



UNESCO Bangkok
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education



THAI National Commission for UNESCO
สำนักงานคณะกรรมการแห่งชาติว่าด้วยการศึกษา
วิทยาศาสตร์ และวัฒนธรรม แห่งสหประชาชาติ (ยูเนสโก)

CONCEPT NOTE

International workshop on the conservation and management of the World Heritage of religious interest in Asia-Pacific

Rationale

According to the World Heritage Center, the properties having religious or spiritual connection constitute the largest single category on the World Heritage List, accounting for approximately 20 percent of the properties inscribed on the List. Significant and specific spiritual meanings are often considered as attributes contributing to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of a large number of the World Heritage properties.

One of the main challenges for the States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* is to ensure, at the national level, the effective protection and management of the properties inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List – guaranteeing its transmission to the future generations. Considering the complexity of the properties with religious or spiritual connection, the World Heritage Committee, at its 35th session (2011) requested the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, to elaborate a thematic paper proposing to States Parties general guidance regarding the management of their cultural and natural heritage of religious interest, and in compliance with the national specificities.

One of the best approaches to address this issue is to have a better understanding of the significance of these religious sites and the roles of national, local, and religious authorities play in protecting and managing the sites. Regular dialogue and communication between the stakeholders and the religious communities, the true custodians of these sites, is also essential in empowering these communities and engaging them in better protecting their heritage. To this end, UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies also recommend the creation of a global network involving relevant stakeholders, such as heritage practitioners (through Advisory Bodies), policy makers, national and local authorities, representatives of traditional and religious communities which should ensure that the thematic paper takes into account all relevant studies, elements, global trends and national specificities.

This workshop aims to discuss the linkages between the World Heritage Convention and the heritage of religious significance, the importance of spiritual values of the religious heritage, and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders concerned. The workshop will also discuss existing national or regional mechanisms and challenges for the effective protection and management of heritage of religious interest. More importantly, it brings together a wide range of stakeholders involved in the preservation of heritage of religious interest from various countries in the Asia Pacific, as part of the creation and strengthening of the network in the region.

Objectives

- To provide participants with knowledge on the key concepts and processes of the World Heritage Convention and their links to religious significance;
- To provide participants with key knowledge on the measures and instruments for protection, conservation, presentation, rehabilitation, and management of the World Heritage properties. This should ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage properties, including the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity at the time of inscription, are sustained or enhanced over time, such as:
 - protective legislation at the national, provincial or municipal level;
 - plans related to municipality and region in which the WH property is located (regional or local plan, planning instruments, planning control mechanisms, conservation plan, tourism development plan);
 - legislative and administrative provisions for the conservation of the property;
 - policies and programs related to the conservation of the property;
 - annual work plans for the management and maintenance of the property;
- To discuss World Heritage management requirements and their implications at site levels including monitoring and state of conservation reporting when required;
- To understand existing management systems and decision-making mechanisms within the properties and to review the status of development of a joint management system requested by the World Heritage Committee;
- To identify the main obstacles which exist in the domain of protection, conservation, and management of the World Heritage properties of religious interest;
- To discuss the development of appropriate mechanisms to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the national specificities in the protection and management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest;
- To discuss relations between religious communities, national authorities, and intergovernmental organizations;

Thematic areas for discussions:

1. Understanding heritage of religious interest

- Discussion on mapping of World Heritage cultural and natural properties of religious interest and definition of thematic sub-categories;
- Development of a preliminary cross-cutting contextual frame as a necessary basis for the development of an outline of the General Guidance.

2. Assessing values, attributes and aspects of authenticity

- Discussion on the establishment of recommendations on how to assess Outstanding Universal Value and associated sacred or spiritual values of properties;
- Guidance on identification of attributes and aspects of authenticity.

3. Conservation and management

- Consolidation of knowledge on the study, development and practical application of national and international normative instruments for the

preservation of World Heritage and assessment of the cooperation between the state and religious communities;

- Discussion on World Heritage management requirements and their implications at property of religious interest levels including access for visitors, heritage specialists, pilgrims, prayers;
- Discussion on current conservation and management regimes within the World Heritage properties of religious interest;
- Discussion on definition of the key contextual issues related to heritage protection and factors affecting the World Heritage properties of religious interest;
- Sharing experiences, information, and perspectives in terms of efforts undertaken to balance the competing requirements of faith and conservation;

Expected Outputs

1. Framework for the development of a management systems identifying key components
2. Network of stakeholders
3. Regional statement and recommendation from Asia-Pacific

Co-hosts and Co-Organizers

- Ministry of Culture, Thailand
- Nakhorn Phanom Province, Thailand
- UNESCO Bangkok
- Thai National Commission for UNESCO, Ministry of Education

In coordination with

- UNESCO World Heritage Centre
- ICCROM
- ICOMOS International

Target Audiences

- Representatives of the religious and cultural communities with direct involvement in the heritage of religious interest management and use from Asia and the Pacific
- World Heritage site managers

Resource and case studies

- Ministry of Culture, Thailand
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre
- ICCROM
- ICOMOS International
- Members states in Asia Pacific site relevant experiences

Duration: Three days' workshop

Venue: Bangkok and Nakhon Phanom Province
