

## **ASIEN 83 (April 2002)**

### **Abstract**

#### **Sozialstrukturelle cleavages, Wählerbindung und politische Repräsentation in Japan**

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By interpreting the cleavage-theory as a dynamic model of "freezing" and "unfreezing" of party systems and voter alignments, this paper tries to focus upon the relevant cleavage structures that conditioned the Japanese post-war party system. After its formation in 1955 it was mainly based upon an economical cleavage rooted in the conflict between capital and labour and a cultural cleavage founded on traditional vs. modern values. Since the early 70's we find a growing tendency of "unfreezing". Neither the LDP nor the JSDP could transform themselves into catch-all parties, for which reason the number of non-party supporters and floating voters dramatically increased. This dealignment brought about an instability of the party system and a great fluidity in party labels in the 90's. The present system seems to be rather based upon conflicts within the established elite than on social cleavages. The "unfreezing" of the system was accompanied by a dealignment of the LDP-elite from the social structure of the society and a tendency to form a closed power group. The political system's further untying from the social structure will yet cause a further weakening of the acceptance of the political system as a whole which could threaten Japanese democracy.