement site and as a source of materials. In this way the mountain was levelled over a considerable area to permit the building of the temple. The sandstone extracted for this purpose was used as the building material for the temple.

In its 2007 evaluation, ICOMOS concurred with the view that the Preah Vihear ensemble bears exceptional witness to the capacity of the Khmer civilisation to make use of a difficult site over a long period as a settlement site and as a source of materials. It went on to say that in this way the mountain was levelled over a considerable area to permit the building of the temple. The sandstone extracted for this purpose was used as the building material for the temple. Also, Preah Vihear demonstrates an important interchange in human values and developments in art, architecture, planning, and landscape design.

In light of the revised boundary proposed by the State Party, and agreed by Thailand, excluding the cliffs, caves, and much of the overall promontory, ICOMOS considers that this criterion cannot be justified.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed justification for this criterion cannot be accepted for the new boundaries, but suggests that the criterion could be justified for an enlarged core area.

*Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.*

The State Party justifies this criterion on the basis that the Preah Vihear ensemble consists of the integrally connected temple and its environment: a natural landscape which is exceptional by virtue of its topography and the boundless view that it gives over the Cambodian plain. From whichever direction the temple is approached and viewed, the temple is indissolubly linked with the cliff upon which it sits and of which it is the expression.

In its 2007 evaluation, ICOMOS concurred with the view that the property should be understood at the different levels of its components: the temple, and in particular its delicately carved ornamentation of plant motifs and classical mythology, the sloping layout of the promontory jutting out from the steep slopes of the Mount Dangrek Range, the cliff and its profiles, and the plain with the natural panorama that it offers. It went on to say that the architectural ensemble is exceptional and the position of the Temple on a cliff edge site is particularly impressive. Stairs and historical access surviving for over a thousand years show a sophisticated technological understanding. The whole historic structure demonstrates the high point of a significant stage in human history.

In light of the revised boundary proposed by the State Party, and agreed by Thailand, excluding the cliffs, caves, and much of the overall promontory, ICOMOS considers that this criterion cannot be justified.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed justification for this criterion cannot be accepted for the new boundaries but suggests that the criterion could be justified for an enlarged core area.

Taking account of the revised boundaries, which encompass the temple, rather than the temple and much of the promontory on which it is sited, and the justifications put forward by the State Party for the criteria, ICOMOS considers that two of the criteria, (iii) and (iv), cannot be justified, as they were in the original evaluation.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (i) and that Outstanding Universal Value has been demonstrated.

#### 4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

##### *Development pressures*

Because the property is located in a remote and lightly populated area of Cambodia, there are no pressures related directly to development. It is also a national protected site.

In its 2007 report, ICOMOS commented on a village within the nominated property devoted to servicing tourists, an activity which is of considerable economic importance to the villagers. This village is now excluded from the nominated area.

##### *Anti-personnel mines*

The property was heavily mined during the Khmer Rouge period. The Cambodian Mine Action Centre has nearly finished clearing the area proposed for inscription. Some pockets remain to be dealt with on the north-east of the perimeter and close to the eastern stairway. After a short break this work began again in June 2006.

##### *Disputed frontier*

ICOMOS noted in its 2007 evaluation that, according to information provided to it by the World Heritage Centre, the precise location of the frontier between Cambodia and Thailand to the north of the nominated site is currently the subject of a dispute between the two States Parties. The property nominated in 2007 and parts of its buffer zone lay partly within the disputed area.

The property now nominated lies entirely within territory in Cambodia over which there is no dispute with Thailand. The issue of the buffer zone in relation to these matters is more complex and is discussed in section 5 of this report.

##### *Environmental pressures*

The region where Preah Vihear is located is in a tropical climate zone which experiences monsoons. The main part of the property is in a balanced vegetal environment, in particular in the eastern part, which is a Thai national natural and archaeological park.

However, the site of the temple at the top of a steep cliff is a very exposed one, subject to the rigours of a mountain climate exacerbated by monsoon conditions. Annual rainfall is around 1500mm, coming mainly in July–September. This causes erosion and some subsidence. Attention is being focussed on rehabilitating drainage systems or introducing new ones. It should be noted that evaporation is roughly equal to the rainfall, and so there is a risk of water shortages. This is being taken account of by constructing reservoirs on the property.

Siting on a high promontory also favours wind erosion, as well as the filling of sheltered areas. Changes in pressure can give rise to powerful erosion conditions during monsoons.

There can be temperature differences of as much as 40°C between sunny and shaded areas, a phenomenon made worse by the movement of sunny areas during the course

of the day. These cycles lead to surface spalling on sandstone elements.

