

# SIWALUH JABU TRADITIONAL HOUSES EMERGENCE LOCAL WISDOM THROUGH INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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## Abstract

Discussion and effort of conservation often generate a dilemmatic debate between how to maintain the condition of historic heritage with the effort to adjust the condition to contemporary era. Conservation activities in housing and residential environment should be able to harmonize these two things, so they can create a sustainability, ranging from traditional sustainability of existing homes, maintain the sustainability of residential, socio-economic sustainability and the sustainability of the natural environment. In order to achieve harmony, between old tradition, historic value and modernisation, it is important to find the local wisdom by increase the community participation. Lingga village dwellers in Tanah Karo, North Sumatra could be an example of how the community with their local knowledge plays an active role in preservation activities of Siwaluh Jabu, the 250 years old traditional house from Batak Karo, North Sumatra.

**Keywords:** *community participation, local wisdom, Siwaluh Jabu*

## Background

Preservation of traditional houses in Indonesia in general met several problems, such as the number of changes in living patterns and lifestyles of the residents, the transfer of population from rural to urban areas, damaged and unmaintained the house due to limited funding, limited natural resources as the main raw materials of traditional houses. This was also coupled with the lack of effort in in a several parties, from governments, businesses and residents to surrounding communities in the preservation of traditional houses.

Lingga village in North Sumatra, has several old traditional houses more than 250 years. Traditional house was a tourism aobject that made this village in the 199 Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter intoos visited by about 100 local and international tourists daily. But with the declining quality of traditional home, this time, only two traditional houses can still be inhabited while the rest already decay and deteriorated. Lingga Village Community since twelve years ago has trying to retain their traditional house, because based on an old story, hundreds of years ago the village of Lingga is the origin and center of the Karo tribal government. Another thing is that besides the house represents their ancestor heritage, their houses had also been the object of tourism flagship of North Sumatra. To solve preservation problems of traditional houses in lingga Village, community participation should be increased so that people can be a determinant of preservation activity as an effort to make Siwaluh Jabu remain sustainable, healthy and livable.

## The concept of preservation, local wisdom and community participation

### *Preservation; for past, present and future*

Siwaluh Jabu that still functioned as a house, should be categorized as a "living monument". Conserve these objects should be combined between conservation activities with the effort to maintain sustainability. In conservation, Michael Heseltine in Home Heritage Annual Report, 1991 states that the sustainability of the heritage is " a growing recognition that conservation is an important part of the quality of life. Poepple respond to a historic environment, not because it offers a nostalgic retreat into the past, but because it cotributes to the quality of life now".

The fact that preservation is not only preserve memories of the past are also listed in several agreements. *Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations.* (1979 Burra Charter). in Indonesia, the importance of maintaining heritage values are even considered as capital for future development. *Heritage, bequeathed from the generations that precede us, is the a vital foundation and initial capital for the development of the Indonesian nation in the future, and for these reasons, must be conserved and passed along to the next generation in good condition, without loss of value, and if possible with an enhanced value, to form heritage for the future* (2003, Indonesian Charter for Heritage).

## *Preservation, local wisdom and participation*

Conservation of traditional houses in each area must be adjusted to the value of locality and their setting. It makes every activity requires a different approach and way. In order to identify and generate activities that has no conflict with the locality, local communities must actively participate in these activities. Active role of society is needed to explore local knowledge they possess. Local wisdom can be understood as local knowledge and local values (genius loci). Local wisdom gained through the process, time and agreed by community. Local wisdom concept is needed to get the continuity conditions are not only related to the sustainability of historical heritage, but more than that is the sustainability of the natural environment (natural environment), artificial (built environment) and human.

