

Saving Our Vanishing Heritage

Asia's Heritage in Peril

May 2012



Global Heritage Fund

SAVING OUR VANISHING HERITAGE, MAY 2012



In this report, Global Heritage Fund (GHF) highlights 10 of Asia's most significant archaeological and heritage sites facing irreparable loss and destruction due to five accelerating man-made threats: development pressures, unsustainable tourism, insufficient management, looting, and war and conflict.

The report was developed by GHF experts based on extensive field research, with additional contributions from members of Global Heritage Network (GHN), a new early warning and threat monitoring system that combines satellite imaging and social networking. Criteria for the list — which represents only a selection of the hundreds of endangered cultural heritage sites across Asia and the developing world — was based on GHF's 2010 study, *Saving Our Vanishing Heritage*, which surveyed 500 major sites in developing countries to evaluate current loss and destruction, conservation and development.

Each of the 10 sites documented in *Asia's Heritage in Peril* represents a vast, untapped economic opportunity for its host nation and local communities in need. International and domestic tourism to major archaeological and heritage sites has soared over the past ten years: from \$8 billion to over \$25 billion in annual revenues, according to the *Vanishing* report. By 2025, GHF estimates that global heritage sites in the world's poorest countries will generate over \$100 billion annually, while creating millions of new jobs and business opportunities — but only if current trends of loss and destruction are reversed.

Also included are three GHF Success Stories: Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia; Pingyao Ancient City, China; and Wat Phu, Laos. These ongoing conservation projects, which incorporate GHF's integrated *Preservation By Design* methodology of long-range planning, conservation science, community engagement, and monitoring and evaluation, demonstrate the power of cultural heritage as a basis for sustainable development.

ON THE VERGE:

Global Heritage Site	Significance	Threats
Ayutthaya, Thailand	<i>"Venice of the East," Former Siamese Capital</i>	Natural Disasters/Flooding, Insufficient Management
Fort Santiago and Intramuros, Philippines	<i>Historic Fortresses of the Philippines</i>	Insufficient Management, Development Pressures
Kashgar, China	<i>One of China's Last Intact Silk Road Cities</i>	Development Pressures
Mahasthangarh, Bangladesh	<i>One of South Asia's Earliest Urban Archaeological Sites</i>	Insufficient Management, Development Pressures, Looting
Mes Aynak, Afghanistan	<i>Ancient Buddhist Monasteries on the Silk Road</i>	Development Pressures, Insufficient Management, Looting, War and Conflict
Myauk-U, Myanmar	<i>Capital City of the First Arakenese Kingdom</i>	Development Pressures, Insufficient Management, Natural Disasters
Plain of Jars, Laos	<i>Megalithic Archaeological Landscape with Mysterious Origins</i>	Insufficient Management, War and Conflict
Preah Vihear, Cambodia	<i>Picturesque Masterpiece of Khmer Architecture</i>	War and Conflict, Natural Disasters
Rakhigarhi, India	<i>One of the Largest and Oldest Indus Sites in the World</i>	Development Pressures, Insufficient Management, Looting
Taxila, Pakistan	<i>Former Crossroads of Industry in the Ancient Middle East</i>	Insufficient Management, Development Pressures, Looting, War and Conflict

GHF SUCCESS STORIES:

Global Heritage Site	Significance	Threats
Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia	<i>Birthplace of Famous Khmer Face Towers</i>	Looting, Neglect, Development Pressures, Vegetation
Pingyao Ancient City, China	<i>China's First Banking Capital</i>	Neglect, Development Pressures, Mass Tourism
Wat Phu, Laos	<i>Sacred Temple Complex of Khmer Kings</i>	Neglect, Natural Disasters

AYUTTHAYA, THAILAND

“Venice of the East,” Former Siamese Capital



A temple surrounded by floodwaters in the ancient capital city of Ayutthaya in October 2011. Photo: Christophe Archambault

SIGNIFICANCE

Founded in 1350, Ayutthaya became the second Siamese capital after Sukhothai and was one of the most important economic and trade centers of the region. It remained the capital until it was destroyed by the Burmese army in 1767. The remaining ruins, noted for their towers and gigantic monasteries, give modern generations a sense of its past splendor. In 1976, the remains became a historical park, which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991.

