

UNESCO joins SPAFA



in conservation of ancient cities

A global vision and the concept of the unity of mankind should permeate all actions", said Mr. Makaminan Makagiansar, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO in his speech delivered during the opening ceremony of the **UNESCO-SPAFA Workshop: Principles and Methods of Preservation Applicable to the Ancient Cities of Asia**.

The workshop was implemented to provide a broader perspective and a balance in the conservation and restoration efforts by including not only the technical aspects but also the socio-cultural-economic context of structures and sites of the living historic cities. Organized by SPAFA and sponsored by UNESCO, this Workshop was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from November 6 - 12, 1988.

Ancient cities constitute important links with the past. They are

living reminders of the nation's eventful history. Unfortunately, much of their glory disappeared with the ravages of time and whatever remains is frequently unnoticed, unidentified and uncared for.

Cities are vitally important to human progress and social development. They hold a very important place in the history of the civilization of mankind. Ancient cities are symbols and concrete evidences of a country's long history and culture.

The cultural heritage of a historical-cultural city is a living part of a country. For this reason, responsible government departments, writers and artists, historians and archaeologists as well as other concerned citizens have, in recent years, shown great concern and keen interest in the preservation of ancient cities.

"In modern times, the biggest and most usual threat comes from random demands imposed by modern life", said Mr Muhammad Ishtiaq Khan, Regional Advisor for Culture, UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

"Most of the pressures for change are generated by people themselves. New families need homes and jobs. With more opportunities they expect a higher standard of life, better homes, public services at their homes.

"The use of cars - necessity in many cases - not only needs widening of streets and thoroughfares but also additional space for parking. Their fumes also affect the atmosphere and cause pollution. These and similar threats pose a serious danger to the fabric of many historical cities and towns."

Left: Country participants and observers of the UNESCO-SPAFA Workshop pose for a group photo.

Supported by representatives from the Sophia University of Japan, UNESCO, SPAFA and observers country participants re-examined the nature of conservation activities regarding the preservation of historic cities in their respective countries.

Participating countries in the Workshop consisted of Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Urban renewal projects, said Mr Khan, seem to show that all too many have been prepared by specialists who have been bounded by their training without awareness of the overall con-

sequences. The depersonalization and uniformity of modern town planning poses a danger to the survival of historic areas.

Realizing the urgent need for action against threats to Asia's ancient cities, a number of recommendations were made by the country partici-



Mr Nabuo Endo of Sophia University presents his special report on the Total Systematic Approach.



Mr. Makaminan Makagiansar, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO (standing, third from left), gives a warm reception to workshop participants during the opening ceremony

pants. To effectively guard these historic areas, recommendations were carefully classified according to: Principles of Preservation, Methods and Means of Preservation, Public Awareness, and Intra-regional Coordination.

As a result, a positive contribution could now be made toward the preservation of Asia's cultural heritage. Recommendations formed during the workshop could possibly go a long way for the preservation of historic areas which had previously received little attention because of neglect and apathy. "When the Workshop's recommendations are circulated, we could be able to establish a connection", said Mr Khan.

And a global response could be forthcoming. ■

- Wynette Puntuna