

Tradition of conservation: redefining authenticity in Javanese architectural conservation

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ABSTRACT: The notion of a “Western” conservation paradigm, originating from nineteenth century Eurocentric classical conservation theory, has been propagated and imposed in Asia by UNESCO and ICOMOS. In the 1990’s, the emergence of ‘contemporary’ conservation theory that emphasizes cultural significance and intangible values has shifted the focus from object to subject. However, the theory is still strongly biased towards the ‘tangible’ when discussing authenticity. This is in contrast to the Asian philosophies and values to underpin more contextual, community based, and culturally sensitive approaches towards conservation. The paper discusses the core differences between “Western” and Asian conceptions of conservation, and outlines a new theoretical position. It emphasizes the tradition of conservation in Asia that values the spiritual meaning of material culture as the repository for practices, skills, knowledge, spirituality, and the continuous renewal of perishable materials as opposed to the notion of material authenticity as seen in the Javanese architectural conservation.

1 INTRODUCTION

At present, there are two paradigms on the notion of conservation. The first one is termed as the classical conservation theory developed in Europe since the nineteenth century considering that the object has a value existing independently of people that should not be threatened to any change. The second one, the people-centred approach termed as the contemporary conservation theory developed since the 1980s views that heritage is inevitably rooted more about people as creators of heritage, who attributes meaning, and selects what is to become heritage from the past. The theories discussed is related to conservation convention as commonly understood in many conservation charters throughout Europe and the international sphere (M. Vinas 2005). In Asia, the conservation theories have widely influenced a number of Asian charters, such as the Chinese Principle (2000), the Hoi An Protocols (2001), and the INTACH Charter (2004).

In Asia, this paper argues that conservation theory should be written familiar with and rooted in the long traditions of Asian society that emphasize the spiritual meanings of the people, as reflected through the tradition of continuous renewal of its perishable historic structures. This perishable architecture in conservation has been ignored, as the policies for the conservation of buildings in many countries are merely been applied to monumental structures (Oliver 2006). Worst, the concept of conserving traditional buildings is regarded as ‘unfamiliar to the “Western” cultural values, which places considerable importance on the building as object, reflecting an interest in it as valuable entity’ (Oliver 1980: 4). Unfortunately, the Eurocentric notion of conservation has been imposed within the conservation profession in the world including Asia.

¹Acknowledgements: I gratefully acknowledge the financial support for presenting this paper from the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia. I also express my gratitude to Professor Johannes Widodo from National University of Singapore for his critical remarks on this paper.

1.1 *Homogenization to the world*

ICOMOS founded in 1965 is dedicated to bring together conservation specialists and promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of cultural heritage 'based on the principles enshrined in the 1964 Venice Charter' as the principal doctrinal document (the ICOMOS Charter). The Venice Charter was then adopted in the 1976 US Secretary of Interior's Standards which guides conservation in the United States. Around the world, the homogenization of the conservation principles namely the notion of authenticity was introduced by UNESCO and ICOMOS through the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Its first 1977 World Heritage Operational Guidelines article 9 states that '... the property should meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship and setting; ...' in order to be able to be included in the World Heritage List. The List is indicative of the Eurocentric perception of cultural heritage that puts strong emphasis on the notion of authenticity relating to monumental culture. For example, the imbalance of the 2000 World Heritage List, 60 percent of the monuments are situated in Europe, Canada and the USA, while the inscriptions in China and India are accounted for only 14 percent, and 1 percent is in Asia Pacific (Fu 2005).

In Asia, the notion of tangible authenticity is also reflected in a number of charters. The Chinese Principles (2000) was developed by ICOMOS China in cooperation with the Getty Conservation Institute and the Australia Heritage Commission with a strong Eurocentric notion of authenticity as the Venice Charter is cited in the Preface and in article 2. The Hoi An Protocol (2001) organized by UNESCO reaffirmed the provision of the Venice Charter as relevant to the conservation of Asian heritage sites, as stated in page 5. These charter and protocol are related and acknowledged the dogma of the Venice Charter, especially the notion of tangible authenticity, propagated through charters and recommendations by member states and the 'authorized' international organizations. They have advantages and power to establish conservation approaches and principles based on the Eurocentric paradigms, and the application went beyond national boundaries, resulted in homogenization of theory and praxis. This refers to the 'Authorised Heritage Discourse' that 'has achieved hegemony realised linguistically and flourish to promote a consensus approach to conservation of heritage' (Waterton et al. 2006).

