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“The Accused Case of Toshitora Sone”

Recorded in

“The Official Document-Note”

Shigenori SATO

Toshitora Sone, who was a naval officer during the first half in Meiji period and an investigator on CHINA and VIET-NAM, wrote many books concerning of Asia. Almost of them were written in 1880's. When we see “The Dictionary of Asian History” and other reports about Toshitora Sone, his work—“HOETSU-KOHEI-KI” (The Battle Between France and Viet-Nam)—has been introduced as it had been prosecuted for its own comment. In addition to it, they tell us Sone was obliged to be discharged from military service. Indeed, though there are very few comments in “HOETSU-KOHEI-KI” on the then Japanese government foreign policy, such comments are not so violent as it was prosecuted.

I reported “HOETSU-KOHEI-KI” had not been prosecuted in “SHIGAKU” (VOL. XLV., NO.1, 1972.). This report depended on Sone's “Naval Official Record”. This report, however, was not clear on several points. The first—the truth of the relation between Sone and Tokichi Tarui. The second—what were the prosecuted points? The third—what were the critical words? The fourth—about the contempt of a Government official. The last—how wanted to manage this problem in the naval circles?

We can understand clearly by “The Official Document-Note” in the Defense Agency. By seeing “The Official Document-Note”, there was not only the prosecuted case on “HOETSU-KOHEI-KI”, but Toshitora Sone was implicated in the political movement of democratic rights. In the naval circles, they made efforts to hush up the matter of Sone's action concerning of that movement, and so he was given a verdict of “not guilty”. If there had not had the naval circles' efforts, Toshitora Sone would

have been tried at a formal trial not in the naval court-martial. Why was "HOETSU-KOHEI-KI" thought as the accused case? I think this book was published in 1886 when Sone had the relation with the political movement through Tokichi Tarui who was arrested in this year, and moreover the matter of fact was not spoken by the naval circles. That is the reason why this book was thought as so, I think.