THREATS

Natural Disaster/Flooding: Ayutthaya is an island city on Chao Praya River, and flooding over the past two decades has resulted in structural damage and eroded the soil foundations of many of its temples. In 2011, major floods damaged 158 historic monuments and caused the closure of hundreds of factories. Culture Minister Sukumol Kunplome estimated that the flood damage over six weeks was comparable to the accumulated water erosion damage sustained over centuries.

Insufficient Management: The Government of Thailand allocates all finances used in the management and preservation of the historic city. Historically, this budget has not met the amount requested by conservationists, and it has been deemed necessary to apply for

additional funding from other international funding agencies. In 2012, Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra announced a budget of around \$162 million to implement new “flagship” water management and flood prevention projects, with around \$25 million allocated specifically for repairing and strengthening ancient sites. The effectiveness of these new initiatives remains to be seen.

URGENCY

With 284 factories still closed and more than 160,000 people out of work, Thailand’s tourism industry — which relies heavily on sites like Ayutthaya — has become an increasingly important part of the country’s economy. Rehabilitating damaged sites, reinforcing standing ones, and focusing on flood prevention measures will be crucial to the continued resurgence and long-term success of Thailand’s tourism industry.



Wat Suwan Chedi shortly after receding of the October 2011 floods: Photo: GHF

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FORT SANTIAGO AND INTRAMUROS, PHILIPPINES

Historic Fortresses of the Philippines



Teenagers play basketball within the ruins of Intramuros' San Ignacio Church, which was mostly destroyed during World War II. Photo: Ville Miettinen

SIGNIFICANCE

Intramuros was built by the Spanish in the 16th century AD, and is the oldest district of the city of Manila, the capital of the Philippines. The Latin translation of Intramuros means “within the walls” and refers to the enclosure of the fortress, as the structure was surrounded by high walls and moats. Fort Santiago is a defense fortress built into the city walls of Santiago, and was constructed for Spanish conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi.

Much of Intramuros was severely damaged or destroyed by the US Air Force during World War II. Intramuros endured heavy shelling, and by the end of the conflict, the only untouched structure was the San Agustin Church. Intramuros became a special historic zone in 1979, and during the 1980s the Intramuros Administration spearheaded a major restoration. The walled city is now the only district of Manila where Spanish-era influences have remained. Fort Santiago is now a museum that houses well-preserved legacies of the Spanish government.

THREATS

Modernization: Although much of the modern development that has changed the face of Manila has occurred outside the walls of Intramuros, several major chains have opened outlets inside

the fortress walls, including Starbucks and McDonald's. Additionally, the old moats that originally surrounded Intramuros have since been filled and converted into a golf course.

Development Pressures: Intramuros is currently managed by the Intramuros Authority and the Department of Tourism. The City of Manila, meanwhile, has been positioning itself to regain control of Intramuros without providing a specific statement as to why they want to become its caretakers again. There is rampant speculation that the city wishes to capitalize on Intramuros' real estate potential, replacing the heritage and history with high rises and malls.

Insufficient Management: Concerns have been voiced over the years about the appearance of Intramuros; the interior has often looked shabby or in poor condition, with poor lighting in many dark areas of the city. As a result, administration is worried that tourists will steer clear of the heritage site due to safety concerns.

URGENCY

If nothing is done to assert Intramuros' right to preserve its rich heritage, there is a strong likelihood that it will be soon overrun by rampant commercialism. If indeed this happens, all the efforts to rebuild this jewel of Manila after its destruction in World War II will have been in vain.



