Another Boshin War: Feud over Political Awareness of Common People in Edo, Part 1

NAGURA Tetsuzo

Most citizens and common people who lived in Edo during the Boshin War showed a rejective response to the Tosei Army stationed in Edo. "The new government" had no choice but to suppress and rebuild the political awareness of the Edo citizens, and a fierce feud between the two parties developed. This feud, different from the Boshin War fought between the old and new powers, is another Boshin War. This article sheds light on the other Boshin War from the viewpoint of historical public thought. However, this article is limited to the period between January 12th when Yoshinobu returned to Edo and April 21st when the governor general entered the castle, and analyzes the events that happened in front of the eyes of the Edo citizens during that period, and reveals the characteristics of the feud over the awareness and thought of the Edo citizens.

While moves by assorted influences of the old feudal government varied, the petition by Makino Yasumasa, the lord of Komoro domain, stood out. He insisted on one theory alone that he would serve the Imperial court by serving the Tokugawa family as vassal, and stuck to the idea that he could not send his army to subjugate Yoshinobu even though it was the order of the Imperial court. He even petition fearlessly to "compensate the delinquency of the Imperial court" by rejecting the dispatch of troops. This theory was displayed before the nose of the Edo citizens on the day when the Governor General entered the castle.

On the one hand, through the whole process of the Tosei Army entering Edo, the burden of the Edo citizens suddenly expanded. Owing to this, the principle whereby the Imperial court would rescue "the nation's terrible suffering" collapsed, and "emperor's nation" became a null word.

Town people in Edo requested the magistrate's office improve the situation whereby even the lower class people had to share the burden of the entrance of the Tosei Army to the castle. On April 5th when the needful cost mounted, approximately ninety town officials submitted a petition to spearhead force lodging.

On the other hand, although having an aversion to "the new government" from the bottom of his heart, Yanagawa Shunsan assumed that military counteraction would have no benefit, and since the end of February continued to issue the "Chugai shimbun," a civil newspaper emphasizing relationships with foreign countries and speech.

Supported by the civil newspaper, Sakuma Bangoro, the Edo magistrate's officer, decided to supply impoverished people in the city with rice on April 2nd. Just before turning over sovereignty, as a last-minute resistance against the new power, he adopted policies siding with the citizens and common people.
Described above are the characteristics of the feud over the Edo citizens and common people's awareness during this period.

Key words: Boshin War, Awareness and thought of the Edo citizens, Civil newspaper