

Date: Wed, 29 May 1996 16:56:05 -0700 (PDT)  
Subject: Field Reports - UNESCO World Heritage Endangered Cities

[Mike Naimark is a media artist at Interval Research and a pioneer in advanced digital imaging. He recently did a large installation project in which he went to four endangered world cultural heritage sites and shot them using a gnarly digital camera. These are his stories, written as a road diary and not intended as anything polished, of what happened as he lugged his gear to each of the sites.]

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Date: Sun, 5 May 1996 17:22:07 -0700  
From: naimark@interval.com (Michael Naimark)  
Subject: field reports

Field Reports - UNESCO World Heritage Endangered Cities

filming with 2 35mm motion picture cameras (for 3D)  
at 60 frames-per-second (for smooth motion)  
on a custom-built rotating platform (for panoramics)

Michael Naimark

1) Jerusalem Report  
Monday 2 October 1995  
Jerusalem

Yesterday I was at the Western ("Wailing") Wall here in Jerusalem from 5:00am to 6:00pm nonstop with my Israeli production assistant, Talia "Tulik" Gal'on, and the 500lbs of gear. We plopped it down on The Spot and filmed 5 panoramas throughout the course of the day, without the tripod moving a micron. Each 400 foot magazine lasts just under 2 minutes at 60 frames per second, and since one rotation takes one minute, it's really just one panorama with a long handle.

The spot, selected the day before, is about 200 feet from the wall itself, where the plaza rises enough to see most of the Dome of the Rock, sacred Muslim shrine, as well as an opening in the city wall revealing part of the far-off landscape. This distance would abstract people praying at the wall into ants, which to me is OK, since it also respects their privacy. It turns out we had no choice.

I had originally hoped there would be a spot in the Old City which could give a less one-sided view. There aren't.

I also have several thousand years of my own genetic and cultural baggage

to deal with and frankly saw no reason to let political correctness overrule.

It was an intense and magical day. Two miracles happened (or to be exact: highly improbable, perfectly timed events of good fortune). One dealt with recording Shofar sounds. I had been inside the inner area recording audio, and no one seemed to mind. The last audio I was trying to get was the shofar, but as I waited, one man asked me to leave and I was in no position to say no. As I walked out a child with a shofar appeared and cheerfully offered to be recorded. The other event was with a van that was partly obscuring part of the landscape view. Just as we were going to ask authorities if they knew whose it was (it has been there for several hours), the owner appeared and happily moved it. Neither were essential, just enhancements. Gifts.

We also got busted by the ultra-religious, their main guy threatening to force us out unless we got permission from their religious authorities (we had already gotten permission from the government authorities). Tulik frantically taxied to their headquarters and got it.

Mid-morning an unclaimed day-pack 50 feet from us was taken as a potential bomb by the Israeli police. The plaza has no trash barrels for fear of bombs. The bomb squad immediately cleared the entire area, moving us back about 100 feet (as if this would be a safe distance from a day-pack full of plastique). But the Israelis in the group didn't freak, knowing a real bomb would be relatively improbable, so we stood with them watching. A brave young bomb squader in a kevlar vest moved in with a SRL-style concussion bomb and "detonated" it. No bomb.

"I hope this didn't hurt your cameras" said Tulik.

By late afternoon the hot arid sun was getting to both of us, since we had to be out with the cameras all day. "It's so abstract" Tulik observed. "The Wall. It's not beautiful or monumental, it's a piece of an old wall. It's only the concept that makes it so special."

The cameras and custom equipment all seemed to perform perfectly. The rented equipment is robust but expensive and the custom gear is barely tested. Everything travelled well, so the obvious thing to do is move everything to the site and set it up there, very very carefully. During shooting, the turntable mechanics appeared stable (even during wind), the motor indicator light stayed green, as did the rented box to keep the cameras in sync.

A few words about the fundamentalist Jews: I don't like them. I don't like fundamentalist Muslims, Christians, or any other group which believes that their "God" justifies killing or any other form of inferior treatment to other humans. A small few such Jews made nasty comments to us. Most others were simply curious. But near the end of a very long, very hot, very grueling day, a young Hassidic-dressed man approached me and asked what I was doing. I gave the explanation and added that such very accurate, very rich recording could be used to assure that the state of things could be compared to their states in the future, like 100 years from now.

"You mean like if the grass there growing out of the wall changed even a bit?"

