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Kumamoto University
RESTORING OLD PRIVATE HOUSES WITHOUT ANY HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION:
Implemental framework and case study at No. 47 Hang Bac street, Hanoi

歴史資料なしの古民家の復元
その実施手順とハノイ旧市街ハンバック通り47番住宅におけるケーススタディー

To KIEN*

トキエン

Many architecturally valuable old buildings in the world have been downgrading or being torn down for new constructions. Among them, while public buildings are somehow concerned for conservation, private houses are mostly abandoned. When these houses eventually collapse, it will be too late to preserve and difficult to restore due to lack of historical documents. In this case, the common survey method is to mainly examine physical relics or traces at site. This kind of resource is usually limited and sometimes impossible due to no excavation authorized. In some of these houses, however, there may be original senior residents still living here for long. They can be an invaluable (or even the only) information resource of the house in the past. The question is how to help them recall memory most effectively by claimed scientific methods, not just by ordinary interviews. This paper aims to propose an implemental framework for tracing that particular sort of houses. Then it takes the No. 47 Hang Bac Street house (Hanoi, Vietnam) as the case study and publishes the results here. The framework is expected applicable anywhere for that sort of houses.

Keywords: Old house restoration, without historical documentation(s), human memory, Hanoi Old Quarter, 47 Hang Bac

1. Background of the research and related previous studies

Many old buildings in local traditional styles in the world, especially fast developing cities, have been downgrading or being torn down for new modern constructions. Among them, while public buildings are somehow concerned for conservation, private houses are mostly abandoned. Since most of the houses' historical documentations are unavailable (in the sense that either there has never been any documentation or there used to be some but now missing), when those surviving houses eventually collapse, it will be too late to preserve and very difficult to restore. In this scenario, one of common methods was to mainly examine physical relics and/or traces at site. However, this kind of resource is rather limited due to no excavation authorization. In some of these houses, however, there may be original senior residents living there. This research aims to focus on this particular sort of houses, namely architecturally valuable old houses (1) where no historical documentation is available, (2) no excavation is authorized or appreciated, and (3) in which original senior residents are defined. Among these residents, anyone who has been living here for long (i.e., over 20 years) and whose memory still works can potentially provide useful spatiotemporal information of the house in the past (such as architecture, residents and changes...in different historical periods). However, it is highly suggested that memories of residents should be activated, stimulated and recorded as soon as possible before it becomes unutilizable (such as "false", disordered or disable memory by aging, sickness...) or the resident passes away.

Since the notion of restoration is actually understood by different ways, let us note that we follow the general sense that "To restore something means to return it to a former state...The objective of many restorations is only to attempt to return the object to a better, less damaged state"1, so a former state may not necessarily be original state which is controversial and radical. Basically architectural restoration needs to answer: (1) "Restore back to What" (Tracing) and (2) "How to restore" (Realizing). For public buildings, especially monumental ones where historical documentations are usually available, task 1 can be mitigated and restorers just need to focus more on task 22. For old private houses where no historical documentation is available, however, both tasks are required. This paper focuses on task 1 only. Fig. 1 shows basic information resources for housing restoration tracing. We theoretically summarized that there are 6 resources potentially utilizable: (1) Physically traces/Analytical inference (broken beams, symmetric windows...), (2) Published materials (books, maps, drawings...), (3) Unpublished/transmissional materials (family-kept photos, personal collections...), (4) Excavated/found relics materials (site discoveries...), (5) Common neighborhood characteristics inference (architectural forms, spaces, details...) and (6) Original defined residents' memories (told stories, memorized details, circulation habit...) Restorers shall decide all available and utilizable resources in each case. Back to our focused sort of houses, resources (2), (3) & (4) are unavailable. Resources (1) & (5) are usually available, yet limited or controversial. Then (6) is the last resource for utilization, if available. The question is how to help residents recall memory most effectively. Usually when they are found at site, they are commonly asked to describe verbally

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Fig.1 Resources for housing restoration tracing
and/or fill out questionnaires regarding the house’s past. This kind of “ordinary” interview is commonly based on no particular scientific technique, as architectural researchers usually do not know much about psychological matters, so the information achieved does not reach potential maximum capacity.

