



SOUTHEAST ASIAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL CENTRE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND FINE ARTS

PRESS RELEASE: SEAMEO SPAFA's 50th Anniversary in 2021

“For our part we think the region will profit from our work in the Arts in creating in a near future a centre for applied research in archaeology and fine arts (ARCAFA = Applied Research Centre in Archaeology and Fine Arts).”

50 years ago, in the opening statement of His Excellency Chhanh Sokhum, Minister of Education, of the Khmer Republic (now Cambodia) on 11 January 1971 at the Sixth Conference of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Council (SEAMEC) held in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh city) that set into motion the creation of what is today the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA). Even though ARCAFA may have been first mentioned in 1971, many years of planning, task forces surveys, review meetings and programme development activities were carried out prior in order to ensure that the Centre had the proper academic foundation.

Thus, it was not until 1975 at the Tenth SEAMEC Conference held in Baguio, Philippines, that the Centre - to be based in Phnom Penh - was approved. At first, the Centre focussed its programmes and activities primarily on archaeology, which was viewed as the important key in understanding the history and culture of Southeast Asia. The Centre assisted in ensuring professional competence for those involved in research and the study of archaeology in the 7 SEAMEO member countries, which over the years grew to include more member countries.

Due to the Civil War in Cambodia, ARCAFA's base was moved to Thailand. In 1978, ARCAFA was re-established as the SEAMEO Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA). The project continued at its trial stage until the Sixteenth SEAMEC Conference in 1981 in Singapore when it was decided to make SPAFA a 'permanent' Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts. At the SEAMEO Council's Twentieth Conference in Manila in 1985, the council endorsed the idea to turn SPAFA from a Project into a Regional Centre. The Government of Thailand agreed to host the new Regional Centre, which would be called the **SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts**. The acronym SPAFA, however, was maintained because of its well-established name.

Today, SEAMEO SPAFA continues its work in the promotion and preservation of the cultural heritage of 11 SEAMEO member countries and to revitalize its role in human capital development for 21st Century archaeology and fine arts by



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- ❖ promoting excellent practice and research in archaeology and fine arts in Southeast Asia;
- ❖ developing SEAMEO SPAFA as a leading centre in communication, coordination, documentation and legal/ethics guidance for archaeologists, artists and experts; and
- ❖ establishing SEAMEO SPAFA as a training centre of excellence that advances new knowledge and technologies

Throughout SPAFA's Golden Jubilee Year, we will be conducting a series of celebratory activities such as a Gala Dinner and Open House (subject to COVID-19 situation), a "SPAFA Memories" invitation to alumni and public, and more.

From all of us at SEAMEO SPAFA, thank you for being part of our 50 years and here's to another 50 more years and beyond.

For comments and enquiries, please email: spafa50@seameo-spafa.org