

Asian Field School in Urban Conservation and Cultural Resource Management



July-August, 1998: SPAFA and the University of Hawaii Combined Efforts for Innovative Historic Preservation Training Programme

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The overall aim of this programme was to increase awareness of historic urban resources on the part of Southeast Asian students and professionals, and to consider steps for preservation and revitalisation. Unlike ancient temple sites or archaeological sites, historic urban resources are usually still in private ownership. Although conservation plans can be drawn, putting them into effect is far more problematic in the urban context. With private ownership come additional pressures: pressures to sell and redevelop properties, and pressures to allow for sometimes damaging changes. Along with economic issues, students must look at historical factors - traditions of use and ownership; the expectations and viewpoints of tenants and owners alike, and much more.

With the generous assistance of the Japan Foundation's Asia Centre, SPAFA (the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts) and the University of Hawaii conducted this six-week training programme in preservation, focussing on the historic old city of Bangkok, specifically the areas known as Rattanakosin and Banglampoo.

This was the third annual Asian Historic Preservation Field School for the University of Hawaii - earlier programmes had been held in Phnom Penh (1996) and Bangkok (1997) - but it was the first time that SPAFA and the University of Hawaii had worked together to offer a specialised training course. It was also the first urban conservation programme that SPAFA had sponsored.



comic relief during course lectures SPAFA Centre

Students were recruited from Thailand, Malaysia and Cambodia. Following a review of applications and recommendations from a number of universities and university faculties, 15 Thai students, two

Malaysians and four Cambodians were selected for the course. A majority of the students were graduates in architecture or city planning; a few were advanced undergraduates and still others, instructors or lecturers in architectural planning. The four Cambodian students were lecturers at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh.

Overall, the course was divided into four distinct parts. Initially, students were introduced to the terminology of historic preservation, and for the first week, they were taught the basic vocabulary for describing historic buildings and sites, and were introduced to practices in Europe and North America. They also received instruction on European architectural styles, and the organisation of historic preservation efforts on an international level.

The second component of the programme was an introduction to field survey techniques. During the second week, students assisted in the development of



Saowalux Phongsatha, Architect (Office of Archaeology and Museums Dept. of Fine Arts, Thailand), sharing her knowledge on Urban Design



Site Survey Ban Mor Pahurat central Bangkok

a building inventory form, and then field-tested the form in an older section of Bangkok (the Ban Moh area, near Wat Po). The students conducted a building-by-building inventory of eight city blocks, containing both historic and non-historic buildings. The results of the inventory were subsequently indicated on an area map. Students were then able to discuss

appropriate boundaries for a proposed (hypothetical) historic district or "conservation area"; and learned some of the technical issues involved.

The third phase of the course was a measured drawing exercise. Relying on standards for architectural recording developed by the Historic American Building Survey of the U.S. National Park Service (but compatible as well with other generally accepted standards), students undertook a measured drawing of a distinctive wood-frame row of shop-houses, located on Chakrapong Road in the Banglampoo section of Bangkok. With the permission of Mr. Kanet Padungshivita, the building's owner, students produced a site plan, interior plans, a front and side elevation and also drawings of significant details. As with the site map for the inventory, this information was transferred to high quality paper as a permanent record of the property.

For the next sequence in the course, students were sent back into the field during the final week to produce free-hand elevation drawings of significant street-frontages, also in the Ban Moh area. These were then drafted in ink and served as the basis for an urban design exercise, which centred on the project area. With the help of urban design professional Peter Drey, each student team was assigned a different set of requirements: one team designed a new building for a nearly intact historic urban row or terrace; a second group designed a larger new building for an open site in the historic area; a third a parking structure, and so on. Each team was also assigned a set of guidelines that addressed some aspect of urban change. These included guidelines for alterations to shop-fronts, for roofing and roofing materials, for modern mechanical systems, for windows and doors and several other categories.

Students throughout the course showed a striking amount of enthusiasm and energy. The principal language for instruction was English, which most students understood, but often only with difficulty. Lectures by Thai experts were also in English, which also put a burden on the Thai students in particular. As the course progressed, student comprehension improved, so that by the end of six weeks, most students were operating at some level of competence in English language use. Daily instruction and exercises were supplemented throughout the duration of the course by field trips to significant historic sites in Thailand. The first week's trips concentrated on Bangkok sites, and included Wat Pra Keo and the Grand Palace; Wat Po and Wat Arun; and Vimanmek Palace, the wood palace of Rama V in the Dusit area of the city.

In addition to larger sites, the students also had an opportunity to visit more vernacular buildings, especially at Suan Pakkard Place and Jim Thompson's House, both near Siam Square. There were visits to museums too, including the National Museum, led by Museum Director Dr. Prachote Sangkhanukit.