This research aims to utilize both memories of original senior residents and researchers’ professional analysis. In short, it combines information from residents (“witness”) and relics (“evidence”). Usually “witness” resource is subjective (cognitive, thus various) while “evidence” resource is objective (more accurate). However, the analysis or interpretation of “evidence” resource by scholars is also subjective (though at a different level), so there is no absolutely accurate method for tracing. “Witness” resource can be the dominant (even the unique) resource when others are limited (or unavailable). Theoretically speaking, since an ordinary person may have a full visuospatial perception from the age of 10-12, an old resident (aged around 70) with fairly working memory can potentially recall something up to 60 years. This means the house’s architecture can theoretically be traced back up to about 60 years. This paper uses different claimed techniques for resident interviews (see 2.1), and systemize all steps into a new implemental framework (as “time saving” tool for future practical restorers, Fig.3). It also takes a case study using the framework (No.47 Hang Bac St., Hanoi, Vietnam-See 3.) For the pre-tracing task, we already took a new complete documentation of the house in 9/2005 (measurement, 2D drawings, 3D CAD models and many photos) and published in a previous paper. This documentation will be utilized for our physical tracing and for making 3D draft restoration models (see 3.4.2).

As long as we have known so far, there are not many previous studies closely relating this particular issue, so our approach could be an initiative.

2. Proposed implemental framework

2.1 Particular previous claimed techniques applicable to residential interview

We brainstormed for any claimed techniques that can be applicable to residential interview by reading different related disciplines’ academic literature, especially psychology. And we found these following techniques potentially applicable. Here is a brief introduction of such technique:

* Mental map: Mental map is “a map of the environment within the mind of an individual which reflects the knowledge and prejudices of that individual. Such a map reflects the individual’s perceptions of, and preferences for, different places and is the result of the way in which an individual acquires, classifies, stores, retrieves, and decodes information about locations” 1. Mental map technique has been applied in different sciences, especially geography-related fields like planning (i.e. asking a group as survey samples to draw freehand sketches of their spatial perceptions about a certain visited or lived in area). However, we expect that our idea to use mental maps technique for restoration of old houses can be rather particular.

* 3D draft models as essential visual aids: Unlike other restoration projects in which 3D models just serve as “output” visualization, 3D models in our method play a vital role as “the only visualizable input” in the grand interview (see 2.2 & 3.4.2.b) to help residents recall memories effectively. So we strongly suggest making 3D draft models of the house in the past (in accordance with the residents’ preliminary verbal description).

* Historical image data bank: We had an idea to apply the principle of “crime investigation” method (“face recognition” technique, Fig.2-top) in criminal science in our interviews. For instance, according to Mr. Thanh, an owner of the case study house, there used to be an “Eight Trigrams” figure (Vietnamese: Bat Quai: Chinese: 八卦) mounted on the street facade. We prepared a data bank of that figure and let him choose the most similar one, then rendered it into 3D model and let him confirm again (Fig.2-bottom).

* Other minor supporting techniques: The research applied “Reliving the immediate relevant past” technique (Buzan 1986). “…The secret is to ‘forget about’ whatever it is you are trying to remember and to surround the absence (what you have forgotten) with every possible association or connection available to you…” 6. This can be applied in resident interviews about any particular architectural or historical details (chapter 3).

2.2 Proposed implemental framework

Fig.3 shows our proposed step-based complete implemental framework and Fig.4 explains more for “Step 3” of the framework.

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Fig.3 Proposed implemental framework for housing restoration tracing (For houses without any historical documentation)

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Fig.4 New interview method vs. common one
3. Case study: Restoring the house at No.47 Hang Bac Street, Hanoi, Vietnam

3.1. Brief introduction of Hanoi Old Quarter, Hang Bac Street and the chosen 47 Hang Bac house

This content was printed in our previous paper. However, for a convenient reading of this paper, we summarized it as follows. Hanoi is the most ancient capital city in Southeast Asia with its foundation in 1010. Hanoi Old Quarter (HOQ), also commonly called “36 Old Streets” or “Ancient Quarter”, is the root of the city (Fig.5). During its evolution, a significant local architectural style was gradually formed up in this 100ha area: the “tube house”. This is a popular term in Vietnam that implies attached street houses whose widths are very narrow while their lengths are very long (i.e. 2-4m wide, 20-60m long).

