

FROM ARCAFA TO SPAFA

- To promote awareness of the cultural heritage of the Southeast Asian countries and to help enrich cultural activities in the region;
- To strengthen professional competence in the fields of archaeology and fine arts through sharing of resources and experiences and through regional activities; and
- To promote better understanding among the countries of Southeast Asia through joint programmes in archaeology and fine arts.

These objectives of SPAFA, the latest SEAMEO Project launched at the beginning of 1978, represent SEAMEO efforts to complete its role as a regional educational organization.

At its establishment over 15 years ago SEAMEO stated as its objectives the promotion of co-operation among Southeast Asian nations through education, science and culture. As the many striving SEAMEO Regional Centres stand witness, great strides have been made during the last decade in the field of education and Science, but SEAMEO's venture into the field of culture seems to have been fraught with obstacles and setbacks through no fault of its own.

The first proposal for SEAMEO to undertake activities in archaeology and fine arts was presented to the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Council during the Sixth SEAMEC Conference in January 1971. The original idea was the establishment of the Applied Research Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (ARCAFA) to be located in Phnom Penh. A series of programme development activities was undertaken which culminated in the formulation of the ARCAFA Development Plan which was presented to the Council and approved at the Tenth SEAMEC Conference in January 1975. Owing to political circumstances, however, this Plan was never implemented.

Determined not to let its sustained efforts to organize this cultural programme go completely to waste because of this unexpected turn of events, the situation was reviewed by the Council at its Conference in Singapore in January 1976, and it was decided that SEAMEO activities in archaeology and fine arts should be continued for the time being outside the framework of ARCAFA. Thus was born the SEAMEO Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA).

Immediately following the Council Conference in 1976 SEAMES undertook development activities for the SEAMEO Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA).

A new questionnaire was sent out for the purpose of updating the information on the human, financial and physical resources collected for ARCAFA, as well as the latest plan, needs and requirements of member countries in archaeology and fine arts. A SPAFA Task Force was set up and made visits to a large number of institutions in five SEAMEO member countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand during May and June 1976.

On the basis of the information gathered through the SPAFA Questionnaires and the visits of the SPAFA Task Force, a Draft Development Plan for SPAFA for the initial 3-year phase of operation on July 1, 1977, provided that funds were to be made available according to the funding scheme of the SPAFA Development Plan.

Even at this late date SPAFA was destined to suffer yet another delay. Upon being presented with the Draft SPAFA Development Plan for approval by referendum of members of the SEAMEO Council, the Minister of Education of Singapore informed the Secretariat that it would not be able to participate in SPAFA while Malaysia, owing to budgetary procedures, was not ready at the time to participate in the Project as outlined in the Proposed Development Plan. Further adjustments in the Development Plan had to be made before the Project could be launched.

Acting on instruction from the Council, SEAMES convened a Meeting of representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand in Bangkok in July 1977 to review the Proposed SPAFA Development Plan and to decide on a suitable date for launching the Project. The representatives from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand expressed their readiness to participate in the Project as soon as possible. The representative from Malaysia informed the Meeting that as no provision was

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made in the third Malaysian National Development Plan for the financial responsibility for participation in SPAFA, Malaysia was not in a position to participate in the Project prior to the commencement of the Fourth Malaysian National Development Plan in 1981.

So it came about that SPAFA started off with only three participating members. By "participating member" is meant a member country who contributes to the capital and operational costs of the SPAFA Co-ordinating Unit and hosts a SPAFA Sub-Centre in its country.

In its operation, however, SPAFA can be considered a full SEAMEO Project. During its first phase of operation (1978-1981) all SPAFA activities have been open to participants from all SEAMEO countries on an equal basis, regardless of whether or not it is a full participating member of SPAFA

SPAFA essentially consisted of a Co-ordinating Unit which is based in Bangkok and a network of SPAFA Sub-Centres in participating member countries of Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand where the actual implementation of programmes and activities relating to archaeology and fine arts are carried out.

The Co-ordinating Unit is run by a complement of three professional staff and a support staff and is headed by a Co-ordinator. In addition to co-ordinating and monitoring all SPAFA programmes and activities at the SPAFA Sub-Centres and helping SEAMES to raise funds for the Project, the Co-ordinating Unit is responsible for the setting up and operation of the SPAFA Library and Documentation Centre which aims at establishing a data bank and providing a clearing house service in the field of archaeology and fine arts in the region.

The SPAFA Sub-Centres are existing national institutions/agencies so designated by the respective member country for participation in the Project and are headed by a Director. In the first phase of operation (1978-1981) each participating member country established one Sub-Centre which implemented programmes then mainly focused on respective chosen area of specialization—thus restoration and preservation of ancient monuments in Indonesia, prehistory in the Philippines, and underwater archaeology in Thailand.

The SPAFA Sub-Centre in each country enjoys the guidance of a National Steering Committee established by the respective participating country to supervise programmes assigned to the SPAFA Sub-Centre and to Co-ordinate national activities related to SPAFA.

The whole Project in turn is under the supervision of the SPAFA Governing Board, the policy-making body which gives approval to all programmes and activities together with their logistics for operation.

Inaugural Meeting of the SPAFA Governing Board

SPAFA can be said to have been officially launched on March 20, 1978 when SEAMES as the executive arm of SEAMEO convened the Inaugural SPAFA Governing Board Meeting in Bangkok.

Members of the SPAFA Governing Board are appointed from the three participating member countries for a term of three years.

Indonesia is represented by Mrs. Satyawati Suleiman, Research Specialist of the National Research Centre of Archaeology

The Philippines is represented by Dr. Alfredo Evangelista, Assistant Director of the National Museum of the Philippines,

and Mr. Dejo Savanananda, Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Education represents Thailand.

The Board elected Mr. Dejo, the Board Member from Thailand as Chairman of the Board for F.Y. 1978/1979. Chairmanship of the Board was to be rotated among the three participating countries.

At this Inaugural Meeting the SPAFA Enabling Instrument "the sole source of authority and rights of this Unit [SPAFA] of the Organization (SEAMEO)" was adopted for presentation to the President of SEAMEC for his signature.