The Nile’s Earth 2023 International Conference was held from July 4 through July 6, 2023 in Grenoble, France. Its purposes were: (1) to promote a better understanding of the scope of earthen architecture and archaeological sites in the Nile Valley and (2) to share perspectives on the current state of conservation, and the present and future challenges in protecting this important part of World Heritage for the future. The themes explored were: (1) archaeology, architecture and building culture, (2) raw and building materials, and (3) conservation, site presentation and management.

A total of 32 papers (mostly covering Egypt and Sudan, but with case studies from other countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, China, Chile and Turkiye) were presented to the audience in Grenoble, as well as audiences in Cairo and other locations around the world, including China, Peru, Spain, Turkey and the USA, via electronic media, enabling exchanges and debate amongst a hundred and ten attendees from a variety of disciplines. As a conclusion to the conference, the participants have agreed on the following statement of values and recommendations.

**Statement of values**

For more than 6000 years a building culture developed along the Nile Valley that led to numerous and diverse architectural achievements, based on the use of earth, mainly using sundried bricks of different sizes and composition.

This heritage is represented by a wide range of architecture including very large monuments: temple enclosure walls more than 20 m high, pyramids up to 75 m high and massive foundation platforms, as well as humble houses, granaries, workshops, kilns and other everyday structures.

Over such a long period of time, the builders tested numerous innovations, adding knowledge and skills that permitted increasing levels of building sophistication, as revealed by both structural techniques and building details that strived to attain the objective of building for eternity. The building culture also included decoration and delicate architectural features ensuring thermal comfort and well-being.

The building knowledge acquired through the use of these sundried bricks gradually opened the door for later achievements using stone, allowing the construction of prestigious monuments that represent Ancient Egypt to the world. Many of these stone monuments, however, still contained subsidiary elements built with sundried bricks. This culture has been retained to present times in some elements of vernacular architecture, very well adapted to the local resources, climate, means and capacities of local communities.
Ensure that earthen structures are taken in consideration with full respect of their values and specific mechanical properties and plan the potential need for conservation measures before, during and after excavations with the involvement of conservation experts.

Be systematic in the documentation of past, present, and future archaeological research and conservation projects, with detailed surveys (plans, drawings and photographs) of the structures before and after restoration.

Adopt research in the fields of ethnoarchaeology and experimental archaeology, as well as microarchaeology and archaeobotany, as sources of information and understanding on ancient environmental conditions, landscaping practices, together with subsistence, diet and cultural activities.

Include a regular research component in projects to identify potential decay factors and processes so that interventions may be identified to address them efficiently or at least with the aim of drastically reducing risks.

Identify the need / relevance for temporary protection measures and explore potential adequate responses. These may include, but are not limited to (1) temporary protective shelters, (2) temporary shoring and bracing, (3) backfilling, (4) the elimination or mitigation of threats.

Develop protocols for conservation strategies with special attention to the values associated with the site (or specific assets) on one side, and the threats and potential processes of deterioration on the other. The site architecture should be clearly understood prior to the design of the intervention(s).

Take care with the use of new technologies by preparing samples that can be evaluated both in terms of technical efficiency and aspect / aesthetic, with special attention to issues related to maintaining authenticity.

Adopt the incorporation of training components while also exploring the possibilities of establishing sustainable educational activities and interpretive programmes.

Ensure that projects are well documented, including materials, techniques and applied expertise, so that the information can be used later without duplication or repetition of issues that have been previously addressed.

Develop integrated management plans, not only for the long-term conservation of earthen sites, but also to encourage and promote interpretation and display of the significance and merits of ancient and traditional earthen architecture to policy makers, local communities, international visitors, professionals and students.

Recommendations to archaeological missions

1. Ensure that earthen structures are taken in consideration with full respect of their values and specific mechanical properties and plan the potential need for conservation measures before, during and after excavations with the involvement of conservation experts.