Hang Bac Street (HB St.), literally means Silver Street or Changers’ Street (Old French name: Rue des Changeurs), is located in the oldest part of HOQ (Fig.5). This street “came into existence between 1460 and 1497” and now belongs to first rank sub quarter for strict conservation (about 19ha). In this street, there were 4 historic temples (Fig.6-Left to right): Dung Tho, Truong Thi, Kim Ngan & Dung Han (Some were illegally occupied & much modified).

Our case study house is situated at No.47, facing directly Kim Ngan Temple and its façade exceeds the street façade alignment. These are great clues to find the house in any map and/or photos (Fig.6-7). People believe that this is the oldest existing house in HOQ (According to an owner, this house could be built app. 166 years ago). This precious house carries an original design of Vietnamese traditional architecture, and because this is one of the very few old houses where original senior residents have still been living in, it was chosen for our case study. There were some surveys (by different groups in different periods), but no conservation task has been initialized so far.

3.2. Previous and current conservation projects in Hanoi Old Quarter

Right from early 1990s, about 12 foreign research groups already came to Hanoi to help local scholars to set up preservation strategies for Old Quarter. Under recent strong modernization process, many tube houses were torn down for modern reconstruction or at least seriously downgraded and much modified. Thus, it is a pressing task to preserve those precious surviving houses, then to restore or renovate them as historic monuments for future reference. Therefore, 3 renovation pilot projects have been realized in recent years: (1) No.87 Ma May St. house was renovated as a museum for Vietnamese traditional living culture (Fig.6, top-right, marked in white & Fig.8-right); (2) No.38 Hang Dao St. house was renovated (open to visitors) yet mainly serves as office of HOQ Management Board; and (3) No.51 HB St. house was renovated (open to visitors), in which previous residents resumed to live, Fig.8-top). There has been a renovation project of the street block Hang Bac-Ma May-Luong Ngoc Quyen-Ta Hien and 2 temples shall be restored (Fig.8-bottom). Yet, street side of 47 HB is not included.

3.3. Overview of existing architectural and living

The existing architectural and living conditions were precisely described in our previous paper. So now we just want to emphasize that the house has been seriously downgrading and the residents have been living in miserable conditions (lacking most minimum requirements for living) such as dwelling spaces, clean sanitary, natural lighting, ventilation and privacy. According to some residents, they already modified their house (i.e. reconstruction of 3rd block, “built in” blocks in yards...). So the house seriously needs to be preserved and then restored to previous architecturally valuable states.

3.4. Restoration tracing process using new proposed framework

Programming: At first, we research related previous studies and projects regarding HOQ and the house (if any). Next, we follow our proposed implemental framework step-by-step to build up restoration drawings and models of the house in the past. Following is the process in details.

- 1357 -
3.4.1. Step 1-Current situation’s survey (9/2006): We not only made new complete documentation but also got important preliminary verbal explanations by an owner (audio recorded) about history & old structure (to make 3D draft accordingly, 3.4.2.b): 3rd group (looked like 1st, 2nd) plus rear group (kitchen, toilet) was rebuilt in 1981. And 1st yard was 4-side roofed with a central void (See our previous paper for details).

3.4.2. Step 2-Lab work:

a) Common neighborhood architectural characteristic inference: Fig.10 introduces two of many old popular photos of HOQ that show the very similarity of tube houses’ facades. We could conclude that HOQ had a very strong identity of common architectural style, so that inference among houses could be possible and reliable.

b) 3D CAD draft models: These models were made upon residents’ preliminary verbal descriptions. Fig.11 shows a bird-eye perspective with some corrections by residents.

c) Physical traces/analogue inferences: According to the owners and to our own analysis, the house was rather symmetric. Therefore, there were many missing components which could be inferred from the remaining symmetric ones, such as wooden beams and pillars, tile roofs, openings, motifs…Fig.12 shows an example.

