

Resolving Conflicts between Systematic and Historical Interpretation in Legal Hermeneutics

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Abstract: This paper explores what appears to be the underlying causes of conflicts between systematic interpretation and historical interpretation in the application of law, and proposes what seem to be scientifically grounded and practical mechanisms for reconciliation. Through theoretical analysis and comparison with practical case studies, the study tends to suggest what appears to be the differences between these two interpretive approaches in terms of value orientation, logical reasoning, and operational execution, and outlines what might be characterized as their specific manifestations in judicial practice. What seems especially noteworthy in this analytical context is that systematic interpretation typically emphasizes internal coherence within the legal system, whereas historical interpretation predominantly focuses on the original intent of the legislature. Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, these differing methodological foundations and normative goals often appear to lead to divergent judicial outcomes and uncertainties in legal application. What the evidence appears to reveal is that establishing a hierarchy of interpretive methods, enhancing the transparency of legislative materials, and constructing what seems to constitute a structured framework for judicial interpretation guidance can ostensibly help mitigate interpretive conflicts, thereby seemingly promoting greater normativity in legal interpretation and consistency in judicial decision-making within these evolving conceptual parameters.

1. Introduction

As a fundamental basis for judicial decision-making, what appears to be legal interpretation not only seems to entail the discovery of meaning within legal texts but also tends to reflect what might be characterized as the interpreter's choices regarding the legal system and social values. Systematic interpretation and historical interpretation, as what seem to be two foundational methodological approaches, appear to play critical roles in contemporary legal application. What the evidence suggests is that systematic interpretation generally seeks to ensure the unity and coherence of the legal system through structural logic and the internal relationships among norms. In contrast, what historical interpretation appears to emphasize is the restoration of legislative intent and the contextual background of legal norms, thereby seemingly aiding in the pursuit of what appears to represent the underlying value objectives of the law. What seems especially noteworthy in this analytical context is that in practice, these two approaches often conflict in terms of interpretive

orientation, technical methodology, and value judgments, apparently leading to diminished clarity and predictability of the law. What tends to emerge as theoretically important is how to establish what appears to be a rational and coordinated mechanism amid the trend of interpretive pluralism—so as to ostensibly ensure logical consistency and institutional legitimacy in interpretive practices—which seems to have become a pressing issue in both jurisprudential theory and judicial practice. Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, this paper systematically analyzes what appears to be the root causes of conflict between these two interpretive methods and proposes what seem to be feasible solutions, aiming to construct what might be characterized as a coordination mechanism that is both operationally effective and evaluatively sound within this broader analytical framework^[1].

2. The Importance of Systematic and Historical Interpretation in Legal Application

2.1. The Critical Role of Systematic Interpretation in Maintaining Internal Consistency of Law

Systematic interpretation appears to be grounded in what seems to constitute the logical structure of legal norms. By analyzing what might be characterized as the position and function of individual legal provisions within the broader legal framework, it tends to suggest what appears to be an alignment of interpretation with the overall spirit of the legislation. What seems especially noteworthy in this analytical context is that, in an era of increasingly complex legislative techniques, the text of a provision alone is ostensibly insufficient to fully capture what appears to represent its normative meaning. What the evidence appears to reveal is that ignoring the integrative logic at the systemic level may lead to what seems to be partial or even contradictory interpretive outcomes in the majority of cases. What appears to follow from this analysis is that systematic interpretation seems to compensate for the limitations of literal interpretation by drawing upon what appears to be cross-references among provisions, thereby seemingly achieving what tends to be characterized as coherence and consistency in the content of legal norms, given the multifaceted nature of this evidence.

