

**Executive Summary of
Scientific Rebuttal to ICOMOS Evaluation Report
(Document WHC – 07/31.COM/INF8B.1)
on the Nomination of Preah Vihear Temple as World Heritage Site**

The Kingdom of Cambodia has begun its mission on nomination of Preah Vihear Temple as a World Heritage Site to the UNESCO since 1992. The Nomination File was submitted to World Heritage Centre on 30th January 2006, which was endorsed by ICOMOS to be added in the agenda of the 31st Session of World Heritage Committee Meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand, in the following year (2007).

It is noticeable that ICOMOS Evaluation Report which was used as a complementary document for consideration in the World Heritage Committee Meeting (Preah Vihear (Cambodia) No. 1224, pages 32 – 37), has certain information which is diverged from the facts. Such divergences can be categorized into 5 aspects as follows:

- 1. Criteria for consideration of outstanding universal value of Preah Vihear Temple as a World Heritage Site in ICOMOS Evaluation Report is different from the Nomination File without explanation of the reasons for change.**
- 2. ICOMOS agrees with the Nomination File proposed by the Cambodian party that “Preah Vihear is an outstanding masterpiece of Khmer architecture. It is very ‘pure’ both in plan and in the detail of the decoration”, however, several other important elements which are testimony to ingenuity in design, planning and exploitation of natural environment in relationship to the Temple, have not been taken into consideration as monuments and areas in close vicinity, thus it is considered an incomplete presentation of the monument and site.**
- 3. Consideration by ICOMOS did not take into account the dimension of relationship between the sanctuary and communities in its vicinity, both in the fact that the communities were caretakers of the sanctuary and in terms of spiritual bonds, which are intangible values and core indications of spirit of the place.**
- 4. Descriptions of the architectural features of Preah Vihear Temple that appears in ICOMOS Evaluation Report indicate interpretation and presentation of information that are diverged from the facts in several aspects, which are questionable in terms of scientific straightforwardness due to certain reasons.**
- 5. ICOMOS Evaluation Report has approved the demarcation of zoning in protection, conservation, and management of Preah Vihear Temple area on condition of a mutual agreement between Thailand and Cambodia on the matter concerning the border, however, the actual problems is not merely the overlapping claim, but certain scientific**

inappropriateness exists that require improvements of zoning demarcation.

Conclusion

Scientifically, the aesthetics of Preah Vihear Temple in terms of architecture and art are undoubtedly outstanding. Nevertheless, ICOMOS Evaluation Report on assessment of the values of Preah Vihear Temple as a World Heritage Site has depended on information given by the Cambodian party only, therefore, several issues are scientifically questionable, especially the issues on criteria for judgement of the site as a World Heritage.

Prof. Dr. Adul Wichiancharoen, former President of the World Heritage Committee, has given opinions that there are 3 principles which should be taken into consideration.

1. Outstanding universal value of cultural landscape
2. Authenticity
3. Integrity

Scientific integrity of a World Heritage site, therefore, is not limited to the monument itself, but should include its setting and other criteria. In this case, the location of the temple and convenient access is specifically from Thailand side. Furthermore, the area in Thai territory is location of monuments which reflect close relationship between the setting of Preah Vihear ensemble in Cambodian territory and sites in Thailand i.e. Sa Trao, which is considered the Baray of Preah Vihear Temple; or Mo I Daeng cliff where Sathup Khu (Twin Stupas) and the bas-reliefs are located. All of these have stories and significance in relationship with the Preah Vihear Temple.

Based on the reasons as mentioned, one of the resolutions for nomination of Preah Vihear Temple as a World Heritage Site is the implementation as a **transboundary property**, which has been practiced in several World Heritage Sites. This scheme reflects an important principle of the World Heritage Committee on paying attention to the concerns and issues which would affect all involving parties, so that the criteria for listing a particular monument as World Heritage Site are considered correctly and completely.

ICOMOS Thailand