

THE SLEUK RITH INSTITUTE (SRI)

A Permanent Documentation Center of Cambodia

SCHOOL OF GENOCIDE, CONFLICT AND HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES

SPEAKER SERIES

“Results of New Research at La-ang Spean Prehistoric Site”

(Battambang Province, Cambodia)

Heng Sophady

December 4, 2015, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

SRI/Building H, National Institute of Education

The Sleuk Rith Institute’s School of Genocide, Conflict and Human Rights Studies is pleased to announce the fifth event in its speaker series entitled **“Results of New Research at La-ang Spean Prehistoric Site,”** which will be presented by Mr. Heng Sophady, Deputy Director General for Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. Students as well as the general public are welcome to attend this event.

La-ang Spean Prehistoric Site was initially excavated and studied by Cécile Mourer and Roland Mourer in the 1960s. It was not until 2009 that further research was jointly conducted by the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the French National Museum of Natural History, led by Heng Sophady and Hubert Forestier. Many artifacts were recovered from the previous excavations, including tools for crushing and polishing stone, ceramics, jewelry (beads and bangles made of stone and pendants made of animal teeth), animal skeletons, and tombs.

From the analysis of those artifacts, researchers have concluded that people lived at La-ang Spean during three different prehistoric periods—the Paleolithic Period (71,000 BP), Hoabinhian Period (11,000-5,000 BCE), and Neolithic Period (3,000 BCE), during which La-ang Spean was used as a burial site. Researchers made these determinations by examining layers of earth as deep as five meters and using various dating methods, including radiocarbon dating, optically stimulated luminescence (OSL), and uranium-thorium dating (U-Th). Currently, La-ang Spean is the only prehistoric site in Cambodia at which researchers have discovered stone tools produced during the Hoabinhian Period. Those excavated objects have enabled researchers to better understand the culture and stone production of the Hoabinhian Period, as well as the relationship between groups of hunters and timber collectors and other people on the Southeast Asian mainland during that time.

Mr. Heng Sophady holds a Master’s Degree in Quaternary and Prehistory and is pursuing his PhD at the Musée National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris. Since 2007, Mr. Heng Sophady has served as Deputy Director General for Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. Recently Mr. Heng Sophady co-authored a research paper, entitled “Laang Spean cave (Battambang province): a tale of occupation in Cambodia from the Late Upper Pleistocene to Holocene,” in the journal of Quaternary International. Mr. Heng Sophady has also published a number of research papers, in both the Khmer and English languages, including “The case of Phnom Teak Treang and Laang Spean Cave, Cambodia: the potential for World Heritage site nomination, the significance of the site for human evolution in Asia, and the need for international cooperation,” “Phoum Satum: life in a traditional Khmer village,” and others.

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