
PREFACE

Sherban Cantacuzino
Hasan-Uddin Khan

The workshop in architectural conservation was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in March-April 1989, taking up an initiative offered by the architectural profession in the country. It is intended to be the first of a series sponsored by The Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The second workshop is to be in Karachi in 1990 and the third workshop is planned for Amman, Jordan in 1991.

The workshops are devoted to area conservation rather than monument conservation, because this broader aspect of conservation, which includes protecting the setting of monuments and looking at groups of buildings, spaces between buildings and whole areas of the city with a view to improving them, is less familiar and less understood than monument conservation, which tends to look at a monument in isolation.

The workshops provide a short training programme for middle to upper level administrators and professionals actively involved with the issues related to the heritage and to area conservation. The form of the workshops is in three parts.

First, there are two days of public sessions at which the historical, social, economic, legislative and administrative bases of architectural conservation are introduced and discussed. At these sessions a number of illustrative case studies are also presented.

The second part consists of four or five days of actual workshop when the selected 20-25 young professionals, working in four groups, respond to project briefs for actual sites by putting forward proposals in the form of drawings and reports.

The last part consists of the final day when each of the four groups presents their proposals and each proposal is criticised and evaluated in turn.

The purpose of the workshop is, specifically, to train mid-career administrators and professionals to handle area conservation problems with more confidence and expertise; to encourage the authorities to strengthen the relevant legislation and to introduce training facilities in area conservation; to persuade the authorities to undertake specific conservation projects; and to raise public awareness of the relevance of area conservation. The purpose in a more general sense is to have a positive impact on deficient conservation policies and to help start a dialogue at a multi-disciplinary level, involving architects, planners, administrators, archeologists and above all politicians.

This is the first volume of “papers in progress” which will cover the workshops, but it does not represent a classic “proceedings”. Neither have all the workshop papers been selected for inclusion, nor do the discussions, speeches, or other presentations appear. The papers were chosen for their compatibility with the final goal, so unfortunately other papers of interest could not be included.

The texts have been edited to form this volume, which is divided into three major sections: papers on the general approach to and theories of area conservation; realized projects in Bangladesh and other countries, and finally, the workshop case studies in Bangladesh. Succeeding workshop publications are expected to follow a similar format. At the end of the series, a comprehensive, more definitive work synthesizing all of the workshop papers in progress is intended.

Besides these papers in progress, the Workshop proposed as a result of its deliberations the following **recommendations** for consideration by the Government of Bangladesh.

1. That a Cultural Heritage Council be formed in which relevant public and private bodies are represented, to help formulate policies and programmes for conservation and to encourage both governmental or private enterprises as the case may merit.
2. That opportunities be developed for the training of professionals and craftsmen in building conservation and planning.
3. That the preparation of an inventory of building and sites of national architectural significance be undertaken.
4. That a provision be made for on-site information at historic sites to create local awareness and pride as well as for continued mass media presentation and publication to create general awareness

of the significance of the country's architectural heritage.

5. That a historic zone along Buckland Bund (location of two of the workshop studies) be established to incorporate and to encourage its rehabilitation.
6. That the Painam Village (site of a workshop study) be incorporated into the present development associated with the Folk Art Museum, Sardar Bari and the proposed Recreation Centre in Sonargaon.
7. That the existing legislation be reviewed to allow the above recommendations to be supported and implemented.

It is encouraging to note the positive response to the workshop. Through articles in both the foreign media and in Bangladesh, including television, the workshop has raised awareness in the public and in the Government of Bangladesh, including at the highest levels, to create support for the field of conservation, although modifications to the existing legislation that would encourage urban area conservation have not yet been made.

Arguably the greatest impact has been felt within the architectural profession in Bangladesh, where most architects will now consider environmental **area** problems in the course of their work.

The Department of Archeology and the Public Works Department are the two main bodies that are involved in conservation and restoration in Bangladesh. During the workshop the Government recognized the need for archeologists to be assisted by an architect within the Department, and has indicated that such a post would be created. Because of the workshop, the Department was given the funds to restore Khan Mohammed Mridha's Mosque — one of the workshop projects.

Government architects in the Public Works Department and in the Architecture Department charged with implementing conservation and restoration projects say that they now have a more comprehensive view of architectural conservation which helps them approach their work with greater awareness of the broader consequences of their actions. Interestingly, some architectural conservation work is now for the first time being carried out by private firms.

According to Professors at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, (BUET) the teaching of conservation issues has been enhanced. Their library has been significantly improved by the donation of books by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and by a major collection of visual

materials given by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. This material in addition to the techniques and studies developed during the workshop has given the University a clearer understanding of the subject and tools with which to undertake systematic training of students.

The University is also working in conservation on several fronts. The Department of Architecture held a seminar in which master craftsmen (*ustagar*) worked with fourth year students to develop approaches to the architecture of Old Dhaka. The Department has also prepared a project proposal for a conservation study of Dhaka city for possible Ford Foundation funding and the Head of the Department has been approached by the Ford Foundation to study the possibilities of restoration of a museum in Rajshahi — a late 19 c. structure.

The workshop has recommended that an inventory of significant architectural sites be undertaken. (The inventory of archeological sites continues to be done by the Department of Archeology). The inventory of more recent buildings and neighborhoods of architectural significance is now being carried out by Chetana, a private independent group of people volunteering their time.

A group of government and private architects have met within the last year to form a Cultural Heritage Council, although it has not yet been formalized.

Finally, all the participants in the workshop — both those from abroad and from within the country — profited greatly from the exchange of information and experiences and parted with a renewed sense of commitment and interest in architectural area conservation.