

The Committee for the Protection of Buried Cultural Properties

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Fiscal 2013 saw excavation research related to reconstruction projects being conducted in full force after the Great East Japan Earthquake. However, personnel shortage due to the enormous amount of projects is still serious, and even with help from other municipalities and organizations it is inadequate. The burden on staff engaged in excavation is rather heavy, and it is needless to say that further support is required. The Japanese Archaeological Association is also working on gathering information and supportive measures, mainly by the Special Committee for Great East Japan Earthquake.

This article summarized activities of the Committee for the Protection of Buried Cultural Properties in fiscal 2013: the national committee meeting (May 24, Komazawa University), secretariat meetings (regularly held once a month), an information exchange session (Oct. 20, Nagano-ken Shakai Fukushi Sogo Senta), and discussion with the Agency of Cultural Affairs (March 14, the Agency of Cultural Affairs), and so on. Also, a preservation request was submitted for remains of Kitsuki Castle in Kitsuki City, Oita Prefecture. Although fiscal 2013 saw an increase in the number of specialized staff for buried cultural properties, most of the increase was for reconstructive projects in the three prefectures in Tohoku region hit hard by the earthquake. The decreasing tendency is still continuing on the whole, excluding these areas. While many baby boomers are retiring they are not being replaced enough by new hires. It became clear from a questionnaire conducted by the Committee that replacement by regular personnel is very rare, and the number of part-timers is increasing. Also there were examples that due to staff shortages, it is becoming a regular practice that administrative excavation research is conducted by temporary workers from private organizations, causing a new problem for the future. While utilization of private excavation institutes is not wrong in itself, it is important for municipalities that manage them to construct management and supervision systems. In the future it would be ideal if private companies are utilized based on the value of their specialties.

Also some important sites were decided to be preserved in fiscal 2013. While it is

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quite fortunate that local assets will be passed down to future generations without destruction, it is a heavy responsibility for local governments who manage them not only to maintain but to utilize the assets. What should be most avoided is to use them for easy attraction of tourists by advertising only outstanding parts. A plan for management and utilization should be constructed carefully based on long-term viewpoints. It is required for the Japanese Archaeological Association to organize a system to give support for future management and utilization.