

Early Modern

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In this article, trends of archaeological research, excavation, and its organization and reports will be discussed for the early modern period.

Publication of excavation reports stayed low-keyed for the early modern, however, excavation research was actively conducted. While the major focus of study consists of ceramics in different parts of the country, it should be mentioned that a study conference on tiles was held which will be an index in the future. Although excavation research was conducted mainly on castle remains, there were some exceptions such as production sites like kiln sites and grave sites and development will be anticipated for organization of the excavation results in the future. However, there is a thought that the current research emphasis on castle sites, because they are easier to access, may change after revision of the Law for Protection of Cultural Properties. Also, as for modern/contemporary sites, there is an overemphasis on “war sites” and “modernization heritage.” It can be said that further understanding of early modern and modern/contemporary sites is necessary from administrative staff who engage in buried cultural properties. Some outstanding examples are introduced below.

Examples in Tokyo

Excavation research was actively conducted in fiscal 2017 on Edo period sites in western Tokyo which used be a part of Edo: Kohinata-ichi/ni-chome-minami site (Bunkyo Ward), Kyobashi-icchome site (Chuo Ward), Sugamo site (Toshima Ward) and so on. Publication of excavation reports was also active. Shounji-ato/Jofukuji-ato (Remains of Shounji Temple/Jofukuji Temple) (Minato Ward) contained research on grave areas in and after the latter 17th century AD, which yield 149 burial features. Yamabukicho Iseki II (Yamabukicho Site II) (Shinjuku Ward) reported facilities related to rice paddies and farms, remains of ridges, remains of underground drains, and so on. Sugamo Iseki 4 (Sugamo Site 4) reported on excavation of the Nakasendo and samurai houses located along the Nakasendo.

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Examples Outside Tokyo

As for castles and castle towns, excavation reports were published for Matsue castle (Shimane Prefecture), Takamatsu castle town (Kagawa Prefecture) and Nakagusuku castle (Okinawa Prefecture). Other examples of excavation research are: Hirosaki castle (Aomori Prefecture), Yamagata castle (Yamagata Prefecture), Sunpu castle (Shizuoka Prefecture) Matsushiro castle (Nagano Prefecture) Osaka castle town (Osaka Prefecture), Himeji castle (Hyogo Prefecture), Saga castle (Saga Prefecture), and so on.

As for production related sites, there are examples of ceramic and porcelain kilns and sugar refineries: excavation research of kiln sites that produced Unkayaki ware at Koriyama castle town (Nara Prefecture) and excavation research of Kuji Seito Kojo (Kuji Sugar Refinery) in Kagoshima Prefecture which operated at the end of Tokugawa era/Meiji Restoration.

Artifact Study

The conference of Kansai Kinsei Kokogaku Kenkyukai was held under the theme “Distribution of Jars/Mortars in the 17th Century.” It tried to grasp changes in the material culture of the 17th century AD using jars and mortars because it is easier to determine production locations due to their typological properties and to be able to grasp changes in composition of production locations.

The conference of Maizo Bunkazai Kenkyukai was held under the theme “Tiles under the Shogunate System: Production and Distribution in the Early Modern City Sites.” As examples of many regions, the majority from western Japan were reported under one roof, and regionality of the early modern tiles were confirmed based on differences in eave-end tiles and carved seals.

Study on Modern/Contemporary Sites

As for study on modern/contemporary sites, the conference of Edo Iseki Kenkyukai was outstanding. It was held under the theme “End of Tokugawa Regime/Meiji Seen in Artifacts.” Reports were made on artifacts from the end of the Tokugawa regime to the modern period: porcelain, tiles, bricks, drainpipes, western tableware, smoking supplies, lighting devices, and make-up sets.