"Yes."

Long pause.

"Then I wish you the best of luck" he said, smiled, and walked away.

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2) Dubrovnik Report  
Sunday 8 October 1995  
Boston

Late last night I drove up the Adriatic coastline of Croatia to the town of Split, 4 hours from Dubrovnik, to catch my 6:50 am flight out. Everyone said it was completely safe, even the 7 km through Bosnia. The drive, under the full moon, was tiring but mostly uneventful. The biggest exception was seeing a convey of 9 full-size busses, too dark inside to make things out, flanked by cars with silent flashing blue lights. Clearly, this was not a bus tour.

Getting in was almost as eerie. My flight from Jerusalem to Rome thursday was overbooked, and from there things went haywire. The result required entering Croatia by van from Slovenia, after midnight. At the border crossing there were a dozen large canvas-covered unmarked trucks. The customs officials only checked the tamper-proof seals on their flaps and sent them through.

After 3 hours sleep in Zagreb, I took the 6:30 am flight into Dubrovnik friday morning. This flight is less than a week old. When I was emailed that it was safe because the bombing had stopped, I assumed they meant 1991, not last month. But the small plane was nearly full, and I saw no evidence of special circumstances, except flying west beyond Split to out over the Adriatic Sea, then south. It doesn't take a ruler to connect the dots: Sarajevo is in the middle.

At the Dubrovnik airport I was met by Dubravka Zvrko from the Dubrovnik Restoration Fund, a non-profit organization working with UNESCO. After maneuvering my gear into the hotel, we toured the Old City. The original walled city had its origins around 700 AD and by medieval times Dubrovnik was a proudly independent city-state, a reputation which has survived among the natives.

The setting itself is spectacular: sandy beaches, turquoise water, palm trees, and soft air, nestled below the hills that run up and down the coastline. Until recent times Dubrovnik has enjoyed a reputation as an ultra chic resort community.

But as we walked the 2 km of the city walls, and inside the Old City itself, evidence of bombing was everywhere. Most took place in late 1991, when Serbian forces let go on Dubrovnik and almost all neighboring Croatian villages, using incendiary bombs to burn everything nearby. Today much has been restored, but small shrapnel holes are literally everywhere. The

Bosnian border is only a few kilometers east, up in the hills above the coastline.

Consequently, one can't talk about Dubrovnik without talking about the current affairs. Dubravka, a native, was impassioned and articulate. The first thing one must understand is that Serbs have Orthodox roots and Croats have Catholic ones, this going back 1,000 years. The Serbs always had a natural affinity to their Eastern neighbors, like Russia; the Croats to their Western ones. The next thing to know is that the former Yugoslavia was Serb-controlled, throughout all of its republics. Dubravka recalled growing up where most all of the local government officials were Serbs who had been brought in. Taxes always went to Belgrade.

Belgrade had been making and stockpiling weapons for years, then their tax base disappeared. They had the position and motivation to become aggressive. This is how Croats see the simplest and most obvious basis for the state of things. (The Muslims, who number close to 50% in Bosnia, continue to get the shortest end of the stick. And, they are weaponless because, unlike Croats, they don't have their own state which shares a border with Bosnia. It's not money as much as geographic access.)

Within the walled city, the most popular gathering place is by the Orlando Column, built in the fifteenth century. This square also has the main clock tower and the baroque St. Blaise's Church. Two outdoor cafes are here as well. This square is smaller and more intimate than that of the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

But something is amiss: the Orlando Column is encased in a wooden box structure 5 meters high, totally obscuring it from view. Protecting it, actually: after the bombings, Dubrovnikers decided to build heavy wooden structures around their most precious monuments and to keep them there until they feel it's safe. This is not symbolic, it's functional.

After the three hour tour, Dubravka took me to have lunch with Berta Dragicevic, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik. The IUC began in the early 1970s to organize academic conferences between the East and the West, and over the years its membership has increased to several hundred universities. Berta and I had been in email touch for several weeks, all because Dubrovnik has a Web Site (<http://tjev.tel.fer.hr/dubrovnik/>), and its designer, Enver Sehovic, an engineering professor at the University of Zagreb, promptly and enthusiastically answered my query.

It's very strange to eat an excellent meal at a fine restaurant which is entirely empty. Before 1991, moguls, artists, royalty, and rock stars filled these places.