1.2 *Conservation in cultural context*

The productions of every culture are constructed according to its own values and norms, borrowing and blending the past with the present, developing distinctive styles and forms then passing it on to the next generations of the worthy achievements. One of those achievements is the traditional architecture in Asia, which is the product of strong cosmological beliefs that every building is a microcosm of the universe; it is also the manifestation of distinctive knowledge of materials, skills, construction technologies, and local wisdoms. One good example of this is the traditional wooden architectures in Asia, which is predominantly perceived as representation of cosmological ideas, as vehicle of spiritual ideas, social and symbolic aspects, which is common to East and Southeast Asian traditional architecture (Chung 2005; Waterson 1990). In this respect conservation of traditional architecture is inherently very particular and specific, therefore it should not be expected that the application of generic and global UNESCO-ICOMOS conservation principles will produce the same results in this situation. Applying the Eurocentric concept to traditional timber architecture in Asia is analogous to the ignorance of the cultural context, as buildings are created to meet functional needs within the context of known local material and technology, time, space and events, and of social and economic conditions. Within the context of material and technology, conservation of historic timber buildings in Asia for centuries has shown that dismantling and reassembling of its parts is a common practice (Sekino 1972; Chung 1991). This practice, which is called "tradition of conservation", introduces new elements to replace the broken parts, and these actions will inevitable delete the original parts as opposed to the Eurocentric conservation notion of tangible authenticity.

2 THE TRADITION OF CONSERVATION IN ASIA

The tradition of architectural conservation can be defined as the management of change in which actions taken in looking after a place or an object to prevent decay and to retain cultural

significance, based upon the traditional knowledge, practices and the notion that architecture is a spiritual container and a vehicle for impermanence, as elaborated below.

2.1 *The spiritual meanings*

The Eurocentric perspective that associated only with tangible qualities is rooted from the origin of materialistic approach to historical monuments lies in the Christian or Greco-Roman tradition (Tomaszewski 2005). In the “Western” architecture, the perfection of form is achieved through realistic visual form, while in the “Eastern” architecture the physical form is a mean for transmitting the spiritual values. For example, the Kyeongbok Palace complex in Korea, which was firstly erected in 1395, was reconstructed in 1867 and then extended with new buildings; however the reconstruction did not change the spirit of the place which is the symbolic-spatial structure of the Palace that represents the *I Ching* philosophy, astrological thought, and Yin-Yang principles (Chung 2005). In China, traditional architecture has been shaped by cultural factors such as cosmological system, the concept of unity of heaven and human, geomancy (*Feng Shui*) principles, also historical events, evolution and change (Xu 2005). In its historical evolution, an architectural manifestation might be preserved, destroyed, abandoned, reconstructed, and even rebuilt elsewhere. Similarly, the people of Southeast Asia perceive themselves as to be part of a cosmological whole (Heine Geldern 1930; 1942). Such perception is mostly embedded in and transmitted through ritual practices and expressed in architectural forms by symbolic representations of social system such as duality of male/female, married/unmarried, sacred/profane; and of cosmological system such as concept of three-tiered cosmos, rules of orientation, four cardinal points, the house as human-body (anthropomorphic system), source of power, and ritual of construction. These characteristics of architectural productions are often considered as strange to Europeans eyes due to different perceptions (Waterson 1990; Widodo 2004).

2.2 *The notion of impermanence*

In traditional Asia, wooden perishable construction is often used as the main structural system and materials. In China, the use of timber in buildings has evolved for more than 3,000 years, based on the principle of prefabrication and assembly of all structural components, that makes dismantling and reassembling of the whole building parts relatively easy and uncomplicated. In Southeast Asian cities, perishable buildings have been existed for centuries in urban contexts that were unfamiliar to Europeans, such as its ‘rural’ appearance with pile-structure wooden houses concealed within their spacious yards of coconut and banana trees (Reid 1993). Timber is vulnerable to climate, water leakage and infestation, and it is the most common cause of decay and lost of its structural capacity. Therefore, the total component renewal is historically a common remedy to cure the deterioration of the structure. Traditional interventions allow annual repair works; renewal of building surface, major restoration such as disassembling and reassembling of roof and structural components, opening up and strengthening foundation, and reconstruction or extension of the building to accommodate new needs (D’Ayala & Hui 2006).

