

Chapter 4

Colonial and Overseas Development Policies of Imperial Japan under Internationalism: Reading the Policies of the Kenseikai Cabinet from the Perspective of Economic and Cultural Integration

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, I would like to present the relationship between the colonial governance policy and the diplomatic policy of the Kenseikai party cabinet, which was one of the two major political parties in prewar Japan and actively promoted the line of international cooperation.

The purpose of this study is to elucidate the tripartite interrelationship among diplomatic responses to the international collaborationist system, the development process of party politics, and colonial rule in modern Japan. In particular, I would like to analyze the South Seas and Manchuria regions, which are the colonial-adjacent zones where these three interests are expected to intersect sharply.

The period covered in this chapter, the Kenseikai period, is from June 1924 to April 1927. In prewar Japan, alternating transitions of power by the two major political parties (the Rikken Seiyūkai party and the Kenseikai party — after, renamed Rikken Minseitō) were achieved between 1924 and 1932. The formation of the Kenseikai Cabinet was an opportunity for colonial rule to suffer the strong aftermath of party

politics, as well as the development of Kijūrō Shidehara's foreign policy, which actively promoted international collaborationism. I would like to consider how they tried to solve the problems that arose in the areas adjacent to the colony during this period.

2. Background

First, as a prerequisite background, I would like to confirm the perspective of the conflict between imperialism and internationalism in the 1920s. The international situation in the 1920s was an era of international economic competition, while at the same time it was an era of international cooperation in politics and diplomacy. The question of how this ambivalent international situation affected Japanese politics, diplomacy, and colonial rule is an important background for this discussion. Imperial Japan was a small but densely populated country, and furthermore, it did not have a promising colonial market like Britain and America. Against this background, Japanese politicians were challenged with how to respond to international economic competition.

Therefore, strong executive power had to be exerted to establish a policy framework at the imperial level, including the colonies, while at the same time curbing the traditional imperialistic approach to territorial expansion. This was the essential condition for the establishment of party politics in prewar Japan, as well as for the realization of a democratic political system. In fact, the failure to accomplish this led Japan in the 1930s to the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident, the collapse of party politics, and the expansion of the military's political influence.

3. Literature Review

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The previous research on this topic is so vast that there are many excellent studies. However, with regard to the Kenseikai Cabinet, interest has focused mainly on the policy toward China of Foreign Minister Kijūrō Shidehara and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter, MOFA) from the perspective of diplomatic history (Sakai 1989; Hattori 2001; Nishida 2005). As a result, the main focus has tended to be on the diplomatic negotiation process and the policy-making process of the MOFA, leaving out issues such as the concept of integration throughout the Empire. It is unclear to what extent the international cooperation policy of Foreign Minister Shidehara was linked to the other policies of the Kenseikai cabinet, especially the colonial administration policy.

There has also been a great deal of research on the intersection of colonial rule and foreign policy. This includes the southward expansion policy of the Governor-General of Taiwan, the issue of police jurisdiction over Koreans in Manchuria, and the negotiation process over land and commercial tax rights for Japanese nationals in Manchuria, whose legal position in the region was unclear (Schneider 1998; Esselstrom 2009; Kitano 2020; Shirane 2022). All are excellent studies depicting the conflicts and complexities between the MOFA, local consuls, and colonial governing authorities. Taking these exceptional findings on the issues into account, I would like to approach the orientation of the Kenseikai cabinet toward foreign policy as much as possible.

Of particular importance to this study is the research on the issue of the unification of administrative agencies in Manchuria, as represented by Kiyofumi Katō (Katō 2000). Since prewar Japan set up colonial administrative agencies in each of the areas acquired in the war, the MOFA and each colonial power pursued their policies separately. Katō argues that it was essential for the MOFA to achieve

a connection to the Washington system by reducing the powers of the various colonial agencies and by acquiring supervision of the South Manchurian Railway Company (hereafter, SMR). And it is the fact that this was not achieved until the end that was the limiting factor in the integration of the colonies by the MOFA, he argues. However, from the perspective of a party cabinet, the SMR was controlled to a considerable degree by partisan personnel. With this in mind, there may be different factors that ultimately contributed to the failure to carry out the principle of international cooperation. I would like to consider this point as well.

