

Early Modern

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The major topic of fiscal 2014 early modern and modern archaeology was protection and utilization of cultural properties. Forty-five years after “the advocacy of early modern archaeology” by NAKAGAWA Shigeo and KATO Shinpei at the general meeting of the Japanese Archaeological Association in 1969, one session held at the fiscal 2014 general meeting was “Prospects of Early Modern Archaeology.” At the session, proposals were made for viewpoints based on business management in utilization of early modern archaeology, and the need to establish an open system for the general public to join in research and studies. Reports were made for the current situation and problems of excavation for Edo sites, and specific examples of preservation and utilization in various places were provided.

As for protection and utilization of “early modern archaeology,” excavation of kiln sites should be mentioned. It was revealed at Yanbeta site in Kuromuta, Arita Town, Nishimatsuura County, Nagasaki Prefecture, where a studio of a national historic site “Yanbeta kiln remains” is located, that firing of porcelain with colored images started around 1640 to 1650. Looking back at research results from Yanbeta kiln remains, it was one of the first kilns that produced porcelain with colored images in our country, and it was the location for a ceramic industry having major studios. On the other hand, it was announced that a prefectural historical site, Ogaya old kiln remains in Kani City, Gifu Prefecture, where “Shino,” “Setoguro” and “Kizeto” ceramics were produced, will be divided by the Linear Chuo Shinkansen rail line that is planned to be completed by 2027. It will be necessary to find a way to protect the historical heritage of the Momoyama period at the sight, while it is transformed into a new era.

As for “modern archaeology,” “Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites” was registered as the first World Heritage site at a modern site in Japan. Tomioka Silk Mill was constructed in 1872, and Japan became the largest exporter of raw silk in the 1920s, sustaining the world’s silk industry. Since Tomioka City became in charge of the maintenance of Tomioka Silk Mill and opened it to the public in 2005, the city has been trying for preservation, maintenance and management. It is a good example of preservation and utilization of a cultural property. Also, this fiscal year saw a growing trend for

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preservation and utilization of war sites in line with the 70th anniversary of the postwar era. Although it became possible for war sites to be nominated as cultural properties with a revision of the Cultural Properties Protection Law in 1995, only a few sites are currently being protected among 30,000 war sites counted in Japan. Among 50 war sites surveyed by the Cultural Agency since 2003 in order to preserve major war sites from the Meiji period to the Second World War, some are already damaged or destroyed, reflecting slow measures by the government and municipalities. Since the number of people who can relate experiences of the war is declining every year, the disappearance of war sites means losing memories of the war rooted in the local community.

Utilization of a site raises the value of the site's existence, and it is needless to say that the understanding of many residents and citizens is essential in protection of sites. Excavation site tours conducted in various places are always attended by a large number of citizens, reflecting a high interest. It is desired of us to make everyday efforts to convey the significance and attraction of archaeological sites to more people in ways easier to understand.