The notion of impermanence is also derived from philosophical and religious thought. In Buddhism, ‘... regards the world as a chain of fluid phenomena with no constancy (*samsara*). In this world everything is in a perpetually temporary state of in-between (*ma*) where becoming and fading away, growth and decay, presence and absence, ...’ (Bognor 1989). Not surprisingly, in Vietnam at the Bat Trang village, instead of conserving the old ones, a new temple was constructed with village labourers by using local materials, reflecting interest in making merit (Ellsmore 2008). In Thailand, it is common that Buddhist communities dedicate very substantial financial and human resources to construct new temples while allowing vulnerable historic structure to deteriorate. Changes and renewals are being made to places of worship that show little regards to the original fabrics of the places (Ellsmore 2008). Similarly in Bhutan, the understanding of architecture is deeply rooted in the Buddhist ideals on impermanence, as none of the *dzongs* have remained exactly the same as when they were built, for the buildings have been going through a continues process of adaptation to current needs (Lim 2006).

The *Ise Shrine* in Japan has been repeatedly demolished and reconstructed 60 times in identical forms and materials for every 20 years since the seventh century. This process is a way in preserving the record of the original design intents and craftsmanship, as the tradition from the

ancient time and the ritual are intended to keep the spirit of the goddess *Ameterasu Omikami* alive (Crouch & Johnson 2001). In India, there is a concept called *jeernodharanam* which is derived from *jiirna* means decayed, and *uddhaarana* means rising up. Hence it is about regeneration of all that decays. The building methods and architectural maintenance are derived from the traditional Hindu teaching of *Vastu Shastra*, which says that a building is a living thing and it should follow the natural process of childhood (*balyam*), adolescence (*koumaram*), climacteric (*youvanam*), old age (*vardakyam*), and death or *maranam* (Tom & Sujakumari 2008).

It is a common phenomenon in many parts of Asia, where the notion of impermanence appears where Buddhism and Hinduism have influence to the worldview of the people as expressed in their traditional architecture. Thus, architectural heritage in Asia is shaped by cosmological belief system that emphasises the primacy of the intangible over the tangible. This leads to a key difference to the notion of tangible authenticity that leads to minimum intervention and reversible principles in conservation. The primacy of the intangible principle allows the replacement of physical fabric and considers the loss of its material authenticity as acceptable.

2.3 *The tradition of conservation in Javanese architecture*

Javanese architecture is selected as an example to illustrate the tradition of conservation for it has been influenced by culture of Hinduism since the past to the present. Two cases were highlighted based upon the assumption that the phenomena of tradition of conservation will only be found in the conserved buildings that has minimal authoritative or “expert” involvement in the building process which does not subscribe to the “Eurocentric” notion of conservation.

2.3.1 *Ki Buyut Trusmi*

The first case is the so called *Ki Buyut Trusmi* located in Trusmi village some 7 kilometres from Cirebon in West Java, Indonesia. It is a shrine complex comprising the grave of the village founder and a mosque for pilgrimage destination. The sacredness of the complex is also attributed to *Walangsungsang* who was regarded as the founder of Cirebon Sultanate (Muhaimin 2006). However, there is no record of the foundation date, but according to oral tradition, it could have been built before the mid-fifteenth century during the Hindu period, as the architecture of the place shows the existence of the Hindu material-culture elements, apparently before their conversion to Islam. The two main entrance gates and the enclosure of two metres high bricks wall are in the styles belonged to the Hindu Majapahit kingdom, as an obvious evident of the continuity with its Hindu past.

Trusmi village has two festivals related to the tradition of conservation, the *memayu*, an annual festival to replace *welit* or the palm-thatch roofs of the buildings (Figure 1), and the tradition of *ganti sirap* or to replace the wooden roof singles of the tomb and the mosque in every eight years. Today, for practical cost-effective reasons, the wooden roof is replaced every four years for the other half section of the roof, and another section is in four years. *Memayu* is derived from the word *ayu*, means “beautiful”, thus it is to beautify the building. However, according to the custodian of the place, *Kyai Waslan*, the essence of the tradition is about the spiritual meaning as to keep one’s heart always beautiful or clean from any wrongdoing. The festival is held in November prior to the rainy season, which is regarded as the sign of God’s blessing to mark the beginning of cultivation period. For the two festivals, all materials, labour forces such as carpenters, and food provisions are donated and provided by the community and partly by the Trusmi Foundation. Replacement and extension are also common practices, as the wall tiles of the mosque and the tomb have been replaced many times, and the floor tiles of many buildings in the complex have also been replaced. All of materials are donated by the community as demonstration of devotion. The mosque was extended at least twice as indicated by the three separated roof units; with the highest *tajuk* type roof belongs to the oldest structure. Similarly, the *mihrab* or the niche is also belonged to the old mosque. Inside the mosque the extension can be recognized from the three different sets of *soko guru* or the four main columns.