I awkwardly asked Berta what her feelings were about shooting around the Orlando Column. I was a bit afraid she might be offended. On the contrary, she was encouraging, feeling that this was the reality of their situation and such realities shouldn't be hidden.

After lunch I asked Dubravka. She agreed with Berta, adding that some tourist concerns still only wish to show the old Dubrovnik as if the war

didn't exist. This, she says, is nonsense. She also feels that Dubrovnik's future for tourism will be rooted in its culture as well as its beaches.

So we went to the square and together chose the Spot.

Ivo Pendo is the A/V guy for much of Dubrovnik, working for the travel agency and setting up equipment for conferences (which today are few). He is a young, talented, and very friendly fellow who would likely be an ace audio hacker if he had been born in the US. But he is local, and much of his knowledge comes from being active in radio here. He knows his audio.

Ivo was my production assistant. Late friday afternoon we got together to check out my gear. Then we went out for some beer with his girlfriend, a geography student visiting from Zagreb.

Ivo's family home, in a village just several kilometers from Dubrovnik, was completely destroyed by the Serbs in late 1991 along with 80% of the village. His parents are for now living in Dubrovnik (many of the people seen on the street are local refugees, a fact totally undetectable to me). Ivo's talk of current affairs is consistant with Dubravka's. There is passion but there is also openness. We could go on but must meet tomorrow at 6am to set up.

The shoot saturday was "cafe society filming" at its finest. The weather was splendid, people were hanging out, children were everywhere, parents were pushing babies in strollers. Evo and Dubravka were around and seemed to know everyone. Berta droppped by and introduced me to her husband. The restaurant owner from friday's lunch stopped over with friends from the local theater. The camera was near enough to the cafes that I could use one as my base to reload film and keep the audio gear.

The Enemy here is the opposite of the Jerusalem situation, where it's in-your-face (and where some Jewish civilians carry AK-47s. Why? I had to ask: Arabs!) In Dubrovnik everyone is on the same side, and the enemy is not among them. There are no snipers nearby, only distant mortar shells.

After we put the gear away in my rental car, Dubravka, Ivo, and I had our last chat of the project. Everything went well and we all felt pretty good. Dubravka said goodbye, and Ivo and I stayed and chatted more. "It's not the question of 'if,'" he said, since everyone knows a gem like Dubrovnik will endure, "it's a question of 'when.'" First Dubrovnikers went 4 months without electricity or water in 1991. Ivo was in the army for 3 years. Until people start coming back to Dubrovnik, there is no income base. Ivo wants to have a family. No one can say when things will get back to normal, and this is frustating.

He said many Croats simply leave. I ask if he's thought about it.

"Yeah. I will not leave."

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3) Timbuktu Report  
Monday 16 October 1995  
Paris

Saturday mid-day we were ready to begin filming in Timbuktu. We were already rather certain that "the spot" would be at one of two sites, and were all pleased with our selection. It was over 100 degrees out and I was kneeling in the hot sand with my hands in the black rubberized film bag loading the magazines when I noticed I was wearing the same clothes I put on wednesday morning in Boston.

More stupid airlines messes (including a 10 hour delay on a United non-stop from Dulles to Paris!) delayed my arrival in Bamako, Mali's capital, until friday. Our only option to keep on schedule was an all-night drive from Bamako to Mopti 8 hours north and catch its flight to Timbuktu saturday morning. We were warned of possible rebel activity along this road, and about every half hour encountered a check-point consisting of several old oil drums placed in the road, where plain-clothed soldiers waved us through, if they were awake. At least I wasn't alone, there were four of us: our rented driver in our rented Land Cruiser; Sagaidou Haidara, a young high school teacher who speaks English and grew up near Timbuktu; Gilles Tass=E9, a Quebecois "cin=E9aste" with whom I had worked before; and me. We = had no problems.

The plan was to film the second half of the day first, then get the early morning shots on sunday. There was a sunday morning flight out, and if we missed it we would have to be there through wednesday when the next flight leaves. After all, this IS the middle of nowhere: this is Timbuktu.

Timbuktu is where the southern edge of the Sahara desert meets the Niger River, and was the first link between the riches of West Africa and the Middle East, and eventually Europe. Gold and spices (and ivory and slaves) were traded for, among other things, salt from mines in northern Mali. It was the last stop for camel caravans crossing the desert, and it always had an air of mystery.

