

# Japanese Archaeological Association 2015 Conference

TANAKA Kazuhiko<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*This short essay reports the proceedings and some highlights of the Japanese Archaeological Association 2015 Autumn Conference, held between October 17–19, 2015, at Nara University.*

**KEYWORDS:** 2015 Conference, Japanese Archaeological Association

Japanese Archaeological Association 2015 Conference was held 17–19 October, 2015 at Nara University in Nara City, Nara Prefecture. Japanese Archaeological Association (hereinafter abbreviated JAA) holds its Annual Meeting in Spring and a Conference in Autumn, and this year the conference was organised as Nara University's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary project. In addition to the perfect weather that the 700 participants enjoyed, the tireless efforts put forth by Hideya Sakai, Head of the Conference Executive Committee, ensured the event was a success.

Chairperson Hiroaki Takakura delivered the welcome address on the afternoon of 17 October. He cited that the conference was being held in Nara Prefecture for the fourth time, with previous events held in 1985, 1992, and 2002. Mentioning the excavation reports and archaeological publications donated over many years to the JAA now housed in Nara University Library, he also stated that he hoped that Nara University would become Japan's centre for the collection and public use of archaeological documents. The next speech was delivered by Hideya Sakai, Head of the Conference Executive Committee and professor in Nara University's Department of Cultural Properties, which he noted was established in 1979. Yoshiya Ichikawa followed with a discussion on the establishment of the Nanto Seikyo Middle School as the beginning of Nara University. Director Ichikawa also noted that 17,000 out of the 63,000 books received from the Japanese Archaeological Association have been catalogued.

Two special lectures followed. The first lecture by Fuminori Sugaya, Head of the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture, was titled 'International Exchange in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries—From Study of Single Excavated Articles to Systematic Archaeological Research.' He illustrated that the most important international exchange agenda was to create and execute the layout of Keito. He offered the Fujiwara Imperial Site as an example that was built based on information obtained from Emperor

<sup>1</sup> *Committee Member (General Affairs), The Japanese Archaeological Association, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 5–15–5 Hirai, Edogawa Ward, Tokyo 132–0035, Japan (jjarch@archaeology.jp)*  
*Category: Report (Solicited) Received: 8 February 2016*

Tenji's envoy to the Tang dynasty in China or Emperors Tenji and Temmu's envoys to Silla. Furthermore, the group of buildings was made to symbolically embody legal codes on earth. Conversely, with regard to Buddhist architecture, which was the other system prevalent at that time, only materials related to Buddhist temples were used for reference. However, Sugaya pointed out that earthen Buddhist sculptures excavated in recent years indicated the possibility that Buddhist rites were performed at compounds of aristocratic households and that those compounds were often turned into small Buddhist temples. He further mentioned that not many Buddhist temples were erected after the Tenpyo era of the Nara period and that small temples and mountain temples with only cypress bark shingles and without roof tiles have not yet been subjected to adequate investigations.

The next lecture was on 'Learning about History through *Castle Archaeology*,' which was delivered by Dr. Yoshihiro Senda, the President of Nara University. Earlier, it was generally considered that research on the Shokuho phase (the phase characterised by the process toward the political integration of warring feudal states by ODA Nobunaga and TOYOTOMI Hidesyoshi) of the Sengoku period (the period of warring states) could only be conducted by studying historical sources. Dr. Senda stated that the castle remains also provided clear insights into the nature and character of the era. He noted that Kiyosu Castle (Aichi Prefecture) and Nagoya Castle (Aichi Prefecture) where ODA Nobunaga initially lived were constructed by joining a number of adjacent buildings. Their structures revealed an alliance between the Daimyo and his retainers as well as the separation of powers between them. Conversely, as Nobunaga moved from Komakiyama Castle (Aichi Prefecture) to Gifu Castle (Gifu Prefecture) to Azuchi Castle (Shiga Prefecture), the distances between Nobunaga and his retainers' living areas continued to be widened. Azuchi Castle, which was Nobunaga's last castle, had a strong centripetal structure which symbolized the new social organisation and its cosmological representation with Nobunaga at its vertex. Dr. Senda argued that the historical significance and innovativeness of Nobunaga's castles not only regulated the surface level characteristics of early modern castles by creating a new architecture style using castle towers, tiles, and stone walls, but they also defined the constitutive characteristics of the Early Modern society of Japan. Some scholars remarked that Nobunaga was unable to overcome the structural characteristics/framework of the Medieval period. However, Dr. Senda's lecture illustrated that Nobunaga's castles evidenced that Nobunaga was actually the pioneer accelerating the historical process toward the Early Modern period.

After the lectures, the participants had time before the welcome party to visit the University Library where the books donated by JAA are shelved and the University Museum where the 'the Akishino and Misasagi areas from the Jomon to Medieval Period' exhibition was being held.

A welcome party was held at the Nara University cafeteria at 5:30 p.m. Chairperson

Hiroaki Takakura and President Yoshihiro Senda addressed the gathering, while Hideya Sakai, Head of the Conference Executive Committee, raised a toast to begin the party. The party's harmonious atmosphere became livelier when a barrel of special rice wine from a famous local sake brewery was served. This was followed by a greeting from Professor Tatsuhito Sekine of Hirosaki University, the venue for the next annual conference to be held in Aomori. Finally, General Affairs Manager Kazuo Miyamoto delivered the concluding speech.

On 18 October, three parallel sessions were held throughout the day: 'From Wakoku to Nihon—Re-examining Asuka and Fujiwara Imperial Sites Through Archaeological Materials and Historical Documents,' which focused on the ancient times; 'Castles and Cities of the Transitional Phase between the Medieval to Early Modern era'; and 'University Education and Conservation of Cultural Properties,' which focused on the issues faced by present-day Japanese archaeological researchers.

