

Acknowledgements

It was more or less exactly twenty years before this present publication, more precisely at around six o'clock in the morning on 13 July 1999, that I first saw Angkor Wat. I approached the site via the southern connection road from the nearby tourist hub of Siem Reap. Sitting on the open rear of a truck with the smiling Cambodian team members of the French Baphuon temple restoration project around me, I watched as the temple's majestic towers emerged from the huge trees in the magic matutinal mist that lay over the deep green moat around the site. It is not exaggerated to call this precise moment one of the most impressive experiences in my life.

At this point I was pursuing a double degree in architecture (with a focus on historic preservation) and art history (with a focus on South Asia) in Vienna, and I had already travelled with my backpack to India's Taj Mahal, Myanmar's Pagan site, Indonesia's Borobudur temple, and China's Great Wall. But my story with Angkor Wat was of a different nature from the beginning. More precisely, it was during my year as an Erasmus student at the *École d'architecture Paris-La Villette* in 1998/99 that I successfully applied for a three-month internship with the famous *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO), the institute that was founded in the colonial time period around 1900 to explore and preserve the cultural heritage of *le Cambodge* in French *Indochine*. When I arrived in Cambodia, it was the extremely charismatic director of the EFEO's field office at Siem Reap/Cambodia, Pascal Royère, who introduced me to the Khmer temples in and around Angkor Park, and the challenges of architectural preservation and cultural heritage management. It is to him – tragically posthumously († 2014) – that my first and most sincere thank-you is formulated.

Shortly after this first visit to Angkor, a fellowship from Vienna University helped me to return for my master's thesis in art history under the direction of Professor Deborah Klimburg-Salter, holder of the chair of Asian art history. I am grateful for her support then and ever since. During this 2001 visit I temporarily joined the German Apsara Conservation Project (GACP), whose work since the mid-1990s had been concerned not only with the famous decorative surfaces of the twelfth-century Angkor Wat temple in the heart of Angkor Park but also with the final consolidation of the Preah Ko temple some kilometres to the south-east of the archaeological reserve. My research project was to unfold and correlate both the original ninth-century architectural construction and the early twentieth-century French restoration history of this fascinating pre-Angkorian brick temple. It not only resulted in my thesis and some years later in my first monograph on Khmer architecture (Falser 2006) but also influenced my upcoming Angkor

Wat project. In this context, I would like to thank Hans Leisen, professor of stone conservation at Cologne University of Applied Sciences and GACP's project director; Simon Warrack, stone conservator; and the project photographer, Jaroslav Poncar, for their shared on-site experience; ongoing support with background information, scientific data, and photographs; and their friendship, which without a doubt laid the solid foundation of this present work. Later internships at UNESCO's World Heritage Centre in Paris and at its regional branch in Bangkok also provided me with important insights into global heritagisation processes at Asia's archaeological sites. Here, my thanks go to Minja Yang and Richard Engelhardt.

The most important institutional support for this project was provided by the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context" at Heidelberg University, funded by the German Research Council (DFG). Here, I had the privilege of embedding the research that I conducted as a project leader since 2009 in the internal research area of "Heritage and Historicities" while I was affiliated to the chair of Global Art History (see introduction). In this context, I wish to thank primarily the DFG itself and, of course, my former Heidelberg colleagues – above many others, Professor Monica Juneja, Professor Rudolf Wagner, and Katharina Weiler and Brigitte Berger-Göken. As I worked towards finalising in 2013/14 what the German system calls a *Habilitation* (a professorial qualification manuscript), I was rewarded with fellowships from the German Centre of Art History in Paris (thanks go to then director Professor Andreas Beyer and to the Gerda Henkel Foundation) and from the Berlin-based Forum of Transregional Studies, funded by the Florence Max-Planck-Institute of Art History (thanks go to Professor Gerhard Wolf and Hannah Baader).

From 2009 onwards my on-site and archival research into Angkor Wat's career as a transcultural heritage icon was a particularly complex and multi-sited endeavour in Europe and Asia. In France, the most important sources came from the Paris headquarter of the EFEO itself, with its magnificent library and archive. In this context, my sincere thanks go to Professor Bruno Dagens and Professor Claude Jacques (†2018) for sharing their profound knowledge about the cultural and intellectual history of Angkor (Park); to Franciscus Verellen (EFEO director 2004–2014) for giving me free access to all necessary archival sources; to Pierre-Yves Manguin, Christophe Pottier, Olivier de Bernon, and Pierre Pichard for their scientific support; and to Isabelle Poujol (director of the photographic archive) and Rachel Guidoni and Cristina Cramerotti (library and archive) for their patient help in identifying and providing written and visual material for this publication.

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It's not surprising that some of the most precious moments of personal encounter and of research into collections, archives, and libraries occurred in Southeast Asia. While international players overseeing developments at

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Michael Falser
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Für Katharina