Timbuktu became a settlement in the 11th century and is the site of three of the oldest mosques in West Africa. It thrived in the 15th and 16th centuries with a population of 100,000. Then Berber invasions from the north, along with the growth of European shipping, broke its trade monopoly and it never returned to its glory. Its tourist status over the past two decades was hurt by the Sahel drought, and most recently by the rebel fighting (Arab separatists originating in Morocco, whose leaders are currently operating from Libya). The population in 1992 was listed as 15,000, but one senses it's significantly less now. Tourists visiting Mali find the famous mosque in Djenn=E9 and the cliff homes of Dogon safer and visually more spectacular, leaving Timbuktu in the sand.

Mali is the largest country in West Africa, but also one of the five poorest countries in the world, with a literacy rate of 10% and an average life expectancy of 44 years. Bamako is a crowded and heavily polluted city, but it is also full of life, where the people wear vibrant colors and almost always return smiles.

My contacts there were pre-arranged by the World Education Organization, recommended by Mary Jo Arnoldi of the Smithsonian by way of an old geography buddy Michael Watts, now a UC Berkeley professor. World Ed

assigned their driver, Cheikne Sylla to help with logistics. Sylla was the best production manager Gilles and I had ever met, even though he doesn't read or write. Sagaidou Haidara, a native Songhai from the village of Rharous near Timbuktu, heard of my query from a friend at World Ed and contacted them. He is a devout Muslim, soft-spoken, but not afraid to give an opinion (e.g., to me: "why aren't you married? You should be married!"). And he had another reason to go with us: his wife was still living in Rharous while he was teaching in Bamako, and it was just around the time they were expecting their first child. Neither of them have telephones (the entire village doesn't have a phone), but he thought he might hear word from one of his many relatives in Timbuktu.

Gilles Tass=E9 was my production assistant in Banff 2 years ago, and since has been doing video work in the Canadian town of Yellow Knife near the Arctic circle, working heavily with the native Denne people there. In an absurd way, Gilles seemed the most appropriate P.A. to take in with me. Most everyone in Mali speaks French, and Gilles would be helpful translating my uneven French.

Upon our arrival in Timbuktu, Haidara was in control, saying hello to friends and relatives beginning at the tiny airport. One of his relatives, Ch=E9rif Haidara, runs his own agency which helps with local arrangements. We e needed to have a car and driver, register with the police, and hire night guards to make sure the cameras could stay in position though the night. Ch=E9rif was knowledgeable about film crews and Timbuktu's UNESCO World Heritage status, and wanted to make sure every local involved was paid. This would include camel drivers if we were to film them. We had an intense discussion about appropriation, exploitation (of both sides), and authenticity and came to an agreement. We shook hands on it and got to work.

The site was near the Sankore Mosque, built in the late 1400s. It wasn't the oldest mosque - the Djinguereber Mosque nearby was built in the early 1300s - but it was a major place of scholarship in the 1500s, one of the world's largest Muslim universities of its time, with 2,500 students. And its square was a large open area.

We filmed until sunset, then met the hired guards, secured the gear for the night, and went to our hotel, exhausted. But it was Saturday night in Timbuktu, and our only night there.

=46rom the moment one arrives in Timbuktu, one is surrounded by people tryin=g to sell you something. Most are Taureg, the original camel people from the North, lighter-skinned than Black Africans, often wearing indigo head dressing, and not afraid to give you an intense stare and say "I have something for you which you must take from me." If you say you have no money they often reply "I can make you a very good price." Here, bargaining is part of the culture. One of these Tauregs, to whom both Gilles and I took a liking, was named Mohamed Agatta, who invited us to his home for tea. It was one of the larger homes we saw, with two open courtyards before entering the interior. We sat together in the inner courtyard under the

very dark sky and drank traditional tea, many times stronger and sweeter than ours, highly ritualized in its preparation. Mohamed spoke of the camel caravans, where he would be out for weeks eating very little but drinking this tea, moving at night to avoid the desert heat and using the stars for navigation. He has taken foreigners on these caravans and invited us to go some day. Then he brought out his goods to sell, which he said were items found or traded in the desert. We bargained.