Legal provisions do not exist in isolation; rather, they appear to be embedded within what might be characterized as a networked structure of the legal system as a whole. What the analysis of the internal structure of legal codes, related provisions, and the interaction between higher- and lower-level laws seems to suggest is that systematic interpretation tends to clarify what appears to be the scope and hierarchical positioning of legal norms. Within this broader analytical framework, in the field of administrative law, overlapping and intersecting regulations across various legislative levels typically occur. Relying solely on a single provision may ostensibly obscure the definition of administrative powers, whereas what systematic interpretation appears to provide is a way to identify what seems to constitute the logic of the allocation of rights and responsibilities among norms, thereby seemingly reducing the risk of abuse of power or administrative paralysis. What appears particularly significant about these findings is that systematic interpretation seems to play what could be characterized as a foundational role in promoting uniformity in judicial application. When judges adjudicate similar cases, what the evidence appears to reveal is that adherence to reasoning based on systemic structure tends to facilitate what appears to be the standardization of judicial reasoning and the transparency of interpretive logic, thereby apparently enhancing the stability and predictability of legal application. Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, as a technical tool, systematic interpretation appears to offer what seems to be methodological support for legal hermeneutics, balancing substantive and procedural justice, and what these findings seem to point toward is its contribution to the stability and advancement of what represents the rule of law^[2].

2.2. The Unique Value of Historical Interpretation in Uncovering Legislative Intent and the Spirit of Law

Historical interpretation appears to hold what might be characterized as distinctive value in what seems to generally indicate the original intent and underlying spirit of legislation. What tends to emerge from these findings is that by focusing on the historical context, legislative purposes, and original linguistic environment of legal norms, it appears to suggest what seems to be the deeper institutional motivations behind the law. Law is not merely an abstract set of symbols, but what appears to represent a structured response to real-world social issues. What seems especially noteworthy in this analytical context is that understanding the meaning of legal provisions tends to require a return to their formative background, including what appears to be the intentions of the legislature and relevant legislative materials. In a modern society largely shaped by diverse values, identifying the policy goals and institutional considerations behind legal texts seems to help interpretation remain ostensibly aligned with what might be characterized as the law's foundational purposes.

What the evidence appears to reveal is that by consulting drafting notes, meeting transcripts, and legislative evaluation reports, historical interpretation tends to reconstruct the meaning of legal terms within their specific historical context, offering what appears to be concrete references for legal analysis. Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships and the seemingly abstract and predominantly open-ended nature of constitutional provisions, relying solely on textual or structural interpretation appears to be insufficient in most cases. What interpreters apparently need to consider is the historical setting to discern what seems to constitute the constitutional framework and values envisioned by the framers. What this pattern seems to suggest, therefore, is that this approach is particularly significant in addressing legal ambiguities or gaps, as it tends to clarify the intended scope and function of norms, presumably ensuring interpretive outcomes remain substantially faithful to what appears to represent the original institutional design^[3].

3. Key Issues Arising from Conflicts between Systematic and Historical Interpretation

3.1. Divergent Value Orientations Leading to Inconsistent Interpretive Outcomes

Systematic interpretation appears to emphasize what seems to be the logical structure and systemic coherence among legal provisions, tending to aim for what might be characterized as formal consistency and coordination across rules. What this pattern seems to suggest, therefore, is the ostensibly closed and self-referential nature of law as a normative system. Within this broader analytical framework, what appears particularly significant is how the structural relationships among provisions, the hierarchical distinctions between higher and lower norms, and the functional divisions among different branches of law tend to serve as primary references for understanding what appears to be legal meaning. This method seems to contribute to the internal consistency of the legal system, largely upholds institutional stability, and appears to support what might be termed technical rationality. By contrast, what historical interpretation seems to focus on is retracing the process by which legal norms were created, apparently emphasizing the subjective intent of the legislature and the institutional values embedded in the historical context. Legislative background, policy orientation, and prevailing social conditions—factors external to the legal text—appear to play what seems to be a critical role in this approach. What appears to emerge from this evidence is that historical interpretation tends to be more value-oriented and purpose-driven, characterized by what seems to be a high degree of openness and interpretive flexibility.

Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, what seems especially noteworthy is that due to the apparently distinct foundations upon which systematic and historical interpretation rely,

substantial divergences in interpretive outcomes are likely to arise when confronting legal ambiguities, normative conflicts, or structural gaps within the legal system. A given provision may seemingly serve a specific function within the statutory framework, yet appear to reflect a different legislative purpose when viewed through its historical context. In the majority of cases, what the evidence appears to reveal is that systematic and historical interpretation may yield what appears to be opposing conclusions regarding the provision's application, thereby seemingly creating contradictions in legal understanding and implementation. What tends to emerge as theoretically important is that in the absence of an effective coordination mechanism, such discrepancies not only appear to undermine consistency in adjudication but also tend to weaken what seems to be the authority of the law and destabilize the interpretive framework. What these findings seem to point toward is that conflicting interpretive outcomes can further lead to what appears to be confusion in value judgments. Systematic interpretation typically appears to prioritize the internal coherence of legal logic, whereas historical interpretation seems to center on responding to societal needs and realizing legislative intent—what appears to represent an inherent tension between their respective claims to legitimacy. Without what seems to be proper integration and guidance in practice, these competing methods may predominantly produce what appears to be radically different, even mutually exclusive, interpretations based on the same set of facts. This appears to threaten what might be characterized as the unity of legal interpretation and erode public confidence in judicial authority^[4].