Preservation is not an easy activity. This activity generally takes a long time and often require large financial support. Thus, preservation of traditional houses should also be supported by many parties. To maintain the historic heritage, all parties have responsibilities and work together to get the best result. This has been stated in some of the charter agreements, such in 2003 Edinburgh Declaration

- *Governments around the world must commit to give the conservation of both cultural and natural heritage a higher political and financial priority in the determination of national policies, and to do all they can to this end to the utmost of the financial, scientific and technical resources available to them.*

- *Non-governmental organizations around the world must pledge to increase their commitment to reverse the accelerating rate of loss of both cultural and natural heritage at national and local levels using all resources at their disposal to this end.*

*and 2003 Indonesia Charter for Heritage :*

- *Raise the awareness of all parties (government, professional, private sector, and community, including youth) on the importance of heritage conservation, through education (both formal and non-formal), training, public campaign, and other persuasive approaches;*
- *Understand and recognize the rights and potentials of marginalized people as well as to assist and re-empower the community in the conservation and stewardship of their heritage for sustained prosperity*

## *Community participation*

In determining the role of stakeholders in conservation, there are several things that must be considered, among others are the meaning and status of ownership of historical objects that will be preserved. Discussions about the power of community is often disputed. However, in cases where historic buildings is directly related to society, community participation should be improved to determining their future. To explain the difference between participation and non participation Arnstein, Sherry R. in "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" use typology of eight levels of participation. The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of

"non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate, but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost

rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power.

## Siwaluh Jabu, Traditional house in Lingga Village

### Lingga village, Tanah Karo, in North Sumatra

Siwaluh Jabu house is one of the typical traditional houses of village of Lingga. The village is located on the plateau, about 1200 meter above sea level and located in Tanah Karo Regency, northern side of Lake Toba. In the past, the area has dense forest and overgrown with various kinds of wood, which become the raw material for the housing and construction materials.

Nowadays, the forest around the Lingga Village has already become a preserved forest, so the woods cannot be utilized for building materials.

Lingga village as a traditional village in Batak Karo has a pattern of group of houses and was established on the land with a certain area. House placement is always based on river flow.

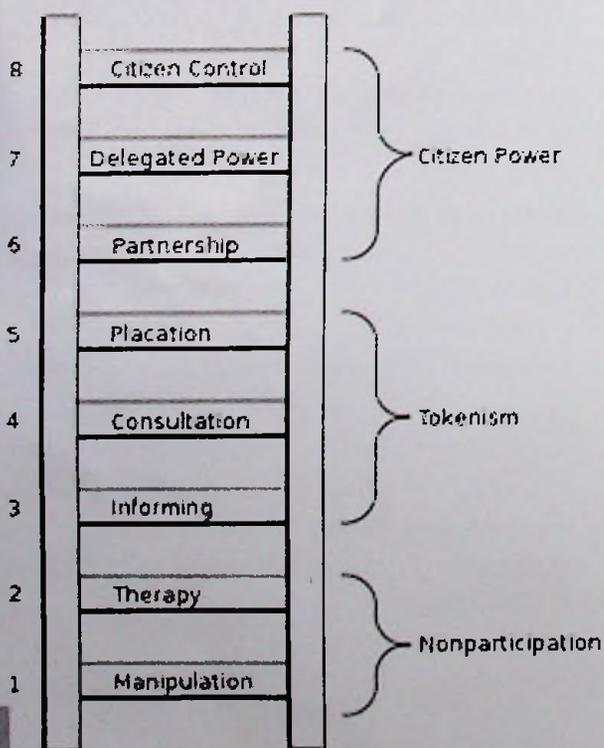


Figure 1: Ladder of Citizen Participation, Arnstein, Sherry R.

## General Character of Batak Karo Traditional Houses

Batak Karo traditional house has a uniqueness that is not only based on its physical form, but also based on the uniqueness of the residential patterns that reflect socio-cultural values of its occupants. The uniqueness of physical form is the size of a house with a length of 11 to 13 meters, width of 8 to 10 meters and built without nails and had anticipated the risk of earthquake. Social and Cultural Uniqueness Value can be seen in every house that inhabited by 4 to 16 families (always even numbered). Even number is related to the firewood stove inside the house. Every kitchen, used by two families as a symbol of togetherness.