2.3.2 *The Trajumas pavillion*

The *Trajumas* pavillion located at the third courtyard of Yogyakarta palace, Indonesia, called the *Srimanganti*. The word *traju* means “scales” and *mas* means “gold”, thus *Trajumas* is to signify its main function as an ancient court of law, and presently it is used to keep articles for marriage

ceremonies. The construction date of this building is unknown, but we learned that the establishment date of the palace was in 1756, and on 3 April 1792, it was recorded that Sultan Hamengkubuwono II met and sat with the Dutch Governor Van Overstraten at this pavilion to watch the dances performed at the courtyard (van Beek 1990:37; Adam 2003: 24).



Figure 1. the *Memayu* festival in 2002 detaching the old roof (left), and assembling the new roof of the custodian building (right bottom and top). Photo: the author and courtesy of Murtiyoso.

Three years after the earthquake on 27 May 2006 that destroyed the pavilion, a ritual was held on 29 June 2009 to mark the beginning of the reconstruction in order to ensure the safety of the reconstruction works. Subsequently two other important rituals were also held. Firstly, the ritual to lifting up the main posts on 9 October 2009, during which the master builder who is also the *abdi dalam* (the palace servant) called Mr. Petrus Wignyopangarso performed the prayer and sanctified the main columns by putting a white plain cloth on the top of the posts. Next, the ritual to assemble the roof ridge was performed on 13 October 2009. Throughout this ritual, offerings were made by inserting sacred items called *Rajah* into one of the main columns by the Prince in charge of the reconstruction, the Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Haryo Hadiwinoto. The rituals focused mainly on the main posts where the offerings were made, and this is regarded as a signifying process of the special spiritual as well as structural importance of the four main posts, known as the *Soko Guru* in Javanese architecture. The spiritual importance of this central four pillars is also expressed by its roof form. The *Joglo*'s soaring upper-central roof unites the surrounding forces and projected them to the peak, and the *Tumpangsari*, or stepped pyramidal ceiling, supported by the main four posts indicates a strong presence of the notion of center, which then is consecrated through the ritual of creating the universe (Tjahjono 1989).

The reconstruction has been carried out according to the Javanese traditions, such as the canon of rules for building construction such as the *Angka Kalang* that follows the old Javanese manuscript *Kawruh Griya* and *Kawruh Kalang*. Literally it is a craftsmanship numeral system represented in certain symbols of the Javanese traditional joinery method to construct the right point of reference of the main posts (*Soko Guru*), the main beams (*Tumpangsari*), and the other structural components in accordance with the *Mandala* of the north-east direction (*Narasunya*), north-west (*Byabya*), south-east (*Ganeya*) and south-west direction (*Nurwitri*). In the process of lifting up the four main posts, the sequence of erecting the first main column to next one followed the *Pradakshina* or circumambulation direction in Hinduism. It is an act of circling the sacred object in a clockwise direction in order to connect the devotee with the cosmos. Traditional techniques were also applied such as the bamboo nails used to tightly join the wooden

structural components together. Replacements of damaged materials were also carried out: for more or less sixty percent of the wooden components, the floor tiles on a like-for-like basis of similar form and materials, and the singles roof by similar roof form but with new material like asbestos. The two main posts of 23 cm x 23 cm in diameter and 500 cm in length were also replaced by new wooden posts, and the other four columns were subsequently repaired.



Figure 2. A prayer was performed by the master builder to mark the beginning of uprighting the main posts (the upper). A white cloth was put on the top of the main posts to consecrate the building (the middle). A prayer was performed to assemble of the roof ridge, and the representative of the Sultanate inserted a sacred item into one of the main post to sanctify the building (the bottom). Photo: the author.