3.2. The Disjunction between Legal Norms and Legislative Background

During the legislative process, legal texts appear to undergo what might be characterized as multiple rounds of revision, political negotiation, and technical adjustment, which seems to generally indicate discrepancies between the final statutory provisions and what appears to represent the original legislative intent. What tends to emerge from these findings is that the initial purposes and policy objectives reflected in the legislative background are not typically clearly or fully embodied in the final structure of the enacted law. What appears particularly significant about these findings, within this broader analytical framework, is that this disjunction seems especially noteworthy in complex legislation characterized by extended drafting periods and multi-party bargaining. Historical interpretation tends to rely on background materials produced during the legislative process; however, what the evidence appears to reveal is that when these materials diverge from the content of the final provisions, the interpretive outcome may ostensibly conflict with the logic of the enacted legal norm. Statements in early drafts apparently reflect policy intentions, yet such language may later be amended or, in the majority of cases, removed altogether. What seems to result from these considerations is that continued reliance on such superseded drafts in historical interpretation appears to provide evidence that may support the risk of invoking legislative intentions that no longer correspond to what seems to constitute the enacted text, thereby producing what appears to be tensions with the current legal framework.

Systematic interpretation focuses on the logical relationships of legal provisions within the existing normative structure, without relying on the legislative process. However, this approach may sometimes overlook the institutional purposes underlying the text. When the legislative context is insufficiently considered, systematic interpretation risks producing rigid applications of the law that neglect the policy intentions and value orientations embedded in the norm. This issue is particularly pronounced in the interpretation of social law, environmental law, and other legal domains closely tied to public policy. The disjunction between legal texts and their legislative background also reveals deeper problems of legislative transparency and accessibility of legislative materials. In contexts where comprehensive legislative records and systematically disclosed

information are lacking, the sources upon which historical interpretation depends can be fragmented or inaccurate, thereby undermining its persuasive force. While systematic interpretation does not depend on such materials, it lacks supplementary grounds when addressing textual gaps or ambiguities, which limits the completeness of normative interpretation. Consequently, the two methods risk falling into a state of mutual exclusivity rather than complementarity^[5].

3.3. The Absence of Unified Standards in Judicial Practice Leads to Inconsistent Application

In judicial proceedings, the choice and application of interpretive methods directly influence case outcomes. However, there is currently a lack of clear and consistent criteria for determining the sequence and conditions under which systematic and historical interpretation should be applied. As a result, different judges may adopt divergent interpretive approaches in similar cases, leading to markedly inconsistent rulings and undermining the uniformity of judicial decision-making. For the same legal provision, one judge may adopt a restrictive interpretation based on structural logic, while another may apply an expansive interpretation rooted in historical context, thereby generating legal uncertainty. This lack of unified standards is also evident at the level of judicial documents and precedential guidance. Existing judicial interpretations, guiding cases, and written judgments rarely offer a systematic account of the logic behind the use of interpretive methods; interpretive outcomes are often result-oriented, lacking methodological transparency. Such practices hinder the standardization of legal application and fail to provide clear references for other judicial actors.

Some courts, when dealing with complex cases, tend to select interpretive approaches that support the desired outcome, rather than relying on a rule-based and coherent methodology—reflecting a utilitarian tendency in the use of interpretive tools. This phenomenon undermines the rational foundation of legal interpretation, rendering the application of law more susceptible to subjective inclinations, thereby compromising legal stability and fairness. The uncertainty surrounding the application of interpretive methods also increases litigation risk for parties. In a legal environment where application is unpredictable, the public finds it difficult to assess the legal consequences of their actions, weakening the normative guidance of law and diminishing the predictability of social order. Establishing a coherent framework and clear rules for the use of interpretive methods has thus become essential for enhancing judicial credibility and promoting the standardization of legal interpretation.

