My Son Sanctuary, Vietnam
UNESCO World Heritage Archeological Site

In partnership with UNESCO Asia Pacific, Quang Nam Provincial People's Committee Centre for Conservation of Heritage and Monuments and the Lerici Institute

September, 2006
My Son Sanctuary - GHF Conservation Program

Global Heritage Fund (GHF) provided sustained funding support of $120,000 for urgently needed stabilization, archaeological documentation, planning, site conservation and training to help save the last remaining temples of My Son Sanctuary, Vietnam. My Son Sanctuary is Vietnam’s only major archaeological site and is an UNESCO World Heritage site which represents the longest continuous occupation for religious purposes, not only of the Cham Kingdom, but also within Southeast Asia as a whole.

My Son was inhabited from the 4th until the 15th century AD, far longer than any of the other Indian-influenced sites in the region including the more famous sites of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Borobudur in Indonesia, Pagan in Myanmar, or Ayutthaya in Thailand. A large majority of My Son’s exquisite architecture was destroyed during just one week of the Vietnam War. My Son is located in Central Vietnam in one of the countries’ least developed provinces and the site remains endangered from flooding, impact of tourism, and deterioration and collapse of monuments.

GHF’s investment in conservation, planning and training has greatly improved the long-term protection, high level conservation science and potential for international and domestic tourism and community development. GHF’s Partner in Conservation and Project Director- the Lerici Institute, has executed an excellent program in difficult conditions in a developing country with few experts or resources for cultural heritage preservation, especially of major archaeological World Heritage sites like My Son.
Above: Stabilization of Temple E7- ‘The Library’ in 2004 by Vietnamese and Italian conservators under the direction of Lerici Institute and monitoring by UNESCO World Heritage Asia Pacific. GHF provided key funding for Temple E7 conservation and master planning.

GHF My Son conservation efforts are focused on the scientific conservation of the most endangered monuments of Group E and Group G, as well as providing an intensive training program for on-site Vietnamese conservators and archaeologists.

Working in partnership with the Lerici Institute, UNESCO World Heritage Centre Asia Pacific and the Vietnamese Quang Nam Provincial People's Committee Centre for Conservation of Heritage and Monuments, GHF had funded a major conservation and archaeological program from 2003-2006, and is currently considering continued support for My Son based on funder availability for 2007-2008.

Grand Circle Foundation, associated with one of the world’s largest travel companies, donated $60,000 for site conservation and $10,000 for GHF Vietnam’s World Heritage in Young Hands program in 2004-2005. Our World Heritage in Young Hands program is bringing surrounding junior high schools to My Son and implementing a structured education program focused on world heritage advocacy, awareness and conservation.
GHF Conservation Progress 2003-2006

1. Temple E7 Emergency Stabilization and Scientific Conservation

Due to Vietnam War-era bombing, neglect and regular flooding of the site, Temple E7 was on the verge of collapse. During 2004, major progress was made on its emergency stabilization and archaeological conservation, which is now seen as a model for all future conservation at My Son. Thorough archaeological excavations were carried out in three sectors of Temple E7 as well as a full architectural survey and structural analyses. A complete aluminum scaffolding for the entire E7 building (a first in Vietnam conservation) was undertaken to keep the building stabilized and wooden structure supports were constructed for the damaged main entrance due to Vietnam War-era bombing.

All geological, geomorphological and topographic surveys were completed as well as laboratory analysis of brick and mortar materials which provides a detailed understanding of the organic adhesive materials used for construction in ancient times. A geosciences/GIS team continued to process resistivity and geomagnetic data for Group E. We completed cleaning of Temple E7 showing existing cracks and stress fractures which were then documented. The focus of GHF support is archaeological conservation with the possibility of partial reconstruction by anastylosis where the collapsed parts of Temple E7 can be found on the ground in their entirety laying in their previous position.

Above: Professional scaffolding for monument conservation at My Son was developed for the first time in Vietnam to provide needed protection and access to all areas of the building.
GHF Conservation at My Son - 2003-2006

GHF is providing urgently needed funding and expertise for scientific archaeological conservation at My Son Sanctuary. GHF is funding conservation and authentic restoration of high priority temples and remaining structures beginning with Temple E7 in danger of collapse. Based on successful conservation of Temple E7 The Library, GHF will undertake funding for additional conservation of high-priority monuments.

