

Participation Model for Conserving the Religious Heritage Buildings: Case Study of Chinese Temples along the North Coastal Area of Java

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Abstract—Community participation in the heritage management is something that cannot be avoided. The awareness of community participation has been growing rapidly in many countries. In Indonesia, there has been a change of mindset, i.e. from the top down approach to the bottom up one. However, this community participation is still considered sporadic and individual. The research is aimed at creating a role model or a form of community participation that can be effectively used in heritage management based on the strategy used by the Chinese temple community along the north coastal area of Java.

The research is the result of the extensive fieldwork using both qualitative and quantitative methods: survey questionnaires, observation and in-depth interview. The result of the research shows that the strategy applied by the Chinese temple community is such an effective strategy and can be used to develop a heritage management model, especially of religious buildings, that provides a quite big opportunity for the community to get involved

Keywords—Chinese temples, Community participation, Heritage management, Religious building.

I. INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY participation is the keyword of the cultural-heritage conservation activity. The reason is that heritage has been owned by the community and considered as a product of the community itself, whether it is tangible or intangible. Cultural heritage, however, should be inherited from generation to generation. There are many reasons why a certain community intends to conserve its cultural heritage. Those include either a very personal reason, which is keeping the community identity memory, a social, spiritual and ethical obligation to preserve it, or another reason such as showing responsibility to preserve and inherit the cultural heritage to the next generation [1].

In fact, in Indonesia community participation is an unpopular approach which has not been widely used. The top-down approach can still be found in many conservation activities. It is meant that the regulation and policy are made by the top government and applied to the lower levels. In this case, community participation cannot be optimal. The community itself is also kept at a distance from their own

heritage. As a result, people think the heritage is not part of their lives. In other words, there is a big gap between the society and the heritage. Next, a conservation process is a dynamic process. It means that conservation is not only used to preserve a building or a cultural heritage, but also to give benefit to the society. In addition, since the society is the creator as well as the owner a cultural heritage, it should be given a bigger part in the conservation process.

It is known that nowadays there are many cultural heritage buildings in Indonesia that are not in proper condition. In Semarang, for example, it is showed that in 2006, 196 buildings were classified as listed buildings, in which 40% were in poor condition [2]. Ironically, this happened at the time when the government had been committed to conserve the cultural heritage through some regulations, such as the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No 11/2010 about Cultural Property. In this law, it is stated clearly that there is encouragement to the stakeholder participation, i.e. the community, groups of people and NGOs to take part in the conservation activities, and a share responsibility between stakeholders and the government. At this time, the government has shown attention to the role of the community through its regulations. Still, it is not enough. It is found that in reality the opportunity to participate is not open widely. As a consequence, a new approach to give a chance for the society to take part in the conservation of cultural heritage is needed.

The fact that there is a gap between the government and the community in the field of cultural-heritage conservation forces the community to develop its own way or strategy, as applied in the Chinese temple management. In this case, the temple community that has been associated with Chinese ethnic, has struggled in its own way to keep the existence of its temple, as well as to keep its ritual and culture. This is also urged by the fact that the government concern towards religious buildings is much influenced by political situation. Yet, in the political situation over the long period, the cultural heritage appears to be well preserved. It is therefore assumed that the existence of Chinese heritage comes from the community support with its varied strategies.

The existence of all temples is actually strengthened by the Chinese community, in the form of their participation in the temple management. Most of temples are independent and hardly find the involvement of the government in the

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management of temples. It can be said that temple management takes full responsibility of the management and the development of the temple. They control and organize daily ritual and cultural activities as well as yearly temple activities; they also raise funding support for temple sustainability. Based on this consideration, the strategy of how Chinese temple's community keeps their heritage gives an important understanding of the essential element of community element in the heritage conservation in Indonesia

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Chinese Temple Community Strategy in Indonesia