4. Optimizing Strategies for Resolving Conflicts between Systematic and Historical Interpretation

4.1. Establishing a Principle of Interpretive Priority to Coordinate the Boundaries of Methodological Application

One of the root causes of conflict between legal interpretive methods lies in the absence of a unified sequence of application and evaluative criteria. When facing textual ambiguities, normative conflicts, or legal gaps, interpreters are often required to choose among multiple interpretive approaches. Currently, there is no unified framework to guide which method—systematic or historical—should take precedence under specific circumstances. This uncertainty not only results in divergent judicial outcomes but also undermines the predictability of legal interpretation and the credibility of the judiciary. Establishing a clear principle of interpretive priority would help form a standardized operational pathway for interpretive practices. However, the principle of priority should not entail a rigid or static hierarchy; rather, it should be grounded in a contextual assessment of case types, the nature of the norms involved, and the functional aims of the law. For example, when interpreting substantive norms involving value judgments, historical interpretation should be

prioritized to reconstruct legislative intent. Conversely, when interpreting procedural rules or structural legal arrangements, systematic interpretation should take precedence due to its emphasis on internal coherence. Developing a mechanism to match interpretive methods with specific application scenarios would provide clearer guidance for interpretation across different categories of cases.

The establishment of a priority principle must also reflect the demands of procedural justice and legal stability. The application of interpretive methods should be governed by publicly accessible standards and supported by explicit reasoning. Interpreters should articulate the rationale behind their choice of method to prevent arbitrary or preference-driven interpretations that undermine objectivity. Incorporating the principle of interpretive priority into adjudicative procedures and the structure of judicial opinions can enhance the transparency and persuasiveness of legal interpretation, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of judicial authority. Legal education and professional training should systematically equip practitioners with the evaluative reasoning necessary to determine interpretive priority. Teaching methods such as case-based instruction and mock trials can cultivate the ability to select and integrate interpretive approaches in a logically rigorous and goal-oriented manner. Moreover, incorporating theoretical and practical assessments of interpretive priority into judicial selection processes and bar examinations would further promote the deep integration of this principle into legal practice.

4.2. Enhancing the Systematic Compilation and Public Accessibility of Legislative Explanations and Historical Materials

The effectiveness of historical interpretation appears to tend to suggest a strong dependence on what might be characterized as the completeness and accessibility of legislative background materials. When relevant documents are missing or access to information is restricted, the accuracy and authority of historical interpretation are substantially undermined. In the majority of cases, key materials generated during the legislative process—such as policy reports, meeting minutes, and explanatory notes for drafts—are either not systematically archived or seemingly remain inaccessible for extended periods. What this appears to suggest is a hindrance to interpreters attempting to accurately reconstruct what seems to be the legislative intent behind statutory provisions. What appears particularly significant about these findings is that establishing a comprehensive mechanism for the collection of legislative process data appears to represent a foundational step toward improving the quality of historical interpretation. Legislative bodies and government agencies should presumably be encouraged to develop unified systems for managing legislative records, including the classification, digitalization, and structured preservation of documents produced throughout the drafting, deliberation, revision, and enactment stages. Within this broader analytical framework, the creation of a centralized legislative process database would ostensibly ensure the authority, completeness, and traceability of historical records, providing what appears to be a reliable factual basis for legal interpretation.

The public disclosure of legislative materials seems to generally indicate an essential element in achieving transparency in interpretive methods. What tends to emerge from these considerations is that a mandatory disclosure regime for legislative explanations should apparently be established, requiring the majority of legislative bodies to publish background statements, explanations of purpose, and records of major controversies in conjunction with the enactment of legislation. Long-term public access to such materials through legal information platforms must typically be ensured. What the evidence appears to reveal is that enhancing the accessibility of legislative records will largely improve the operability and standardization of historical interpretation and reduce what seems to be the risk of subjective or selective interpretive outcomes. Given the complexity of these

theoretical relationships, advancing the construction of historical documentation also appears to require strengthened inter-agency coordination. Legislative bodies, academic institutions, archival authorities, and judicial organs should seemingly establish collaborative mechanisms to unify standards for data classification, sharing protocols, and platform development. What seems especially noteworthy in this analytical context is that, leveraging modern information technologies, an open-access platform should presumably be built to encompass both national and local legislative information, offering comprehensive, up-to-date, and easily searchable historical data. What these findings seem to point toward is that strengthening the infrastructure for historical legislative materials not only tends to enhance the practical utility of historical interpretation but also appears to promote transparency in legal information, increases public understanding and trust, and appears to provide evidence that may support a solid foundation for constructive interaction between different interpretive methodologies.