The modern skyline of Manila looms behind the centuries-old fortification wall of Intramuros along the Pasig River. Photo: GHF

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KASHGAR, CHINA

One of the Last Intact Silk Road Cities in China



85 percent of Kashgar's old city is expected to be destroyed by the end of 2012. Photo: Fred Chiang

SIGNIFICANCE

At one time an important oasis on the Silk Road, China's Kashgar prefecture has existed for centuries as a unique and historic region set far apart from the rest of the country. Situated along China's westernmost edge, bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan, Kashgar City's population is around 350,000 and consists mainly of Muslim Uyghurs. Home to China's largest mosque and the tomb of Abakh Khoja, one of the holiest Muslim sites in Xinjiang province, Kashgar is considered one of the world's best-preserved examples of a traditional Islamic city.

THREATS

Development Pressures: Since 2009, a program called "Kashgar Dangerous House Reform" has been progressively destroying historical houses and buildings, with plans to ultimately raze 85 percent of the traditional Old City. The Chinese government has been heavily criticized for its program of destructive modernization and urban development in Kashgar, but officials have shown no mercy toward the city's disappearing cultural heritage. The government, which has deemed the old town overcrowded and unsafe (half the city's population lives there), has been reluctant to consider culturally sensitive renovation possibilities, instead insisting that earthquake proofing necessitates total demolition and rebuilding.

URGENCY

In 2011, a resolution by Members of the European Parliament (MEP) charged the Chinese government with “forcibly resettling residents without considering the loss of priceless historical and cultural heritage, and without giving priority to the preservation of relics or principal building artifacts and architecture in order to pass on to future generations, and to the world, objects illustrating the thousands of years of Chinese historical and cultural development.”

The MEP resolution urged the Chinese government to reverse its course in Kashgar and consider the irreplaceable treasures being destroyed every day. But ethnic tensions have not relaxed between Muslim Uyghurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang province, with political and economic factors contributing to a resurgence of violence in Kashgar in 2012. Without a comprehensive inquiry into culture-sensitive renovation methods, the future of this Silk Road relic hangs delicately in the balance



An example of a neighborhood in Kashgar's old town, destroyed to make way for urban housing developments. Photo: Kendra Farrell

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MAHASTHANGARH, BANGLADESH

One of South Asia's Earliest Urban Archaeological Sites



Tourists walk on the ramparts of Mahasthangarh's citadel. Photo: P.K. Nigoyi

SIGNIFICANCE

Mahasthangarh, located on the west bank of the river Karatoa, is the oldest archaeological site ever found in Bangladesh, with remains that date back to the 3rd century BC. At the heart of the ancient city, once the capital of Pundravardhana, lies a great citadel, fortified on all sides by high and wide ramparts. This is surrounded by a hundred or so mounds, many of which have not been excavated, but which are presumed to contain valuable Hindu temples and antiquities.

THREATS

Insufficient Management: Lack of expertise and funding has led to severe deterioration of the archaeological site. The various terracotta artworks within the site have suffered from serious damage as a result of lack of proper maintenance, shortage of manpower, funding constraints, and heavy rainfall. Poor water drainage accompanied by high levels of salinity in the soils have also contributed to the decay of terracotta sculptures. Uncontrolled vegetation is also a problem.

Looting and Vandalism: Due to a lack of security and the unmet need for a protective wall surrounding the site, the area has been vandalized numerous times. Looting also occurs

regularly, and many visitors and local antique dealers have been seen removing items from the site. There have also been reports from reliable sources of site administrators stealing artifacts.

Development Pressures: Population growth has led to new residences, roads, drainage systems, electrical posts and commercial markets in the area, all of which encroach on Mahasthangarh and its environs. An emergency High Court order was required in 2010 to halt construction directly on top of the archaeological site, where workers were digging to build a multi-story complex.

URGENCY

Mahasthangarh was declared a protected area by the national government in 1920, but efforts to safeguard it have become increasingly futile. Because only government-owned or occupied areas fall under control of the government conservation authority, most of the lands surrounding Mahasthangarh — which are owned by local people — can not be preserved or excavated without a lengthy legal intervention.



