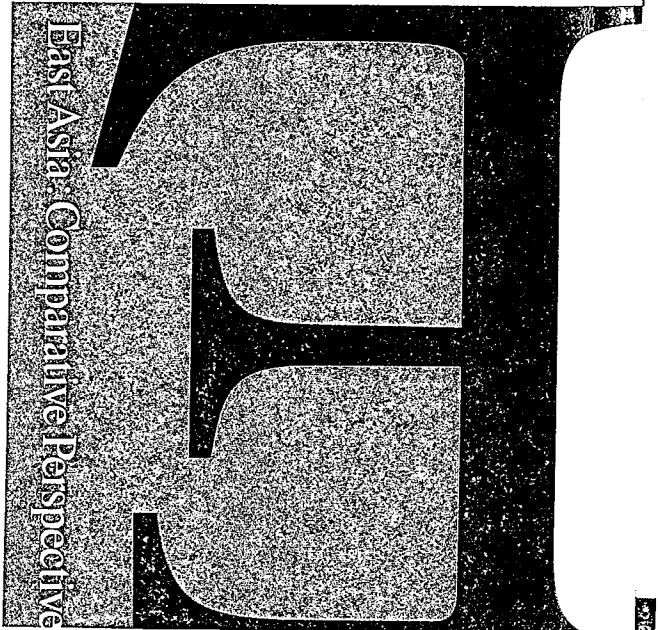


동아시아의 문화

동아시아의 문화: 동아시아의 문화



Review Article:

Industrial Relations in the Automobile and Steel industries*

Akira Suzuki**

Abstract

This review article examines research trends in the study of industrial relations since the 1980s on Japan's automobile and steel industries. Among studies on automobile industry's industrial relations, those studies that focus on workplace-level industrial relations suggest that the labor unions do not negotiate with management as representatives of the workers. Those studies that focus on corporate-level industrial relations, on the other hand, indicate a certain amount of labor union "voice" to management, although its significance and influence on management is greatly debated among researchers. Studies on steel industry's industrial relations focus on three issues: the response of labor and management to the changes in the economic environment surrounding the industry since the Oil Shock, the worker consciousness, and the postwar history of industrial relations/labor movements. The article shows that, as in the case of studies on automobile industry's industrial relations, researchers differ in their evaluations of labor union "voice" to management as steel companies heavily rationalized their operations in the 1970s and 1980s.

Keywords : Japan, industrial relations, labor unions, automobile industry, steel industry

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Introduction

This review article will examine research trends in the study of industrial relations since the 1980s on Japan's automobile and steel industries. Automobile and steel are strategic industries within advanced industrialized nations, thus industrial relations within these industries greatly influence the entire industrial relations system of that particular nation. In the case of Japan, the automobile and steel industries established "harmonious" industrial relations based on the mutually trusting relationship between managers and union leaders, and this style later spread throughout the entire system. Ever since 1980, numerous studies have analyzed labor-management or labor-capital relations¹⁾ in these two industries. This article will discuss major publications (books and articles) which deal with the history and actual status of industrial relations at the company/plant and workplace levels

Industrial relations in Japan are a well-researched field of studies with numerous books and articles published both in Japanese and in English. English-language studies increased since the early 1980s because of the growing attention to harmonious industrial relations at the company level. This "Japanese model" was widely seen as contributing to the internal flexibility of Japanese companies and to the Japanese export industries international competitiveness in the 1970s and 1980s. With a few exceptions, these studies concern themselves with general characteristics of industrial relations and do not present empirical analyses at plant or workplace levels. Studies written in Japanese in this field, on the other hand, are rich in empirical analyses of plant or workplace level industrial relations as well as functions and internal relations of company-based unions. The aim of this article is to review and thematically analyze these empirical studies, many of which are not well-known outside the circle of Japanese industrial relations specialists.

1) Researchers who take Marxist perspectives have been using the term labor-capital relations rather than labor-management relations. Despite different connotations, both terms mean industrial relations. Note that they are homonymous in Japanese (*roshi kankei*).

The scope of this article is not limited to formal systems of industrial relations, such as labor-management joint consultation and collective bargaining, but also extends to informal relationships of union leaders and company managers, as well as internal relationships within enterprise unions. Why are internal affairs of labor unions worthy of mention? As some studies suggest, industrial relations are reproduced within the union itself, as the union leadership attempts to persuade the general union membership on the terms of agreement with the company management.