##### *Natural disasters and risk preparedness*

Cambodia is not in a seismic zone. Because of its altitude, the property is not at risk from flooding. However, its location in a wooded area exposes it to danger from forest fires in the dry season.

##### *Visitor pressures*

The number of visitors is low, averaging 185 a day. This is not considered to constitute a threat at present, even though the annual visitor numbers have risen from 14,719 in 1999 to 67,843 in 2004. However, once the property has been cleared from landmines, the State Party should ensure that visitor pressures do not adversely impact on the values of the property.

ICOMOS considers that the main risks to the property are environmental and climatic. It recommends that special attention is given to these in management planning.

ICOMOS also recalls that, in order to ensure the sound long-term management of the property, the processes to resolve the relationships between the boundaries of this property and the relevant national borders should continue.

#### 5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

##### *Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone*

In its 2007 evaluation, ICOMOS noted that, the boundary of the nominated property coincided on the north with the existing frontier between Cambodia and Thailand. The area beyond this segment of the boundary lies entirely within what is currently the territory of Thailand.

The nominated area has now been revised so that it falls entirely within land in Cambodia not disputed by Thailand. The core zone includes the temple and a small area immediately surrounding it.

A buffer zone has been proposed to the south and east, but as no boundaries have been delineated, it is not clear how far this extends. To the north and west a zone of joint management between Cambodia and Thailand has been proposed, but has also not been delineated.

In the original nomination dossier it was stated that three protected zones of the Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear which cover both the cultural property and its environment have been defined by the Royal Decree NS/RKM/0303/115 of 11.03.2003:

*Zone 1:* The Central Zone, which extends over the entire upper part of the mountain on which Preah Vihear is situated (i.e. the nominated core area).

*Zone 2:* The Buffer Zone, corresponding to the landscape around the property and the natural environment.

*Zone 3:* The Satellite Zone, reserved for economic and social development that preserves the traditional way of life.

The new core zone lies within Zone 1. The new buffer zone lies within Zone 2, as does the new zone of joint management.

ICOMOS notes that the documentation from the State Party received in January 2008 indicates that the significance of the temple on its mountain promontory is related to mountain peaks to the east and west that curve around the vast plain to the south. The massif on which Preah Vihear sits and two peaks to east and west are said to reflect the Hindu divine triad of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. Two of these peaks are outside the core zone, and one outside the buffer zone, and only part of the plain is within the buffer zone.

The documentation also suggests that a new enlarged boundary might be considered for management reasons to encompass these specific landscape relationships and thus the full cultural, natural and historic values of the site. It is noted that further survey work would be needed to define this area accurately and that this could only be undertaken after mine clearance work has been completed.

ICOMOS considers that the boundary adequately encompasses the main built remains of the temple, but excludes its landscape setting. ICOMOS cannot comment on the extent of the buffer zone or the zone of joint management without further documentation.

### **Ownership**

Under the provisions of the Cambodian land legislation NS/RKM/0801/14 of 30 August 2001, the archaeological, cultural, and historical heritage and protected natural reserves are public property.

### **Protection**

Preah Vihear is protected under the *Law on the protection of the cultural heritage* (NS/0196/26 of 25.01.1996) against illegal destruction, vandalism, illicit transfer of ownership, illicit excavations, and illegal exports and imports. It applies to both movable and immovable heritage, whether public or private. The interministerial *Conseil Supérieur de la Culture Nationale* (CSCN) is responsible for developing policies, and these are implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

As mentioned above, the Royal Decree NS/RKM/0303/115 of 11.03.2003 defines the three protected zones of the Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear which cover both the cultural site and its environment.

A number of other decrees relate to the protection of animal and vegetal resources in the area and the protection and management of natural resources.

ICOMOS considers that the protective measures for the Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear are adequate.

## **Conservation**

### *History of conservation*

Because of the political situation in Cambodia over recent decades, no conservation work was possible until relatively recently. The work that has been done has been restricted by the inaccessibility of the property and the dangers from mines. There has been no major restoration work carried out at the property since the clearance work of Henri Parmentier in 1929–30.

### *Present state of conservation*

The state of conservation of the monumental stairway and the pavements is variable. Stabilisation is required and a monitoring programme is needed.

The main structure is in good condition, with the exception of *Gopura 5*, where consolidation work is needed to rectify serious problems resulting from water infiltration and erosion. A policy should be developed for reinstating and replacing certain fallen architectural elements in order to retain the spirit of place, and also to preserve the ‘poetry of ruins’.

