Position-related Consumption and Corruption in China:
An institutionalist Analysis

by

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Position-related consumption (P-R consumption) refers to public expenditure incurred when government officials conduct their official duties including, for example, spending on official vehicles, banquets and overseas trips. P-R consumption has become a public concern in China today due to its huge magnitude and, perhaps more importantly, its close relations with corruption. Although the Chinese government made extensive efforts to control P-R consumption, the effectiveness of its various policies and regulations has failed to meet public expectation. This research explores how and why lavish P-R consumption has taken place. It argues that in P-R consumption, formal rules stipulated by the government are only on paper while informal rules, defined as unwritten rules and usually at odds with official ones, have prevailed. Adopting theoretical concepts from new institutionalism, this research proposes that extravagant P-R consumption is an isomorphic behavior. Three mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change (i.e., coercive, mimetic and normative) work together to contribute to the predominance of informal rules in P-R consumption. Lavish P-R consumption has thus been institutionalized into an organizational behavior.

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All are welcome!