I went back to the hotel and joined up with Haidara, who had just returned from his relatives. Good news: his wife had a boy 2 weeks ago, which they had agreed to name Mohamed. He was quite happy but also said that at the naming ceremony the baby was sick, and he wanted to bring both mother and baby to Bamako where medical care more accessible. He didn't sound like it was too serious, and had planned on bringing them to Bamako when he could anyway. He was happy to be a father and happy to earn the extra income to bring them now. So we sat in the lobby, where 2-foot lizards sauntered up and down the walls, and talked about Timbuktu. Gilles finally returned, having visited a couple other Tauregs, and was totally drained of all his cash but happy with his acquisitions.

The next morning we were at our spot before dawn, praying the sun would appear in the shot in time to pack up the gear and make our flight out. It did, but not by more than 10 minutes, and we flew back to Bamako where Sylla was waiting for us at the airport. "Yesterday at this time we were just arriving in Timbuktu" said Haidara, the closest sense of jet lag he had ever experienced. We took him to his home and said our good-byes. He will ask for a two week leave from teaching to take a Niger River boat north to bring back his wife and baby, and plans to leave this wednesday.

Sylla insisted we meet his family in Bamako, where they offered us tea. We met his parents, his wife and their two children, and another dozen relatives. Everyone was very warm, and we had a lively and joyful conversation.

But the most intense conversation was with Haidara the night before, about Timbuktu. He said he knows Timbuktu well and has for all his life, but there is still something mysterious about it. He spoke of the third old Mosque there, the Sidi Yahiya Mosque. The legend is that Sidi Yahiya once appeared as a grown man and helped his grandmother collect wood when she was young. "It was before his mother was even born!" exclaimed Haidara, knowing it was unnatural but seeming to have no doubt that it happened. "And there are old people around here who don't work. They just have money." He doesn't know where they get it. "Old families?" I ask.

"Yes. Old families."

Deep secrets.

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4) Angkor Report  
Wednesday 25 October 1995  
Bangkok



Late Sunday afternoon I walked over to the ruins of a library in the Angkor Wat complex, about 100 feet from the spot where the cameras were set up, to get some shade from the tropical sun. Tra You, my production assistant was sitting there already, with a large Buddhist family: 4 young men in colorful monk robes, 3 older women with shaved heads wearing white, 3 older men well-dressed in casual Western clothing, and several children, including a teen-age daughter wearing fashionable Asian clothing and make-up. Everyone was relaxed and chatting, laughing with each other, and occasionally asking us about the filming. One of the young monks told me in English that they lived nearby. At one point the teen-age girl made a remark to one of the women, who gave her a sarcastic slap, then they both laughed. This could have been a Buddhist sit-com.

Cambodian culture is almost entirely Buddhist, where greetings are made by pressing palms together and bowing, where the smell of incense permeates indoors and out, and where people walk around barefoot whenever they can. It is almost inconceivable that the most recent holocaust on earth took place here 15 years ago.

My first night in Cambodia, Friday, was in Phnom Penh, a city that has seen better days. Buildings are in disrepair, the streets are full of holes, and all street lights and traffic lights are out. Traffic is chaos; most people travel by motor bike, bicycle, or "cyclo" (a one-seat rickshaw front with a bicycle back, a most thrilling ride). But the strangest part of the picture is that the vast majority of the population seems to be under 30, mostly children. Some are orphaned, some left their homes. The municipal police last week started a controversial program of seizing street kids and deporting them back to rural provinces.

But Siem Reap, the town adjacent to Angkor, has the earmarks of a rising tourist town: 737 jets fly in from Phnom Penh and busses take English, French, Japanese, and Chinese tourists to their hotels. Everyone is going to see Angkor, the most prominent site in Cambodia. This week is particularly busy because Angkor is in the path of the total eclipse Tuesday.

My P.A., Tra You, just sort of appeared Saturday morning, though I later learned that both my UNDP and UNESCO contacts (made via another geography buddy Jim Clarkson, now living in Bangkok) knew and respected him. Tra's been making arrangements and giving tours for 3 years, and before that worked on the election. He lives in a small 2 storey thatched roof house with his parents and "many many" siblings, and is recently married (and when I told him I wasn't yet married his response was "WHEN!?!"). His mother, a charming French-speaking woman, offered me tea. Tra says tourism is definitely on the rise, except when an "incident" happens, like when the American tourist was killed by the Khmer Rouge last January, then all tours stop for a while.

We toured Angkor to select the site, shuttling back and forth several kilometers in a car with a driver.