3.4.3. Step 3-Grand interview (3/2007): This step is to collect most detailed information. Fig.14 listed the interviewed residents with some related useful index.

a) Grand interview preparation: Sketch papers, pens/pencils, felt-tipped pencils, voice recorder (basic techniques); and a laptop (with databank of houses’ details & neighborhood common styles), 3D drafted perspectives (particular techniques).

b) Achieved information and collected materials:

* Additional verbal explanations: We were told more details of rear group (a bath added), veranda (2nd group, 2F). Mr. Thanh also showed us the old poorly abandoned bonsai basin in 1st yard (Fig.15) and described how the whole setting looked like.

* Residents’ mental-map sketches: We asked some residents who have been living here for a long time (Fig.13) to draw sketches about past architecture in accordance with their memories. We also gave “stimulating” questions for each part accordingly. For those who had some difficulty to draw, we drew by ourselves upon their verbal description and made them confirm the sketches which could be in forms of plans, sections, spatial arrangement or circulation diagrams. (Fig.14) shows the most visualized sketch drawn by Mr. Hao. From that we can well understand the main old structure, 1st yard roofs, 2nd yard veranda and rear group (kitchen, toilet) in the past.

* Family-kept materials: We asked residents for any old family-kept materials regarding the house (photos, maps…) Mr. Thanh used to keep the land lot layout, but unfortunately missing now due to many changes. However, at Mr. Ngoc’s family we were fortunately shown and lent two old stained photos taken from the street as seen in Fig.16. There were some more, yet did not show well enough architectural details.

* Additional field notes (2nd survey): During our 2nd survey, we searched more traces and details that we were wondering while analyzing data and sketched them down for further laboratorial analysis. Fig.17 shows some of additional field sketches.

3.4.4. Step 4-Lab work (Summer 2007): After gathering all utilizable information, we started to conclude our final tracing. For a convenient reference, all utilized resources are numbered as: [1] Mr. Thanh, [2] Mr. Ngoc, [3] Mr. Hao, [4] physical traces/relicts or inferred elements, [5] old photos, [6] similar houses’ reference. Now let us briefly describe our tracing categorized by level of certainty (the numbers indicate the resources) as follows:

* Well concluded: [1,2,3,4,6] The overall old architecture consisted of 3 similar tile-roofed 2-storey built groups (with 3 wood ladders) and a small 1-storey rear group for kitchen, toilet and bath, alternately composed by 3 inner yards. There were a shop at front (same as current one), a bonsai basin in the center of 1st yard, an altar room with 2 timber circular pillars on 1F, a wood ladder leading to a foyer (almost no furniture) and a sky veranda for laundry dry up on 2F of 3rd group. [1,2,3,4,5,6] The façade was rather symmetric and there was absolute no opening on the 2F façade.


3.4.5. Step 5-Final total check with residents (11/2007): This step is to get every draft confirmed plus any minor change by residents for the last time. We got a very fruitful interview with Mr. Ngoc and Mr. Thanh (oldest owners) as they confirmed and certified right on our printed 3D models with their signatures stating "...This model accurately presents our house's architecture in a period earlier than 1954"). Let us note that 1954 was an important historical point of Hanoi when the city was liberated from the French, the war fleeing finished and a peaceful time officially started.

Fig.18  Restored plans, street façade and sections of the house (Supposedly earlier than 1954)
3.4.6. Step 6-Labwork (11/2007): At last, we focused on the rest minor details that residents failed to recall, then referred to correspondent ones in other houses (esp. 87 Ma May house) to guess them and eventually added into our final restored 2D drawings and 3D CAD model (the old neighborhood townscape was also rendered). Finally, an overall old street-scene montage image was also processed (See Fig.18, Fig.19).

3.5. Sub-conclusion of the case study

In terms of architecture, the house’s old structure was very beautiful and typical for tube houses: 3 main built groups with in-between open yards and a rear group for kitchen, bath and common toilet (although the house’s width was bigger than average size). The house was originally for one big family and the first floor was mostly saved for non-living functions (shop, altar, goods storage…) while the second floor was for dwelling and terrace. With regard to methodology, this complete case study has well illustrated our proposed implemental framework. Memories of original residents and all other accessible resources were fully and effectively utilized. Though the result may be not very accurate due to the relativity of memory resource, we believe that our restored model may be the first and rather reliable (at least for the main structure) model so far (as long as better resources are still unavailable). Therefore, it is highly suggested for reference in any future governmental restoration program for this house.

