Issues with Cultural Asset Rescue in Large-Scale Disasters: From the Experience of Cultural Asset Rescue in the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster

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"Cultural asset rescue," performed for cultural assets damaged in disasters, started in Japan with the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster of 1995. Cultural asset rescue has been performed in the years since according to the circumstances of the disaster-stricken area every time a disaster occurred, including earthquakes and flood damage. A repertoire of actual cases have been built [Murata 2014, Nakamura 2014, Hidaka and Uchida 2014]. The Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster occurred in 2011, approximately 15 years after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster, and what could be called the culmination of cultural asset rescue up to that time was set in motion.

Cultural asset rescue for the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster was performed over a larger disaster-stricken area and for a greater amount of affected cultural assets than ever before experienced in cultural asset rescue, with a support system of a national scale for the first time since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster. This cultural asset rescue, which took place over the two fiscal years 2011 and 2012, utilized the experience gained from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster and in cultural asset rescue implemented in disasters since, can be pronounced to have achieved major results. However, cultural asset rescue in the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster was also one which revealed some issues to consider for future large-scale disasters.

This paper raises issues about the system for cultural asset rescue for the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster, which the writer personally participated in, and reveals the importance of the role of prefectural museums and art museums of the prefecture of the disaster-stricken area, which would become the base facility for the cultural asset rescue. Next, it focuses on the expression “cultural assets etc.” indicated as the target of cultural asset rescue and presents the writer's view. Further, it indicates a way of utilizing exhibits as one method for the cultural assets which were the target of cultural asset rescue to be used as cultural assets of the region once more and suggests the necessity and possibilities for implementation for these cultural assets of the region to be utilized and preserved in the region in ordinary times as well.

Key words: cultural asset rescue, Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster, Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster, disaster exhibit, regional cultural asset