Study on “Tenjō Tokoroate”

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“Tenjō Tokoroate”, a court function for the appointment of nobles, officials, and chamberlains (Kurōdo) to stewardships in various offices, organization for management of Imperial household (Tokorodokoro), and temples, was held through the Heian and Kamakura Periods. An outline of the “Tenjō Tokoroate” has been given in encyclopedias, but no thesis was dedicated to it.

The first mention of the “Tenjō Tokoroate” is dated the 9th year of Engi (909 AD), from which the “Tenjō Tokoroate” is considered to have been established from the Kanpyō era (889–897) to the Engi era (901–922). In the reign of the Emperor Murakami, a distribution was made between the initial “Tenjō Tokoroate” of a reign and routine ones. The first “Tenjō Tokoroate” was held in the year of enthronement of a new Emperor or the following year, and all the stewards of various offices, organization for management of Imperial household (Tokorodokoro), and temples were reappointed. At every change of imperial reign, the regent, chief advisor (Kanpaku), chamberlain, and high-ranking courtiers (Tenjōbito) were reelected. The first “Tenjō Tokoroate” may be also included in this series of functions. Later, in the reign of the Emperor Ichijo, the term “Tenjō Tokoroate” came to be used.

In the reign of the Emperor Go-Ichijō, the “Tenjō Tokoroate” came to be held less frequently, and the order of the ceremony came to be more formalized. After the reign of the Emperor Go-suizaku, which there are some periods for which little documentation remains, only the first “Tenjō Tokoroate” in a reign can be verified from historical documents. In other words, the “Tenjō Tokoroate” came to be held only once in a reign. In the period of the Insei, change in the political framework, in which the steward system in various offices, organization for management of Imperial household (Tokorodokoro) and temples lost its political meaning, may be mentioned as a background to this. It is pointed out that the secular stewards at various temples became inactive in the period of the Insei. Also, in and after the period of the Insei, the place where affairs of state and ceremonies took place shifted from the Imperial Palace to the Sato-Dairi (temporary palace in the residence of the family of the Empress), and the scale of political organization was reduced. It may be supposed that various offices and organization for management of Imperial household (Tokorodokoro), which had been numerous, were cut back, and that only those with a real meaning remained.

Furthermore, after the period of the Insei, the system of the distribution of the duties of officials and chamberlains (Kurōdo) came into being. On the appointment of chamberlains to the stewardship of various places, an Imperial mandate was issued in the different way things were conducted under the “Tenjō Tokoroate”. This is why the “Tenjō Tokoroate” became formalized.

In the period of the Insei, while the “Tenjō Tokoroate” became formalized, other
functions were frequently held, including Kan Tokoroate (for Government Office), Chûgû Tokoroate (Empress's Office), Tôgû Tokoroate (Crown Prince's Office), In Tokoroate (ex-Emperor's Office), Sekkanke Tokoroate (Regent's or Chief advisor's Family) and Gekikyoku Tokoroate (Register's Office). This may be taken to show that the political organization of the court was reduced, and became concentrated in the Government Office, Register's Office, and Chamberlain's Office, while influential household powers, such as those of the Empress, Crown Prince, Ex-Emperor, Regent or Chief advisor, were enlarged, and the so-called "Kenmon" (influential household powers) regime was established.