An example of encroaching agriculture directly on top of archaeological features. In this case, a field of banana trees is tended right atop the ancient city wall gate. Photo: GHN

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MES AYNAK, AFGHANISTAN

Ancient Buddhist Monastery Complex on the Silk Road



The remains of the Buddhist monasteries of Mes Aynak. It is currently being excavated in advance of demolition by a Chinese mining company. Photo: Joanie Meharry

SIGNIFICANCE

About 20 miles south of Kabul, atop one of the world's largest untapped copper sources, lies Mes Aynak, an ancient Buddhist monastery complex. Spread across 9,800 acres, archaeologists have only begun excavating the site in the past few years, but already their discoveries include manuscripts, Buddha statues and stunning ancient architecture. Studies of the site have led some archaeologists to question the popular theory that religious centers grew up alongside but separate from commercial activity, and to wonder if, at Mes Aynak, religious leaders may have actually directed copper mining and refining and used the monastery network to trade the metal as far away as Japan and Korea.

THREATS

Development Pressures: Mes Aynak is set for complete destruction within the next year or two, thanks to a Chinese company which hopes to turn the site into the world's second biggest copper mine. The China Metallurgical Group Corp., which originally wanted to begin mining in 2009, agreed to give archaeologists three years for a salvage excavation of the site, but it still has firm plans to destroy the site.

Insufficient Management: Although archaeologists have known about the site since the 1960s, serious excavations did not begin until its acquisition by the Chinese mining company in 2007. Only in the last year has the excavation team expanded to include adequate numbers of archaeologists and laborers.

Looting: Before current excavations brought increased security to the site, Mes Aynak was badly hit by looters who exploited its treasures to sell on the international antiquities black market.

War and Conflict: Once used as an al-Qaeda training group, Mes Aynak is located in a zone vulnerable to war and conflict, as evidenced by the Buddhas of Bamiyan bombings in 2001.

URGENCY

Under the circumstances, the team of French and Afghan archaeologists at Mes Aynak have done an admirable job of excavating the site, with many artifacts moved already to the National Museum. There are also plans by the Ministry of Information and Culture to create a site museum in Logar district (much closer to the site than the National Museum) where the majority of the larger artifacts can be displayed. Sadly, there appears to be little hope for the actual complex, which will be totally destroyed once mining begins.



An ancient Buddhist statue at Mes Aynak. Photo: Joanie Meharry

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MYAUK-U, MYANMAR

Capital City of the First Arakenese Kingdom



Large cracks and unskillful restorations on the Koe-Thaung Temple, the largest ancient architectural monument in Myauk-U, have caused concern about a sudden collapse of the temple. Photo: Zero-X

SIGNIFICANCE

With some 200 Buddhist monuments dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries AD, Myauk-U tells the story of a great religious center and the most important and powerful Arakenese kingdom. Located in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, east of the Kaladan River and surrounded by hills to the north and south, Myauk-U developed into an important regional trade hub due to its proximity to the Bay of Bengal. As the kingdom prospered, the kings, ministers, and peasants built a great collection of pagodas, temples, monasteries and stupa around the town to reflect their faith, many of which still stand today.

THREATS

Development Pressures: The construction of a new railroad through Myauk-U has mercilessly damaged important cultural sites, including ancient pagodas, stupas, strongholds, religious libraries, moats, and city walls. Influential residents of the town, including monks, have submitted a formal request to local authorities to cease construction of the line, but the project has continued.

Insufficient Management: Systematic and regular maintenance of Myauk-U's monuments is neglected due to a lack of state funding. Major cracks have been found in the walls of Koe-

Thaug Temple (the largest in Myauk-U), causing concern about the sudden collapse of the temple, but restoration efforts have been merely aesthetic.

Natural Disasters: Myauk-U, like much of Rakhine State, is situated in a coastal tropical monsoon rainforest climate region. The town receives over 200 inches of rain annually from the Southwestern Monsoon, making it one of the wettest regions in Myanmar. On July 19, 2011, Myauk-U broke a 33-year-old record with 9.37 inches of rainfall, causing severe flooding.