The security situation seems OK. The Cambodian government knows how important foreign visitors are right now, and also knows how deep the repercussions are when incidents occur. I did see a mine removal truck and

chatted (in English) with the head guy. He said mine removal is "not dangerous." Then he added "it can't be. You MUST know what you are doing." The trucks are working far away from any of the current tourist sites.

"Angkor" is Sanskrit for "royal city," and it's clear that it once was. Over 100 temples sites have been found, and everywhere one walks one finds thousands and thousands of sandstone slabs, mostly fallen, many with fragments of inscriptions and bas-relief images. Most everything is overgrown with jungle and scrub. Spoung trees, whose seeds can take root on temple roofs, grow both on top and down through the structures forming giant tenacles to the ground, dislodging massive stone walls. Tra showed me spoung trees at the Ta Prohm temples which he thought were 50 years old. An elderly woman overheard him and said she remembered those very trees when she was a young child. Tra asked her how old she was. Eighty.

Angkor Thom (great royal city), a walled city 9 sq. km., has the ruins of the Bayon Temple with its giant sculpted heads inside, among many other structures. Several international efforts are currently underway to reconstruct some of the sites, but the whole job is absolutely overwhelming. The most well-preserved site is Angkor Wat, the royal city temple just outside the walls.

Angkor was the seat of the great Khmer Empire from the 9th through 14th centuries when it ruled much of Viet Nam, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. It was Hindu, and its leaders believed they were "god-kings," reincarnations of the gods they worshipped most. They built monumental temples to themselves. Early on, in the 9th century, they also built a sophisticated irrigation system which could accomodate dense populations. (Normal people lived in wood structures, long since disappeared.) By the 13th century, Angkor had 1 million inhabitants.

But during the 15th century, Thai armies defeated the Khmer Empire and destroyed their irrigation system. Hinayana Buddhism was replacing Hinduism among the people, and Angkor slowly started to fall apart, except for Angkor Wat, which Buddhist monks took over and maintained ever since.

Tra and I went back and forth between Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom and finally settled on a spot in the Angkor Wat complex, in part because of the ruins of two libraries nearby (like the Muslim university in Timbuktu I'm finding I have a soft spot for ancient academia). We needed permission from the police to drive our gear in and out. UNESCO project. No problem.

We filmed sunday. Young women and small boys sell cold drinks and souvenirs, and we got to know the ones staked out near us. Seeing that we were also their for the whole day, they let us in on their various gags and scams (actually Tra already knew a couple of the women, as well as most all of the authorities). As afternoon approached the area began to swell with a wide variety of visitors, both natives and foreigners.

Several of the military police agreed to be in one take. Later in the day Tra went to the monastery to invite the Buddhist monks to participate. No one asked for money, but at Tra's suggestion I made an offerring to the head Buddhist monk.

A very thin line seems to exist here between offering, tipping, donating, and bribing. Several times throughout the day police would come by on motor bikes and Tra would buy them cold drinks. After dark, when our car and driver finally came, Tra gave the two police watching us some money. (I learned monday morning that the original driver sent to pick us up sunday night was arrested en route. "He was a little foolish" said Tra, since he simply said he was driving at night through Angkor to "find a tourist." The Angkor complex has only one road in, and it is heavily secured because of the immense potential for theft or destruction. Tra got him out, paid him \$20 compensation, and told me not to worry about it.) And even with such seemingly shady activity, it's common to see Cambodians giving small amounts of riels to beggars. It almost appears as acts of camaraderie.

Cambodians have been through unimaginable horrors for 3 decades. The US "secret bombings" in 1969 (finally stopped by Congress in 1974) left thousands dead and hundreds of thousands fleeing their rural homes for the cities. Within 2 weeks after the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Khmer Rouge emptied out the entire populations of Phnom Penh and provincial towns and systematically attempted to liquidate all ties with past non-agrarian culture. Much of the artwork of Angkor was intentionally destroyed. Over 1 million Cambodians died, including most of the religious and the educated.

Today, in Siem Reap and Angkor, almost everyone says hello to foreigners passing by, especially children. Four years of rigorous UN peace-keeping and two years of elected officials (with a 90% voter turnout) has had an effect. But that can't be all. Though I've seen a tiny and skewed piece of the picture, it is tempting to conclude that maybe smiles, touching, warmth, and laughter are the default states of the human spirit.

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