3 “WESTERN” CONSERVATION THEORIES

3.1 *Classical conservation theory*

In the western world, classical conservation theory emerged that seek to preserve and restore the aesthetic integrity of an object based upon soft science such as archaeology and history, and the hard material science such as chemistry and physics (M. Vinas 2005). The desire to preserve the original fabric has been used as the major philosophical foundation of conservation and continues to be the focus in conservation discourse, from the onset of the restoration debate in the nineteenth century England, the *Athens Charter* (1931) and the *Venice Charter* (1964) in Europe, to the international sphere of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1977). In the nineteenth century, the trend of art and fine arts was especially intense in England, where the Arts and Crafts movement had a strong cultural impact among artist, art lovers and the public. One of the prominent English art writer and draughtsman was John Ruskin who strongly appreciates the virtues and values of ancient building that disregard for the restoring of the original remnants from the past. One of the proponents of restoration movement was the French architect, Viollet-le-Duc who restored Notre Dame of Paris, who tried to fill-in-the-blanks of damaged buildings restoring to the original state conceived as original idea of the creator.

In response to this growing impact of restoration, in 1877 the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) published a manifesto written by William Morris that addressed the

respect of original fabric, ruins, the look and feeling of weathered materials as integral to authenticity of the historic fabric. Thus, the emphasis on the authenticity of materials must be seen in context and its origins in the late nineteenth century English Art and Crafts movement, a romantic vision of decaying ruins that led to reverence for authentic historic object.

During the World War I wide-scale destruction happened in Europe, repair works of monument after the war were allowed by utilizing the available resources and techniques. This development was reflected in the Athens Charter issued in 1931 that allows for repair of monuments unlike the earlier SPAB Manifesto. For repair works, new materials and techniques such as reinforced concrete was introduced to recover the original building. Partial reconstruction of the missing section (*anastylosis*) was conducted, and kept clearly recognizable as a new to create a more complete experience of the building. The Charter was the first document to set out the scientific principles for the preservation of historic monuments, however it states nothing about authenticity, yet the closest meaning of authenticity is stated ‘... steps should be taken to reinstate any original fragments that may be recovered’ (article VII).

After the World War II, the Venice Charter was adopted in 1964. Like the Athens Charter, this charter was developed after the War therefore its conservation principles reflected much of this post-war reconstruction of damaged architecture by acts of war in Europe. The document emphasizes on scientific methodologies, the importance of the aesthetic and historical significance of the original fabric. It is the first document to set out the concept of authenticity as stated in the preamble ‘... to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.’ Hence, the respect for original materials remained paramount to the means for achieving authenticity as stated ‘Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents’ (article 9).

3.1.1 *The colonial legacy and celebrating the nation in Asia*

In Asia, the first limited conservation efforts were initiated by the ruling class and their apparatus who gained the knowledge from the collaboration with the former colonists and the ‘authorized’ international organization, for example through the ancient monuments conservation works such as the Angkor Wat by the French in 1920, and the Borobudur by UNESCO in 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The importance of the authenticity of the built fabric has also been imposed to the mind of the states’ apparatus and technocrats through conservation legislations. In India the Manual compiled by John Marshall in 1923 was used as the ‘bible for conservation of ancient monuments’ (Biswas 2008), and even after the independence, the conservation legislation was also aimed at ‘conservation as monumentalism’ as in the 1951 Act (Punekar 2006). The legal protection in Hong Kong was based on the grading of ‘monumental quality’ as outlined in the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance enacted in 1976 (Chu 2007). In post-colonial Indonesia, the 1992 Cultural Heritage Act is similar to the 1931 Dutch’s *Monumenten Odonantie*. In Singapore, the 1993 Objectives, Principles and Standards for Preservation is drawn from the Venice Charter, the US Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, and the Burra Charter.

This imposed knowledge was transferred to the former colonial capital cities in the newly independent nations, where the ruling power is particularly strong in which the economic interests are often highest, and the place for the most potent of political symbolism. In the capitals, colonial buildings were conserved as ‘..., illumination and glorification of certain aspects of history are selectively commodified for political ends’ (Anderson 2006). One example is the old district of Jakarta, currently as the *Fatahillah* Square, named after the sixteenth century Muslim hero, was designated as the first conservation project in Indonesia in 1973. The colonial buildings were conserved as the repository of Indonesian cultural artefacts, such as the former Dutch Town Hall is now a museum displaying the Indonesian and the *Betawi* (the local people) relics, the former Dutch East India Company warehouse became the National Maritime Museum, and the former Dutch church became the shadow puppet museum.

