A Re-examination of “Karafuto Kikō in Meiji 39” by Yanagita Kunio

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Through a detailed examination of Yanagita Kunio’s “Karafuto Kikō in Meiji 39 (A Trip to Sakhalin in 1906),” which was written based on his diary, this paper explores the significance of this 21-day trip, including the collecting of archaeological materials. Neither folklorists nor archaeologists have discussed the significance of the journey Yanagita made to Sakhalin less than one year after the Russo-Japanese War. Some of the archaeological materials collected by Yanagita seem to have been contributed by a man who worked on a breeding stock farm in Solowiyofuka (Kaizuka) and who was interested in archaeology and anthropology. On his trip to and from Sakaihama, Yanagita saw things such as great numbers of workers looking for work, the adverse impact of overfishing and poaching on the once abundant marine resources, the abandoned cemeteries of former inhabitants, traces of forest fires, the dwellings of Ainu people, migrant workers, and poverty in small villages, and recognized that these issues needed to be addressed by social policies. It is of interest that he emphasized that a man in a village on the way to Galkinovlaskoe (Ochiai) was a murderer, as this reflects his experience as an officer of the Legislative Bureau who had examined the records of the preliminary examination of a ranger who had killed his own child in Gujo, Mino Province, to determine whether amnesty was appropriate. This episode indicates that he already had a worldview that would become evident in “Tōno Monogatari (The Legends of Tōno)” and “Yama no Jinsei (Life in the Mountains).” During the latter half of the trip, Yanagita took a ship to Mauka with the director of the Karafuto Civil Office and others and interviewed local residents. It seems that at that time, he heard from a local person that it would be better to make individual fishers settle down in farming and fishing villages rather than to promote large-scale seasonal fishing in which workers and food were brought in by ship and taken away after the fishing season and therefore which would not benefit local communities. On this journey to Sakhalin, Yanagita used only the method he later called “collecting by the eye” but could not use those he called “collecting by the ear” and “collecting by the heart.” Nevertheless, as a researcher on industry associations, Yanagita found interesting issues throughout this trip. Moreover, the encounter with various people living in remote places led to the birth of “Tōno Monogatari” two years later.

Key words: Field trip as a method, Kunio Yanagita, Tōno Monogatari, murder, industry association