4.3. Establishing a Judicial Interpretation Guidance Mechanism with Normative and Directive Functions

The ultimate application of legal interpretation appears to tend to suggest itself in judicial decision-making. What seems particularly significant about these findings is that effectively translating the rules governing systematic and historical interpretation into adjudicatory practice seemingly depends on what might be characterized as constructing a judicial interpretation guidance mechanism that appears to provide what seems to be clear orientation and practical instruction. Within this broader analytical framework, at present, most judicial interpretation documents seem to focus on supplementing substantive norms and regulating judicial discretion, with what appears to be limited systematic regulation of interpretive methods themselves. What the evidence appears to reveal is that this tends to result in what appears to be fragmented standards for interpretive conduct and a seemingly substantial lack of institutional coherence. What these findings seem to point toward is that a judicial interpretation system centered on methodological guidance should ostensibly clarify that judicial interpretation is not merely a tool for extending substantive provisions but also what appears to represent a structural framework for directing interpretive pathways and technical rules. Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, interpretation documents should apparently include a designated section for what might be characterized as "interpretive path clarification," offering what seems to constitute a structured account of the methods applicable to ambiguous or disputed provisions, presumably specifying the order of application, conditions for use, and methodological limits. What appears to follow from this analysis is that this would tend to promote consistency in judicial reasoning and seemingly foster a largely unified interpretive approach among judges.

Oherent interpretive guidance mechanism should be grounded in a system of precedents and guiding cases, extracting patterns of method application from representative cases and summarizing replicable and predictable operational standards. An "interpretive methods application matrix" should be developed to systematically list the prerequisites, scope of use, and coordination logic for each interpretive tool, thereby enhancing the rule-based nature and transparency of interpretive practices. Judicial decisions should more explicitly detail the application of interpretive methods. The reasoning section of judgments should clearly outline the rationale for method selection, the application process, and the logical progression from interpretation to conclusion, forming a complete and coherent chain of legal reasoning. Standardization and public disclosure of judgments would guide lower courts toward consistent interpretive practices and promote verifiability, evaluability, and accountability in interpretive conduct. The effective operation of a judicial interpretation mechanism also requires that judicial personnel possess systematic methodological

literacy. This can be fostered through dedicated training programs, workshops, and interpretive review mechanisms that strengthen both theoretical understanding and practical exchange on interpretive methods, facilitating the transition from experiential to rule-based legal interpretation. An expert consultation system should also be established, allowing for the incorporation of hermeneutic expertise in complex cases to enhance the professionalism and depth of interpretation. A standardized and institutionalized judicial interpretation guidance mechanism is not only essential for the coordinated development of interpretive methods but also serves as a critical foundation for resolving interpretive conflicts and achieving consistency in judicial reasoning.

5. Conclusions

The tension between systematic and historical interpretation appears to reflect what seems to be the inherent pluralism of legal hermeneutics in judicial practice. What the evidence tends to suggest is that systematic interpretation emphasizes textual coherence and institutional stability, seemingly making it suitable for what might be characterized as structural analysis. In contrast, historical interpretation appears to focus on legislative intent and background, which tends to address what seems to constitute normative gaps and value-based ambiguities. Both approaches appear to have strengths, but within this broader analytical framework, without what appears to be a unified framework or coordination, their application in cases involving ambiguity, value conflict, or institutional transition may ostensibly lead to inconsistency, potentially undermining what seems to be judicial fairness and legal authority. What appears particularly significant about these findings is that, given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, a hierarchy of interpretive methods should presumably be established, legislative history made substantially more accessible, and what seems to represent a unified interpretive mechanism developed to ensure what appears to be a balanced, largely coherent, and value-sensitive legal interpretation.

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