

Trace Examination, a Process Indispensable for the Preservative Restoration of Cultural Property Buildings



In Cultural Property preservative restoration projects, such buildings are ideally restored to their state when their value as Cultural Properties was at its peak based on the history of their development and historical documents. Preservative restoration works are under way at the former Suzuki family residence with the aim of restoring the buildings to their state as of 1896, when the residence site and the layout of buildings came to have their current forms.

In the process of preserving and restoring Cultural Property buildings, traces left on the buildings are thoroughly examined to reveal the history of the buildings (including how they looked at the time of their construction). Based on the results of the examination, project members restore the buildings to their state at the time when their value as Cultural Properties was at its peak while consulting closely with the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs.

[COLUMN] Cultural Property preservative restoration sometimes rewrites regional history



[Trace examination as the first step toward preservative restoration]

The preservative restoration of Cultural Property buildings starts with thoroughly examining and recording the form of building parts, the state of their deterioration, etc. Wooden buildings have traces of repairs and modifications on the wood, which offer clues about what changes the buildings have experienced. While the buildings are partly or entirely dismantled, a detailed examination is conducted on traces of mortises, nails, etc. left in building parts, as well as India ink writings on the wood.



[Historical facts revealed by detailed examinations]

In 1775, a destructive fire called the “Great Fire of An’ei” burned down most of the townhouses in Asume.

In the ongoing project for the preservative restoration of the former Suzuki family residence, a thorough examination of the dismantled buildings revealed traces of black soot on the external walls of the Buddhist altar room building, which is to the south of the main building, and black scorches on the tops of the roof rafter of the same building.

In addition, India ink writing dated the “seventh year of the Horeki era” (1757) was also discovered on the edge of a ceiling beam in the same building. These discoveries show that the Buddhist altar room building, which escaped the destructive fire in the An’ei era, is the oldest surviving building in Asume.