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# Cambodia Down South:

Images of an Archaeological Field Season in the Delta

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Shawn Fehrenbach is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Born and raised in Lexington, Kentucky, he developed an interest in Southeast Asian studies while working towards his undergraduate degree in Anthropology. His current research interests are in the archaeology of mainland Southeast Asia, ceramic studies, compositional analysis, archaeological survey, geographical information systems, and digital media in archaeology.

Archaeology in Cambodia explores landscapes that have shaped and have been shaped by their human inhabitants for thousands of years. Since 1996, the Lower Mekong Archaeological Project (LOMAP) has focused its efforts on understanding the development of complex societies that emerged in southern Cambodia's Mekong Delta during the first half of the first millennium CE. One focus of the project is to survey the distribution of archaeological sites and features on this landscape and understand how their relationships change through time as the nascent polities, later referred to as Funan by Chinese visitors, were forming in the region.

Most of the archaeological sites or features in this part of the country fall into three categories: mounds, ponds, and moat mounds. Identification of these features is facilitated by the uniform flatness and persistent grid of rice paddies that dominate the landscape. Even slight changes in elevation or vegetation can intercept your gaze from kilometers away. Though line of sight is rarely obstructed, the infrastructure of access generally provides a different story all together. The following collection of images offers a glimpse into the trekking, trudging, riding, roving, winding, wandering field sea-

son of the 2009 LOMAP crew's explorations of southern Cambodia's Mekong Delta.



*Above: With two or three archaeologists to a moto, the LOMAP crew prepares for another day in the field.*



*All too often, as you get closer and closer to where you need to be, the roads give way to paths, which turn into bunds. Eventually, on foot is the only way to reach most sites.*



*Though mechanized agriculture is ubiquitous and on the rise in some areas, it is not uncommon to see the hard work of plowing done with more traditional tools of the trade.*



*Mounds are often marked by a conspicuous change in vegetation, with more trees around their periphery and sometimes trees and shrubs across their surface, if they are not cultivated.*



*The vegetation on a mound provides welcome cover for an afternoon deluge during the rainy season. In this sort of rain, staying dry can be a lost cause.*

*Burning the left over plant material after rice harvest sends plumes of smoke into the mid-afternoon air during harvest season.*





Larger roads are often associated with canals. Crossings can be widely spaced.

*The afternoon rush hour clogs the infrastructure of even the more remote regions of Cambodia, at times, though with a decidedly different character than in the city.*

