

International Notes

Edited by Ewan Maidment

National Archives of Cambodia

Correspondents: Lym Ky and Peter Arfanis

The National Archives of Cambodia (NAC) experienced a most eventful and productive year in 1995 with the influx of substantial foreign assistance. The NAC has suffered for many years from a lack of skilled archivists and equipment and, as a result, the condition of our holdings has deteriorated. This assistance creates the basis for staff development and support, and supplies equipment and material which will allow the NAC to start the long process of arranging and describing the holdings in the NAC repository and preserve them for future use.

Major developments for 1995

The appointment for two years of Peter Arfanis, as a volunteer archivist, has been made by the Overseas Services Bureau of Australia, to assist in implementing a program for redevelopment which includes the acquisition of material and technical assistance, establishing relations with other national archives and the training of staff.

In September the NAC received a donation of US\$8 000 from the Australian Government. The money was made available through Cultural Relations funding and was used to purchase the following: computer, printer, computer table, photocopier, generator, voltage regulators and uninterrupted power supply units, security gates for the building, English language training, computer training, dictionaries and reference books for staff and archives.

To take advantage of training courses in archives management being offered in countries such as Malaysia and France for Archivists from developing countries, five staff are studying English at the Australian Centre of Education and another five are studying French at the French Cultural Centre.

In November and December two staff attended a two month computer course at the Cambodian Development Research Institute.

In August Lym Ky attended a two month course in bookbinding and conservation at the National Archives of Malaysia.

In October the NAC received a donation of books about archives and conservation from the Society of American Archivists.

Arrangements are being made for a French archivist with good knowledge of Indochinese archives to visit Cambodia in 1996 to assess the holdings of the NAC. This may prove to be the beginning of substantial French assistance to the NAC.

An application is being prepared for the NAC to become a member of the International Council on Archives.

One of the NAC's major tasks at the moment is the sorting of thousands of French novels, periodicals and journals located in the archives repository but which are the residual holdings of the National Library. Before 1986 the NAC and National Library were responsible to the Ministry of Culture and occupied shared premises. Following their separation into different Ministries the NAC was left with these publications from the French colonial period. Meetings are being held to decide what is to be kept by the National Archives and Library respectively. While it is fairly clear cut what is to be retained by each institution, there is some argument over journals relating to administration and law in Cambodia and Indochina.

National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia

Correspondents: Elaine & Tony Eccleston

In early December 1995, Dr Noerhadi Magetsari, the Director-General of the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) agreed to a visit to the repository by Elaine and Tony Eccleston. Acceptance of the visit, and the opportunity to meet Dr Noerhadi and his senior staff, was facilitated in large measure by a letter of introduction sent to Dr Noerhadi by George Nichols, Director-General of the Australian Archives.

The visit to the National Office in Jakarta, arranged by Drs Desi Pratiwi and Anak Agung Gede Putra, included initial discussions with Dr Noerhadi, Bondan Hindarwoto, the Deputy Director-General Archives Administration, and Secretary to the Director-General, Sumeh Abdul Hamid.

Dr Noerhadi summarised his concerns and aspirations for ANRI in terms of his responsibility to organise, develop and guarantee the preservation of evidence of the history of the nation. The central theme of the ANRI program is to be involved with government records management issues at the operational stages, recognising that current administrative problems in document and records control will inevitably be reflected in the archival domain.

The ANRI involvement in active and inactive records administration is extended to human resources development, with an active program to create skilled personnel both as records officers, archivists and trainers. The Archives program includes the provision of trained personnel to government agencies to ensure appropriate and effective handling of records before transfer to inactive and archival status.

The standard Australian government agency archival processes are replicated in Indonesia, with appraisal being conducted on the basis of records retention schedules created for individual departments according to perceived valuations, the use of inactive record storage facilities, and the progressive transfer of archival material to National Archives repositories. However, essential differences do exist between the two systems. First, the national archival program in Indonesia extends beyond the national government departments to provincial, regional, and municipal level administrative records, and they still have a commitment to custody of all government archival documents, irrespective of format.