Systematic survey has produced a conservation inventory detailing the measures needed for each of the components of the property. Proposed actions include the re-erection and stabilisation of columns, insertion of supports, installation of tell-tales, reconstruction of stairways, reinstatement of paving, etc.

### *Active conservation measures*

There are no conservation projects currently in progress, apart from those associated with minefield clearance.

ICOMOS considers that there is an urgent need for a systematic and comprehensive conservation programme and the allocation of financial resources to permit its implementation according to a prioritised timetable.

## **Management**

### *Management plans, including visitor management and presentation*

ICOMOS’s evaluation of 2007 noted that there was then no formal management plan in force, although an action plan had been prepared. This has involved the creation of an interministerial coordination committee (November 2005), amendment of Royal Decree NS/RKM/0303/115 of 11.03.2003 so as to increase Zone 2 (February 2006), issue of an order (*sous-decret*) implementing the above Royal Decree (July 2006), and establishment of an Authority for the Conservation and Management of Preah Vihear, based on that for Angkor Siem Reap, known as APSARA (December 2006).

Details were given of the contents of an eventual management plan, to be prepared following an exhaustive preparatory study by Cambodian and international specialists in the relevant domains.

The Committee at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session requested the Cambodian authorities to strengthen conservation and management at the site by making progress in developing an appropriate management plan.

The documentation provided by the State Party in January 2008 sets out the progress that has been made. Experts from the United States of America, France, Belgium, China, Thailand and India were invited to attend an expert workshop with experts from Cambodia in January 2008 to consider a wide range of aspects of the sites and its management challenges. Some experts had carried out preliminary missions to the site in December 2007.

The overall approach to the Management Plan is set out as to:

- 1) identify issues;
- 2) establish limits of the site;
- 3) establish management zones;
- 4) develop prescriptions or desired future conditions for each of the zones;
- 5) allocate the potential zones to specific locations on the map and illustrate access and circulation patterns.

Detailed information has been provided under the following headings:

- Protection of the sacred and natural surroundings
- Archaeology of the massif and the plain
- Archaeological zoning related to visitor management
- Structural stability
- Protection of the cultural landscape
- Protection and conservation of built remains
- Climate and hydrology
- Organisation of space and visitor movement
- Monitoring tools
- Objectives for social and economic development
- Objectives for the fight against poverty

In the joint Communique of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008, it was stated that pending the results of the work of the Joint Commission for Land Boundary (JBC) concerning the northern and western areas surrounding the Temple of Preah Vihear, the management plan of these areas will be prepared in a concerted manner between the Cambodian and Thai authorities in conformity with international conservation standards with a view to maintaining the outstanding universal value of the property. It was further stated that such a management plan will be included in the final management plan for the Temple and its surrounding areas to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 34<sup>th</sup> session in 2010. ICOMOS considers that there is a need to delineate in some form the areas to the north and west referred to in this Communique.

There is also a need to delineate the area to be covered by the Management Plan in the light of suggestions made in information provided in January 2008 that the Management Zone could be much larger than the nominated area. As set out above, the values of Preah Vihear are linked to its position in the landscape and the way it responded to that dramatic landscape. Managing

the temple alone will not ensure that its values are sustained.

ICOMOS also suggests that given the complexity of the proposed Management Plan, it would be appropriate for a progress report to be submitted in 2009.

*Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training*

The proposed Authority for the Conservation and Management of Preah Vihear will initially have a staff of between 35 and 40, comprising administrative, scientific, documentation, security, and labouring personnel. It will be responsible for daily maintenance, field studies, and exploratory excavations preparatory to the formulation of the conservation plans.

ICOMOS considers that progress has been made in defining the parameters of the Management Plan and setting out overall strategies, as well in gaining agreement of the Thai authorities to the production of a joint management plan for the areas to the north and west of the nominated areas, which remain to be delineated.

## 6. MONITORING

Until now the level of monitoring, carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and local authorities, has been minimal, restricted to mine clearance, security and daily maintenance.

It is recognised that there is a need for a dynamic monitoring procedure directed towards the state of conservation of the buildings, stairways, and pavements, so as to produce a plan for conservation interventions over the next 15–20 years.

ICOMOS considers that the existing monitoring measures for the property are inadequate.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

ICOMOS considers that the full value of the Temple of Preah Vihear is inextricably linked to its surrounding landscape. At one level it is an extraordinary interaction between the spiritual, (the temple) and the natural, (its surroundings). But in its planning and orientation, facing north, which is quite different from other Khmer temples, and in the bowl of three surrounding peaks, it has been suggested that the natural could be part of the spiritual setting, the three peaks reflecting the Hindu divine triad of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma.

