

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONREPORT OF A MEETING OF A GROUP OF MEMBERS OF DELEGATIONS,
HELD DURING THE NINTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE, FOR
THE STUDY OF MAJOR PROJECT 4 A"Mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values"

1. The Programme Commission, considering that a certain number of orientalists and other personalities especially interested in East-West cultural relations were present in New Delhi during the ninth session of the General Conference, decided to take advantage of that opportunity and invited the experts to meet for a preliminary exchange of views concerning major project 4A. The consultation took place on 30 November between experts of sixteen delegations representing different cultural regions and various fields of study:

Argentina: Professor Vicente FATONE, Director of "Universidad del Sur", Bahía Blanca;

Austria: Dr. R. NEBESKY-WOJKOWITZ, Lecturer at the University of Vienna (Central Asian Studies and Buddhism); Reitschulgasse 2, Vienna I;

China: Professor P.K.T. SIH, Director of the "Institute of Far Eastern Studies", Seton Hall University, Newark 2, N.J.;

Egypt: Dr. Ahmed FIKRY, Professor of Islamic civilization at the University of Alexandria; Permanent delegate of Egypt to Unesco;

France: Mr. Jean FILLIOZAT, Professor at the Collège de France;

India: Mrs. S. WADIA, Director of the "Aryan Path" - "Aryasangha" - 22, Narayan Dabholkar Road, Malabar Hill, Bombay 6;

Japan: Dr. Shoson MIYAMOTO, Professor at the University of Tokyo, and at Wasoda and Kemazuwa Universities (Zen Sect); Director of the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies; member of the Executive Board, International Association of History of Religions; 620 Szijo-machi, Setagayaku, Tokyo;

Mr. Hajime NAKAMURA, Professor of Indian and Buddhist Philosophy, University of Tokyo;

Lebanon: H.E. Mr. Charles Daoud AMMOUN, Permanent delegate of Lebanon to Unesco;

Morocco: H.E. Mr. Mohammed ELFASI, Minister of Education;

Netherlands: Professor C.C. BERG (Indonesian Linguistics and Javanese Historiography); Gerecht, 8, Leyden;

Professor J.W. DE JONG (Buddhism and Thibetan studies); Haagweg 43, Leyden;

Poland: Dr. Stanislaw LORENTZ, Professor of History of Art at the University of Warsaw; Director of the National Museum; Al. Jerozolimskie 3, Warsaw;

Switzerland: Mr. Constantin REGAMEY, Professor at the Universities of Lausanne and Fribourg (Indology, Buddhology, linguistics of Indian and Far Eastern languages);

Thailand: Mr. Dhani NIVAT, President of the Private Council of His Majesty, Bangkok;

Mr. Phya Anuman RAJUDHON, Vice-President, Royal Institute of Culture, Bangkok;

Tunisia: Mr. Mohammed MZALI, Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Education, Professor at the Zituna University, Director of cultural publication "Fikr", 55, rue du Dr. Braquehaye, Tunis;

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: Professor E.P. CHELISHEV, Head of the Indian Philological Department of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Moscow;

United States of America: Professor Henry HOPE, Chairman, Department of Fine Arts, Indiana University.

Attended from the Secretariat, Messrs. P. KIRPAL, J. HAVET, N. BAMMATE.

2. The Group abstained from commenting on individual draft resolutions submitted to the General Conference and from dealing with administrative aspects of the project. For the time being, it favoured a free and informal discussion of some general features.

With reference to the various categories of persons to be reached by the major project, the Group singled out three series of questions. They dealt with:

I. Orientalists and other specialists likely to be actively associated with the major project;

II. The cultivated but non-specialized public, interested in some knowledge of foreign civilizations;

III. The general public.

To each aspect of the problem and to each category of persons correspond specific methods of action which were commented as follows:

I

3. The consideration of the part to be played by orientalists and other experts in the major project raised two kinds of questions; on the one hand, the relations among the experts - a problem of co-ordination; and, on the other hand, their relations with the general public - a problem of transmission and education.