Community is an important element for Chinese people. "Klenteng" is the special term for a Chinese temple in Indonesia. The word "klenteng" is only found in Java and Madura Islands [3]. The temple has several functions; i.e. as a religious place, a social place and a main "house" for Chinese people who live in the surrounding area. Based on its functions, the temple has reflected the Chinese culture, physically and unphysical. Chinese temples can also be considered as well preserved since there are many functions attached to the temples, meaning that the temples are inseparable from their community and are still actively used by the community. In this case, "continuity" is the keyword of the conservation of Chinese temples, and is meant the survival of the existed religious and cultural values, as well as their connection to the community [4]. Historically, Chinese temple had a difficult time in Indonesia. Many non-Muslim religious buildings were closed, and the Chinese temple had been pulled out from tourist routes. Even in Central Java province, the governor at that time released a policy that the Chinese temples could not be renovated, whatever the condition. Therefore in that period there were no actions towards Chinese heritage conservation. The negative feeling towards Chinese people or *Tionghoa* (Indonesia term for Chinese) could not be separated from the government policies, both in the Dutch colonial period and the New Order of Soeharto, which applied the discrimination policies toward the Chinese ethnic. The discrimination policies covered the field of culture, Education, and their religion [5]. It is interesting to know that although Chinese heritage experienced difficult conditions for a long time, it is still well preserved. It is assumed that the strength of the Chinese heritage existence comes from the support of the Chinese community as the owner and these difficulties have not made the Chinese temple disappear, and they are even stronger in the era of openness in Indonesia.

B. People Participation in Heritage Management

Heritage management is defined as a process to manage heritage. It includes identification, assessment, planning as well as the management itself. In the Guideline issued by the Australian Heritage Commission [6], it is stated that in the heritage management there are some references, such as: understanding of heritage significance, determining the logical objective of the conservation activity, community participation in each activity and decision making, determining the

conservation process, as well as planning, monitoring and evaluating. In this process, community participation is given a substantial role. According to Dan and Phillip as quoted by Chirikure et al [7], community participation can be meant as giving roles and power to the community as one of the stakeholders, in which the degree of the role and power is different in each phase. Concerning the community participation issues, it is always important to raise the question of how community is represented in heritage management Chirikure et.al al [8], stressing that participation means giving an opportunity and room for the community to get involved in heritage conservation.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to design a model based on the mechanism developed by the management of the temple. The reason is that the management can be regarded as people participation on a small scale because of the voluntary based involvement. This research covered 4 Chinese temples located along the north coastal area of Java, namely Jakarta, Cirebon, Semarang and Surabaya. The cities chosen for this research were based on some key considerations such as the existence of the Tri Dharma heritage temple and the role of the cities in past history, while the selection of temples was based on some considerations: historical value, authenticity value and level of intervention.

The choosing of respondent was based on the preliminary research in which management had an essential role in managing the temple, whereas the visitor participation was limited to donation. Therefore, greater attention was intended to the management staff and to how the developed the mechanism of temple management.

In general, the purpose of giving questionnaire was to get a global picture about the temple management's role and responsibilities in keeping the sustainability of their religious buildings. Since the research concerned about conservation, the questionnaire was divided into two topics. The first topic was about the building condition, type of intervention, and the use of conservation standard during the implementation of the intervention, while the second was more about managerial approach, i.e. management structure, responsibilities and duties, financial issues, activities, future plans, and conservation activities. Next, the interview was also used to clarify their answer when this was not sufficiently clear. Through interview, a good and trusting relationship between the surveyor and the respondent can be built, and this is important when carrying out surveys with people. Qualitative data was important in this stage and can be considered as the main source of information. The data gained from in-depth interviews and observation, together with the number/percentage from quantitative data can provide the whole picture of the topic. Basically, in each category, these two approaches were mutually supportive to complete the understanding of the topic.

IV. RESEARCH RESULT

The results of the research on the strategy of Chinese temple community in the North coastal area of Java are as follows:

1. In general, temples still have a strong role as a religious place for the Chinese, and as places for organising several Chinese cultural activities as well.
2. The awareness of Chinese temple community was very high, but there were no real actions taken such as participation in the physical work of repair and maintenance especially for the temple visitor. The real participation was mostly in terms of funding/donation.
3. However, major support came from the foundation or management. The management staffs basically are voluntary and unpaid. The foundation itself has strong control on both ritual and other cultural activities. There is, however, no single power in the foundation because most decisions are based on agreement between staff. Deliberation mechanism is considered the strength of the temple management in order to make an agreement especially in decision making. This becomes crucial because through this mechanism all problems can be solved so that the unity can be maintained. Such mechanism is badly needed in a small community.
4. The foundation's awareness about the importance of conserving the temple's original shape is quite high; unfortunately it is not followed by action to involve a professional in the conservation work in the temple. The temple's foundation prefers to give the responsibilities of repair and maintenance works mostly to the daily caretaker or internal staff who has no knowledge of conservation
5. As no temple receives regular government support, the foundations have created many ways to get funding to support their activities, either from strong networking or other creative ways.
6. The role of the foundation is very important in the temple's life because this is the only internal institution which decides everything for the temple. Since the foundation is run on a voluntary basis, it can also be assumed that the involvement of people in the foundation is a kind of participation on a small scale.