The only room inside the house is a long and wide space for families, which is served as a place to cook, eat, gathering, as well as the family's bed. Because the divider is not available, every cooking hour, the house is filled with smoke from the wood that is used for cooking. The small size of the doors and windows in the house makes the air stuffy and congested.

Karo traditional house is a stage house with roof made from palm fiber, has two doors (pintun) and eight windows (see figure 3). Under the house, it is used as a chicken cage, pig and also as a place to store firewood. Siwaluh Jabu is one type of traditional houses of Batak karo. Siwaluh means eight, while Jabu is a space with no partitions.

Figure 2:(source: nincarin)  
"Mecu house" with only two direction roof, while building on the right far side of the picture is the traditional house-"Sianjung anjung Karo", a house with the four direction roof

## Type of House Siwaluh Jabu Base on the Roof Shape

Siwaluh Jabu house can be divided into two parts, namely a house Sianjung-anjung: a house with four faces or more, with one or two tersek and has four horn, and Mecu: a house with simple shape, two faces and has a pair of horn at the top and covered with black palm fiber.

## Jabu Siwaluh House Construction based on Foot (Base)

Based on its foot, Siwaluh Jabu has two systems. First is Sangka Manuk house or a house made of stacks beam structural systems and the column is using pegs or ropes tied with palm fiber. The next type of house is sendi (joint) house or a house where every sub structure column connected with the beam, thereby becoming a more solid foundation.

## Building Hierarchy

Siwaluh Jabu house building hierarchy is divided into three parts; the roof as a symbol of upper world (holy place) called as Dibata Atas. On its top there are two horns, which is



believed as a liaison between the upper and middle world. The second part is the body or middle world or *Dibata Tengah* (worldliness place). The bottom is the foot as the underworld or *Dibata Teruk* (place for dirty/crime so that suitable to place pigs, chickens and ducks).

## Patterns in Space

*Siwaluh Jabu* house has a line gangway where the front door with the back door aligned with the direction facing the flow of the river, upstream to downstream or if there is no river, it is using the East-West direction. Inside the house, although inhabited by eight families, there is no divider. The division of space without partition (*Jabu*) made under the provisions of the *Karo* tradition. Traditional house in general can be divided into *Jabu Jahe* (downstream) and *Jabu Julu* (upstream).

Each *Jabu* occupied by one family whose placement is determined according to the function and the degree of kinship families in

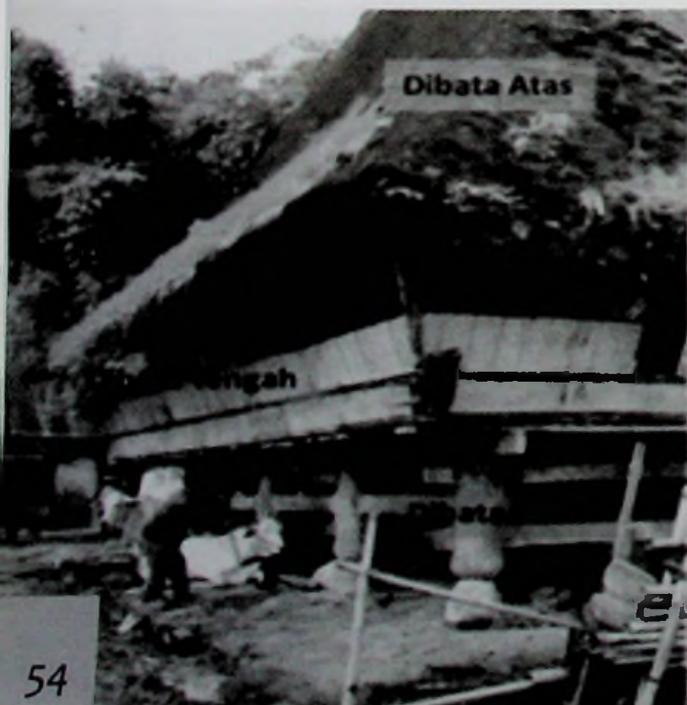
the family tree. Some functions are known are the class of its founders who became leader of the traditional house and occupy the *Jabu 1*, the spokesman occupies *Jabu 5*, news seekers who inhabit *Jabu 8* and respectable inhabitants of a respected and honored to be invited to every party, occupying the *Jabu 4*.

