Travel of Women in the Late Early Modern Period Observed in Travel Diaries: A Study on Its Positioning Relative to the “Popularization of Traveling”

YAMAMOTO Shino

Recent analyses of travel diaries and painting materials have clarified the existence of many women who enjoyed traveling independently as travel became popular in the late Edo Period. However, because the reality of such female travel is not reflected in general historical materials such as the records of vicarious visits by Ko religious groups, it is currently difficult to gain a systematic understanding of the travel of women in the Edo Period. This article studies a system that supported the travel of women through its reality as described in personal travel diaries. The travel diaries selected are (1) "Saiyuso" written by Hachiro Kiyokawa, (2) ‘Diary of a Visit to Ise Shrine’ written by Ito Nakamura, and (3) ‘Tabino-nakusa, Miyakono-tsuto’ written by Taseko Matsuo.

Travel diary (1) is a record of the time when Hachiro Kiyokawa, known as a member of an antiforeigner faction in the late Tokugawa Period, visited the Ise shrine with his mother without written permission. It describes how illegal actions for passing through checking stations were openly conducted as a kind of Kaido (highway) moneymaking scene. It also indicates that the routine disapproval of women traveling, as round trips commencing with a visit to Ise shrine became popular. Travel diary (2) is a diary of the time when the wife of a wealthy merchant family in Edo visited the Ise shrine with her acquaintance family. Especially through the record of watching the Ise dance in the Fururiichi licensed quarter, we can observe how the women travelers were entertained and sense the solid financial backing. Travel diary (3) is a record of the time when Taseko, the wife of a wealthy farming Matsuo family in Shinsu Ina and later a disciple of Hirata Kokugaku in the late Tokugawa period, made a trip to Kyoto amidst the turbulence and stayed there for about half a year. It is a unique but remarkable example; showing how she used her cultural accomplishments as a tool to form her own connections unaided in a strange land and use them for people back home.

The existence of female travelers seems to have had various influences on the whole concept of Kaido and Shukuba post stations. In particular, the safety of the Japanese Kaido, as described clearly in later years by the British female tourist Isabella Bird, is inseparable from the travel of women. To reevaluate the Japanese traveling culture in the late Edo Period, the travel of women must be further studied.

Key words: traveling of woman in the Tokugawa government, traveling diary, disapproval traveling, Ise dance, matsuo taseko