

CONSERVATION
IN THE
TROPICS

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INTRODUCTION

IT WAS BEING realized for some time past that the problems of conservation in the Asia-Pacific region were very different from those in the Western countries, and probably much more acute. This difference, it was felt, was mainly due to the extreme climatic conditions prevailing in the region, special nature of the construction of the art objects and socio-economic factors. It was also realized that many problems of conservation in the region have a common ground, and a cooperative effort for their solution could be beneficial to all concerned. As a first step it was agreed that it would be in the best interests of the preservation of cultural property if the technical experts of the area could meet and exchange views and ideas on conservation methods. The first Asia-Pacific Conference on Conservation of Cultural Property was arranged at New Delhi from February 7 to 16, 1972 to meet this growing need of the region.

It had always been our conviction that the problems in conservation relate to the technical field, research in conservation and its practice, and to the administrative field, namely training of specialists, establishment of conservation services, provision of laws for the protection of cultural heritage, etc. The working sessions of the Conference were devoted to the conservation of wall paintings, stone, paper and metals. Since the climatic conditions in the area are very rigorous, one session was devoted to the study of climatology as applied to the preservation of museum material. Deterioration due to biological growths assumes greater significance in humid climates. This subject was dealt with as a special contribution. Another special contribution was on the identification of organic binding media.

The training of specialists is a question which has always agitated the minds of those who are concerned with the establishment of new conservation departments. It is not only a question of lack of specialists but also of the content of training. This formed the subject matter of the talk by Dr. Paul Philippot, who as the Director of the International Centre for Conservation, has much to do with international training.

Of equal importance were the sessions devoted to the problems of individual countries. Each country has certain problems—administrative, technical and legal—which can be called specific to that country. Discussion of these problems provided an opportunity to understand the basic needs of various zones.

The papers presented and the discussions that followed are compiled together in this publication which will form first of the series being planned by us for this region.