URGENCY

“Myauk-U Archaeological Area and Monuments” was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative list in 1996, but Myanmar still has not had a site officially inscribed. Today, Myauk-U is a popular destination for travelers in the region, but its residents remain poor and live without even very basic infrastructure (such as 24-hour electricity). Funding for proper conservation and sustainable development of the site would go a long way toward improving lives and ensuring the future of this once-great kingdom.



Pagodas as seen from above Myauk-U. The town has recently become a popular tourist destination, but construction of a new railroad is damaging its heritage. Photo: Jean-Marie Hullot

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PLAIN OF JARS, LAOS

Megalithic Archaeological Landscape with Mysterious Origins



One of the many jars at "Site 1." Several jars removed from this particular site are now on display at museums, including the Smithsonian Institution. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

SIGNIFICANCE

Dotting the landscape of Xieng Khouang Plateau in Laos are thousands of megalithic jars, part of an archaeological landscape aptly named the Plain of Jars. The structures, carved mainly from sandstone, granite or limestone, have been associated with the funerary customs of ancient inhabitants who occupied the area during the Iron Age (500 BCE - 500 CE). The Plain of Jars has the potential to shed light on the relationship between increasingly complex societies and megalithic structures and provide insight into social organization of Iron Age Southeast Asia's communities.

THREATS

War and Conflict: Laos is the most heavily bombed country in the world, per capita. During the Second Indochina War (1964-1973), bombing missions by the U.S. Air Force left unexploded ordnance (UXO) strewn about the landscape. Decontamination efforts have helped archaeologists study the jars, but leftover UXO remains an obstacle in ensuring the safety of local people, as well as tourists.

Insufficient Management: Weather and vegetation have contributed in part to the jars' deterioration, but human disregard for the structures has taken an even greater toll. A lack of

management at the sites means tourists are allowed to climb all over the structures, while villagers have been known to use the urns as trash receptacles.

Development Pressures: With ground decontamination slowly allowing farmers in Xieng Khouang to till the land, very few jar sites remain wholly isolated from urban settings. Jars may be used as containers for farming debris or transformed into animal troughs and chicken coops, while intense heat and smoke from slash and burn are causing damage to the fabric of the stone. Additionally, road construction can cause displacement and damage to jars, perhaps best evidenced by the construction of Highway 7, which saw countless stone artifacts ground up and used as ballast.

URGENCY

Today, the Plain of Jars faces a number of conservation challenges as Laos, one of the world's least developed countries, prepares it for UNESCO World Heritage nomination. The economy created by increased tourism to the jar sites would undoubtedly help communities all across the province of Xieng Khouang, but protective mechanisms and infrastructure must first be put in place to ensure the resources' long-term sustainability.



A jar riddled with bullet holes as a result of UXO. Graffiti is also visible. Photo: Lia Genovese

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PREAH VIHEAR, CAMBODIA

Picturesque Masterpiece of Khmer Architecture



Preah Vihear has found itself directly in the line of fire between Thai and Cambodian troops as a result of an ongoing land dispute. Photo: Peter Winter

SIGNIFICANCE

Preah Vihear is an 11th-century Khmer temple located along the border of Thailand and Cambodia. Dedicated to the Hindu deity Shiva, Preah Vihear features perhaps the most stunning setting of all Khmer temples, as it sits atop a massive cliff in the Dangrek Mountains and provides spectacular views of the surrounding plains. As a key edifice of the empire's spiritual life, the temple was supported and modified by successive kings and bears elements of several architectural styles. UNESCO has called it a “masterpiece of Khmer architecture.”

THREATS

War and Conflict: Since the early 20th century, both Thailand and Cambodia have claimed ownership of the site, and despite an international court ruling in 1962 that awarded the temple to Cambodia (even though its main entrance is in Thailand), dispute over the surrounding lands has continued. Tensions further increased in 2008, when Cambodia was awarded a UNESCO World Heritage inscription for the site. Since then, sporadic military skirmishes have erupted each year between the two sides. In 2011, the clashes grew even more violent, with dozens of soldiers killed and thousands of villagers displaced. During the conflict, Preah Vihear found itself directly in the line of fire, and was reportedly hit by shelling.