3.1.2 *Conservation and tourism industry in Asia*

In the 1990s, conservation in Asia was popularized by the state agencies through publications of aestheticized and romanticized heritage from popular magazines, commercial advertisements, to tourists’ guidebooks, maps, brochures, and websites developed for tourism industry. The past was wrapped up for commercial consumption to embrace the economic globalization, especially the lure of tourism industry. For example, the conservation of the historical zones of the Bund

and the Western concession districts in Shanghai, and the Chinatown in Singapore. In 1990s, to conserve historic districts in China, tourism was adopted as a strategy for conservation. However this state's policy has threatened the quality of historic districts that ignored local community services, excluded suitable modern uses, and even resorted in the construction of fake historic scenes, such as the Jinli Old Street in Fujian, the Wuyi Mountain Old Street in Hubei in Zhejiang Province (Zhu 2007). In short, these conservation practices showed that the asymmetry axis of power has caused the ordinary people were excluded from the equation, because of the main concern of conservation was mainly given to the physical intactness as taught by the "Eurocentric" classical conservation dogmas.

3.2 *Contemporary conservation theories*

On the contrary to the past theoretical approaches, the primary interest of the contemporary conservation theories is no longer focused on the objects but rather on the subjects, questioning why-, and for whom-, the conservation is done. The answers are closely related to the reasoning of that objects are conserved for it has meaning for a certain group of people, and the responsibility to conserve falls on them, thus it is their duty to conserve, and it is for them that conservation is performed (M. Vinas 2005). The followings are some of those contemporary theories.

3.2.1 *The idea of significance*

In the 1980s, the idea of Significance emerged due to some thoughts that not everything from the past could and should be saved, and that heritage has to pay its own way. This idea emanated from the dwindling financial resource coupled with the actual cost of conservation, and that historic buildings accumulated its significance because they had been developed, modified, and used for many years. In 1990s, the idea of significance has become common topic, stemming from its use in the Burra Charter. The charter highlights the term 'Cultural Significance,' a concept which helps in estimating the value of places in encompassing attributes such as 'historic', 'social' or 'scientific'. Another approach is the Value-led conservation theory developed by authors associated with the Getty Conservation Institute. The main idea of this theory is that decision making in conservation should be based on the analysis of the values an object which are possessed by different people, in order to reach equilibrium among all parties including professionals coming from various fields such as tourism and economics, and finally the communities will arrive with their own criteria and opinions (Avrami et al. 2000).

3.2.2 *Inclusive approach and challenging the state*

In contemporary theory, the primary interest is on the people, therefore conservation may be perceived as a complex and continuous process that involves the process of determining what constitutes heritage and how it is used, cared for, interpreted, by and for whom. To answer these questions and to reach equilibrium in decision making, an inclusive approach to involve all parties is expressed in the Value-led conservation principle. One charter that adopted this inclusive approach is the Burra Charter, which attempts to prioritise public interest by the statement that '... conservation, interpretation and management of a place should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has special associations and meanings, ...' (article 5.1).

In the late 1990s the impact of the democratization of heritage, as seen in the growing numbers of newly founded NGOs that were involved in community campaigns to protect historic buildings, and in the increasing numbers of conferences and publications on heritage. One example is the public protest in 1996 that challenged both the state and private developers and was successfully stopped the Golden Hanoi Hotel development (Logan 2002), and the public protest in 2000 to conserve the Tai-O fishing village in Hong Kong as the last remaining 'stilt house' community (Cody 2002). In Indonesia, the bottom-up movements were led by the academics and professionals to promote community awareness through local organizations such as Bandung Heritage (1987), Sumatera Heritage (1998), and Bali Heritage Trust (2000).

The growing public support has shifted the policy-making on heritage issues from championing the 'monumental quality' of the object into focusing to the subject. In Georgetown, Malaysia, urban redevelopment policies implemented by the federal, the state and the municipal governments have been challenged by community responses to conserve the historic districts inclusive its living cultures (Nasution & Jenkins 2002). In Bangkok, an increasing numbers of

civic associations were emerged in 1990s, including the *Banglamphu* Muslim community and the Mon community, and their settlements have been declared as conservation districts (Askew 2002). In China, after a period of massive urban renewals, conservation of small-scale house-based historic district began to involve multiple actors in 1998. In the Zhongshan Road Conservation project in Cheng Nan, China, collaboration among stake-holders was formed by local government, the public, the private sector, and the developer; all cooperated closely in the conservation project implementation, and shared the cost for conservation (Zhu 2007).