Most of the orientalists present have insisted upon the very serious need for better co-ordination between various fields of research or even within the same subject. In fact, the division of the work of research in oriental studies is carried further than in most other humanistic studies, possibly because of the highly specialized linguistic qualification which is needed in most cases; this results in harmful isolation of research workers and, too often, overlapping activities.

4. To end this isolation, it was suggested that one of the most efficient measures would be the publication of a bulletin to be issued twice a year and through which orientalists would be requested to publicize periodically, in a few lines, the subject of their present studies, the progress already made, a list of their recently published books and articles, as well as translations completed or in progress. Such a bulletin, with a really international character and covering all fields of oriental studies, especially cultural exchanges between East and West, does not yet exist. Its creation would improve co-ordination of scholarly research and would encourage further co-operation among scientists.

5. Better co-ordination between orientalists would also result in a clearer understanding of the interdependence between various cultures of the East and the West. In some cases, such co-ordination would permit the development of comparative studies in civilization; comparative history of religions, of law, of art. Some examples were quoted of universities where such teaching is successfully given, with an emphasis on better mutual understanding between East and West.

Thus the co-ordination of research, the sense of interdependence between cultures and comparative studies would encourage several approaches toward the fundamental aim of the major project: the pursuit of a better understanding between different cultures. Those approaches should quicken the disappearance of the national or religious prejudices which too often subsist, according to the Group, even in some works aiming at a scientific and objective character.

6. However, the Group was unanimous in stressing that the major project should in no way be confined to the special interests of scholars. The inadequacy of a purely academic approach was emphasized by all participants.

The participation of orientalists and other technicians in the major project was therefore considered under two aspects: (1) co-ordination of research; (2) transmission of knowledge. In addition to the needs of scholars, the Group called attention to their responsibilities in this project: to encourage further understanding and respect among different cultures and to aid in making this understanding available to the largest possible number of people.

Having expressed their main concern, several delegates submitted proposals for activities. Most favourable support was given to a request for more effective revision of curricula in general education so as to inspire international understanding, particularly with regard to cultural values of the East and West. There have been many useful contributions in oriental studies and some of these, although in the field of erudition, can readily be adapted to textbooks and popular publications, where too many antiquated notions about the East still subsist.

II

7. The above-mentioned remarks launched a debate upon another aspect of the major project, related not to the specialists but to the educated public. One of the delegates spoke of the "intelligent layman". The Group was unanimous in acknowledging the importance of that section of public opinion: the increasing number of persons attracted by oriental cultures, the variety of educational and social backgrounds affected by this movement, and especially the great intellectual curiosity manifested by the public. Unhappily this public does not find adequate means of information. In many countries they are confronted by the choice either of being discouraged by highly specialized books or being led astray by popularizations which too often give a misleading image of the East. Books which are both readable and reliable are rare. On this problem many concrete proposals were made:

8. Grammars of a more practical character should be published; part of the heavy philological apparatus should be deleted;

textbooks should refer more directly to living forms of culture and avoid introduction of worn out theoretical examples;

more time should be given to the study of the spoken languages. The tape recorder could be used effectively for this purpose;

it would be highly desirable to publish informative and attractively printed handbooks on the cultures, customs and traditions of various oriental countries. The publication of books on art, such as: Islamic art pre-Moghol Indian art, Buddhist art, etc., should be considered, but enquiries should be made to avoid duplication and to determine what is needed.

9. The Group dealt at length with the problem of translations of great works. Some thought that as far as the classics were concerned, most masterpieces had already been translated and it would be advisable to give more attention to modern writers. Others claimed that many existing translations of the classics are unsatisfactory and pointed out that many of those translations, intended for specialists in oriental studies, do not have popular literary appeal. Translations should now be published, scrupulously authentic of course, but written in a more lively style. On the other hand, most of the existing translations are to be found in highly specialized publications with a restricted circulation. It would be advisable to enlist the support of publishers who would be able to give them wide circulation. The Group wishes to emphasize the problem of distribution.

III

10. During the exchange of views on the choice of methods and measures for reaching the widest possible public, the Group discussed in particular the rôle of mass communication media, especially radio, television and cinema.

