

A Survey on Community-based Local Builders who succeed the Urban Wooden Houses

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Key words: Wodden Houses, Organic Structure, Community-based Local Builders, Maintenance System, People-based Management, Seismic Retrofit

1. Background and Purpose

Traditionally, wooden houses used to be maintained by the continuous time-consuming repairs by local carpenters. However, recent changes such as market economy, owner-occupied policy, and great seismic damages, have changed the wooden houses and made the relationship between carpenters and owners more complex and distant. Then, its losing maintenance system contributed to the huge amount of housing collapse in the Grate Hanshin Earthquake.

However, we have tackled to that condition mainly by the promotion of seismic retrofit based on engineering despite complex organic structure, and these seem to be inefficient and cause paradoxical situation. In these circumstances, this research reviews the significant maintenance system for wooden houses, and studies on the activities of local builders who play a key role in wooden housing production in Japan.

2. Outline of the Research

This research focuses on local builder F in Nara prefecture who manages remodeling and repairs of wooden houses. This field study was conducted intermittently between 03/2009 and 12/2009 through participant observation to H house renovation project and interview to builder F and its clients.

3. Research Results

Extra repairs were observed in H house project by builder F even though those were not originally planned. This means their work has diagnosing function for the target. Their work with this function classified into 3 types – a): dealing with the wooden frames directly (13%), b): dealing with the frames

indirectly (17%), c): daily repairs (70%). a), b) are directly contribute to the maintenance of wooden houses and c) provides the opportunities for experts to diagnose and to grow the relationship between builders and clients. In addition, their repeating activities which are taken place in high density within small areas have built trust relationships which may lead to a), b) in the future.

4. Consideration

According to the research, local builders can provide appropriate actions to each houses and owners because of mutual understanding developed by piles of small repairs and communication. This kind of ‘traditional’ maintenance system based on experience and human relation is unlimited and reasonable action to the organic structure compared with institutional seismic retrofit process (Fig.1). Total human-based management created by these community-based local builders would succeed the urban wooden houses to the next.

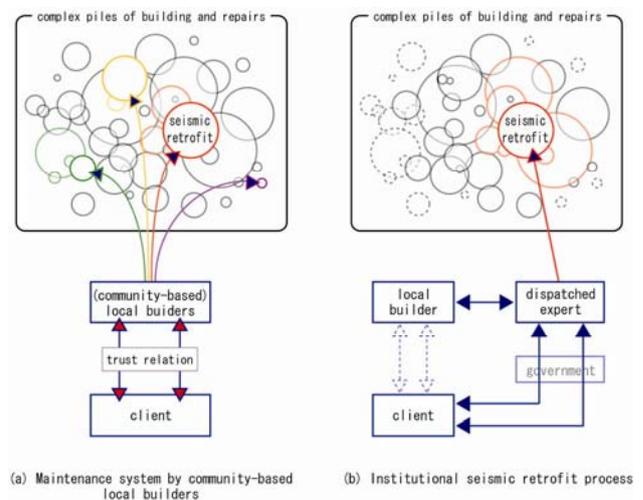


Fig.1 Feature of the community-based local builders compared with institutional seismic retrofit process