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On the Unknown Documents about the Sea Accidents

—One Chapter in Cultural History of Early Meiji Era—

by Katsujiro Asako

The present article is founded upon the manuscripts which I have recently discovered in Iruma (入間) Izu. They are the reports of sea accidents in the begining of the Meiji era. By this record we can fortunately learn of the careers of two important persons who made great contributions toward cultural development in modern Japan.

One of them is Masatsuna Okuno (奥野昌綱). We can read his life and work in the record of shipwreck of the Kanrinmaru He was a vassal of Kugenhoshinno (公現法親 (咸臨丸) in 1868. 王) who was the highest priest of the shrine dedicated to the Shogunate family. At the time of Meiji Restoration, Kugenhoshinno escaped from the pursuit of the Imperial army and went to Sendai leaving his vassals. As a faithful servant, M. Okuno tried to follow his master and embarked the Kanrinmaru, a battleship belonging to the Tokugawa (徳川) party, to go to Sendai. But the Kanrinmaru was stranded on the coast of Shi-This unexpected incident seriously affected his later course of life. After a long wandering he made up his mind to become a christian and devoted himself to the missionary work all through his life. He is to be rememvered as one of the first translators of the Holy Scritures in Japan.

The other notable person appearing in these documents is Antoine Liccioni. He died as a passenger of the Nille, a French steamer, which shipwrecked near Iruma in 1874. We can find his deed in the record of that sea accident. He had played a leading part in a dockyard at Yokosuka which had been established by the Tokugawa Government. We can not underestimate Liccioni's contribution to the development of shipbuilding industry in Japan.