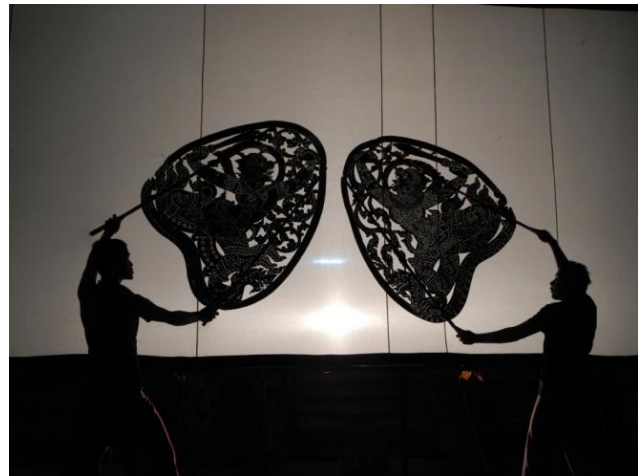


Susan Needham
2013 NBS Summer Mini Grant
August 5, 2013

2013 NBS Summer Mini Grant Summary Report on
RESEARCH IN CAMBODIA
June 9-27, 2013

This is a summary of research conducted on Cambodian Shadow Puppet Theater (Lakhon Sbaek Thom) in Siem Reap, Cambodia, June 9-27, 2013. My goals were to 1) document the process of puppet production, 2) document the craft as practiced in Cambodia today, and 3) document the *sompeah kruu* ceremony.

My student, Alexxandra Salazar, and I were able to complete preliminary research in all three areas. We met with three puppet makers. Two of them, House of Peach and Little Angels Orphanage, are schools where children are learning the art. We also had the rare opportunity to video record a full rehearsal and performance of the shadow puppet theater, both of which included a *sompeah kruu* ceremony. Such recordings are not available anywhere and so are extremely valuable. Finally, I purchased rare books and other materials published on shadow puppets which will be placed in the Cambodian Community Archive at the Historical Society of Long Beach where they will be available to students, scholars, and community members.



Performance at Wat Bo

Continuing Work: On August 8, 2013 I submitted a grant to the [Alliance for California Traditional Arts](#) to bring a puppet master to Long Beach next year to help train the troupe being formed here. I will be giving a presentation entitled *Art and Ritual in Khmer Culture*, for OLLI on October 4, 2013 and presenting a paper on the shadow puppet project as an example of research and community engagement at the annual conference of the Society for Applied Anthropology in Spring 2014.

Below are some images from the trip:



House of Peace, Siem Reap, Cambodia: Puppet maker and assistant teacher, Chuen Chetra, shows us leather puppets that he and the Master puppet maker, Look Kruu Tin Kung, made. House of Peace is a shadow puppet school supported by a Cambodian-German physician. Master Tin was given the land and money to build the school by Prince Sihanouk in the mid-1990s.

Susan Needham
2013 NBS Summer Mini Grant
August 5, 2013



House of Peace: Master Tin's altar with several sizes and styles of Preah Eisey, guardian of the shadow puppet art form.



While we were at House of Peace the Supreme Patriarch of Buddhism in Cambodia, Samdak Preah Sang Riech Tep Vong, came in to commission the making of a Preah Eisey puppet from Master Tin (seated on the floor).

Susan Needham
2013 NBS Summer Mini Grant
August 5, 2013



Little Angels Orphanage and Khmer Art Center, Siem Reap. This child is learning to draw the “kbach” (design elements) used in making shadow puppets. Children at the orphanage attend school and learn the art of leather work design. The founder, Look Kruu Nhek Sirey Rattana, is a former student of Master Tin.



Older students at Little Angels Orphanage creating designs in leather. The students learn every aspect of puppet making, including how to make their own tools and preparing the cow hide.