THE EVOLUTION OF LABOUR POLITICS IN POST-COLONIAL MYANMAR

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ABSTRACT

Scholars, journalists and other writers primarily illustrate the political contentions between the state of Myanmar and other social forces as a series of zero sum games. When it comes to the political contentions between the state, Myanmar workers, employers and other social forces, existing studies have only focused on particularly obvious labour contentions that emerged between these groups, ignoring other various forms of labour contentions that existed under the four different political regimes in Myanmar since it gained independence in 1948. Moreover, the existing studies and writings suggest that the political contentions between the state, workers and other social forces became largely insignificant under the authoritarian regimes since 1962. However, this dissertation attempts to contribute a better understanding of the political contentions that emerged between workers, employers, the state and other social forces when workers fought for their fundamental labour rights and entitlements or for settling their industrial disputes and other employment associated issues by examining different forms of labour contentions that emerged when workers struggled for their fundamental labour rights and for resolution of their employment-related issues by employing both formal and informal institutions as their problem-solving mechanisms. This dissertation argues that the success of workers in realizing their claims or in addressing their labour issues largely depended on their abilities to take advantage of the political opportunities that arose out of the institutional arrangements created
by the different policies and decisions of different political regimes that emerged in the post-independence era and to employ the appropriate institutions which were inherently linked with those political opportunities as their problem-solving mechanisms. Additionally, this dissertation challenge the conventional notion that the labour contention has been absent under the dictatorial regimes in Myanmar since 1962 by arguing that the political contentions and, labour contentions, that emerged between workers, employers and the state and other social forces could not be regarded as a collections of zero-sum games and that the labour contentions have stayed alive in both significant and non-significant forms in Myanmar.
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