In the original nomination the promontory on which the temple sites was included in the core area. The revised core area is smaller enclosing only the main linear monument. ICOMOS considers that the values of Preah Vihear are not limited to the monument alone: they extend into its setting. What is nominated is a small part of this overall picture, but is the kernel of it all.

ICOMOS considers that the decision to reduce the core zone to the temple and its immediate surroundings has had a significant impact on the way the boundaries



encompass the attributes that reflect outstanding universal value, and thus on the outstanding universal value of the property.

ICOMOS commends the State Party on the progress made with setting out a strategic framework for the development a management plan for the nominated area, that addresses the full range of issues that impinge on the site, and on the proposed joint arrangements with the Thai authorities for a management plan for the areas to the north and west of the nominated property which allows for the protection of these areas in a concerted manner.

As the landscape is so extensive, there need to be layers of protection, as suggested in the management plan papers, with the core zone being supported by buffer zones. As the promontory will now partly be in the eastern buffer zone and partly in the zone of joint management, it is essential that management of the property extends to these two zones – and thus in effect the monument and its closer setting are managed as one unit.

ICOMOS notes that although a map has been provided for the revised core area, this is at a small scale and needs to be augmented with a more detailed map. No detailed maps have been provided for the boundaries of the buffer zone and areas to the north and west, which will be subject to joint management arrangements between Cambodia and Thailand, (only general areas have been suggested).

The nominated area is now considerably smaller than in the original nomination dossier, and the nomination dossier needs to be revised to reflect changes made to the boundaries.

### ***Recommendations with respect to inscription***

Recalling the decision of the Committee at its 31<sup>st</sup> session which recognised ‘*that the Sacred Site of the Temple of Preah Vihear is of great international significance and has Outstanding Universal Value on the basis of criteria (i), (iii) and (iv),*’ and agreed ‘*in principle that it should be inscribed on the World Heritage List*’;

ICOMOS recognises that the two State Parties of Cambodia and Thailand each support the inscription of this property on the World Heritage List, as previously recommended by ICOMOS, and have found, through extensive discussions, an agreed approach to its nomination (and cooperative management of areas to the north and west of the core zone);

ICOMOS re-affirms its original evaluation of the property, but notes that this was based on aspects of the original nomination which have now been changed in several significant ways: the core area has been much reduced and now only includes the temple and its immediate surrounding and not the wider promontory with its cliffs and caves;

ICOMOS wishes to acknowledge, and bring to the attention of the Committee, that the map submitted, with its undelineated buffer and joint management zones, is a

source of concern in terms of the long-term conservation and protection of the property;

As the Committee has already determined that the property should be inscribed, it is the considered view of ICOMOS that this could now be justified only in relation to criterion (i);

The Committee might decide to inscribe the property on the basis of criterion (i) alone. ICOMOS considers that this would occur without an adequate map and delineated boundaries, and would limit the appropriate recognition of all the cultural values of the property. On that basis, ICOMOS does not wish formally to recommend this to the Committee;

In accordance with its original evaluation of this property, ICOMOS considers that if the property is inscribed by the Committee at this session on the basis of criterion (i) only, criteria (iii) and (iv) could be justified in the future if there is a possibility to extend the boundary of the inscribed property to include the landscape setting of the temple on its promontory;

ICOMOS encourages the State Parties of Cambodia and Thailand to commit to continuing their overall collaboration to safeguard the values of the property and expresses the hope that in the future it will be possible for them jointly to submit an extension to the boundaries which reflects the full values of this property and its landscape setting.

ICOMOS recommends that, if the property is inscribed at this session, the World Heritage Committee should invite the State Party to submit by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009:

- Detailed map of the core area and a map delineating the buffer zone;
- Updated Nomination dossier to reflect the changes made to the boundaries;
- Confirmation that the management zone for the property will include the core zone, buffer zone and joint north and west zone;
- Progress report on the preparation of the Management Plan, including the joint management plan to be prepared with the Thai authorities for the areas to the north and west of the core zone;
- A delineation of the areas to the north and west that will be covered by the joint management plan;

And to submit to the World Heritage Committee at its 34<sup>th</sup> session in 2010:

- Completed Management Plan for the nominated site, including a joint management plan for the areas to the north and west, produced jointly by Cambodia and Thailand.





**General view**



**Monumental stair**



**Gopura no. 2**



**Large pool**



**Gopura no. 5**