Like other ancient traditional houses in Indonesia, *Siwaluh Jabu* does not recognize the space for a shower and toilet. Bathing activities are conducted in the nearest river, while toilet activities could use the forest nearby the house. At night for security reasons, toilet activities performed directly on the floor thus the dirt will fall down to the ground under the house and became food for pigs under.

## Functional Elements of the House

*Siwaluh Jabu* house has several functional elements, such as stairs leading to the entrance with handle made of bamboo and wooden steps. Porch or patio made from bamboo where the women mingle or weave. Walls made from wood plank. Door size is 80 cm width and 120 cm height. Window size is 35 cm width and 85 cm height. Kitchen measuring 1 m x 1.2 m made from wood and mounted on the roof construction as a place to put the cooking equipment and materials as well as cooking stoves. The ceiling use as a place to store and hang equipments. Fiber Palm roof use as ventilation for air and smoke circulation.

Figure 3: Vertical Hierarchy (Source : *nincarin*)



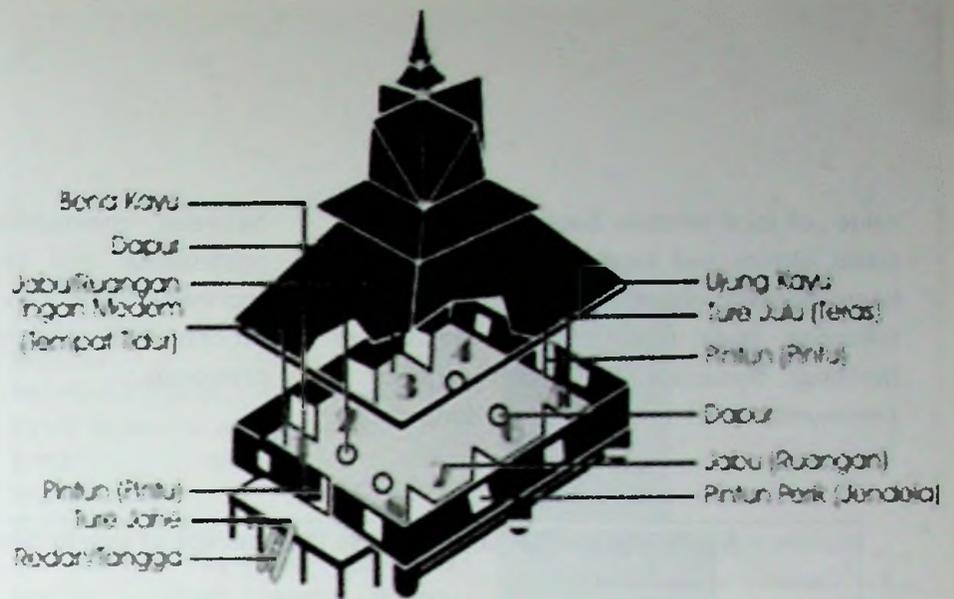


Figure 4: Plan of Siwaluh Jabu (Source : karoweb.or.id)

## Ornament

Siwaluh Jabu houses identified with some ornaments like “ayo-ayo” made of woven bamboo, and serves as a triangular-shaped top wall and the placement of buffalo horn and carved buffalo head with the spiritual function to protect against disaster. A variety of ornaments are also used, such as lizard ornaments, to stitch the wooden wall and also a symbol of animals that eat mosquitoes and used as a medicine.

## Local Wisdom through Community Participation

To be able to do conservation, rural communities with limited economic Lingga need funding help, either from government or other parties. In order to obtain an agreed conservation guidelines diverse parties, the representatives of indigenous communities Karo village with local governments and ministries of Public Housing has made a table listing the things that need to be maintained and need to be adjusted, while maintaining high local value. Adjustment produced a

figure 5: (source: nincarin) Local gathering. attended by Lingga village community, local authority, professional, central government.



value of local wisdom based on experience, travel history and local knowledge that has been handed down for generations. The following table represents the results of meetings, discussions and action plans at the community level as a form of cooperation

between communities, local government, professional and central government. Table represents the conclusion of a series of processes that have been implemented previously.

