

The TICRAT Model: A Binational Adobe Workshop

R. Brooks Jeffery, University of Arizona

TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS are disappearing throughout the world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the efforts to preserve the cultural heritage defined by earthen architecture. Monuments constructed of adobe and rammed earth, when not properly preserved and maintained, are susceptible to deterioration and even collapse.

In the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, the buildings and communities of the Spanish colonial mission era represent a defining chapter of this

In November 2008, the TICRAT model was used as a vehicle to conduct a binational adobe workshop held consecutively at Tumacácori, Arizona, and Pitiquito, Sonora, gathering fifty participants, including NPS and INAH craftsmen and agency officials, academics, private-sector building professionals, community participants, and students from both sides of the border. This workshop consisted of a week-long series of lectures, case studies, tours, and, most important, hands-on field workshops in the areas of building assessment and stabilization, adobe brick-

making, and lime plaster preparation and application. The workshop also included a bilingual roundtable discussion of current issues facing adobe conservation and the preservation of mission communities, as well as the commonalities, differences, and future trends of cultural resource management.

Mexican and American participants worked side by side in a bilingual setting, beginning in Tumacácori National Historical Monument, where the workshop focused on Mission San José de Tumacácori, then traveled to Pitiquito, Sonora and

worked on the town's Edificio Municipal. Although the intent of the workshop was to develop partnerships between Mexico and the United States, the workshop also coincided with the U.S. State Department-sponsored visit of a delegation of cultural heritage specialists from Afghanistan, who participated in all activities during the workshop, including giving a presentation about Afghan traditions of earthen architecture and discussing the challenges of preservation within a climate of conflict.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the workshop has yet to be realized. Throughout the week, videographers captured core knowledge, construction principles, and technical skills with the goal of disseminating them to a much broader audience via web-based videos in both English and Spanish. This web-based tool has been partially funded by a grant from the Southwestern Foundation for Education and Historical Preservation and will be accessible by summer 2009. For more information on the TICRAT and the larger Missions Initiative, visit www.missions.arizona.edu.

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Left: Participants get their hands dirty making adobe bricks. Right: Boiling alum, which is then applied to adobe bricks as a traditional waterproofing technique.

region's rich cultural heritage of earthen architecture, which is now divided by an international border. This shared cultural heritage is the focus of a multidisciplinary partnership known as the Missions Initiative and involving hundreds of Spanish colonial mission sites.

Under the administration of the University of Arizona's Preservation Studies program, representatives from the United States' National Park Service (NPS) and Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) are collaborating to protect cultural resources and promote heritage tourism through the re-establishment of historic links among Spanish colonial missions.

Since 1994, NPS and INAH have been collaborating with New Mexico-based Cornerstones Community Partnerships to conduct workshops, known as TICRATs (Taller Internacional de Conservación y Restauración de Arquitectura de Tierra, or International Workshop on the Conservation and Restoration of Earthen Architecture), disseminating adobe and plaster techniques to dozens of communities, primarily in New Mexico and Chihuahua.