

CAMBODIA – HERITAGE @ RISK!

Case Study – Angkor Wat

Right in the heart of Cambodia lies the famous Temple of Angkor. The temple buildings of the Angkor region date from the period between 802 to 1295. In 1992, Angkor was entered in the UNESCO World Heritage List. These important monuments have not been accessible for many years because of the armed conflicts under Pol Pot's regime of terror. Through the opening up of the country these hundreds of years old testimonies to the Khmer civilisation, but also their alarming decay have now finally come to the consciousness of the public.

In Angkor more than a hundred larger temple structures are spread over a district of about 230 km². The temple of Angkor Wat represents one of the largest religious buildings of the world. The surrounding water supply and outer drainage system

alone reaches 1,500 x 1,300 m and a width of 300 m, the base of the temple elevation is 200 x 180 m, and the temple itself has a height of 65 m. In Angkor Wat, reliefs of a total expanse and surface of about 2,000 m² were carved out of the stone. But visitors are struck by the variety and outstanding quality of the pictorial representations even more than these measurements.

The sculpture is made of various types of sandstone, which differ considerably in colour as well as in the behaviour of their deterioration. The observed damages are far-reaching: from immense structural and stability problems to extremely active deterioration processes and a rapid decay of the artificially sculptured images along the temple walls. At the moment the Fachhochschule in Cologne, Germany, is entrusted with a project for the rescue of this World Heritage Property, but can only take care of an infinitely small part of its endangered fabric.

The temple of Angkor Wat





Badly damaged relief on the temple of Angkor Wat



Increasing destruction of the temple reliefs: condition of a relief in 1965

The same relief in 1996