Conversely, both ethnicity and networking are of important in the Chinese temple context. Even though Chinese is considered a minor ethnic in Indonesia, the feeling of being Chinese has become a great drive for the Chinese temple community to support one another. This feeling results in a strong networking, for example in financial issues, among the temple community in order to support their sustainability.

One weakness that occurred in the above research is the lack of conservation knowledge. This aspect becomes prominent because lack of conservation knowledge will lead to bad management. Thus, one possible solution could be inviting professionals' participation, i.e. those who are experts in the field of conservation techniques and skills as well as in conservation regulations.

In short, management plays a significant role in the process of religious heritage management, and the management itself is considered people participation in a small scale. This is because the members of the management have great initiative and strong motivation, driven by some reinforcement aspects, namely ethnicity feeling, religious belief and their respect for the values attached to the religious buildings. On the other hand, lack of conservation knowledge among the members of the management provides a change for some experts to get involved in the conservation work.

Based on the above aspect identification, the participation model developed is as follows figure 1:

The below model (fig.1) shows people participation in the management scheme of religious building, starting from the involvement in management, in which self-motivation, religious belief and ethnicity, in some cases, have been supportive points for them to get involved in the conservation activity. Moreover, in this scheme, vision and mission affect the whole process, such as policies, objectives and others. Consequently, vision and mission becomes very crucial and should be clearly and firmly defined from the beginning. It should also be noted that in defining the vision and mission, the understanding about the value significance is, as a matter of fact, very important for it is the basis of vision and mission. Some ways to implement it are among others through research, literature, and key persons. In addition to the understanding about value, the understanding about standard and conservation ethics are also needed in planning the activity. Next, to implement it, a practical conservation guideline containing dos and don'ts on how to treat historical buildings should be available and since the guideline will be used by common people, it will be great if it is written in a simple language so as to be easy to understand.

A good communication with the surrounding community should be created, especially if the heritage building is located in the center of the settlement. Besides, as a form of people participation, a good communication will bridge differences and conflicts between the management and the community, will generate understanding between both parties, and will raise new ideas. As for financial issues, funding to support all activities can be obtained either from the existing internal or external networking.

In regard to conservation works, managerial issues cover funding, legal permit, institution coordination, and identifying the staff who are capable for conservation work, whereas conservation issues include the degree of damage, cause of damage, proper technique, and social and cultural aspects. In defining these issues, a dialogue between the surrounding community and relevant outside parties is needed.

The involvement of outside parties continues to the next step, i.e. deciding conservation activities. A conservation plan should be made based on the applied conservation principles, ethics and standards. Learning that management staff lacks of conservation knowledge, credible outside parties should give technical assistance. In this case, they can set up phases of conservation work and decide the type of intervention needed.