Longer excursion to view other significant sites were made during each weekend. One Saturday tour was to Ayutthaya, where students met on-site staff of the Fine Arts Department and examined different sites in various stages of consolidation and/or restoration. The second trip was to Petchaburi, to examine the Summer Palace of King Mongkut (Rama IV) and the later mansion of Rama VI - a trip led by SPAFA Officer-in-Charge, Pisit Charoenwangsa, who helped throughout in the interpretation of information on the sites. During another trip, students were taken to several rural sites outside of Bangkok, where they had an opportunity to view vernacular architecture from the river.

Weekend field trips were in turn augmented by visits to offices of governmental agencies. Most significant of these was an afternoon-long introduction to the work of the Bangkok Department of Town and Country Planning. Here, students were informed of current municipal policies for conservation in the city and also plans for the older districts. The students asked questions and acquired a better sense of the place their own work was focussed on. A final feature of the course was a five-day long excursion to major sites outside of Bangkok - Phimai and Phnom Rung in Northeast Thailand, and Kampaeng Petch, Sri Satchanalai and Sukhothai - to visit the archaeological parks and further consider issues of management and conservation in historic sites. Acting Director Mr. Sayan Prishanchit provided an excellent overview of the work of the Sukhothai Park staff and the challenges in the management of such a large and complex site.

At each of these sites, students spoke with Fine Arts Department staff members, other personnel such as park supervisors, archaeologists and historians.

Building upon earlier instruction, students became better acquainted with policies and procedures for conservation practice, and were

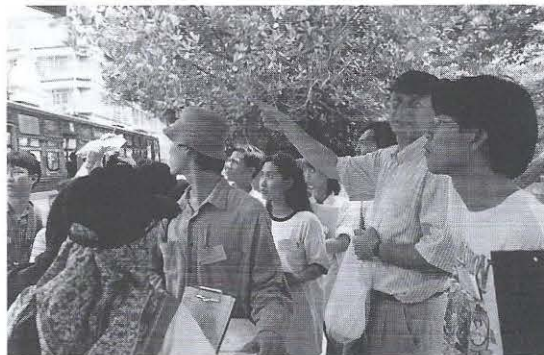
introduced to the special problems of each site. The programme was assisted throughout by many individuals, and especially SPAFA staff, particularly



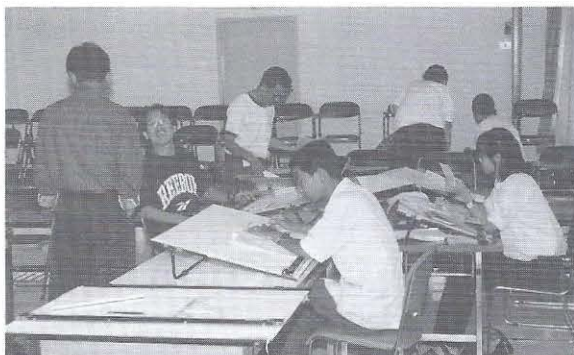
Chao Fah Road Central Bangkok Site Survey Participant Pisate Chantani (a graduate of King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, Thailand)



Field Work Chao Fah Road Central Bangkok

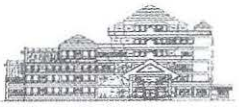


Instructor William Chapman leading the flock on a field survey Ban Mor Pahurat Central Bangkok



drafting stage SPAFA centre

Prasanna Weerawardane, who helped especially in various aspects of programme planning and also accompanied students, and guests during the weekends and excursions. They also organised special events, such as an introductory dinner cruise, as well as providing logistical



support for excursions, lecturers, and opening and closing ceremonies.

The opening ceremony featured addresses by Dr. Savitri Suwansathit, Deputy Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Education; and Dr. Suparak Racha-Intra, Director of SEAMES. Dr. Pisit Charoenwongsa, Officer-in-Charge of SPAFA, and William Chapman welcomed students and visitors, and described the aims and schedule of the course.



*Pisit Charoenwongsa
Officer-in-charge speaking
on Cultural Resource
Management*

Responsibility for instruction was primarily taken on by the University of Hawaii, with William Chapman serving as the principal instructor. Additional lectures were provided by Dr. Pinraj Khanjanustiti and Dr. Doosadee Thatakoo of the Faculty of Architecture at Chulalongkorn University; Dr. Yongtanit Pimon-sathean of King Monghut's Institute of Technology in Ladkrabang; architects and planners Pichya Boonpinon and Saowalux Phongsatha of the Bureau of Archaeology



*Participant Kong Kosal, a
lecturer at the Royal
University of Fine Arts,
Phnom Penh*

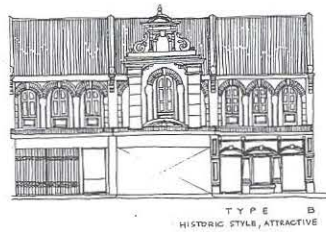
and National Museums, Department of Fine Arts; and Dr. Janya Manavidpoke, also of the Department of Fine Arts. Subjects covered included the work of the Bureau of Archaeology and National Museums, conservation work in Phuket, the management plan for Ayutthaya, the

development of Buddhist architecture and the history of Bangkok.