GHF’s goal was to raise $240,000 for direct investment from 2005-2006 for My Son Sanctuary conservation. GHF was only successful to raise a total of $120,000 for direct funding to My Son, and to leverage additional funding sources of approximately $280,000 of in-country matching funding from Vietnamese and European governments and foundations towards My Son conservation. Already, the Japanese constructed a new Visitor Center and Museum at the entrance to My Son.

Primary areas of GHF investment in My Son are:

1. Master Conservation Planning
2. Completion of the Conservation of Temple E7 Library
3. High-Priority Monument Conservation in Group E and Group G
4. Vietnam World Heritage in Young Hands Program

1. Master Conservation Planning

The primary emphasis of the Site Conservation Plan for My Son Sanctuary is to provide a comprehensive and scientific-based living framework to guide conservation of this important sacred archaeological site in its cultural and natural environment for archaeology conservators, heritage architects, planners and site for the site’s long-term protection and development.

Site conservation planning is focused on preserving and protecting the outstanding universal value of the cultural heritage assets, while enabling consensus-building with key stakeholders and realizing economic development in harmony with a Site’s aesthetic beauty and historic and cultural values.

Conservation in the context of this Plan includes not only ensuring the physical survival of the archaeological sites and monuments, but also enhancing the visual character of their landscape setting and improving the interpretation and understanding of the whole site as a cultural landscape to visitors. The Site Conservation Plan should form the basis for legislation and designation of the Site as it is protected within the State and Federal jurisdictions, and provide guidance in all conservation work and archaeological research and exploration.
GHF Conservation at My Son - 2003-2006

Architectural and Archaeological Survey and Mapping

Architectural and Archaeological Survey and Mapping were completed with all relevant survey maps, illustrations, photographs, architectural drawings and descriptive detail including:

- Archaeological History
- Historic Architectural Survey
- Existing Land Use and Activities
- Extended Vistas
- Primary tourist pathways
- Proposed development
- Access points, entry/exits
- Religious facilities
- Highest Priorities- Exterior, Interior, Platform, Fortification
- Restoration of Rooftop Temple Sculptures
- Authentic Techniques and Materials
- Gateways and Platform, Reuse of existing sculptured stones
- Doorways, Windows, Security
- Mapping - 2D and 3D
- Inventory all stone/sculptures
- Photos and positioning
- Architectural survey
- Historical background
- Current Land Use and Ownership
Located in central Vietnam in Quang Nam province about 50 km Southwest of the city of Da Nang, My Son Sanctuary is the largest and most important archaeological site in Vietnam. Group E is the area of GHF focus, then conservation will include other high priority structures in Group G.
2. Completion of the Conservation of Temple E7 Library

All cleaning and archaeological excavation and detailed study has been completed. In order to stabilize the building for the long-term, foundation analysis has provided critical input into what intervention is required for the base, the walls and the vaulted roofs of the temple to ensure its long-term survival.

Primary Areas of Conservation

- Foundations
- Main Entrance
- Walls
- Vaulted Ceilings
- Roofing
Above: The first major field seasons begin in 2001 with geophysical prospecting and mapping of the entire My Son UNESCO World Heritage site led by Lerici Institute.

3. High-Priority Monument Conservation in 2003-2006 in Groups E and G

Based on the model conservation work, analysis and planning from Temple E7, additional work was carried out in 2005 and 2006 for the remaining endangered high-priority monuments of My Son’s E and G Groups by Lerici Institute.

One of the key elements of My Son conservation work is to research the type of organic mortar that was originally used so that authentic conservation can be done using similar organic mortar to protect the monuments integrity and authenticity over the long-term. In ancient times, different types of organic mortar were used between the constructional details in order to prevent the formation of mosses and the growth of plants between the joints of bricks, which, in the subtropical climatically conditions, could very quickly undermine the stability of the buildings. Based on the conservation of Temple E7 and tested results, GHF funding of conservation will be expanded to other priority monuments.