Application of local wisdom to the concept of origin Siwaluh Jabu			
Elements	concept		Description - Picture
	Origin	Local Wisdom	
Roof	Two or four face, finished with palm fiber	Still using the same material, because it can protect the occupants from the cold at night and hot during the day, while providing air flow and coolness.	
Foot/ Base	using timber wood with a hinge system in anticipation of an earthquake	Using concrete, because wood from the protected forest is prohibited for building material. But the joint has to be covered with palm fiber to avoid friction that could crush concrete.	 original  solution: need improvement
Vertical Building Hierarchy	Consisting of three parts which symbolizes the sacred, secular and bad, as a place of sewage or animal cages	The lowest part, can be used as a barn or storage and use plank wood wall.	 solution stil need improvement

In spatial	<p>Large and huge room use for families bedroom, kitchens, living rooms, as a symbol of togetherness.</p> <p>Each Jabu occupied by family whose allocated according to their function and position in the family kinship.</p>	<p>Walled. To get more privacy. Color preferably dark to keep the genius loci</p> <p>Become rental unit for low income people. (no need degree and kinship family)</p>	  <p>solution still need improvement</p>
	<p>Kitchen in the middle of the room, as a symbol for togetherness</p>	<p>Kitchen strived still follow the original conditions to maintain togetherness. Smoke cooking process spread throughout the room can be trusted to preserve and maintain the quality of palm wood</p>	 <p>Government, professional and academics should help find solution to make their house more healthy.</p>
	<p>No bathroom and toilet</p>	<p>Preserve as the original house</p>	<p>Bathroom and toilet allocated in a public area as a neighborhood facilities (public toilet)</p>

**Application of local wisdom to the concept of origin Siwaluh Jabu**

Element	Element		Description - Picture	
	Origin	Local Wisdom		
Other functional elements	Ladder	Handle made of bamboo with wood steps	Step can be changed with bamboo	
	Door	Size 85x120 cm	Preserve as the original, as a respect symbol to the occupants.	 <p>solution: accepted</p>
	Window	Total number eight with the small size	The number still same, but the width can be enlarged	 <p>solution: accepted</p>
	Floor	board	Can be replaced with bamboo or board with a smaller size	
	Wall	board	Continue to use boards of different types of wood but can be added to the beauty and durability of paint timber	
Ornament	Wall	Stitched with the palm fiber as an amplifier and unifying wall	It is possible to be given an additional paint as wallcoverings	<p>solution: accepted</p> 

**Application of local wisdom to the concept of origin Siwaluh Jabu**

Element	Concept		Description-picture
	Origin	Local wisdom	
Utility	No electricity, no water supply	Electricity supported, water supply available in comunal out door space	This is a solution in order to maintain occupancy. The existence of the inhabitants of the kitchen will make smoke billow and preserved wood and roofed.

<b>Application of local wisdom to the concept of origin Siwaluh Jabu</b>			
<b>Element</b>	<b>Concept</b>		<b>Description-picture</b>
	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Local wisdom</b>	
<b>Occupancy</b>	Occupied by eight families who came from relatives	Occupied by low income tenants which pay just only five cans of rice per year	This is a solution in order to maintain occupancy. The existence of the occupants makes the kitchen producing smoke to maintain and preserved wood and roof.

## Conclusion

Poeple in Lingga village need to be empowered to the level of active community involvement. This aims to enable them help preserve the traditional houses Siwaluh Jabu by maintaining the sustainability fits their now and future needs. Lingga village community also needs to continue given ongoing guidance and coaching as a community development process.

Local gathering was a tools to improve their participation from non participation level to participation level. But it still has need some improvement to increase their participation, so that conservation activities Siwaluh Jabu House should be a multi-year activity and continuous and Siwaluh jabu house not only preserved, but also healthy, convenient, safe and sustainable

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