

The Committee for the Protection of Buried Cultural Properties

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The Committee for the Protection of Buried Cultural Properties (the Committee) is a standing committee installed in 1971 with the aim of preservation/protection and utilization of archaeological sites in Japan. Currently over 120 members are appointed from 47 prefectures nationwide and work together to realize protection of cultural properties and their appropriate use. In recent years, the Committee handles various problems sharing information with the Special Committee on Disasters and Research Environment Committee, as well as cooperation with the Public Relations Committee.

Due to COVID-19, the directors' regular meeting was canceled in April, May, and June, and it was held online after July. As for the national committee meeting at the general meeting in the spring and information exchanges at the convention in the fall, the former was held in the form of mail deliberation and the latter was canceled as both the general meeting and the convention was canceled. While activities of the Committee were greatly constrained, it promoted the meeting to be held online, making it easier for committee members to join meetings for each of the liaison committees. It prompted closer cooperative ties in information collection, and was able to maintain comparable content of the meeting to face-to-face.

The requests submitted by the Committee in fiscal 2020 are as follows: 1. "Request for Preservation and Utilization of Nagasaki Prefecture's Prefectural Office Site" on October 5, 2020; 2. "Request for Preservation of Taira-jo Site in Iwaki City" on November 20, 2020; 3. "Request for Preservation of Takanawa Embankment Site" on January 22, 2021; 4. "Request for Protection of Buried Cultural Properties at Adjoining Land of National Historic Site, Tokushima Castle" on January 25, 2021; 5. "Request for Preservation of Urijiri Site in Aki City" on March 3, 2021; and 6. Chairman's Statement for Preservation of Takanawa Embankment Site.

Items for consideration were: 1. Measures against natural disasters such as large earthquakes and extremely heavy rains in recent years; 2. Problems regarding enforcement

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of revised Cultural Properties Protection Law; 3. What is “utilization” of archaeological sites; 4. Reinforcement for protection system of early modern sites; 5. Reinforcement for storage system of artifacts; 6. Promotion of information disclosure; and so on.

In case of emergency excavation, protection movements always take place after the development. However, the system itself has to be reconsidered so that a consideration for the site will be reflected in the development plan by a thorough prospecting to grasp the underground condition in detail. The problem of excavation and protection of early modern/contemporary site was emerged as an important issue with Takanawa Embarkment problem. Discussion for organizing the system should begin as soon as possible.

It is necessary for us to install tighter information networks and stronger cooperation with other committees in the future. As for the problems with revision of the Museum Act, a joint discussion with the Research Environment Committee was held. As for Cultural Properties Protection Law, it is necessary to strengthen information dispatches through various media together with the Public Relations Committee, since our greatest weapon is arousing public opinion.