Outcome of the 2012 LiDAR Remote Sensing Programme over Angkor, Phnom Kulen and Koh Ker

Philippe Delanghe

UNESCO Phnom Penh Office, Cambodia

Abstract

In mid-April 2012 full coverage was obtained over the three main acquisition blocks of Angkor, Phnom Kulen and Koh Ker.

The four months of planning culminated in various contractors from various countries converging in Siem Reap for seven days of flight operations in mid-April, with all work overseen by staff from the APSARA National Authority, the University of Sydney, and Civil Aviation authorities. The logistical support was provided by various teams.

Flight operations consisted of approximately 20 hours of total flying over the seven day period, with the LiDAR instrument mounted in a specially-designed pod attached to a helicopter, just a standard helicopter of the type usually used to carry out touristic flights over Angkor.

Special permission was granted by the APSARA Authority and the State Secretariat of Civil Aviation for a waiver of the usual flight restrictions over the Angkor Archaeological Park, and with the cooperation of air traffic control, all flight
patterns were controlled to guarantee minimal disturbance to regular aircraft movements at Siem Reap international Airport.

In addition to the air crew, several ground crews manned GPS base stations during flight operations, at various locations in Siem Reap and Preah Vihear provinces. Incidentally, networks of new, permanent survey-grade benchmarks were established as part of this process, including at sites like Koh Ker, where no accurate benchmarks previously existed.

Thanks to excellent cooperation among all international teams, private contractors and the various government agencies involved, not to mention an excellent run of clear weather and blue skies, flight operations finally came to an end on 22 April, and the LiDAR instrument and technical team was demobilised back overseas. The Canadian company responsible for the acquisition has been working on calibrating and post-processing the enormous amount of data collected during these flight operations.

Our three acquisition blocks were widely separated, and involved extensive ferrying of the helicopter to and from the different sites, as well as to and from Phnom Penh at the start and end of flight operations. While the helicopter was in transit between the blocks, the LiDAR instrument remained on, collecting data. Although our initial contract with the LiDAR provider was for 270 square kilometres of data, they have offered to process several additional blocks of data that were acquired incidentally. Notably, those additional blocks include the Roluos and Beng Mealea temple groups.

This brings our total coverage to approximately 300 square kilometres overall. Something like four billion individual laser measurements were taken during the course of the project, which is the first of its kind in Asia and the largest of its kind ever achieved anywhere in the world.
LiDAR 2012
Outcomes of the Program over Angkor, Phnom Kulen and Koh Ker

Dr. Damian Evans | Department of Archaeology
University of Sydney | damian.evans@sydney.edu.au

High-Precision, Helicopter Mounted System
Contributing Partners (USD $210,000)

APSARA National Authority • JASA • EFEO
University of Sydney • HUNINCOR • ADF Kulen
World Monuments Fund • SCA/INRAP (Airport)

Khmer Archaeology LiDAR Consortium
(KALC)

Coverage Areas

Koh Ker (60 km²)
Phnom Kulen (30 km²)
Angkor (180 km²)
Flight Operations

Photo: Francisco Goncalves

Ground Control Stations
Summary of Flight Operations

- Duration of flight operations: April 16 to 22
- Total coverage area: ~300 km²
- Total flight hours: 20
- Total flight length: 1165 linear km
- Average flight height: 800 m above ground
- Largest helicopter-based archaeological survey ever undertaken, anywhere.
Raw 3D Point Cloud

Three Dimensional Models

Full point density
Conventional Aerial Photography
Data Fusion: Aerial Photography and Point Clouds
Summary of Data Acquisition

- Total number of points: ~4 billion
- Average measurements per m²: 10-15
- Accuracy: >15 cm horizontal + vertical
- Number of air photos: ~5000
- Spatial resolution of air photos: ~10 cm
- Most extensive archaeological LiDAR survey ever achieved, anywhere.
Royal Govt of Cambodia
HE Dr Sok An
HE Keat Chhon
HE Dr Sok Siphana
HE Mme Chau Sun Kérya

Société Concessionnaire d’Aéroport
Mr Emmanuel Menanteau
Mr Bruno Desveaux
Mr Feliciano Enríquez

Archaeology and Development Foundation
Dr Jean-Baptiste Chevance
Mr Seu Pich
Mr Sakada Sakhoeun
Mr Stéphane De Greef

PT McElhanney
Mr Francisco Goncalves
Mr Chris Cromarty
Mr Oliver Swaffield
Ms Glorie Siahaan
Mr Imam Hartono

APSARA National Authority
HE Bun Narith
HE Dr Tan Boun Suy
HE Khuon Khun-Neay
HE Soueng Kong
HE Dr Hang Peou
HE Ros Borath
Mr Hok Pengse
Mr Im Sokrithy
Dr Ea Darith
Mr An Sophap
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Mme Hang Sawathya
Mr Phin Samnang
Mr Chea Socheat

Helistar Cambodia
Mr Hin Samnang
Mr Chan Sophak
Mr Phil Butterworth

INRAP
Mr Pierre Bâty

State Secretariat of Civil Aviation
HE Mao Havanall

UNESCO
Ms Anne Lemaistre
Mr Blaise Killian
Mr Lim Bun Hok

EFEO
Prof Christophe Pottier
Dr Dominique Soutif
Prof Pascal Royère
Mr Vann Sary
Mr Chea Socheat

World Monuments Fund
Mr Glenn Boornazian
Ms Konstanze von zur Muehle
Ms Bonnie Burnham
Ms Cheam Phally
Ms Ginevra Boatto

JASA
Prof Takeshi Nakagawa
Dr Ichita Shimoda

HUNINCO
Dr István Zelnik
Mr Robert Kuszinger
Ms Dóra Egyházi
Ms Zsuzsanna Renner
Mr Sam Sambath

ILI Consult
Mr Jerome Suszeck

National Geographic Society
Mr John Francis
Mr John Bredar

University of Sydney
Prof Roland Fletcher
Dr Damian Evans
Ms So Malay
Dr Martin King