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Formation and Change of Social Systems

: Subjects and Historical Constraints in Japanese-Style Employment

System

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The purpose of this paper is to consider formation and change of social systems in association with subjects. Historical constraints under given conditions for subjects don't limit activities of subjects but expand capabilities of them. This view is referred to as subjects-historical constraints approach in this paper. It can bring us a new comprehension of social systems ; which is different from both the environmental determinism and the way to put subject-behavior before environment.

Social systems should be discussed not only from the viewpoint of their historical origins but also from that of their functionality as a whole. Therefore we conduct comparative analyses of functionality for subjects representing social systems diachronically related. Taking this way of thinking, we can examine not continuity but identity of social systems.

We analyze Japanese-Style Employment System which has the life-time employment, the seniority wage system and company unions as its important characteristics. The reason why we choose this target is that it is the most important and influential employment system in modern Japanese society.

The theories about the origin of the system fall into three categories ; period of interwar, period of wartime, period of postwar reformation. The analyses in this paper make it clear that

employment systems in each period are not identical with Japanese-Style Employment System.

The core of Japanese-Style Employment System is an implicit promise between labor and management that management doesn't dismiss labor. Japanese companies have made a compromise to accept the policy after fairly tough labor-management disputes in postwar 10 years. The policy was supported by all-time tightness on the labor market which it was caused by high growth of Japanese economy for about 20 years and an irreversible change of the population movement. Japanese-Style Employment System equals the implicit promise locked-in ex post by a shortage of workforce.

We have introduced subjects-historical constraints approach as a framework for analyses of social systems. Main points of this approach are emphases on subjective viewpoint, historical constraints for subjects, separation between origin and function of systems. This enables us an acquisition of an evolutionary viewpoint for social systems.