Natural Disasters: The temple's location atop a steep cliff leaves it vulnerable to the rigours of a mountain climate, further exacerbated by monsoon conditions. Conversely, the surrounding wooded areas subject it to risk of forest fires during the dry season.

URGENCY

Following the deadly clashes that broke out in 2011, authorities from the two countries met and reported "a significant easing of the tensions around Preah Vihear," though they did not resolve the dispute. In February 2012, the International Court of Justice ruled that both countries must immediately remove its military forces from the area. As of March, however, neither Thai nor Cambodian troops have withdrawn, leaving the atmosphere around the temple no less volatile.



Preah Vihear is spectacularly set atop a 525-meter cliff in the Dangrek Mountains. Photo: Jeff McNeill

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RAKHIGARHI, INDIA

One of the Largest and Oldest Indus Sites in the World



Although mostly unexplored, Rakhigarhi has the potential to uncover secrets about one of the world's great ancient civilizations: the Indus. Photo: Michael Tomlan

SIGNIFICANCE

At first glance, one might not think much of Rakhigarhi, a muddy village in northwest India. But closer inspection reveals its origins as home to the great Indus civilization more than 5,000 years ago, with evidence of paved roads, drainage and rainwater collection systems, terracotta bricks and statues, and advanced metal working tools. Consisting of large ancient mounds, many as high as 50 feet and as wide as three football fields, Rakhigarhi is today one of the oldest and largest Indus sites in the world, easily rivaling Harappa and Mohenjodaro. While only small portions have been excavated, the findings have yielded tremendous discoveries.

THREATS

Insufficient Management: After partial excavations a decade ago, Rakhigari was abandoned in 2004 and has since been plowed under. Currently, the muddy site is used for the drying and harvesting of buffalo dung, which local communities use as cooking fuel. Pottery and bone fragments can be found mixed in with the gravel at the site, while the majority of its ancient structures remain buried. There are currently no markers denoting its importance to visitors.

Development Pressures: With New Delhi located just three hours to the southeast, urban development is encroaching on Rakhigarhi, threatening to further bury the unexplored mounds.

Looting: For years, both residents and non-residents have dug into the mounds to procure artifacts, which can be sold on the international antiquities market.

URGENCY

If preserved and excavated, Rakhigarhi can teach the world about the Indus, whose ancient history rivals the Egyptians, Mesopotamians and Mayans in terms of global significance. Easily accessible from India's capital, the site also has potential as a major ecotourism site, which would create jobs, diversify industry in the villages around Rakhigarhi, and enable key improvements in the areas of sewage and drainage, sanitation and solid waste management, roads and electrical improvements, and other forms of infrastructure.



This mound has been dug into both for saleable items and to accommodate the construction of a road.
Photo: Michael Tomlan

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TAXILA, PAKISTAN

Former Crossroads of Industry in the Ancient Middle East



The view from one of Taxila's ancient Buddhist monasteries. Photo: Waqas Usman

SIGNIFICANCE

Taxila, one of Pakistan's most famous tourist destinations, is an archaeological site of great cultural importance. Alternatively demonstrating Persian, Greek and Asian influences, this vast complex of ruins includes a Mesolithic cave, four settlement sites, a number of Buddhist monasteries, and Muslim mosques and *madrasas* of the medieval period. Strategically situated at the crossroads of three major trading routes, Taxila was also an important Buddhist learning center from the 5th century BC to the 2nd century AD. In 1980, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site with multiple locations.

THREATS

Insufficient Management: The historical monument of Sarai Karwan, located within Taxila, has been increasingly encroached upon by nearby development in the area, including auto garages, business centers, shops and houses. Officials have done little to protect the site, and parts of the monument are frequently used for garbage dumping. Dampness, pollution, and lack of proper maintenance have resulted in further destruction and decay of the monument.