4. Kenseikai-Appointed Governor-General's Governing Policy

(1) Removal of Japanese Bureaucrats in Taiwan

Let us take a look at the relationship between the policy of southward expansion in Taiwan and the Kenseikai Cabinet's policy for governing Taiwan. As mentioned earlier, from 1924 to 1932, the era of alternating administrations between the Seiyūkai and the Kenseikai (later becoming Minseitō) was in full swing. However, as Table 1 shows, there were frequent changes of government between the opposing parties within a short period of approximately two to three years. It was customary during this period for the Governor-General to be replaced in parallel with the removal of the Cabinet. Therefore, by analyzing what policies the Governor-General had put in place when each party was in power, it should be possible to identify the approximate governing policies of the party.

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Table 1. Linkage between the 2-party system and colonial governors

Party	Prime Minister	Period	Governor-General	Period
	Gonbee Yamamoto ~Keigo Kiyoura	1924.6~1926.1	Kakichi Uchida	1923.9 ~ 1924.8
Kenseikai	Takaaki Katō	1924.6 ~ 1926.1	Takio Izawa	1924.9 ~ 1926.7
Kenseikai	Reijirō Wakatsuki	1926.1 ~ 1927.4	Mitsunoshin Kamiyama	1926.7 ~ 1928.6
Seiyūkai	Giichi Tanaka	1927.4 ~ 1929.7	Takeji Kawamura	1928.6 ~ 1929.7
Minseitō	Osachi Hamaguchi	1929.7 ~ 1931.4	Eizō Ishizuka	1929.7 ~ 1931.1
Minseitō	Reijirō Wakatsuki	1931.4 ~ 1931.12	Masahiro Ōta	1931.1 ~ 1932.3
Seiyūkai	Tsuyoshi Inukai	1931.12 ~ 1932.5	Hiroshi Minami	1932.3 ~ 1932.5

Source: Author

Let us examine this in detail. With the temporary decline of Western powers' commercial rights in the "South China and South Seas" due to the First World War, the Governor-General of Taiwan instituted a variety of policies aimed at countering the re-entry of the powers' commercial rights. This was led by Motojirō Akashi, who was the last military governor-general before the civil governor-general period. He led the construction of the Sun Moon Lake hydropower project in Taiwan. In his letter, Akashi stated that the production of trade goods not only for the island of Taiwan but also for overseas must be made by this power¹; in other words, it was to be positioned as the root of Taiwan's trade policy toward the South Seas.

Based on the above situation, I



Fig 1. Takio Izawa, 11th Taiwan Governor-General

Source: <<https://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/datas/475/>>

¹ Letter of Motojirō Akashi to Giichi Tanaka, October 29, 1918, Documents of Tanaka Giishi, No. 527, held by Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives.

would like to look at the characteristics of the policies of the Governor-General appointed by the Kenseikai Cabinet during the period 1924–1927. First, a large number of Japanese officials who had ruled before 1924 were removed, and then the hiring of Taiwanese officials in the provinces was expanded during the Takio Izawa Governor-General's term (Okamoto 2008). And he was described by his contemporaries as being aware that all southward expansion policies were the work of the MOFA (Nihon Gōdō Tsūshinsha 1932). On the other hand, the government was active in the development of unexplored areas on the island and the provision of funds for agriculture. It is also of note that they were reluctant to take on the Sun Moon Lake hydropower development project.

(2) Establishment of Taipei Imperial University



Fig 2. Mitsunoshin Kamiyama,
12th Taiwan Governor-General

Source: <<https://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/datas/466/>>

A further notable policy was the promotion of the establishment of Taihoku Imperial University. Here, the Department of Literature was established with the goal of enabling Taiwanese to acquire humanities knowledge about the South China and South Seas. What is important here is that the plan was to develop the South by making good use of Taiwanese tastes and preferences to make cultural facilities even more effective.² They also shifted the policy of extending education to the interior and expanded business education institutions

