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Presented in this volume are the proceedings from the sixth seminar in an ongoing series organized during each three-year cycle preceding the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Like the five previous seminars whose themes addressed the phenomenon of contemporary architectural transformations in the Islamic world, the present theme, "Changing Rural Habitat", was chosen as a focus for deliberation partly because the 1980 Awards had underlined the importance of changes taking place in the rural environment, and partly because the design profession in the developing countries has had difficulty in defining the relevant, not to say crucial, roles it might play in solving rural problems.

That the People's Republic of China, whose population is 80% rural and among which there is a significant Muslim minority, should want to host our seminar on this topic seemed altogether appropriate. The Architectural Society of China, who co-sponsored the international conference with the Aga Khan Award, emphasized repeatedly that the theme corresponded to new areas of reflection adopted since 1978 by its own membership, and to reorientations in governmental policy in China. Thus, such a scientific gathering dealing with problems of the rural habitat represented a 'first' in what was sincerely hoped on all sides would be a continuing dialogue.

The principal intellectual force on behalf of the Aga Khan Award Steering Committee in conceiving the programme of case-studies was Professor William Porter of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was assisted in his task by Ms. Deborah Allen of the Award office, and the present writer. Authors from a variety of cultural and professional backgrounds were asked to prepare papers in such a way that the mechanisms producing change in the rural sector, as well as the participants in, and the outcome of, this change should be apparent. The wide range of approaches reflected in the papers collected and published here, whether it be an interpretative description of spaces in a cave-dwelling, a technocratic stance by a civil servant, or an ideological critique, attest to the fact that all are operative (*even in China*) and generate information for thoughtful debate. (Portions of these debates are included in the Discussions.)

An extraordinarily enriching series of experiences, rarely made possible anywhere, concluded the seminar: a ten-day visit to actual sites of rural development in China was undertaken by the foreign and Chinese participants. The opportunities for observation, discussion, and comparing of prior experience while actually in the field were indeed unique.

For having extended the original invitation and afforded such opportunities for fruitful dialogue the Aga Khan Award for Architecture wishes to express its profound gratitude and appreciation to the government of the People's Republic of China, to the Architectural Society of China, its members and logistical staff who worked so tirelessly to make the seminar and field trip tremendous successes. Special thanks are due also to Mr. Paul Collard and Brig. Iqbal Shafi for their services on behalf of the Award.

Finally, the *Proceedings*, which will appear in French and in Mandarin Chinese languages for the first time, as well as in English, are in large measure the result of the dedicated efforts of Ms. Beatrice Grou-Radenez, Portia Steele, Patricia Theseira, and the principals of Viscom Graphics, in Singapore.

