

# **TRAINING AND EDUCATION IN CRAFTS IN CONSERVATION**

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## CRAFTS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

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This very important subject that has been underestimated for so long, is finally making its way to the surface, and demanding its own place; an ICOMOS Committee on Crafts & Craftsmanship; is there one? This is possibly the one cultural heritage conservation area, crafts and craftsmanship, which applies to all other areas that have scientific committees. Crafts and craftsmanship are implemented on all materials from stone to earthen, and is used in the art of architectural and landscape patterns, as well as in the designs of structural systems of period construction technology.

The crafts created over the millennia to build, adorn or strengthen our cultural heritage around the world, cannot be counted. Every big or small region distinguishes its self with its special craftsmanship which reflects its own heritage character. This applies to the area of the world that I am writing from, the city of Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Erbil is a radial city that has expanded around the ancient citadel that is perched on a mound in the centre of the city. Erbil citadel is a historic city inside the expanded city, the size of Quebec City, Porto Rico Citadel, or Valetta in Malta. It is almost entirely earthen, and sits on an 8000-year-old mound formed by layers of civilizations. About 40 kilometers from its fortification, Alexander the Great won his battle against the Persians over 2000 years ago.

The fortification, most buildings, and most architectural finishes and decorative arts are of mud, mud brick, sun-dried brick, and glazed brick craftsmanship. The fast pace of development in this region of Iraq, in contrast to the destruction and insecurity in the other parts of the country, has resulted in adopting concrete, steel, and glass products for new buildings including concrete blocks, cement renderings, and decorative elements. This meant the rejection of all thing earthen leading to a tragic change in the heritage character of the city, and loss of traditional crafts and craftsmen.

We are in the process of restoring, and revitalizing this citadel, that has been emptied (against conservation principles) for the first time in its history in preparation for conservation work. The need for craftsmen and training in traditional craftsmanship, suddenly is important and enormous. There are not many, if any, master craftsmen in the crafts related to materials or traditional building components.

A dream for a conservationist involved in such a project would be to call on an International Team in training and education, with a universal approach or approaches developed for implementation as suitable to site or region. This team would have the know-how in pulling together quickly and systematically the existing experts and talents according to the potential of people and place, and would train the trainers.

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## **PROFILE – Gouhar Shemdin**

\* Gouhar Shemdin is a Canadian citizen born in Iraqi Kurdistan, and obtained university degrees and diplomas from Baghdad, Ankara, Rome, and New York.

\* She is a **Conservation Architect** of Heritage Properties, and a **Preservation Planner** of historic complexes and old city centres.

\* As a **Canadian Federal Civil Servant**, she acted in different capacities for over two decades working on the protection of Canadian national historic sites. She contributed to the review of **Parks Canada** policy and trained staff in applying the policy in national workshops.

\* As a Senior Architect she supervised staff of multidisciplinary teams and was the architectural advisor with the **Museum Assistant Grant Program**, for upgrading and expanding museums.

\* Working in the area of **intergovernmental affairs**, she advised on the nominations of the Federal Heritage Awards, and attended meetings of the Canadian Commission for **UNESCO** regarding heritage issues related to the International Centre for Conservation-Rome (**ICCROM**), the international Heritage Decade, and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (**ICOMOS**).

\* She served on the boards of **international organizations**; the Association for Preservation Technology International (**APTI**) and **ICOMOS** and her papers are published in the proceedings of their conferences. She was a board member of Heritage Ottawa, and was on the Ottawa municipal committee; the Local Advisory Council on Architectural Conservation (**LACAC**). She works on the protection of the heritage character of city neighborhoods, and with other interest groups as a community member. She is a supporter of the work of **Scout Canada**.

\* She works with **UNESCO**, World Monument Fund (**WMF**), the Getty Conservation Institute (**GCI**), and **ICCROM** as a faculty member in training international professionals including Iraqi participants of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (**SBAH**) in 2004 and 2005, and Iraqi professionals in 2007.

\* She has received the **Ontario Volunteer Award** for her work with societies and associations, and received the **Recognition Award** from **APTI** for her active role in the society over 20 years.

\* Gouhar Shemdin is a **Private Consultant**, the **Chairman** of the Martin Weaver Memorial Fund, an active member of **ICOMOS**, and is the **Heritage Adviser** in Iraqi Kurdistan.