As well as archways and architrave, antefixes and columns were put side by side at the entrance of the monuments, all richly sculptured, made entirely in sandstone. Samples have been taken of bricks and pieces of stone that are now being studied at the Laboratory of Analysis of Materials at the Polytechnic of Milan, to test compatibility with modern materials.

Though most of the intricate stucco sculptures and building interiors and exteriors have been lost in the course of centuries, most temples still show elaborate carved brickwork. Long exposure to atmospheric conditions has caused splits that have given plants the opportunity to establish strong root systems which must be carefully removed. These roots are producing deep cracks and often the collapse of complete walls. Mosses and lichens have set upon the decorations in stone, provoking erosion of the figurative parts.
Ground-penetrating radar and more comprehensive surveys of the site are providing detailed monument locations, topographies and finding other previously under discovered monument foundations, structures, components and artifacts.

Examples of recent geophysical prospecting and scientific mapping of the My Son Sanctuary by the Leric Institute including Zoning Protection Proposal (above), Geo-Morphological and Hydraulic Studies (right) and results of Ground penetrating Radar.

A detailed topographic map of the entire site was produced helping to plan for zoning identifying the protected area, buffer zone, land-mined areas. Then mapping of all the buildings was done in the surveyed area. Campaigns of geophysical prospect have been carried-out to localize buried remains and dig-up trial trenches to work out the stratigraphic sequence to give more correct chronology.
Tourism Development

The Vietnamese government has recently created a “World Heritage Road. This newly developed route encompasses three UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites including My Son, the sixteenth century silk route trading harbor of Hoi An, and the ancient imperial city of Hue. The World Heritage Road will also become an extension of the East-West Corridor which connects Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar.

Tourism is still under developed in the region, although the potential is clear and authorities are putting efforts towards tourism development. Immediately after UNESCO accorded its World Heritage status, the number of tourists visiting My Son Sanctuary soared by 40 per cent. Last year, My Son welcomed 97,000 visitors including 50,000 international tourists.

Because of the lack of conservation at My Son, the site is highly vulnerable to the impacts of tourism and unplanned development. Timing is critical for the passage of new legislation to establish strict protection for My Son and related Champa sites in the region establish visitor flow management while helping to energize the local economy through sustainable tourism.
4. Vietnam *World Heritage in Young Hands* Program

As part of our partnership with UNESCO World Heritage, GHF has established a formal education and outreach program - Vietnam *World Heritage in Young Hands* at selected schools in Hoi An Ancient Town near My Son and in Quang Nam Province.

The goals of this program is to increase awareness of the importance of World Heritage for the younger generation and their parents, and to educate local peoples as to the problems facing conservation and its potential to bring economic and cultural benefits to the surrounding communities and the nation as a whole.

GHF is implementing an education and outreach programme on Vietnam UNESCO World Heritage. To this end GHF has hired one full time Vietnamese Program Manager for a two year period to implement the project’s activities related to education and outreach components in close cooperation with the UNESCO Vietnamese National Commission. We have prepared to publish 1,000 Student Handbooks on Vietnam UNESCO natural and cultural World Heritage in Vietnamese / English and to distribute these handbooks to 40 schools in Hue and Hoi areas, as well as provide a two hour orientation for the use of the handbook at each of the 40 schools.

At each school, we are carrying out two teacher training workshop, training at least one teacher from each of the 40 schools identified and, in close cooperation with the My Son site administration, we are coordinating site visits of local schools presenting the World Heritage education and outreach and presenting on World Heritage and World Heritage in Vietnam (Hue, Hoi An, etc.). We are also working to train local guides and implement a series of education and World Heritage “pride” campaigns at My Son Sanctuary and with surrounding communities.
Above: The illustrious temples of My Son are some of the only carved brick monuments in the world with elaborate carvings of deities directly into the bricks (see Below).
Above: Bomb crater left from a one week B-52 campaign which destroyed over 50 of the 75 remaining temples and buildings of My Son Sanctuary.

