The Development of Kunio Yanagita’s Interest in Field Studies and the Turning Point in His Life: Focusing on His Three Archaeological Artifacts and His Life in the First Decade of the 20th Century

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This paper examines the archaeological materials collected by Kunio Yanagita to deduce the context of his collecting practices and correlate them with his academic interests. In particular, the focus is on three ancient artifacts he allegedly obtained in Japan. They seem to have been added to his collection in the first decade of the 20th century (hereinafter referred to as “the ’00s”). It corresponded to the time when he developed an interest in field studies while working on his early trilogy: “Tōno Monogatari (The Legends of Tōno),” “Ishigami Mondō (Dialogue on Ishigami),” and “Nochi no Karikotoba no Kī (A Record of Boar Hunting).” The ’00s were also the decade when he went through various life transitions, such as graduating from university, finding employment with the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, becoming an adopted heir, and getting engaged to be married. According to the labels on these three artifacts, they came into his possession while he was on a lecture tour around Japan for the Industry Association or while he was serving as a lecturer of agro-politics at Waseda University. He seems to have collected these three archaeological materials as reference information for his research activities in the ’00s. During this period, he exchanged 34 letters with Kyōko Yamanaka and others for “Ishigami Mondō,” worked on the study of the Thirteen Mounds, and collected archaeological artifacts on a trip to Sakhalin while working for the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. Although the ’00s were the time when Japan was involved in a major transformation of international relations through the Russo-Japanese War, the Japan-Korea Convention, and the annexation of Korea, Yanagita was developing an interest in domestic issues (the anthropology and history of the Japanese archipelago), rather than engaging in foreign affairs (diplomatic activities) as a government official. Thus, the archaeological materials collected by Yanagita were considered as evidence that he developed an interest in field studies as a young adult in the ’00s.

Key words: Interest in field studies, the first decade of the 20th century, adopted heir, early trilogy, lectures for the Industry Association