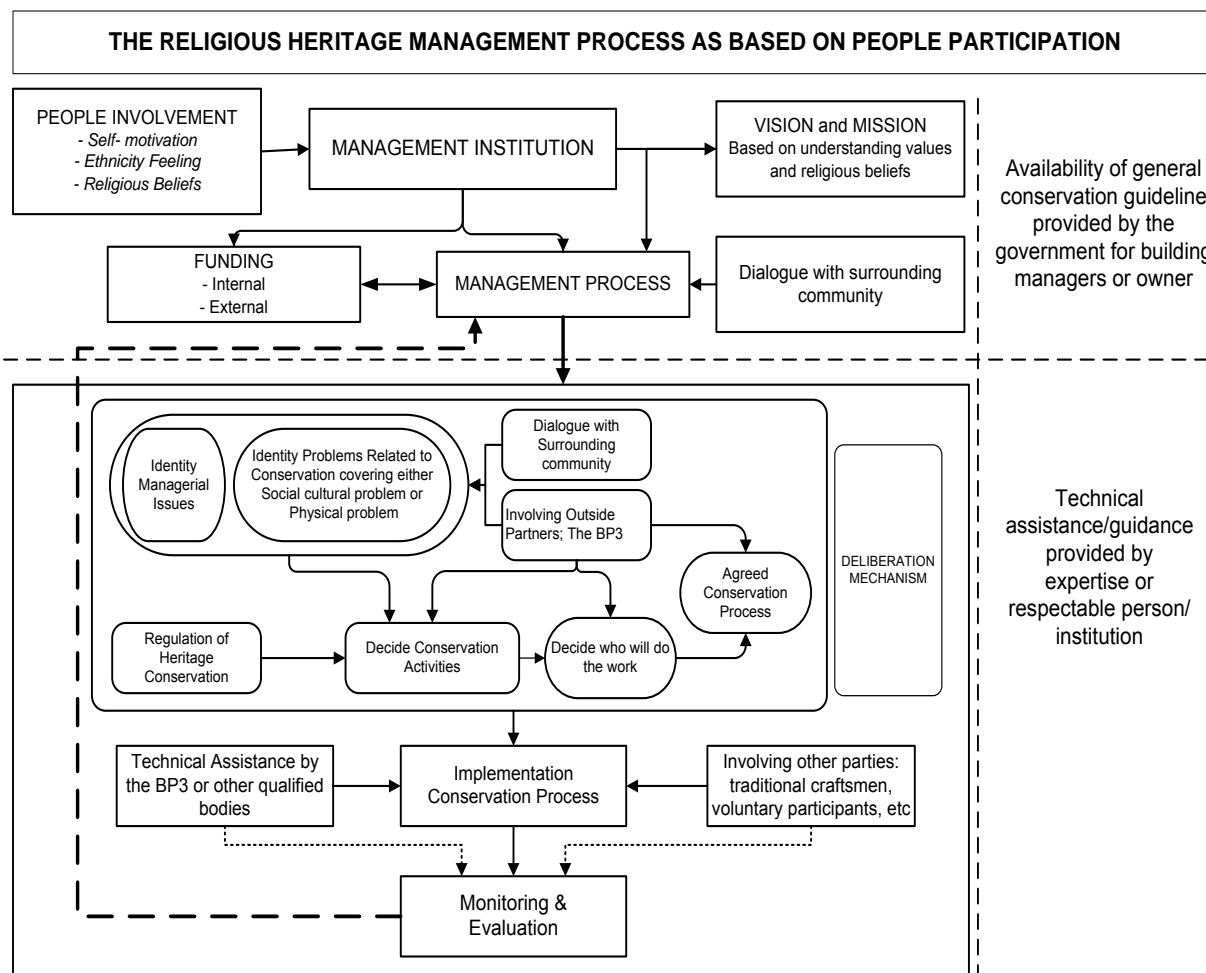


Fig.1 Model of People Participation on Heritage Management

It is of course necessary that the determination of phases and types of intervention should be based on the previous study, and in the implementation of conservation work, the applicable national and local conservation regulation out to be followed.

Conservation planning will remain a plan if not carried out. The problem occurred lies on who will implement this plan. The fact is that most management staff does not have proper skills to handle the conservation work. In this situation, the work may be conducted by anyone directed by qualified government agency or conservation experts. They can not only give technical assistance, but also control the implementation of the work as well as ensure that the work is on the right track. After all steps are agreed, the conservation work can be started. And, it should be noted that in this process, i.e. from identifying issues until planning the conservation, deliberation mechanism is a way to reach an agreement without any conflict.

.When conservation work is done, assistance from credible government agency, such as BP3, is still needed. This assistance is considered a kind of government attention towards heritage conservation activities in Indonesia. In this conservation work, the involvement of local and traditional craftsmen cannot be avoided, especially in Chinese temple. The reason is that the details ornaments found in temple are

often complicated. With the involvement of some parties, many benefits are gained. In this case, government agency (BP3/Board of Archeological Heritage Preservation) and conservation experts can learn from traditional craftsmen's knowledge and skills. On the contrary, traditional craftsmen can learn about conservation principles and techniques. Conservation work is also open for people participation providing that they follow the regulations agreed. Although not big, people participation is necessary since the community can learn from their experience working in the heritage conservation. And by having this kind of experience, it is hoped that the community will raise their concern about conserving religious heritage buildings.

The last steps are monitoring and evaluation. These are aimed at finding out whether the work has been carried out based on what is planned and the standard of conservation or not. The results of monitoring and evaluating will be an essential input for the management in terms of further conservation. Monitoring and evaluating can be done using various management ways, such as observing the work, using checklist forms prepared by the management, or both.

V. CONCLUSION

The model made based on the Chinese temple strategy is a heritage management model that gives a quite a big room for

the community to participate in the heritage conservation activities. The participation starts from identifying the existing values as part of developing vision and mission, identifying all issues, until determining the process of conservation and conducting the conservation work. At the same time, stakeholders, such as the government, local and traditional craftsmen and conservation experts, are also given a room to participate. As a consequence, there should be a good communication among them. In this case, deliberation mechanism will be of some help. In other words, there is shared responsibility among stakeholders. In the future, it is hoped that this model can also be an effective approach for the conservation of other religious buildings, by optimizing the role of each stakeholder and can synergize stakeholders' contribution to the conservation activities

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