2 Documents of Izawa Takio, No.479-480, held by National Diet Library.

that matched Taiwan's actual conditions (Sogō 2020). Therefore, Governor-General Mitsunoshin Kamiyama, who succeeded Izawa, based his policy on the promotion of agricultural policy and cultural integration, as symbolized by his policy of "promoting cultural and economic integration with ethnic fusion" as its core.³

(3) MOFA's Policy on Cultural Projects in China

Next, based on previous research, I would like to confirm the MOFA's cultural projects in China. This was the characteristic policy of the MOFA in the 1920s, which rejected conventional political and economic, or imperialistic, advances and became the central policy of imperial expansion under a system of international cooperation (Kumamoto 2013). In this light, it can be said that Izawa and Kamiyama's policy of rejecting Taiwan's program of southward expansion through industrialization, promoting agricultural policies on the island, and looking toward southward expansion through cultural policies was truly a policy linked to the MOFA's international cooperation policy. In fact, the amount of the Taiwan Governor-General's subsidies for southward expansion, which had been increasing during the Taisho period, declined after 1924. Personnel changes in the Taiwan Governor-General due to party politics were a major factor in the stagnation of the Governor-General administration's southward expansion policy (Schneider 1998). In other words, the Kenseikai had a policy of restraining economic development to the South Seas, which was prone to international criticism, and developing overseas in a cultural way. This orientation becomes even clearer when compared to Takeji Kawamura, the Governor-General appointed by the Seiyūkai Cabinet, who attempted to fully promote economic southward expansion

3 Documents of Kamiyama Mitsunoshin, held by Hōfu City Library.

through industrialization on the island of Taiwan from 1928 to 1929 (Sogō 2020).

(4) Ministry of Colonial Affairs (*Takumushō*)

Next, we need to turn our attention to the Cabinet. In June 1929, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs (*Takumushō*) was established by the Tanaka Giichi Cabinet, whose ruling party was the Seiyūkai, in order to supervise the various colonial administrative agencies and to take charge of immigration and economic development affairs overseas. It differed from Western colonial ministries in that it was largely unique as it was responsible for economic development policies outside the official imperial sphere (Sogō 2023). This Ministry of Colonial Affairs was also being seriously considered for establishment by the Kenseikai Cabinet in 1924. In the case of the Kenseikai, however, the main focus was to establish a general policy for colonial administration within the Empire. Therefore, immigration and economic development affairs overseas were excluded from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs.⁴ It should be considered that this concept of establishing the Ministry of Colonial Affairs was clearly linked to the aforementioned Governor-General Izawa and Kamiyama's policy of emphasizing agricultural development within the Taiwan island and the diplomatic policy of Shidehara Kijūrō. From the above, it can be pointed out that the Kenseikai Cabinet's orientation toward colonial administration clearly distinguishes between imperial territory and overseas administration.

4 Gyōsei Chōsakai Shorui, No.13 *Iinkai Gijiroku*, held by National Archives of Japan (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan (JACAR), Ref: A05021078100).

5. The Governing Orientation of the Kenseikai in the Context of the Korean and Manchurian Issues

(1) Kenseikai's Orientation Toward Korean Rule

Next, I would like to clarify the governing orientation of the Kenseikai Cabinet from the Korean and Manchurian issues and discuss its problems. I would like to confirm the orientation of the Kenseikai toward governing Korea. Their main characteristic is that they were oriented toward a change in the “Metropole extensionism” (*Naichienchō-shugi*) that had been the policy for governing Korea since 1919. Among the members of the Kenseikai, including those at the executive level, there were many who recognized that the assimilation policy was impossible and insisted that the policy should be implemented in line with the actual situation in Korea, rather than forcibly imposing an internal system from Japan.⁵ Similar to Taiwan, there was also an orientation to switch from education as a metropole extension to business education (Sogō 2020). It is also noteworthy that they were willing to establish the Korean Assembly, albeit with some restrictions (Lee 2013). In other words, they were willing to expand suffrage in the Korean region, although only to a limited extent. From the above, it can be seen that the Kenseikai had the orientation to shift the meaning of Korean “cultural politics” from a metropole extensionist conception to a relatively loose union of the entire Empire. The government also placed a high priority on the stability of the Korean people’s livelihoods and put great emphasis on plans to increase the amount of rice produced and improve infrastructure. Thus, it was unique

5 “Fukumeisho” written by Tsunenosuke Hamada, Colonial Bureau of the Cabinet, August 30, 1925, *Kōbun Zassan*, Vol.4 of 1925, held by National Archives of Japan.

in that it contemplated, to some extent, the independent operation of Korea. Then, why was the Kenseikai able to tolerate this?