ANRI has three repositories in Jakarta, the main office being at Cilandak. The eight-storey Cilandak repository houses thirty linear kilometres of archival material in environmentally controlled conditions. The holdings are separated into two large categories; colonial archives and post-independence papers. The colonial material includes some fascinating historical documents from the early Dutch colonial occupation, including an original contract dated 12 April 1667. Also stored, and occasionally exhibited to the public, are historical maps, photographs, films and sound recordings. Modern computer and audiovisual facilities are also available under the control of Anak Agung Gede Putra, a specialist officer in new media management who received his training in Germany and The Netherlands. His responsibility is the acquisition, maintenance and preservation of archival documents held on film, audio, video, magnetic and optical disc media.

At the instigation of Anak Agung Gede Putra, we were invited to visit the West Java, Level 1, Provincial archives office (KAD Propinsi Daerah Tingkat 1,

Jawa Barat) in Bandung the following day. Hj. Djudju Djuenah, the Manager of the Provincial Office greeted us and described the structure and functions of provincial archives and her excellent working relationships both with the central office in Jakarta and Provincial Government agencies. Subsequently Ibu Djudju escorted us on a tour of the facilities which included the repository itself, a converted warehouse without the usual environmental controls. The urgency of acceptance and implementation of plans for a new purpose built repository was emphasised by the high humidity we experienced on the day of our visit.

The National Archives of Indonesia was established in 1872, then known as the *Landsarchief*, to provide the Dutch colonial administration with the basic information of government in the colony. Transferred in 1949, with independence from Dutch rule to the new Republic of Indonesia, it became Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia. Its objectives are to ensure the preservation of national heritage documents, to provide national accountability, and to make these materials available for use by the government and the public.

Lao Revolutionary Museum, Vientiane

Correspondent: Marion Ravenscroft

I am not an archivist, but a conservator. Yet I am surrounded by masses of media that remains uncatalogued and undocumented. As I am sure you are aware, conservation procedure cannot go ahead until objects, manuscripts, etc. are properly registered and documented. This makes my task here difficult as my archival and curatorial skills are limited. The following is a brief account of the archival situation in the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic. Brief because we are frantically busy at the moment killing termites, the scourge of the country.

Perhaps one of the most uplifting experiences I have had in the country was a visit to the Film Archives a few weeks ago. Here a small but diligent team battle against all odds to preserve much of the country's recent history that exists on film. The Soviets' use of film as a means of propaganda is well known and there are various stockpiles of 35mm black and white film throughout the country. Two of the staff of the Film Archives have had some training at the National Film and Sound Archive in Australia and the benefits of such training are clear indeed. What a shame such scholarships are so rarely available!

Lack of funding, resources and professional expertise in this country makes progress slow. High humidity and heat certainly must be the greatest deteriorating factors, creating havoc of a biological kind. The materials that are of most concern to me are the various archaeological collections and the collection within the Lao Revolutionary Museum where I am based. Manuscripts, photography and objects that are contained within the collection remain uncatalogued, but we are slowly getting through it. This material, though many people here see it as redundant, is a very concise record of a critical time in Lao history. Namely the revolution and the complex (or, sometimes extraordinary) events that took place in the country this century. The general political climate here is forcing much of the Soviet material under the carpet rather than having it documented and conserved. Some documents and photography are seen as a risk to national security and they are therefore rotting behind closed doors. Often the most sensitive material is the most interesting, but I simply cannot get to it. However, 'times they are a-changing' here in the Lao PDR. Laos needs more of its nationals to be trained in the fields of Museology and record documentation. In a country that contains sixty-eight ethnic groups it will be important to retain the culture if they are to maintain a national identity.

The Lao PDR requires resources, funding and professional scholarships urgently. Donations from individuals or institutions of money, computer hardware and software to the Lao Revolutionary Museum at PO Box 5512, Vientiane, Laos, would be greatly appreciated.

PARBICA

Correspondent: Karin Brennan

Members of the PARBICA Bureau had arranged to hold a Bureau meeting in conjunction with ICA meetings held in Washington in 1995. Unfortunately the Bureau meeting had to be postponed at short notice until 3 February 1996, when members were able to meet in Sydney at the NSW State Office of Australian Archives.

Bureau members invited Dr Peter Orlovich, UNSW, and Dageo Jano, Pohnpei State Archives, to attend the meeting. Dr Orlovich had been asked to join the meeting to participate in the discussion of the training program for the upcoming PARBICA 7 conference, and Dageo Jano was visiting Sydney to attend a BISA conservation course at the School of Information, Library and Archive Studies at UNSW.

At the meeting Bureau members moved a vote of thanks to Dr Peter Orlovich for the work he undertook for PARBICA in writing the official minutes for the PARBICA 6 General Conference held in Guam.