Peter Drey, an Atlanta-based architect and urban designer in private practice (and formerly on the faculty of the University of Georgia, U.S.A.) also contributed time as a special lecturer on urban design issues in historic areas during the last week of the course. He also served, along with Professor Chapman, as a juror for the final presentations by the students.

Great assistance was provided by the Bureau of Archaeology and National Museums of the Department of Fine Arts, with special thanks to Mr. Vira Rojpojchanarat, Director of the Office of the Secretary, Department of Fine Arts; Mr. Prachote Sangkhanukit, Director of the Office of Archaeology and National Museums; and Architects Pichya Boonpinon, Saowalux Phongsatha and Manatchaya Wajvisoot, also of the Bureau - all of whom contributed toward the project, including personal time during the weekend excursions.

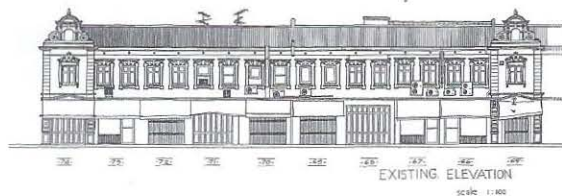
The programme owes its greatest debt to the Japan Foundation, Asia Centre for providing the funding and for giving its support to the project. Following an earlier programme held in Bangkok in 1997, Japan Foundation programme officer Alan Feinstein and Bangkok representative Mr. Kazuhiro Fukuda gave enthusiastic



support to the project, trusting its organisers to fulfill their mission. Mr. Fukuda was present at the closing ceremony, and demonstrated a strikingly informed

interest in the programme's intentions and the results of the students' work.

A final feature of the programme was an exhibit of the students' work, displayed at the adjacent Bureau of Archaeology and National Museums offices in



November. Mounted by the SPAFA visual arts specialist, the exhibits demonstrated the extent of the students' commitment, and also the wealth of historic architecture in Bangkok that deserves

preservation. SPAFA and the University of Hawaii are scheduling a similar programme for July and August of

1999. As an improvement of this year's programme, a few modifications are anticipated. These include additional excursions and field trips which focus on historic urban resources, in addition to the monumental sites visited this year.

The programme could also benefit, it is thought, from additional outside lecturers, particularly scholars who are knowledgeable in the history of both Bangkok's early and later development. It is also considered that a more formal arrangement for a lecturer, who knows about urban design and the problems of regulating historic areas, would also strengthen the programme. Finally, additional on-going assistance is needed, especially a Thai-speaking graduate assistant to aid in day-to-day tasks.

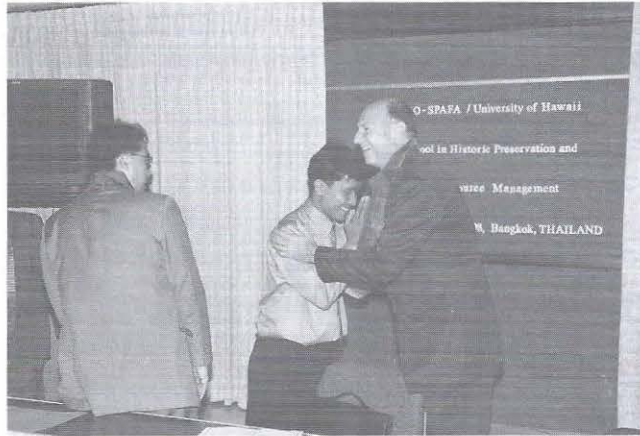
In terms of course organisation, few changes are expected. One consideration is to provide more time for the final exercise on design guidelines. This aspect of the course was probably under-emphasised, and students needed a longer time to produce something useful. More photo-copied hand-outs would also be helpful, as would outlines of lectures and lists of terms.

In conclusion, additional time is absolutely necessary for preparing the exhibition, which burdened the SPAFA staff. It would be better, the organisers thought, to allow time for more student input.

The 1998 Summer Field School in Urban Conservation and Cultural Resource Management was a success in many ways. We believe the programme did much to introduce Southeast Asian students to the

value of the historic urban heritage, and some of the methods developed in other countries to provide for wiser management and protection. The programme

was also a wonderful exercise in human interaction; many friendships developed during the intensive six-week instruction period, and many ideas were exchanged. The organisers hope that an even greater number of countries could be represented next year, both among students and faculties. It is also hoped that the field school will become a regular programme for SPAFA and the University of Hawaii.



Prak Nimol, lecturer of the Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh, congratulated by instructor William Chapman at the closing ceremony of the course



Peter Drey, special lecturer on urban design issues



Having measure of things Chao Fah Road Central Bangkok



Mr. Kazuhiro Fukuda (centre), Bangkok representative of Japan Foundation, view students' work at completion of course

All photographs by Nipon Sud-Ngam