

Globally Recognized Traditional Skills, Techniques, and Knowledge of Artisans Specializing in Traditional Architecture —Architectural Woodwork—



“Traditional skills, techniques and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan” were inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020. One of the traditional architectural techniques is architectural woodwork, which enables the reuse of used wooden pillars, beams, etc. without using any metal fittings.

These traditional skills, techniques, and knowledge, which have long supported wooden architecture in Japan, are indispensable for the restoration of Important Cultural Property buildings. In the project for the preservative restoration of the former Suzuki family residence too, these traditional architectural skills, techniques, and knowledge were not only relied on to restore the buildings but also handed down to young artisans.

[COLUMN] Woodwork as a technique of revitalizing used wood



◀ Left: Splice

◀ Center: Joint with a komisen cotter

◀ Right: Joint with a hanasen cotter

[Technique of avoiding the use of nails: Splices and joints]

To join wood pieces together, a splicing technique called “*tsugite*” is used. In addition, joints between vertical wood pieces, such as pillars, and horizontal ones, such as beams and girths, are called “*shikuchi*” in Japanese. Splices and *shikuchi* joints are fixed by adjusting the shape of the splices or using *komisen* (cotters for recesses) or *hanasen* (cotters for holes), instead of using nails.

[Repairs to old building parts: Grafting, patching, and plugging]

In the preservative restoration of Cultural Property buildings, the buildings are basically restored while maintaining the old parts as much as possible. Therefore, various techniques for continuing to use deteriorated old wooden parts are used, for example: *tsugiki* (grafting), removing deteriorated areas and grafting new pieces of wood onto the remaining parts; *hagiki* (patching), patching new pieces of wood together; and *umegi* (plugging), plugging openings with new pieces of wood.



▶ Left: Grafting

▶ Center: Patching

▶ Right: Plugging