3.2.3 *Conserving the intangible heritage*

In 1994, the Nara Document on Authenticity was adopted. It proposes that assessments of authenticity should encompass matters relating to 'form and design, materials and substance, use and functions, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors' (article 13). It acknowledges the plurality approach to the issue of authenticity that does not reside primarily in earlier notion of intact fabric, and acknowledges local traditions and also intangible values. This represents a pace of change from the "Eurocentric" definition of material originality to embrace the culturally intangible heritage. In Asia, the Chinese Principle (2000), the Hoi An Protocols (2001), and the INTACH Charter (2004) have acknowledged the essence of the Nara Document and its notion of authenticity is relevant to the conservation of heritage in their respective contexts. In the INTACH Charter, the master builders, namely *Sthapatis*, *Sompuras*, *Raj Mistris* who continue to build and care for buildings following their traditions, are considered as living heritage and the judges of authenticity.

From the year 2000 onward, the emphasis on the intangible heritage in Asia has been evident through the recognition of outstanding conservation projects awarded by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards program. For example, the recognition of traditional craftsmanship and techniques using linseed oil, tempera paints and organic dyes, local materials, and *fengshui* that were used in the restoration process of the *Guangyu* Ancestral Hall in China (completed in 2002), the *Hung Shing* Old Temple in Hong Kong (2000), the *Krishan* temple in India (2000), and the *Cheng Hong Teng* temple in Penang, Malaysia (2000). The examples show traditional knowledge includes building techniques, practices and rituals associated with periodic renewal of the building have been revived in conservation works in Asia.

4 CONCLUSION

In the course of history, the conservation discourses in both Asia and the West should be viewed in a parallel timeline as they have different traditions that affected the course of conservation. In the West, the framework for the classical conservation theory has been reflected in many charters such as the Athens Charter, the Venice Charter, and other UNESCO-ICOMOS documents. Such documents were originated from the European context, and imposed to the ICOMOS member states and its national committees, including the Asian countries, by the 'authorized' institutions acting as the privileged interpreters of the past. The imposition of the "Eurocentric" conservation principles in Asia has been structured in many conservation ordinances inherited or generated from the former colonial masters, and re-constructed by the post-colonial states during the waves of conservation in the 1970s and 1990s. As a result of this state-led conservation, the people were not the main concern since the main focus is the object, and serving the interests of the state-sanctioned tourism industry, policy, and ideology.

The shift from the object-centric to the subject-centric conservation has been happening since the end of the twentieth century, as reflected in the contemporary conservation theories that acknowledged the plurality of meanings, functions and values including intangible heritage. Unfortunately, the notion of tangible authenticity still stays as influential doctrine in the theory of conservation, as expressed in the Chinese Principle, and the Hoi An Protocols. The Burra Charter is also still standing as an integral part of the Eurocentric realm, as throughout the charter the emphasis is strongly inclined towards 'maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state' (article 1.6). Thus, authenticity is still perceived to be residing in the "frozen fabric" (existing state) that link 'inter-textually incorporated' with the Venice Charter which dates back to European antiquarian assumptions that artefacts embodied a fixed meaning (Waterton et al. 2006).

In Asia, traditional architecture is viewed as vehicles of values for communicating spiritual-intangible meanings. The importance of spiritual meanings in tangible-fabric is reflected in various conservation practices in Asia, as people are considered as the centre of conservation. Buildings are built, repaired, restored, rebuilt, and extended continuously by the people with their skills, rituals, and knowledge for fulfilling their needs in everyday life. This tradition of conservation to prolong the life of buildings in Asia leads to the common practices of continuous renewal as opposed to the Eurocentric notion of material authenticity that insists on the notion of minimum intervention and reversibility. In this context, the notion of authenticity should be redefined in which authenticity or the truth is found in the community leaders, the master builders as the so-called living authenticity. In this sense, one of the most important steps towards sustainable conservation in Asia is by continuing efforts in conserving the tradition of conservation in Asia: the knowledge, the practice, the craftsmanship, and the rituals embedded in the living heritage.

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