

Kurume History Walks

No.6 Remains of Townhouses in the Castle Town

年号のある遺物とその遺跡



Phoenix designed pottery

A fragment of vessel-like pottery (above) was excavated at the Sanbonmatsumachi Remains in 1989. We regard it as a stand bonded to something like a bowl or a barrel because of the silvering round trace on the inside surface.

This blue and white pottery (sometsume) has the pattern of the phoenix and the arabesque with some red lines in the blank space. And on the outside surface, there is the peony arabesque drawn in red. The inscription on the base shows the date: August Manji 4 (1661). In that year, the name of the era changed to Kanbun. Then, we guess that it was an ordered object before the new era came.

Sanbonmatsumachi Remains

During the Edo period (1603-1868), Sanbonmatsumachi (literally three pines town) was located southeast of the outer moat of Kurume castle.

In 1601, with the accomplishment at the Battle of Sekigahara (a decisive battle in 1600 that preceded the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate), Tanaka Yoshimasa entered to Yanagawa castle and set his second son at Kurume castle as the branch, then Yoshimasa dominated the whole Chikugo Province. He worked energetically for infrastructure development.

The construction of the Yanagawa Okan, the main road between his castle and Kurume, was completed probably in 1603. A starting point at our city was at Sanbonmatsumachi, which had been constructed and developed since the beginning of the 16th century.

The excavation revealed the traces of streets, buildings, pits, and wells. Over three townhouses (machiya) stood in line on the western side of a street. The disposition of foundation stones shows the structure of a house. There were burnt traces which we estimate to be from the great fire that destroyed most of the residents in the castle town in 1696.

We found the porcelain fragment which was introduced on the previous page at these remains.





The object on the photo (left) is a Buddhist talisman for longevity that we excavated from a pit of the Gofukumachi Remains.

It is 67.5 cm long, 11.4 cm wide (upper part) and 0.7 cm thick. It is larger than the usual one and made of cypress wood.

On the top, there is a Sanskrit character that expresses the Wise King (*Fudo Myo-o*). On the lower part, three lines in ink indicate the making date (March 1645), the words of prayer, and the place name (Mt. Koya*).

It is unclear where and how this came from: either someone of the community took it home from Mt. Koya, or a certain wandering monk gave it to someone in this area. However, it is a valuable material that shows the religious belief of that time.

*Mt. Koya, Koyasan is a Buddhist sacred place in Wakayama Prefecture, over 700 kilometers away from Kurume. In the early 9th century, Kobo Daishi (grand master) opened the Kongobu-ji temple, which became the headquarters of Shingon School, an esoteric Buddhism sect. Since then, monks and worshippers have frequently visited.

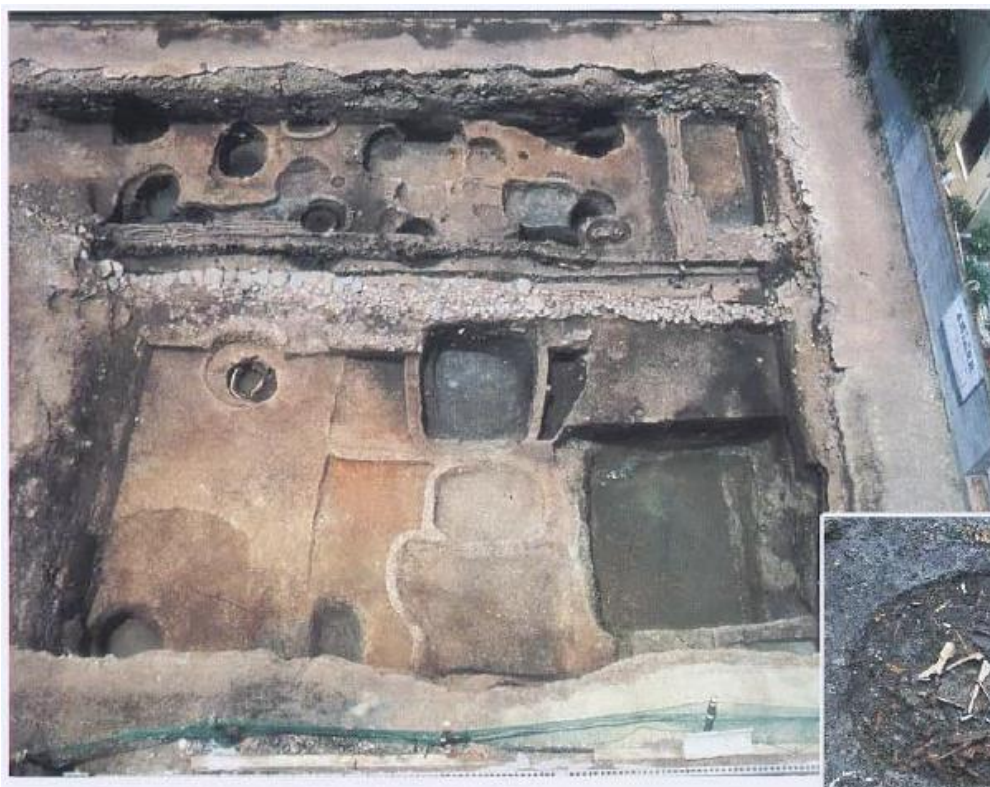
Gofukumachi Remains

Other remains of the townhouses (*machiya*) in the early and the middle Edo period are located between Gofukumachi (draper town) and Uoyamachi (fish shop town) to the west of the current City Hall.

After the entry into Kurume in 1621, Arima Toyouji* started the enlargement of the castle and the full-scale construction of the town surrounding the castle. They reportedly completed its framework of by the 1620s-40s.

Here, we discovered traces of pits, well, pillars, roof-tiled corners, bathroom, buried dog, and goods such as ceramics, earthen, wooden, stone or metal goods, coins.

*Arima Toyouji was the founder of Kurume Arima Domain. The family ruled over the domain for 250 years until the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate.



呉服町遺跡



埋葬された犬

Gofukumachi Remains (above) / Buried dog (right)

The remains on the photo (above) are pond-like. We excavated several bones of animals, roof tiles with Christian cross design, many burnt planks of wood, the talisman mentioned in the previous page, and some daily commodities. These seem to have been filled by the 1630s for the construction of a new town.

Traces of wells were often found at Uoyamachi (fish shop town). They should have needed a sizeable amount of water.

At the bottom of a wooden container of 85 cm in diameter, served as the lavatory, we discovered a brass thread removal signed as 'Yoshida'. It should be put in instead of a coin that people used to throw in when they abandoned the container.

The dog in the photo (right) is a medium-sized male. It was covered with a straw mat and buried carefully. We wonder if it was much loved, or it was a Dog protected by the ordinances prohibiting cruelty to all living things*.

*The ordinances issued in 1687 by the fifth Shogun Tsunayoshi. As he was born in the Dog's year (one of the twelve animals of the Oriental zodiac), people must treat dogs especially well. In Edo, the government fed 10 millions of wild dogs. They imposed the expenses on the citizens and severely punished violators. Although people had been frustrated, he kept the ordinances until his death.

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