

早稲田大学大学院アジア太平洋研究科

博士論文審査報告書

論 文 題 目

原題名 Original Title	<i>Tenkin</i> in Employment and Family Production, Reproduction, and Transformation
英訳 In Japanese	雇用と家庭における転勤 生産と再生産、変容

申 請 者

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The subject of this thesis is the employment practice of *tenkin* (employee transfer) in contemporary Japan, and its gendered implications for employment and family formation in the 21st century. The author based the thesis on qualitative interviews with 46 individuals who have had the experience of *tenkin*, or who have had a spouse with that experience. In addition, she interviewed and collected data from seven large corporations of different industries. The thesis explores how this employment practice is reproduced in contemporary society despite ongoing changes in the gendered regime of employment, when women are now increasingly called on to work throughout their lifetimes as breadwinners. Fujita, utilizing the concepts of structure and agency by Orter (1984, 2006), as well as Sahlin's (1981) theory on social change through production, reproduction and transformation, also notes how employees at times negotiate *tenkin* with their employers, thereby holding out the potential for structural change.

Summary

Introduction

In this chapter, the author provides the background to her thesis, noting changes in Japanese employment, the problem posed by *tenkin*, explaining how it is situated in dominant structures of gender inequality in post-war Japan. She lays out her analytical framework of production, reproduction and transformation, poses her research questions, and explains her methodology and the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 1: Historical Perspectives

The subjects of this chapter are the history of Japan's internal labor market, how the practice of *tenkin* operates for blue-collar and white-collar workers, as well as for female workers. In addition, the effects of *tenkin* in the family, for wives, mothers, husbands and fathers, are elaborated. How the practice of *tenkin* is *produced* is largely discussed in this and the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 2: Dominant Practices of Tenkin in the Contemporary Workplace

Here, the author uses data collected from interviews with firms in varying industries to inform us of the range of *tenkin* in practice and the varying rationales firms use to employ it. In addition, ethnographic accounts are interwoven into this chapter to illustrate how employees regard *tenkin* as a practice.

Chapter 3: Dominant Practices of *Tenkin* in Contemporary Family

This chapter explores how the work lives of the employees studied were affected by the practice of *tenkin*, which the author argues forced them to *reproduce* the conventional family structures, even though they were dual-career couples. When couples were ordered to *tenkin*, the author notes, they tended to follow and reproduce culturally acceptable practices of accompanying the spouse or sending them alone. The author notes that this means that women usually end up deprioritizing their own careers, especially when they work in the same company as their spouse. Conventional gender norms in the home are thus *reproduced*.

Chapter 4: Novel Practices of *Tenkin* in Contemporary Family

This chapter focusses on individual interpretations of the varying effects of *tenkin* on marriage, depending on whether one accompanies the spouse or stays back. For some, separation via *tenkin* symbolizes marital independence. For others, accompanying the spouse enhances self-worth and allows for the pursuit of a better life. Findings point to new forms of supportive marital relationships exemplified by spousal communication and negotiation at home.

Chapter 5: Novel Practices of *Tenkin* in Contemporary Workplaces

Herein the author again takes up the subject of novel practices as evidenced in the workplace, via negotiations some employees undertook with their employers, as well as the efforts some employers make to share business goals with employees, attempting to offer them some degree of collaboration in decision making, as long as the decision is ultimately favorable to corporate goals. In addition, the possibility of new forms of collaborative management such as '*ikubosu*,' and career building without *tenkin*, are raised by some informants. Hence this and the previous chapter largely take up the question of *transformation*.

Conclusion

In the Conclusion, the author reiterates her framework of production and reproduction of the cultural and gendered impact of *tenkin*, while holding out the possibility of a transformation of this practice toward a more negotiable and less gendered one, in the future. The chapter argues that evidence from this doctoral research points toward the possibility of change in this direction.

The Defense

The dissertation defense was held on 26 November from 2:30-4pm. All four members of the committee agreed that this dissertation was of high quality, based on sufficient fieldwork and archival research, on a topic that is very current and important given the challenges posed by the contemporary labor market in Japan, yet understudied. We felt the thesis was thorough and compellingly argued. The ethnographic accounts throughout the thesis were

highly informative and gave us clear insight into how the practice of *tenkin* is affecting employees today, how they experience it, and how they view it, as well as what the possibilities are for changes in this central practice underpinning employment in large firms.

The committee felt that this version of the dissertation was more than adequate as a doctoral dissertation.

Nevertheless, we felt that a few changes could be made to improve the general argument of the thesis, as follows:

1. We felt that the model of production-reproduction-transformation should provide guidance throughout the dissertation. We asked the author to re-think some of her usage of theory that did not add to her overall argument (Wharton, Sewell, Kanter), and streamline the argument.
2. We felt that the author should be more careful about discussing the extent of the transformation of *tenkin* practice that she saw in negotiations with employers. After all, individual negotiations, while holding out the potential to change individuals' lives, do not necessarily make changes to the overall structure. Furthermore, the capacity of people who *reproduce* the current system should not be underestimated, nor should the power of the firm as the ultimate disciplinary force.
3. We asked her to rewrite the conclusion, to reflect more on the broad potential for transformation in this employment practice.

Results of the Defense

We unanimously voted that this dissertation is a 'pass.' Subsequent to the defense, Ms. Fujita has revised the dissertation in accordance with our critiques above, so that the final version reflects well our suggestions for improvement. The thesis represents an important contribution to the literature on gender and employment in the anthropology and sociology of contemporary Japan, taking up a central institution of the Japanese employment system, and exposing it to inquiry in the light of today's economy, gender roles, and familial roles.

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