First, the reason why the Kenseikai was able to adopt a stance of respecting ethnic and indigenous realities and customs was the concept of strengthening the economic ties between the interior and Korea. What is more important, then, is their emphasis on a different way of approaching the challenges of solving overpopulation problems and dealing with international economic competition. Rather than imperial expansion, it was in the Kenseikai Cabinet's policy of proximity to world markets and its emphasis on trade policy.

(2) Measures to Cope with International Economic Competition

For example, it envisioned the creation of a new Trade Bureau in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the establishment of a Commercial Officer under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry lineage in each consular office. Thus, the Kenseikai were very aggressive in terms of expanding their trade policies. That is why they were able to distance themselves to some extent from the task of developing Japanese residents in Manchuria and the South Seas enterprises. The emphasis on the connection between the home country and the colony, rather than on the closeness of the colony and its neighbors, is also closely related to this. This was a very compatible orientation with the international cooperation line of Shidehara's foreign policy.

Furthermore, with regard to the SMR, which was the central institution for economic development in Manchuria, the Kenseikai cabinet decisively implemented personnel changes of the president and senior executives. As a result, it succeeded in guiding the SMR toward the pursuit of managerial rationalization rather than the pursuit of economic development. However, due to the stagnation of Japan's

overseas activities under the chronic recession, the local side strongly requested government subsidies and financial support, as well as aggressive loans from financial institutions. Interestingly, the move most emblematic of this demand came from within the MOFA, not from colonial agencies.

(3) Discussion at the Meeting of Consuls in Manchuria in 1926

In May 1926, a meeting of consuls in Manchuria was held, but the Governor-General of Korea was not invited. Unlike in the past, economic issues were the most important issues in the discussion, and measures to overcome the current situation of Japanese residents in Manchuria were discussed. This was a move that emerged in the context of a response to international economic competition, based on a sense of crisis over the increased economic activity of the UK, the US, Germany, and Russia against China in the post-WWI period. In other words, factors included the stagnation of the economic activities of Japanese residents in Manchuria, along with the economic expansion of the Western Powers and the Chinese Nationalist government into Manchuria. Therefore, it was proposed that an authoritative investigative body be established in Manchuria to guide and supervise general entrepreneurs.⁶

The proposal was to establish a Commercial Officer at the Mukden (*Hōten*) Consulate General, which was the center of the Manchukuo consulate. This was envisioned as a steppingstone for the future direct supervision of the operations of special companies such as the SMR, the Yokohama Specie Bank (*Yokohama Shōkin Ginkō*), the Bank of Korea, and the Oriental Development Company (*Tōyō Takushoku*), which were

6 Zaiman Ryōjikaigi Zakken/Zaiman Ryōji Kaigi Vol.1, held by Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, (JACAR Ref: B15100138500).

expected to serve as the brains behind the Consul General in Mukden to implement policies toward Manchuria and China. The chief consul would be selected from among the young staff of the Ministry of Finance, and the vice consuls would be recruited from the SMR, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Furthermore, at the same time it was proposed to establish a central organization to guide the Koreans in Manchuria. It was planned as an agency to lead an aggressive economic development policy that would include Korean associations, education, health care, financial unions, and the encouragement of side jobs. In other words, an independent policy of imperial expansion, different from that of the central government, was envisioned here. This concept was unique and could not be found in the SMR or the Governor-General's Office of Korea.

(4) Problems in the Governance Structure of the Kenseikai

Now, I would like to point out the problems in the governance structure of the Kenseikai cabinet as seen from the above discussion, together with the results of my research. The Meiji constitutional system of prewar Japan was characterized by a high degree of decentralization. In particular, the state of separation of the colonial administrative organs in Manchuria was symbolic of this. So, what did it take for party politics to take hold under these circumstances? I consider that for party politics to take root in prewar Japan, it was essential to establish a political system centered on the cabinet, or ministers of state who were responsible to the emperor and parliament, and to utilize the strength of political parties as groups to penetrate the divided ministries and agencies through personnel affairs. This was necessary as a prerequisite to promote a unified and strong policy and to respond to global economic competition while maintaining a system of international

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cooperation.