Broadly speaking, the studies reviewed in this article work under two different assumptions. One group maintains the perspective that labor unions and managers are basically independent actors. The other group emphasizes the mutually dependent relationship between the unions and managers. These two contrasting models hereafter will be called "collective industrial relations" (for the former group) and "mutually-dependent industrial relations" (for the latter group).

Studies of Industrial Relations in the Automobile Industry

Overview

From the 1980s onward, research on automobile industry's industrial relations focused primarily on case studies of the top two automakers, identified as T and N in this article. Company T's production system received great attention both at home and abroad as representative of Japan's efficient production system. Thus, researchers' interests shifted to analyzing the relationship between industrial relations and efficient production lines. The two companies also represented contrasting modes of industrial relations. While collective industrial relations in the form of labor union vs. management died out in Company T, the labor union in Company N maintained a strong control over the workplace, at least until the mid-1980s. The latter half of the 1980s, however, pointed to the breakdown of the contrastive models, and saw

possibility for convergence into Company T's model of industrial relations. The great transformation of Company N's labor-management relations raised interesting questions, such as the mechanism of change in industrial relations.

Apart from T and N, there were also studies of other automakers, such as lower-ranking companies of H, MI, MA, and "light-automobile" manufacturers, S and D. While the contrasting configuration of industrial relations in companies T and N received greatest attention, these studies provide evidence for the diversity in industrial relations within the automobile industry

The "hollowing out" of collective industrial relations in the workplace

Roughly speaking, the methods of empirical research can be divided into "from above" and "from below" perspectives. Interviews with managers in charge of industrial relations and union leaders provide the foundation for the "from above" approach, which aims to analyze the structure and function of management/union organizations and industrial relations system. The "from below" approach places greater emphasis on surveys and interviews of workers and non-ranking union members, and by highlighting their action and attitudes, mainly analyzes workplace industrial relations.

Several studies, published in the 1980s, very consciously took the "from below" approach. The *problematik* of these projects was to illustrate how the efficient production system, based on harmonious and mutually trusting industrial relations, played out in the workplace and how workers perceived them. Some representative works of this approach are: Koyama Yoichi ed., *Large Corporate System and the Worker*, *Kyodai kigyo taisei to rodosha*, 1985, Nohara Hikaru/Fujita Eishi eds.; *The Automobile Industry and the Worker*, *Jidosha sangyo to rodosha*, 1988; Kobayashi Hajime et al., "The workplace structure and the production, labor and life processes for the working class at automobile factory 'A', *A" jiko ni okeru shokuba kozo to rodoshaso no seisan/rodo-seikatsu katei*, 1992. The Koyama edited volume, along

with Nohara/Fujita edited volume, focused on Company T, while Kobayashi et al. researched Company MI. These volumes spanned the period between the late 1970s to the early 1980s.

These three studies, taking "collective industrial relations" perspective, posit the hollowing out of such industrial relations within the workplace. That is, at the workplace level, the labor unions do not negotiate with management as representatives of the workers, thus collective industrial relations do not exist. The unions at the workplace level are integrated into the management structure, as the union leadership and lower management positions (as well as their reserves) overlap, and rarely regulate the production process and labor conditions. Furthermore, according to the interviews and surveys conducted by these studies, a large number of blue-collar workers (in the Koyama study, over half of those surveyed) are dissatisfied and/or critical to this situation of industrial relations. In place of labor unions, the mediators for workplace-level industrial relations are QC groups, in-company organizations and other "human relations" activities.²⁾ Workers are integrated into the company through these groups, organizations and activities.

The Koyama's and Nohara/Fujita's studies focusing on Company T emphasize the strong emotional and physical stress experienced by the worker's, who maintain the highly efficient and intense, yet very monotonous, production line. Why is the "mutually trusting labor relation" so stable, despite these workers' alienation from the production process? These studies argue that the workers' dissatisfaction and

2) The Nohara/Fujita edited volume characterizes QC groups, in-company organizations and other human relations activities as mass movements directed by management (Nohara/Fujita, 1988: 256-264). In-company organizations are organized based on ranks (e.g., managers, foremen, sub-foremen) and occupational and academic backgrounds of employees (e.g., veterans of Self Defense Forces, former temporary workers, graduates of the vocational school owned by Company T). These organizations, under the direction of the personnel department, aim at the promotion of smooth communication and mutual friendship among members during as well as after working hours. Human relations activities include those movements aimed at inculcating the company consciousness in young workers and at making the life in dormitories of single workers lively see also Koyama ed. 1985: 267-283; Nomura, 1993: 110-121.

alienations are, to a certain extent, alleviated through social networks within and across workplaces created by QC group activities, in-company organizations and other "human relations" activities. Yet more significantly, those workers who cannot keep up with the fast-paced production line and/or the promotion competition are "discharged" through self-imposed retirement. Thus, the stable industrial relations of Company T is maintained, not through the long-term stable employment as it is usually understood, but by discharging undesirable workers and homogenizing the remaining workforce.