Development Pressures: Quarrying and stone blasting in areas in and around the Taxila valley have substantially damaged 24 excavated archaeological sites and monuments. Even priceless antiques in the Taxila Museum have been damaged, as constant vibrations from blasting caused objects to slowly slide towards the edges of shelves in their display cases until they fell

and broke. Local government has failed to regulate mining in the area, and thousands of trucks and machines use the nearby road system on a constant basis.

Looting: Several ancient artifacts have been stolen from the Buddhist monastery, and illegal excavations conducted with the help of heavy equipment further damaged the site. Police were informed of the incident and arrested numerous diggers, but all were eventually released without any further legal action.

War and Conflict: Over 2,000 priceless objects housed inside the Archaeological Museum of Taxila are vulnerable to theft and terrorist attacks without sufficient security. The museum has been the target of threats from militants in the past, and foreign governments advise excavation teams not to visit the site when they visit the region.

URGENCY

Taxila, a diverse and wide-spanning World Heritage site, faces an equally diverse array of conservation challenges. Only with cooperation from all levels of local government will these archaeological and heritage sites be able to weather the numerous threats they face today.



Lambs graze among Taxila's ruins. Photo: Mr. Matt/Flickr

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BANTEAY CHHMAR, CAMBODIA

Birthplace of Famous Khmer Face Towers



Local workers stabilizing the southeast corner of the Banteay Chhmar temple complex. Photo: GHF

SIGNIFICANCE

Banteay Chhmar, one of the great architectural masterpieces of the Khmer Kingdom, was commissioned at the end of the 12th century by King Jayavarman VII in honor of four army generals and his son, the Crown Prince Indravarman. Hidden for centuries in the dense jungles of northeast Cambodia, the temple complex is most notable for its extensive bas-reliefs documenting the period's contemporary history. Today, Banteay Chhmar is one of the country's leading candidates for UNESCO World Heritage nomination, and the site of one of Asia's most important conservation projects.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Earlier this year, the Associated Press ran a feature story on GHF Banteay Chhmar, a project led by world-renowned archaeologist John Sanday O.B.E. The story was picked up by some of the biggest media outlets in the world (CBS News, ABC News, Fox News, The Independent, and many major newspapers), demonstrating to the international community how powerful cultural heritage preservation can be for local communities in developing countries.

The article focused significantly on the efforts of Sanday's all-Khmer conservation team, which features some 60 experts and workers. The young and enthusiastic team has been assembled to conserve and repair the temple complex and establish appropriate conservation technology. These individuals have been trained in techniques of recording, assessing and implementing

technology, forming a conservation unit that will eventually administer the Ministry of Culture and Fine Art's northern Cambodian monuments.

The article also mentioned the GHF-supported Community Based Tourism group, which features over 70 local members and has created new jobs and business opportunities, promoted tourism and cultural heritage preservation at the site, and drastically improved living conditions and the lives of local people. In April 2010, with support from GHF, CBT introduced the Solid Waste Management program, which has educated villagers about sanitation and helped make Banteay Chhmar cleaner and more attractive to tourists.

Sanday's vision for Banteay Chhmar is a partial ruin with low-impact, safe visitor access via suspended cable platforms over the fallen structures, along with selective interventions for high-risk structures, bas-reliefs and towers. This is a change from the standard restoration concept favored at sites like Angkor Wat, where out-of-control tourism has damaged the temples and put the site's survival in jeopardy. At Banteay Chhmar, visitors will instead experience a romantic ruin hidden for centuries — an accurate interpretation of a natural site with its mystery intact.



Photo: The Face Tower 18, which was heavily destabilized during heavy monsoons, receives structural support and partial disassembly with the assistance of a crane. Photo: GHF

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PINGYAO ANCIENT CITY, CHINA

China's First Banking Capital



The restored courtyard at 12 Mijia Xiang now serves as the GHF field office and a visitor and community center. Photo: Wang Xiaodong

SIGNIFICANCE

In 1997, Pingyao Ancient City was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status for its exceptional preservation of an intact, classic Han Chinese city from the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911). However, poverty, a lack of funding, and damaging alterations to the historic courtyard buildings over the years have put this incredible site's heritage at great risk.

