



The Earthen Architecture Initiative Teaching Note

INTRODUCTION

The Earthen Architecture Initiative (EAI) seeks to further the conservation of earthen architecture through international activities and institutional partnerships. Advancing the discipline of earthen conservation is the organizing principle for all of the EAI's activities—which include model projects that improve the way conservation interventions are carried out in different parts of the world, pursuing research that addresses unanswered questions in the field of earthen conservation, and disseminating information regarding appropriate teaching methods and conservation interventions on historic buildings, settlements, and archaeological sites composed of earthen materials.

It is the expressed intent of the EAI to foster the establishment of education programs in regions of the world where earthen architecture is an important part of life and culture. The ultimate goal of such an endeavor is to produce knowledgeable and skilled professionals to deal with the conservation of earthen architectural heritage.

The EAI Teaching Guidelines have their origin in didactic materials originally developed as a collaborative effort by the GCI, ICCROM (the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), the International Center for Earth Construction, School of Architecture of Grenoble CRATerre-ENSAG, and the former Instituto Nacional de Cultura (INC), Dirección Regional La Libertad del Ministerio del Perú for the [Pan-American courses on the Conservation and Management of Earthen Architectural and Archaeological Heritage \(PAT96 and PAT99\)](#)¹. PAT99 was the last in the ten-year history of short-term courses for mid-career professionals working with earthen architecture. An important aim of PAT99 was to synthesize past efforts and to begin to codify the body of knowledge that had amassed through the years of training activities in order to serve as a foundation for working with universities on the development of long-term programs. As part of their effort to promote the academic study of earthen conservation, the GCI and its partners had the opportunity, through PAT99, to test, apply, and adapt a range of new and conventional approaches to teaching conservation. Successes and challenges as well as changing contexts and conditions have all informed the continuing development of a process of educational practice that emphasizes student-centered teaching and cooperative learning, and the enhancement of problem-solving skills rather than simply the transfer of information.

Despite the large number of professionals trained during the ten-year history of the PAT courses and other short-term training activities, there are still few higher education programs that address earthen architecture and its conservation. Though short courses serve to improve expertise in the field and build a network of specialists worldwide, academic legitimacy and recognition of the profession can only be

¹The first intensive professional training course in earthen architectural conservation, *Curso Sobre la Conservación y el Manejo del Patrimonio Arquitectónico Histórico-Arqueológico de Tierra* – familiarly known as “PAT” – was organized in 1989 at CRATerre – EAG, France. Over the course of the next ten years, four international and two regional (Pan-American) courses were offered to conservators, architects, engineers, and archaeologists interested in the subject. Altogether, the international PAT courses, offered from 1989 to 1994, served to establish a network of some 120 professionals from 36 countries in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The two regional PAT courses—organized by the GCI, ICCROM, CRATerre-EAG, and the INC— in Peru in 1996 and 1999, trained an additional 52 participants from 18 countries in the Americas.



achieved when the study of earthen architectural conservation has a credible presence in higher education. University initiatives in Latin America and Europe have developed in recent years, but many face challenges in ensuring future growth and viability.

Reinforcing such programs, as well as supporting the development of additional education efforts, would:

- benefit the long-term sustainability of training initiatives
- create institutional hubs for field and research activities
- provide new environments for interdisciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation in such activities, and
- encourage the publication of scholarly work on the topic.

University programs in earthen architecture may still be a long way off. However, in the interim, much can be done to help create conditions for the development of higher education initiatives. There has long been a need in the field of conservation generally for an increased corpus of educational texts and teaching materials as well as documentation of effective teaching practices. A similar deficiency exists in the field of earthen architecture. The Earthen Architecture Initiative aims to respond to this need by sharing the teaching experience gained through the PAT courses with those interested in developing and enhancing programs of study in earthen architecture conservation.

SCOPE AND USE OF THE MATERIALS

The Earthen Architecture Teaching Guidelines are based upon materials originally prepared by the instructors of the PAT courses and therefore reflect their cumulated teaching experience. The PAT99 partners—ICCROM, CRATerre–ENSAG, the Ministry of Culture of Peru, and the GCI—have agreed for the original course materials to be used as the basis for these Teaching Guidelines. The original materials have undergone a series of editorial processes by the GCI, including some revision and expansion, as well as technical reviews by colleagues involved in the teaching of earthen conservation in other courses around the world. The Teaching Guidelines that have resulted from this process are the work of the GCI and are copyrighted to the J. Paul Getty Trust.

The GCI presents these guidelines as a resource for other educators who are teaching and/or developing courses on the conservation of earthen architecture. Teachers (from university faculty to professionals teaching in the field) can choose the materials relevant to their teaching needs and either use them as references to create new classroom materials, or adapt the existing materials for their own uses, according to the GCI's Creative Commons license (see **TERMS OF USE**).

The text and visual material presented here can be repurposed in a number of ways. Some examples of potential uses include:

- Classroom handouts, drawn from topic abstracts and content outlines.
- Reading lists for students, drawn from topic bibliographies.
(Please note that some bibliographies indicate publications PAT instructors considered essential reading for the topic. Publications available online in PDF format are also indicated.)
- Classroom, lab or field exercises, based on the practical work described for specific sessions



- Images for classroom lectures or other instructional uses, drawn from the image galleries included for each topic.

The Teaching Guidelines are organized by topic. The material for each topic includes: an abstract, learning objectives, a content outline, bibliography, images and, when used, classroom or field exercises, and a glossary. Although the guidelines cover a great deal of technical content, they also emphasize pedagogy. The PAT curriculum had emphasized active problem-solving, self-directed enquiry and constructive learning. In order to enhance the problem-solving skills so needed by future practitioners in this field, it is necessary for students to "not only gain knowledge of the discipline, but also become self-directed learners."² Therefore, the didactic methods and tools used in teaching each topic are as essential to learning as is the course content. For this reason, the Teaching Guidelines suggest ways to create a successful learning environment, one that will prepare students to become effective problem-solving practitioners.

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² "Problem-Based Learning," *Speaking of Teaching*, Winter 2001, vol. 11, no. 1.
http://www.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/cgi-bin/docs/newsletter/problem_based_learning.pdf



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