2. Be systematic in the documentation of past, present, and future archaeological research and conservation projects, with detailed surveys (plans, drawings and photographs) of the structures before and after restoration.

3. Adopt research in the fields of ethnoarchaeology and experimental archaeology, as well as microarchaeology and archaeobotany, as sources of information and understanding on ancient environmental conditions, landscaping practices, together with subsistence, diet and cultural activities.

4. Include a regular research component in projects to identify potential decay factors and processes so that interventions may be identified to address them efficiently or at least with the aim of drastically reducing risks.

5. Identify the need / relevance for temporary protection measures and explore potential adequate responses. These may include, but are not limited to (1) temporary protective shelters, (2) temporary shoring and bracing, (3) backfilling, (4) the elimination or mitigation of threats.

6. Develop protocols for conservation strategies with special attention to the values associated with the site (or specific assets) on one side, and the threats and potential processes of deterioration on the other. The site architecture should be clearly understood prior to the design of the intervention(s).

7. Take care with the use of new technologies by preparing samples that can be evaluated both in terms of technical efficiency and aspect / aesthetic, with special attention to issues related to maintaining authenticity.

8. Adopt the incorporation of training components while also exploring the possibilities of establishing sustainable educational activities and interpretive programmes.

9. Ensure that projects are well documented, including materials, techniques and applied expertise, so that the information can be used later without duplication or repetition of issues that have been previously addressed.

10. Develop integrated management plans, not only for the long-term conservation of earthen sites, but also to encourage and promote interpretation and display of the significance and merits of ancient and traditional earthen architecture to policy makers, local communities, international visitors, professionals and students.
Undertaking surveys and documentation of earthen archaeological sites with priority for sites facing the danger of urban expansion, neglect, climate change, and unregulated development.

Recording and documenting indigenous terminology used by local communities as well as jargon used by earthen heritage professionals, in order to develop a multilingual glossary of standardised scientific terminology cross-referenced to equivalent vernacular or poorly-defined terms currently in use.

Promoting comparative and diachronic investigations to understand further the dynamics of generational change and transformation in the use of materials, techniques, designs and building site organization (including the location of soil quarries, transport of water, sand, and other materials), as well as intercultural exchange of ideas and practices.

Standardising methods of field testing and laboratory analysis of earthen materials in accordance with existing standards used in the analysis of sediments, to determine mechanical properties and structural stability, as well as methods used in the display and interpretation of results.

Documenting and archiving information related to archaeological and traditional earthen sites, structures, methods, practices, know-how, cultural context and condition in a database accessible to all, including data on the adaptation or reuse of ancient earthen techniques and heritage structures to contemporary needs.

Ensuring accessibility of any information placed in archives, documentation centres, or online, while also adding data to the world database on earthen architecture and building techniques.

Exploring the potential impact of the use of earthen materials on the environment and the inhabitants of earthen structures and how such architecture impacts on the social fabric of society.

Preparing curricula and relevant content to allow development of the teaching of traditional earth building practices, to aid in understanding the complexities of Nile earthen architecture and any appropriate interventions, and to make possible the continuation of this tradition to address today's habitat needs with minimum environmental impact.

Promoting this heritage and its potential for addressing some contemporary needs in social media, permanent and travelling exhibitions and other formal and informal avenues using digital visualization, social media applications, and pedagogical kits.

Developing and supporting capacity-building programs to sustain traditional knowledge of designing, constructing, maintaining and conserving ancient archaeological and threatened vernacular earthen architectural structures, aimed at local builders and architecture students through short courses, workshops and study tours.

Enhancing and strengthening efforts to engage local communities in all conservation and management efforts, with special attention to expanding and ensuring the educational, social and economic benefits to local communities in accordance with Sustainable Development Goals.

Organizing regional, national, and international meetings and conferences. In this respect a continuity to Nile’s Earth 2023 with similar events every 2 to 4 years is highly anticipated.