

The Committee for the Protection of Buried Cultural Properties

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In this report the situation surrounding fiscal 2016 buried cultural properties is reviewed. As excavation research due to the Great East Japan Earthquake that took place in 2011 has passed its peak, the current tasks are organization of excavated artifacts and publication of excavation reports. Under such circumstances, the Kumamoto Earthquake took place in April, and again many lives were lost. The image of Kumamoto castle destroyed by the earthquake was repeatedly shown on media, and as a result, it was regarded as a symbol of cultural property damaged by an earthquake. On the other hand, destruction of other cultural properties including a decorated mounded tomb were reported, and it is required of the Japanese Archaeological Association to keep working toward gathering and sending information and supporting damaged cultural properties.

The following are major trends of protection of buried cultural properties during fiscal 2016, mainly from the activities of the Committee for the Protection of Buried Cultural Properties (the Committee). It included contents of a meeting of the Subcommittee for Measures against Protection of Buried Cultural Properties that was held at Tokyo University of the Arts on May 27 (Fri), a day before the 82nd general meeting of the Association, as well as an information exchange session at Hirosaki University on Oct. 16 (Sun) during the Association's Hirosaki convention. The Committee has submitted requests for protection of archaeological sites for the west boundary features of Enkakuji temple in Kamakura City, Kanagawa Prefecture; Jono site in Kitakyushu City, Fukuoka Prefecture; Chudoshi-yamajiro site in Kakogawa City, Hyogo Prefecture; and Maehata site in Chikushino City, Fukuoka Prefecture. Also, the Association issued a statement by the chairman regarding protection of buried cultural properties in relation with Kumamoto Earthquake.

Other than above, the Committee discussed preservation problems for Denotame site in Kitamoto City, Saitama Prefecture; Kanaihigashishimoshinden site in Shibukawa City, Gunama Prefecture; Magaiwareishi-jizo Buddhist statue in Mihara City, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum site in Hiroshima City, Hiroshima Prefecture; Iwaidaniochigata

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site in Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture; and the remains of Kojima-yojosho clinic in Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture. Unfortunately, preservation was not possible for some sites mentioned here.

As amendment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties is imminent, and “utilization” of cultural properties including buried cultural properties is a focus. However, utilization is not possible without adequate preservation. With such awareness of the crisis, long-term, continuous, and strategic utilization plans based on detailed management are necessary for protected sites, rather than hasty and exhaustive use of cultural properties. While the generational change of specialized staff is carried out without choice, the succession of know-how and experience is not necessarily smooth. As an academic society, it may be required of the Association to put efforts to reduce the burden of specialized staff qualitatively and quantitatively by solving these problems. If archaeology is a science closely connected to society, we need to prove that buried cultural properties are necessary and effective “property” to enrich society, through smooth circulation of research, utilization, and protection based on support and understanding from the public.