To address these issues, GHF and the Pingyao County Government have undertaken a collaborative effort to preserve the cultural heritage of Pingyao with more comprehensive and systematic approaches as part of an integrated planning, conservation and development program. The Pingyao Cultural Heritage Development Program aims to preserve the vernacular architecture, revitalize and stimulate traditional arts, and establish special historic areas.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

In Summer 2011, Dr. Vince Michael, a GHF Senior Advisory Board member, visited the site and came away impressed with the work of the GHF Pingyao team.

He first recognized the great work done to restore the courtyard at 12 Mijia Xiang, which today serves as GHF's field office, as well as a visitor and community center that every Friday hosts a presentation on local Pingyao culture. He also applauded the conversion of an intrusive, modern two-story cement structure in the courtyard into a traditional yaodong, a parabolic arched vault structure that provides natural heating and cooling.

Dr. Michael also toured the next physical conservation project GHF has planned at Pingyao: Fanjia Jie, a street where the extended Fan clan lived in a series of courtyard houses. Two houses, which have survived as Class I historic buildings, are to be rehabilitated for the families that live there, while the larger plan envisions restoring the entire street—not as a museum, but as a living place.

GHF's local partners at Tongji University have completed a detailed conservation plan for Pingyao, incorporating both the conservation of important buildings and streetscapes, as well as essential issues of waste and water management, transportation and other elements “essential to the success of heritage conservation as a development modality.”

According to Dr. Michael, “Preserving historic buildings is not a challenge to development, it is a kind of development, and it is inherently a more sustainable development model because it incorporates those aspects of a community’s history which the community has determined are central to its identity.”



A courtyard set to be restored as part of GHF's next physical conservation project at Pingyao. Photo: Vincent Michael

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WAT PHU, LAOS

Sacred Temple Complex of Khmer Kings



An elevated view of Wat Phu, one of the largest archaeological sites in Laos, and one of the country's two UNESCO World Heritage sites. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

SIGNIFICANCE

Wat Phu, a ruined Khmer temple complex, is the largest archaeological site in Laos. The monument, dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, is one of the most important examples of Khmer architecture because of its plan, its historic and religious significance, and for the value of its sculptures. It was inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2001, making it one of only two sites with such status in the entire country.

Located in one of southern Laos' poorest regions, Wat Phu has suffered from a lack of regular maintenance and is prone to damage and destabilization due to fluvial processes. To counteract these issues, GHF's conservation efforts at Wat Phu are focused on the scientific conservation of the most endangered monuments, as well as providing an intensive training program for on-site Laotian conservators and archaeologists.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

GHF's scientific conservation work at Wat Phu has focused predominately on the stabilization and restoration of Nandin Hall, one of the most significant architectural remains in the park. Its foundation over many years had been weakened by uncontrolled vegetation growth, nearly to

the point of the monument's collapse. Today, Nandin Hall has been stabilized, and conservation of the structure is expected to be completed by 2012.

Other successes by GHF's conservation team, which includes many local community members, include restoration of the main ceremonial road and primary access route to the site using all authentic materials, conservation of over 420 artifacts (including major statuary) which will be presented or stored in a new \$800,000 site museum, and authentic restoration of a library in the nearby town of Champasak, which will be used as a community meeting and study space equipped with furnishings and hundreds of books.

The local community around Wat Phu has benefited greatly from tourism growth and park infrastructure developments. In 2005, before GHF's project work began, the park was seeing under 20,000 tourists per year. Today it attracts over 250,000 annually, including approximately 200,000 international tourists who each pay six dollars for entry, generating \$1.2 million for the government. A new \$2 million road connects Wat Phu directly to the Pakse airport within 20-30 minutes, eliminating the need for a river crossing, while the airport itself, primarily for visitation to Champasak and Wat Phu, has been upgraded and now serves international flights to other UNESCO World Heritage locations like Siem Reap, Da Nang, and Luang Prabang.



Trained local workers restoring the ancient holy road leading to Wat Phu. Photo: GHF

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