The Royal Sanctuary of the Champa Kingdom

My Son Sanctuary is perhaps the longest inhabited archaeological site in Indochina and was the royal burial and temple grounds for Vietnam’s first major civilization- the Champa Kingdom- which thrived between 400 and 1500 AD. Located in the central region of Vietnam in Quang Nam province about 50 km Southwest of the city of Da Nang, My Son Sanctuary is an assemblage of the largest and oldest ancient ruins in the country.

Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999 for its ‘universal value to mankind’, My Son was almost entirely destroyed during the Vietnam War by U.S. B52 bombing campaigns. Large bomb holes are visible to the naked eye can be seen throughout the site. The last remaining twenty monuments left standing represent the longest inhabited and most worshipped ancient site of the Champa Kingdom.

My Son’s endangered temples are in critical need of conservation and stabilization to save the last remnants of this once great sanctuary. There is a strong need for training and support to bring Vietnamese conservation and heritage management teams up to world-class standards.
Above: Ceremonial altar of Temple E1 from the 7th century AD with worshipers and dancers.

My Son Sanctuary - Universal Value to Mankind

In view of its historical and cultural significance, My Son Sanctuary was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in December 1999. Its UNESCO World Heritage inscription states:

Between the 4th and the 13th centuries, a unique culture developed on the coast of contemporary Vietnam which owed its spiritual origins to the Hinduism of India. This is graphically illustrated by the remains of a series of impressive tower temples in a dramatic site that was the religious and political capital of the Champa Kingdom for most of its existence.

The archeological site represents the longest continuous occupation for religious purposes, not only of the Cham Kingdom, but also within Southeast Asia as a whole. The site was inhabited from the 4th until the 15th century AD, far longer than any of the other Indian-influenced sites in the region including the more famous sites of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Borobudur in Indonesia, Pagan in Myanmar, or Ayutthaya in Thailand.

My Son Sanctuary was an imperial city, a religious and intellectual center, and served as a burial place for Cham kings during the Cham dynasty. Over a thousand years of political and religious history of the Cham has been preserved in a lasting way, thanks to the impressive remains of its monuments and the numerous inscriptions and artifacts.
My Son Sanctuary - Universal Value to Mankind (cont’)

While most historians have focused on the heavy Chinese influences on Vietnam, few people know that through the Champa Kingdom there was much Indian influence on Vietnamese culture as well. My Son Sanctuary is considered one of the main centers of Hindu monuments in Southeast Asia and the only uniquely Indian-influenced heritage of its kind in Vietnam.

The surviving temples of My Son Sanctuary stun even the most jaded viewer. Skilled carvers, who were sent to learn their craft in Java between the 8th and 10th centuries AD, returned to My Son Sanctuary to create some of the most detailed carved brickwork and stonework to be seen anywhere in the world. While many of the carvings have been removed to the Cham Museum in Da Nang city, exceptionally fine bas-reliefs still stand in the sanctuary. Also in this temple group, are some fine kalans, or temple-towers, first built of brick and then elaborately carved.

My Son’s wonderful natural environment was the reason Cham rulers chose the My Son Valley for their sanctuary. The monumental area of My Son Sanctuary lies 300 meters above sea level and is surrounded by a row of high hills, and is accessible only through a narrow gorge. Cham kings believed My Son was the residence of the god Shiva who’s presence helped protect the empire. My Son Sanctuary monuments are set in a beautiful verdant valley shadowed by Cat’s Tooth Mountain (Hon Quap). My Son is within a day’s drive to other mystical Cham cities as Simhapura, Indrapura and Vijaya, once the Champa capital and largest settlement, now with little left in terms of archaeological remains.
My Son’s major threats include un-repaired damage from the Vietnam War, illegal looting, deterioration from exposure, overall decay, and vegetation overgrowth. Annual flooding during the rainy seasons has accelerated the deterioration at the site. The region’s poverty and the poor economic situation has left My Son neglected over the past hundred years. As noted by the Institute for South-East Asian Studies, My Son represents the cultural, artistic, and historical heritage of Champa. This richness can be attributed to over 1000 years of continuous worshipping, building, and maintenance.

