Chronological Study of Susuya Type Pottery: In Relation to “Karafuto Kikō” by Kunio Yanagita

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The archaeological site of Solov’evka, which Kunio Yanagita visited on his trip to Sakhalin in 1906, corresponds to the Minami shell mound (also known as the Solov’evka site). This site, along with the Susuya shell mound in the vicinity, is considered one of the most important sites in Sakhalin archaeology. Objects unearthed from these sites are referred to as standard artifacts to distinguish Minami kaizuka type pottery from Susuya type pottery. Among them, the latter is examined in this paper to reassess its age. Dated between the Epi-jōmon culture and the Okhotsk culture and distributed in areas/cultural groups between Hokkaidō and the Lower Amur River basin, Susuya type pottery has been considered to provide an important clue in revealing the relationships between them. Nevertheless, its chronological and typological categories have not been fixed yet, partly because the upper limit of the age range is unknown. The results of radiocarbon dating and the reassessment of existing dating evidence in this study indicate that Susuya type pottery is dated to between the fourth century B.C. and the sixth century A.D. in Sakhalin and to between the first and sixth century A.D. in Hokkaidō. In the light of these results, this paper suggests that Susuya type pottery was first established in Sakhalin and later made an impact on the pottery of Hokkaidō. In view of the conventional chronology of pottery types, this assumption raises the following issues. First of all, because the pottery of Northern Sakhalin cultures, such as the Kashkalebagshch, Pil’tun, and Nabil’ cultures whose existence was suggested by recent studies of Northern Sakhalin, as well as Boštishaya Bukhta type pottery which was closely related to cultures in the Lower Amur River basin, are chronologically close to early Susuya type pottery, it is essential to examine the detailed typological relationships between Susuya and these types of northern pottery. Moreover, it is necessary to review the conventional chronology of pottery types because it still suggests that early Susuya type pottery was distributed in Hokkaidō as well. These issues must be clarified as soon as possible to facilitate chronological studies of Susuya and other types of Epi-jōmon culture pottery as well as the pottery of the Paleometal Age in Sakhalin.

Key words: Susuya type pottery, Okhotsk culture, Epi-jōmon culture, Sakhalin, Hokkaidō