In the session 'From Wakoku to Nihon,' Masashi Kinoshita presented a paper on 'the Asuka and Fujiwara Imperial Sites—The Period of Civilisation and Enlightenment,' explaining the purpose of the session and its outline. The panelists presented their papers on various topics such as relationships between the ancient capitals of Asuka and Fujiwara and the tumuli and ancient temples, the formation of the *Jobo* grid system in the Fujiwara capital, and the process of the ancient state formation as seen from *Mokkan* wooden document strips excavated from the Asuka and Fujiwara archaeological sites. Furthermore, there were also presentations that compared the hillforts in the ancient Korean Peninsula to the Fujiwara Imperial Site, and results of a study on the Early Modern period in the Asuka and Fujiwara area. The presentation on the formation of the *Jobo* grid system in the Fujiwara capital focused on the orientation of the buildings and castle walls in each phases of its duration. This presentation highlighted that from the phase II of the duration, the buildings and castle walls in the Asuka capital were built facing the north. In the phase III-B, the buildings and walls in the area surrounding the Asuka castle were also built to face north. Thus, the *Jobo* system took shape as the number of buildings facing north continued to grow.

In the session 'Castles and Cities of the Transition Phase between the Medieval to Early Modern,' examples of castles from the Medieval-Early Modern transitional phase throughout Japan were presented. After Masato Miyatake's presentation defining the research questions for the session in 'The Objectives of the session "Castles and Cities of the Transition Period from Medieval to Early Modern",' relevant examples from around the country were presented (starting from the north): Aizuwakamatsu Castle (Fukushima Prefecture) and Kozashi Castle (Fukushima Prefecture) as examples from the southern Tohoku region; Karasawayama Castle (Tochigi Prefecture) and Sano Castle (Tochigi Prefecture) as examples from the northern Kanto region; Odawara Castle (Kanagawa

Prefecture) as an example from the southern Kanto region; Komakiyama Castle (Aichi Prefecture) as an example from the Tokai region; Kanazawa Castle (Ishikawa Prefecture) as an example from the Hokuriku region; Tamonyama Castle (Nara Prefecture) as an example from the Kinki region; and Hizen Nagoya Castle and various Kyushu castles from the transitional phase as examples from Kyushu. This presentation highlighted the each region's characteristics. The mention of Hizen Nagoya castle (Saga Prefecture) and related facilities was particularly important as it might have helped the Daimyos learn about new architectural techniques, thus prompting the modernisation of castles in the country. This led to fewer differences between various regions. Furthermore, it also questioned how the following three types of castle characteristics observed in Kyushu during the transitional phase appeared in other regions: 'complete modification type,' 'central part modification type,' and 'feature-wise modification type.' This question provides an interesting subject for future studies.

In the session 'University Education and Conservation of Cultural Properties,' Hideya Sakai outlined the issues to be dealt with and objectives of the session in his introductory paper 'Current State and Problems in University Education and Conservation of Cultural Properties.' Following up on this, three panelists from the administrative offices and two from the universities presented their papers. Finally, there was a paper on archaeological education in Europe and Britain presented by Akira Matsuda, formerly at the University of East Anglia, the United Kingdom and just moved to the University of Tokyo. The panelists from the administrative offices spoke about the shrinking number of new applicants for specialised heritage officer's posts while many current employees are approaching their retirement age. The panelists from universities spoke about the difficulties in nurturing ready-to-use specialised knowledge and techniques required for excavation and post-excavation works amongst pupils due to the strict control over attendance and academic achievements imposed by universities, and the sharp decline in opportunities for students to experience excavations. One of the solutions to this problem was presented by Ryuzaburo Takahashi who presented the outcomes of the internship program organised by Waseda University during the 2014 academic year, in cooperation with Saitama Research Centre for Buried Cultural Properties. This program was successful because the internship offered university credits. Furthermore, Hideya Sakai also stated that universities had to be aware of the fact that a significant ration of those who took archaeology major would not get archaeology-related jobs. However, he argued that they would play important roles in promoting the preservation and effective public use of cultural properties for the general public. Universities must train and educate such students as well.

Apart from the sessions, four poster sessions were held over two days: 'The Current State of Education of Successors in Archaeological Research 2—Analysis of Aggregated

Results from University Surveys' by the Research Environment Review Committee; 'Yayoi and Kofun Periods in Primary School Social Sciences (History) Textbooks' by the Social Sciences and History Textbooks Review Committee; 'Present Status of the Archaeological Cultural Properties Survey in Light of the Great East Japan Earthquake Recovery Project (III)' by the Archaeological Cultural Properties Conservation Measures Committee; and 'Donation and Use of Association Books to Nara University Library' by the Association Books Related Review Subcommittee. These sessions were held in the lecture hall on the second floor. (Note: 'Donation and Use of Association Books to Nara University Library' was held on the library's first floor on the first day.)

An excursion was organised on 19 October on which the participants visited the Nara Archaeological Centre, the Fujiwara Imperial Site, the Fujiwara Imperial Site Exhibition Room in Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, the Sakafuneishi Ruins, the Asukamura Archaeological Exhibition Room, and the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara's museum, Nara Prefecture. The visit to the excavated sites at the Fujiwara Imperial Site was extremely significant as it was the topic of group discussion I.

Furthermore, although the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara's museum in Nara Prefecture was closed to the public, it was opened specifically for this tour.

The Nara Conference concluded successfully with the help of approximately 100 students.