

The Study of Underwater Archaeology as Disaster Archaeology: What needs to be done in Japan

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Japan is known as a hotspot for disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons. Literature records past disasters, but evidence of a past disasters can also be found in archeological records. The word archeology conjures images of excavations on land, but in fact, the remains past disasters are often found underwater. Ruins formed on land now submerged, shipwrecks, and traces of fishing structures and harbors are some of the examples of underwater archaeological site. A flooded village often leaves the appearance as is at that time of the event, and a wrecked ship also leaves a trace of the maritime accident. From these archeological sites, it is possible to see the actions of the people at the moment of the disaster. In addition to these types of sites, war remains may be regarded as a (man-made) disaster site, and such evidence are often left below the waves. In this presentation, I will introduce some examples of underwater archeological disaster sites around the world and of Japan, followed by the significance of such sites and the need for developing better protection system for underwater archaeological sites in Japan.

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