

Abstract of Doctoral Thesis

Title: Power Consolidation under the Meiji Constitutional System and the Party Cabinet System: The Bottleneck of Politics based on Responsible Cabinet

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This thesis reviews the structural contradictions of the party-cabinet system (1924-32) in modern Japan and the process that led to its collapse. Party cabinets in prewar Japan were tasked with two important missions: (1) carrying out politics that reflected the will of the people, and (2) Integrating the decentralized system of governance that the Meiji constitutional system had. In order to achieve these two goals without contradiction, what needed the establishment of an integrated system based on a responsible cabinet system, supported by the constitutional theory of Minobe Tatsukichi. Based on this premise, the process by which political parties were no longer able to integrate based on the principle of responsible cabinet system can be positioned as an important political turning point in modern Japan, more than the end of the party cabinet period or the point at which the possibility of its revival was cut off. By clarifying this, the main point of this thesis is to intrinsically unravel the demise of the party-cabinet system.

In order to function fully the responsible cabinet system, it was essential to make use of “partilization” (It means consolidation through partisan appointments), a powerful means of consolidation of political parties. However, the emperor and the imperial court, which had risen politically in tandem with the political parties, forced the parties to curb their “partilization”, even though they expected the unifying power of political parties based on the logic of the responsible cabinet system. As a result, the political system demanded by Inner Minister of State Makino Nobuaki and the emperor eventually came to define the entire of party cabinet period.

The emperor and the imperial court were particularly influential on the issue of colonial rule. The Tanaka Giichi Seiyukai Cabinet was designed to take the opportunity of reorganizing the colonial administrative system to reform the entire of the administrative organizational structure. However, in order to realize this grand vision, control of the bureaucracy through “partilization” was essential. Therefore, the vision of the Tanaka Cabinet was not accepted by the emperor and was impeded.

The next Hamaguchi Osachi Minseito cabinet, gave priority to financial consolidation rather than fundamentally organizational changes through administrative reorganization, because it did not envision

consolidation through “partilization”. However, since this functioned only when it was linked to the global economy, the effects of the Great Depression directly shook the integration system of the entire cabinet. As a result, the phenomenon of "bureaucratization of party ministers," in which ministers of state were incorporated into the bureaucracy and became representatives of their respective ministries, had become apparent.

The drastically administrative reform plan conceived by the second Wakatsuki Reijiro cabinet to solve the above problems already had an orientation that deviated from the principle of responsible cabinet system. In the end, the two major political parties in prewar Japan were forced to abandon the integration based on the responsible cabinet system and change their policies to strengthen institutional integration. This marked the limit of the party cabinet system and was also an important turning point that connected to the power structure of the period of united national cabinet.