4. Conclusion

This research focused on restoring architecturally valuable old houses (1) where no historical documentation is available, (2) no excavation activity is authorized or encouraged, and (3) whose original senior residents are defined. Any of these residents, who has been living for a long time (i.e. over 20 years) and whose memory is still working (as long as it has not turned to “false memory” or become disordered or disable yet), may potentially provide restorers invaluable information about the house’s past. So they became our essential resource for restoration tracing.

This paper, at first, proposed a new implemental framework (as “time saving” tool for future practical restorers) that mainly combined information achieved in residents’ interviews with professional physical relics analyses in order to build up restoration models traced back to different historical periods. Then it took the house at No.47 Hang Bac St. in Hanoi Old Quarter as the case study. Although the main information resource for restoration was based on residents’ memories which are subjective and usually not very accurate, it could still be a very good reference and sometimes a dominant and precious resource when others are too limited or unavailable. And since any detail once failed to recall may be casually recalled at anytime, it is encouraged to stay in contact with residents for updates then. This kind of memory could theoretically be recalled up to about 60 years; this means the past architecture of the house could be traced back up to 60 years. This method could be an addition to previous claimed fundamental housing restoration methods and expectedly be applicable anywhere for that particular sort of houses.

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5) For details please refer to the webpage: http://www.answers.com/topic/mental-map
7) Hoang Huu Phé & Nishimura (1990),’The Historical Environment & Housing Conditions in the “36 old streets” Quarter of Hanoi”, Bangkok, pp.12
8) “Research institute on architecture”, representatives of cities of Toulouse & Brussels, and many individual scholars such as Le Van Luan, Duong Trung Quoc, Nguyen Ba Dang, Soichi Ota, Sawako Utsumi, Michael Wael... visited/surveyed the house (Information given by Mr. Thanh who stores visitors’ name cards).
10) For more information please refer to the website: www.hanoic2010.org or to Hanoi Old Quarter Management Board (No. 38 Hang Dao St.)
11) Project ordered by Hanoi’s People Committee and directed by Prof.Dr. Pham Dinh Viet, National University of Civil Engineering-Hanoi (HUCE)

Fig.1. Fig.2-bottom,Fig.3-Fig.6, Fig.7-right, Fig.9, Fig.11-Fig.18: Done and or collected by To Kien (Fig.586-background maps: from the book: in note 9, pp.61&131)

Fig.2-tops: From the webpage http://www.securecity.com/systems (Actually this kind of illustration can be popularly found in many other sources)

Fig.7-left: From www.chanhoa.com (This kind of old photos rather popular in different resources and either copyrights expired or non-commercial usage allowed)

Fig.8: Top & right models from www.hanoic2010.org (also available at HOQ Management Board); Bottom model from Dr.Pham Dinh Viet (HUCE)

Fig.10: Left photo: “Hanoi-Chu ky cua nhung dot thay” (see details in note 9), pp.83; Right photo: From the website http://nguyenit.free.fr

Fig.19: Rendered by Arch.Nguyen Huy Quang, montage image processed by To Kien (Background photo: See Fig.7-left)
和文要約

1. 研究の背景と目的

現在、世界的多くの伝統的な古建築は、近代化により新築するため
に取り壊されている。その中で、特に民家については保護の関心が
薄く、ほとんど見落とされた状態にある。これらの民家が次々に壊
壊される現象は、今後の歴史的価値の欠落を大きく懸念する要因
となる。このような場合、一般的には、現場でその現状を調査する
方法がとられる。しかし、このような方法は、通常、物理的に限局があ
ったり、調査が許可されなかったりするために不可能な場合もあ
る。そこで我々がそこに住み続けている年配の住民の記憶が貴重な信
頼源となる。これにより、理論的に民家の構成の変遷を60年ぐらい前
まで追い、当初の姿を復元することができる。

本稿の目的のひとつは、ある特定の種類の民家を記録するために、
歴史的・文化的な方法に基づいて、最も有効な記憶の復元を手助けする手順を提案することである。その
実例研究として、ペトナム・ハノイ旧市街のハノバック通り47番住
宅をとり上げ、この手法を用いて当時の姿を復元する。我々の知る限り
では、この住居に直接関与する既往研究は少ない。その意味で、本
研究は、歴史の資料のない古民家に関する研究に対し、その調査の方
法論を提示し、調査結果に基づいた復元案の提示をするものである。

