An Analysis of Auschwitz Museum Viewed from the Standpoint of Phenomenological Museum Anthropology: The Case of Toshio Shimao

TERADA Masahiro

This paper presents an investigation of exhibits at Poland’s national Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum from the perspective of museum anthropology.

It goes without saying that the museum is the site where the Nazis were implementing their plan to extinguish the Jewish people during the Second World War. The conversion of the concentration camp into a museum makes for an unusual venue. By examining the nature of the exhibits at this sort of place, it is possible to gain pointers for museum exhibitions that commemorate catastrophes.

Toshio Shimao also occupies a unique position in post-war Japanese literature. Having experienced the war as a marine on torpedo boats, one of the main thrusts of his literary activities was the expression of those experiences.

He traveled to Poland, where he visited Auschwitz and wrote detailed descriptions of what he saw. By examining the features of his descriptions it is possible to glean the characteristics of the exhibits in the Auschwitz Museum.

Chapter One deals with the background leading up to the time when Shimao visited Auschwitz. Chapter Two is an in-depth examination of his descriptions of Auschwitz, while Chapter Three discusses how to evaluate his descriptions of Auschwitz from the perspective of phenomenological museum anthropology.

Toshio Shimao’s responses to the exhibitions at the Auschwitz Museum become clear through the above, from which the features of the exhibitions also emerge.