Seventy (70) impressive carved towers and temples were constructed at My Son Sanctuary from the 4th through the 15th centuries. A mere twenty (20) of these temples remain after the extensive damage caused US bombing during the Vietnam War. Adverse impacts of natural

**Threats to My Son Sanctuary**

Above: My Son Sanctuary Group G Temples after the Vietnam War bombardments in the 1960s. Up until the Vietnam War, My Son retained much of its monumental architecture and sculptures.

calamities, landmines and limited understanding of the Cham culture have hindered conservation activities at My Son Sanctuary. My Son Sanctuary is in urgent need of support for conservation and stabilization as critical structures and monuments are collapsing.

**Above:** Conservation stabilization efforts have rebuilt many walls and doorways. Because the level of skills and craftsmanship needed did not exist. There is currently no feasible method to correctly deconstruct and rebuild utilizing correct mortar leaving many unauthentic reconstructed buildings.
Religious Cham architecture, Indian by origin, is in general characterized by a principle sanctuary, surrounded by minor buildings. The Chams built their temples of clay bricks, then engraved the bricks with intricate patterns of animals, gods and goddesses, and flowers. The external surface of the monuments had originally been covered with stucco and with pictorial decorations. At one time, the tops of some of the towers were covered in a thin layer of gold. Skilled carvers, who were sent to learn their craft in Java between the 8th and 10th centuries AD, returned to My Son Sanctuary to create some of the most detailed stonework to be seen anywhere in the world.

Henri Parmentier, a French archaeologist, first found the remains of My Son in 1904 and recorded 72 towers in detail. Parmentier classified My Son’s monument groups into 8 complexes each labeled as A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. Each group was built in a different time period, likely under the rule of a different god-king. The architectural influences of My Son Sanctuary vary within these time periods showing persuasions of different local and Hindu religious ideas. The progression of each temple-complex group represents a step in Cham evolution. Although each temple complex in My Son Sanctuary differs with each time period, the Champa kingdom followed a basic architectural approach in the makeup of each group. Each temple group is characterized by massive shrine towers and kalan built of intricately carved brick and sandstone to commemorate the deeds of Cham Kings.
GHF Partners in Conservation

UNESCO World Heritage Centre- Asia Pacific

Under the leadership of Dr. Richard Englehardt, a Harvard-educated archaeologist, UNESCO World Heritage Centre located in Bangkok, Thailand provides support and advocacy for the many World Heritage sites throughout Asia in the areas of conservation, heritage management, tourism management and sustainable development. UNESCO’s leadership has helped focus resources and attention on endangered sites like My Son and organizes partnership to help UNESCO World Heritage sites succeed in conservation and cultural heritage management.

The Lerici Institute

The Lerici Institute is one of the leading research and archaeological institution in Italy, specializing in non-invasive investigations for the safeguarding of cultural heritage for over 50 years. Based at Milan Polytechnic, the Institute supports conservation, research and collaboration across multiple disciplines of conservation including archaeology, geophysics, structural engineering, materials science, hydraulic engineering, GIS and IT, and geotechnology.

Quang Nam Provincial People’s Committee Centre for Conservation of Heritage and Monuments

Based in Da Nang, this regional department is responsible for the protection and conservation of My Son Sanctuary and includes one regional director and a developing team dedicated to Mi Son, which has grown significantly over the past three years. Training and capacity building of this department and team for archaeological conservation is a key goal of GHF investment in My Son.

Dedication to GHF Leaders in Conservation- the above mentioned organizations comprise the team of dedicated people working towards the long-term survival of My Son Sanctuary.

About Global Heritage Fund

The Global Heritage Fund is a non-profit, international conservancy formed to preserve and protect humankind’s most important archaeological and cultural heritage sites in developing countries. Our timely investments, global network of experts, and advanced Preservation by Design methodology work together to create a ‘cycle of success’ for Global Heritage sites which have high potential for sustainable preservation, tourism and economic development.

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Contact Information

For more information on GHF’s conservation work in My Son Sanctuary and other archaeological and cultural heritage sites around the world, see our website under Where We Work at:

www.globalheritagefund.org

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