2. 民家復修に関する記録の概要

(1) 図面作成／分析・推測（塗られた塗、左右対称の門扉等）
(2) 記録に発表された資料
(3) 未発表された資料及び伝承
(4) 発見または発見された遺物
(5) 地域の特性
(6) 我が社が自らに定義した住民の記憶

筆者が注目している民家に関して述べると、上記(2)、(3)及び(4)
の情報は、入手できない状況である。(1)と(5)に関しては、通常入
手できるものであるが、現在、制限・論議されている。最後の(6)
に関しては、可能であれば活用することとする。

3. 住民に対する聞き取りに活用できる技術的な方法について

上記方法の根拠については、他分野の学問によりものである。想像
上の見取り図、視覚的な3Dモデル図、歴史的画像、他と同様な技術
的方法に活用できる歴史的映像などを活用して、聞き取り調査を行う。

4. 実例研究

ハノイ旧市街では、およそ1000年後の歴史を持つペトナムのハノ
イ市にある。長い歴史の中で、「チョーブハウス」と呼ばれる重要な伝
統的建築様式が形成された。このチョーブハウスは、ペトナムの最盛
期に形成され、形態としては通りに面して開口が非常に狭く、高加工
が非常に高い（幅：約2〜4m、奥行き：約2〜60m）住宅であ
る。調査した住宅はハノイ旧市街の中でも最も古い、ハノバック通り
47番地に位置しており、この47番地が残る最も古い住宅（建
設後約166年）である。この貴重な住宅は、ペトナムの伝統的な建
築様式を保有しており、そして、今後この住宅に住み続ける年配の住
民がいる数少ない住宅の一つである。この住宅の現状調査については、
日本建築学会計画系論文集、No.624、(2008年2月発行予定)に報告
した。

調査は民住の現状調査(2005年11月)、住民に対する聞き取り調
査(2007年3月)、最終聞き取り調査(2007年11月)を行ない、こ
れらを元にして復元作業を行った。}

5. 結論

こうした調査を行なった結果、この建物は2階建ての家屋部分が
前後3箇所に配置され、最も奥の部分に台所・トイレ・浴室から成る
平屋の建物であり、それぞれの間には向広があったことが判明した。
1階は、通りに面して入口の一角に居舎があり、内部には裏に面した
仏壇や教説用の空間ないし居間であった。最初の間は院風に屋根を囲
うし、その中央に水槽を配置しており、その後の居室の上部はベランダ
となっていた。当初はひとつ家族のための住宅であったが、この地区
の人口が増加するにつれて、複数の家族が住むようになり、中庭には
増築された建物で通り庭となり本来の機能を失った。また、最も後ろ
の2階建て部分は築かれて、RC 4階建ての建物に取り代わっ
た。こうした変遷の経過と、当初の姿が明らかになった。現在の住宅
の居住環境は、狭くで衛生状態の悪く非常に不満足である。今後この歴
史地区全体の保存と活用および居住環境の改善にとって、調査結果は
重要な資料となると思われる。

本研究は、建築の価値のある古民家の復元に着手したものである。
まず、歴史的資料のない古民家での役割を見出すのか。
発掘調査の行われていない古民家のごとに正当性を見出すのか、あ
るらは発掘するのか。

誰を昔ながらの住民と定義するのか。20年以上住み続けている住
民は、これから住民の中の誰か。そして、誰の記憶が復元作業に際し、
有効な情報となるのか。

本稿では最初に、復元における実施方法の段階（将来、復元を試み
る人たちのための実用的な資料として）を示した。それから、実例研
究としてハノイ旧市街のハノバック通り47番住宅を挙げた。復元の
ための主な情報源は、住民の記憶に基づくものである。それは個人
的なものであり、決定されるものではないが、しかし、それは非常
に有効な参考資料と成りうる。また、しばしば他の資料が限られて
いたり、参考にならないものだった場合、その記憶は貴重な情報とな
る。そして、600年を越えた住宅を活用する有効な資料となるので
ある。この方法は、基本的な古民家復元、並びにそれを動機とする数
多くの復元に対応できる方法であると考える。

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