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## Conservation of Wooden Architecture: Willingness, Support and Tradition

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### Abstract

Thousands of wooden architecture can be found almost anywhere in Indonesia, delivering different shapes and carpentry technique in the form of palaces, religious buildings, houses and even simple barns. Uncontested, all of these have already become national treasures without having them be officially promoted as national heritage. One of the most important aspects of conservation work at the early stage is self-awareness, by the owner as well as the government, in keeping a building as heritage and it being part of the national culture. Even after realizing how important and valuable keeping the original building is, not many individual have the budget or access to an expert. Having a look at how the conservation work is applied in Japan may provide the chance to adopt some approaches to increase the people and government’s willingness and support, as well as making it a tradition in the future.

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### 1. Introduction

Indonesia has a huge number of cultural heritages, and many of these are architectural: the traditional and colonial buildings. Although the government had issued the latest law for the protection of cultural properties in 2010, there is still a lack of indication in the field that those heritages are being protected. Taking an example from Bandung city, the most famous city in Indonesia for colonial buildings, even this city’s government can do nothing for preserving its colonial buildings, where many of them are currently being demolished and replaced by new

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buildings (Siswadi, 2014). Reflecting the current condition and the race against time in avoiding further demolishment or extinction, a real action should be taken immediately.

First of all, the point that should be understood by everyone is the position and context of a cultural heritage as part of national identity and culture; followed by the understanding of the importance of keeping the cultural heritage as a national treasure. A nation will never exist without culture, and architecture is one of the so many products of cultures. Wooden architecture, which in most contexts refers to traditional architecture, is one of the categories of architecture that surely needs to be conserved as part of the culture. Traditional architecture also sits in a dangerous situation for becoming extinct. Taking for example, surveys of 30 old wooden or brick mosques in West Sumatera in 2009; 5 of these mosques were completely rebuilt into new ones without leaving any sign of the past. 9 out of those 30 mosques are made of wood. Even though these mosques are registered as national/local heritage by the government, most of the wooden mosques are unmaintained and are endangered in breaking down and becoming demolished by themselves.

The law for the protection of cultural properties has been issued several times, but in the reality, still many assets are left behind for conservation work. Probably, financial limitation could be one of the aspects for the incapability of the government to run an adequate conservation program for all cultural properties. Conservation work taken solely by the government, without any help from people, would be a very hard and expensive task. As a simple example of how people can help by take action in conservation activity is by providing required information related to buildings. This kind of action will only succeed based on the willingness of each.

This article will discuss how an individual's willingness can take part in the conservation system scheme, and how, with the support from the government, this will develop a tradition. Once this system is developed into a tradition, the conservation activity will no longer be a difficult task to execute. The discussion will be supported by a case study in Japan. Japan is one of the leading countries in the context of wooden architectural conservation systems, and has been proven for centuries as a country that treats building conservation as part of their tradition.

## 2. Research Design and Methods

This research is intended to find out how the conservation system for wooden architecture in Indonesia lacks, by comparison to Japan's success in keeping their wooden architecture heritage for centuries, and furthermore, to bring this to a stage of tradition. The research was contrived through understanding the present situation in Indonesia and learning how the Japanese system for wooden architectural conservation can be applied by examining it as a referential case study for actual implementation. The written regulation and law system will be used as the reference and basis of discussion into seeing what is available and what lacks, of terms of regulation. This study will also help to give an understanding on how to implement the law of protection for cultural properties into a real action.

The research will take the case of the conservation project of Ono family residence in Shiojiri, Japan. This case study is representing a typical case of a conservation project on a private property in Japan. The data was taken from an open-ended interview with the owner, conservation architect and the local government officer for cultural properties, and an observation of the site during the project. The interview and observation were done in 2013.

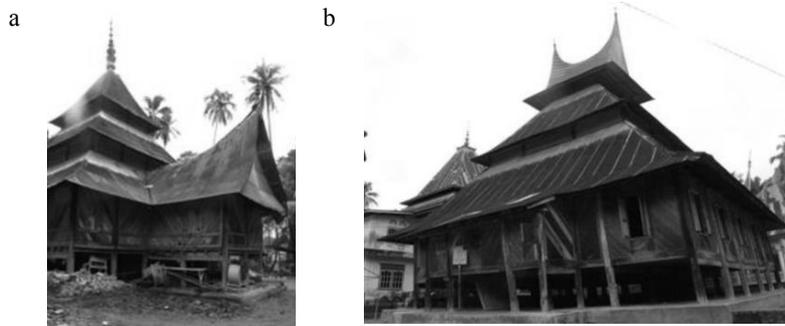


Fig. 1. (a) Masjid Tua Padang Piaman; (b) Surau Gadang Syaikh Burhanuddin, West Sumatera.

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