The Secretary-General reported that PARBICA had approached the Government Archivist of Fiji National Archives to ascertain whether the Archives were in the position to accommodate PARBICA's archives. At the last general conference PARBICA members had expressed their desire for the PARBICA archives to be deposited at Fiji National Archives as the Archives was already providing accommodation for the PARBICA library. Bureau members decided no longer to persevere with a PARBICA library and to inform the Government Archivist of Fiji National Archives of this decision. The library materials have been offered to Fiji National Archives for use in their staff training. This decision was taken with some regret, but was made in consideration of the fact that members have never made any use of the library in the past, and that the costs to make the materials known and circulate them were prohibitive.

Bureau members at their previous meeting had decided not to publish a journal but a quarterly newsletter instead. Four issues of the newsletter were published during 1995 and were well received by members. It was decided that the PARBICA newsletter, *Panorama*, should be available for subscription to non-PARBICA members at a price of US\$15 per year.

PARBICA membership was another issue which was discussed at the meeting. It was reconfirmed that ICA membership is obligatory for PARBICA members and that the matter be raised with members as appropriate. It was further decided that PARBICA membership should lapse if membership dues are in arrears for four years or more. The time span of four years was chosen so that members who had been unable to attend the PARBICA 6 conference would not be disadvantaged by this rule, as it has been customary in the past for many members to finalise any outstanding dues at the general conference.

The Bureau also decided to establish an Associate membership category subject to ratification by the General Conference. PARBICA members in many Pacific Islands still do not receive institutional and governmental support for membership of ICA and PARBICA, yet they are central to a Pacific archives network. It was felt that a new membership category would ensure that the contacts and relationships with these members which have been established in the past are not lost, but continue to be fostered. Members in the Pacific region turn to PARBICA for guidance, assistance and training on archival issues and it is PARBICA's mandate to provide training and assistance in

archival development in the area. Associate membership status will apply to all members not yet members of ICA. An associate membership status carries no voting rights and does not entitle the member to stand for office. On the question of honorary membership it was decided that Karin Brennan and John Wright should formulate policy procedures along ICA rules. The ultimate decision on conferring honorary membership of PARBICA lies with the General Conference.

During 1995 several project proposals had been brought to the attention of the President and the Bureau. Bureau members did not have any information on the projects which had been brought to the President's attention and therefore decided on the information available at the time of the meeting that PARBICA should pursue the PARBICA 7 conference and a Directory/Guide to Archival Institutions in the Pacific Region as special projects.

Towards the end of 1995 the Bureau received an invitation from the Governor of New Caledonia to hold the next biennial PARBICA conference, PARBICA 7, in Noumea, New Caledonia. Bruno Corre, PARBICA's Vice-President, was designated by the Governor as the government's contact person with responsibility for conference arrangements.

Subject to availability of the conference venue PARBICA 7 will be held in October 1997 and most likely cover a time span of ten days. It is anticipated the program will consist of several parts, including a training workshop, visits to local institutions, a discussion session, the general conference and a special session open for community participation. The exact date and duration of the conference are not yet final and will depend on the availability of accommodation and finance.

Following deliberations taken at the previous Bureau meeting the ICA Deputy Secretary-General, George MacKenzie, had suggested that PARBICA use both the ICA and PARBICA logo on PARBICA publications. This suggestion was unanimously endorsed by Bureau members.

Planning for PARBICA 7 is under way now and Bureau members are arranging to hold a meeting to discuss conference arrangements. It is anticipated that the meeting will be held in April 1996 in Sydney and a preliminary program for the conference should be available in May.

During 1995 PARBICA was involved with the presentation of a pre-conference workshop at the PIALA '95 annual conference in Yap, Federated States of Micronesia. Karin Brennan and John Wright had been

invited by PIALA, the Pacific Islands Association of Libraries and Archives, to present a pre-conference workshop on 'Care of archives and books, disaster preparedness and recovery, and managing resources in libraries and archives'. The theme of the conference was 'Preservation of Culture Through Archives and Libraries'. Karin Brennan, as Secretary-General of PARBICA, had also been invited to represent PARBICA during the conference.

Works currently in progress by Bureau members are the design and publication of an information brochure on PARBICA and determining changes required to the PARBICA constitution. Some minor changes have become necessary resulting from changes to the ICA constitution.