Some members of the Group recommended the preparation of short documentary films on oriental ways of life. Others favoured the development of radio programmes which would be prepared and broadcast jointly by stations in different countries. As a whole, the Group agreed to the desirability of multiple proposals in that field, since modern audio-visual techniques allow for an infinite variety of action.

11. There was an animated discussion about another form of action intended for the general public when the Group examined the question of school teaching. Some references are made in paragraph 5 above concerning higher education. Many members of the Group stressed the fact that sympathies or prejudices toward foreign cultures started in school at an early age when the child is very impressionable. The logical consequence is that the revision of handbooks and curricula should have a high priority within the framework of the major project. Some delegates gave, in connexion with the cultural regions they knew best, a few examples of stereotyped judgements which can affect the mind in a lasting way. The too great place given to national history was criticized.

IV

12. Many members of the Group expressed the wish that the Advisory Committee on the major project be constituted as soon as possible so that preparatory work might start without delay. They asked questions about the structure and activities of this Committee. Some members expressed the wish that this Committee be composed of highly qualified scholars. They all wanted to follow the development of the major project beyond the present session. It was decided to list in the present report the addresses of the participants in the Group of Experts in order to facilitate mutual consultations and contacts among themselves and with the Unesco Secretariat. Each member was invited to send a written note which would summarize his comments and present new observations as an addendum to the present report. These notes should be sent to the Director of the Department of Cultural Activities, Unesco House, 19, Avenue Kléber, Paris 16.

ANNEX

New Delhi, India
December 3, 1956

Dear Mr. Kirpal,

Replying to your invitation for written proposals regarding the planning of the East-West major project, I am submitting herewith some informal suggestions put together mainly from our meeting on Friday morning, November 30. These should be construed as personal comments, but I hope that you will receive before long a more developed commentary on this project from our National Commission.

1. The experience of the Asian-American meetings held in several American cities during the spring of 1956 yielded many ideas which might contribute to this project. We will refer to them later.
2. The National Commission sponsored two meetings of experts on this project during the summer of 1956. (At New York on June 21 and at Ann Arbor, August 13-14). I shall refer to some of their suggestions herewith. Others may be sent to you later.
3. In view of the considerable extent of work being done with regard to the Asian affairs in the U.S., we would like to prepare a survey for use in connection with the project. We assume that other Member States would be willing to do the same and that out of this could come an important collection of information which would aid the Secretariat in avoiding duplication and providing information as to source of experts and other kinds of information. In this connection, one might consider the possibilities of bibliographical surveys as suggested by Professor Nebesky. It might even be feasible to consider at some later day a bulletin which would serve as a clearing house.
4. The various proposals for encyclopedias, directories, guides, histories of art and photographic collections, reproductions of art and any future proposals relating to the visual arts whether contemporary or ancient should be taken under advisement by a committee of specialists. Possibly the Advisory Committee could delegate this task to regional groups in several interested States. Before adopting the work plan for a history of Islamic art there ought to be a fairly extensive survey of the needs in this field.
5. We strongly support the proposals under the heading Programs for Schools (9C/5/Corr.I chapter 4 A, Paras. 58-78) and I was pleased to observe the unanimous enthusiasm for this program in our preliminary meeting.
6. We strongly support exchange of persons within this project.
7. We think that much emphasis should be given to language teaching.
8. The proposal of developing handbooks regarding the customs and culture and folklore of Member States in these areas seems very possible and should be studied further.

9. Translations. Our specialists support this effort but urge you to give even further care to the choice of works with regard to the reading public and to the quality of translations. We also urge as we have before that Unesco act as the coordinator and that it carefully avoid undertaking publishing contracts.

10. We recommend that the program in the dissemination of visual arts and music be referred to specialists. In the case of the former, we believe that ICOM should be given a contract to study this question.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I was personally pleased with the preliminary meeting of specialists, with their agreement as to the main lines of action in this program, and especially of their understanding of the major project in terms of Unesco's formal aims.

Very truly yours,

Henry R. Hope

Mr. P.N. Kirpal,
Director,
Department of Cultural Activities,
Unesco, Paris.