I believe that in Japan, under the international order of the 1920s, it was inevitable that demands for the promotion of economic development policies to adjacent colonial areas would be activated. In this context, previous studies have pointed out that after the First World War, the MOFA established a system of exclusive policy establishment by the foreign affairs bureaucracy (Chiba 2008; Kumamoto 2013). This must have been an obstacle to the stability of party politics. Furthermore, although at first glance it appears that Shidehara's diplomacy enabled the Kenseikai

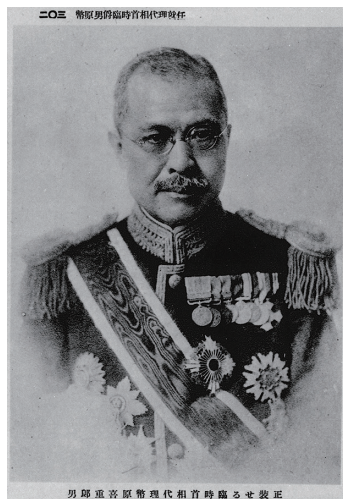


Fig 3. Kijūrō Shidehara, Foreign Minister

Source: <<https://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/datas/274>>

cabinet to form a stable integrated order in line with the responsible cabinet, previous studies have pointed out that there was always tension between the regional consuls and the MOFA (Sakai 1989; Esselstrom 2009).

Considering the above, it seems that a split in Shidehara's foreign policy was inevitable unless the independence of the MOFA was controlled in some way. However, although the Kenseikai cabinet was oriented toward partisan appointments in politics within the Empire, it was not willing to take steps to improve the structure of the MOFA (Naraoka 2006). On the other hand, it was the Giichi Tanaka Seiyūkai Cabinet that strongly recognized this problem and actively attempted to establish the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and control the MOFA. In this light, as Hattori points out, the failure to establish a party-led diplomatic

system was a serious problem for party politics (Hattori 2006).

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the line of international cooperation by the Constitutional Council cabinet from the perspective of its relationship with colonial rule. The Kenseikai cabinet used partisan personnel to influence colonial administration, modified cultural policies to emphasize local realities, and stressed the stability of colonial administration by encouraging agriculture. It was also envisioned that the establishment of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs would provide a power base for the Cabinet to set the policy for governing the colony as a whole. From the above, I think it can be evaluated that the colonial government was successful in encompassing colonial rule under the logic of international cooperation.

This policy of relatively loose imperial cohesion based on cultural fusion was made possible by the fact that, as a countermeasure against international economic competition, the emphasis was on expanding exports by competing in the global market rather than on establishing a self-sufficient sphere. So, instead of trying to connect the colonies with the adjacent areas of the Empire economically, the direction was toward ensuring cultural independence and economic closeness between the mainland and the colonies.

However, the problem was the Cabinet's inability to integrate the MOFA and its dependence on the integrating power of Kijūrō Shidehara. Furthermore, this meant that the Kenseikai Cabinet was unable to fully meet the demand for economic development in the adjacent colonial areas. This resulted in a desire for consular independence, which loosened the integrating power of Shidehara's diplomacy. In addition, the policies of the Kenseikai, with its instability that forced it to depend

on the economic conditions of countries around the world, suffered directly from the impact of the Great Depression.

As a result of the severe decline in the consolidation power of the Kenseikai, which had become Minseitō, the idea emerged in 1931 to include economic development policies for overseas countries in a newly established Ministry of Industry (Sogō 2021). This means that the Kenseikai's policies came down to a concept that, in principle, encompassed an orientation toward imperial expansion. This, I believe, also brings to light the importance of the contradictory meanings of international cooperation and economic competition.

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Fig.1–3: Kindai Nihon no Shōzō (Portraits of Modern Japanese Historical Figures), National Diet Library, Japan. (<https://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/e/>)

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