Industrial relations in the workplaces of companies MI and T are similar in that union regulations do not exist in regard to the strenuous production-line labor. However, as the research by Kobayashi et al. on Company MI shows, there is control by the worker groups, albeit of a limited scope, of the labor process on the production line. Work Unit C, the focus of Koyabashi's study, established "difference" within the production line. Older workers had their workloads "lightened" while younger workers were assigned to operations enabling the acquisition of multiple skills. Therefore, this case study shows how the management allowed the worker group to assume part of the labor unions function (Kobayashi et al. 1992: 174). Furthermore, this same study shows that, in the absence of union regulation, QC groups may operate as an alternative to the labor union by acting as "QC from below". In the case of Work Unit C, workers decided on a specific task for QC activities (the improvement of working postures), analyzed their jobs on the line, and improved their own working conditions. However, this "QC from below" did not continue for long, due to harsh business conditions, and changed over to "QC from above" (i.e., management began to closely control QC activities) (ibid.:180-182).

These research projects, focusing on workplace industrial relations and taking a perspective "from below", provided important information based on surveys and interviews with workers and their families, which are usually unobtainable from union leaders/management and formal company reports. However, it is important to

keep in mind that the results of these surveys and interviews do not necessarily represent all the workers' opinions at companies T and MI, since their data came from subjects selected based on "non-probability sampling". One of the greatest difficulties for these types of studies is to follow methodological procedures, such as random sampling of data and subjects.

Labor-Management negotiations and the Voice of Labor Unions

After 1980, numerous scholars published their research on the automobile industry's industrial relations "from above", focusing on company as well as plant level system of labor-management consultation and/or collective bargaining. Unlike the studies focusing on industrial relations at the workplace level, these studies indicate a certain amount of labor union "voice" to the management, through the system of joint consultation. However, the significance and influence of this union voice is greatly debated among researchers.

(a) Differing evaluation of industrial relations at Company T

Some of the studies analyzing the industrial relations of Company T at the company and plant level, and the "voice" of the labor union include: (previously noted) Koyama ed., 1993 *Large Corporate Systems and the Worker (Kyodai kigyo taisei to rodosha)*, Nomura Masami, *Toyotism*, and Ishida Mitsuo et al., 1997 *Japan's lean production method (Nihon no lean seisan hoshiki)*. Koyama ed. and Nomuras studies point to the weakness of labor union's ability to "voice" their concerns, but Ishida et al. positively evaluate the role of union in labor management consultations.

The Koyama ed. volume argues, "the labor union's function to stand by the workers and restrain (Company T's management of labor) is obliterated", based on a historical analysis of Company T's industrial relations as well as examination of its labor-management policies (Koyama ed., 1985: 219). Furthermore, the study shows a different mode of decision-making in labor-management consultations at the company

and plant/workplace levels. While management representatives consult or reach an agreement with union representatives at the company-level consultation, "ex post facto reporting" from management to union representatives was the dominant mode of communication at the plant and workplace level consultations. From this analysis, Company T's labor-management consultation system is depicted as one of "top-down order structure (ibid.: 314)". However, the evaluation on the "voice" of labor union in the consultation process is based not on a specific case study. Rather, it is based on a historical overview of industrial relations and a digest of official regulations for labor-management consultation.

Nomura's research conducts a more nuanced analysis on Company T's industrial relations than that of Koyama. According to Nomura, the labor union does not concern itself with issues of wage distribution or assessment. While labor-management negotiations do occur occasionally on issues of productivity management, working hours, rearrangement and redeployment of labor, and the number of personnel, these matters are in principle subject to the company's decision. Nomura argues that Company T's labor union is committed to the company's prosperity, thus the influence of the union is limited to the extent of not hampering the rational management of the company. (Nomura, 1993: 91) In this way, labor-management relations at Company T can be characterized as company-first, but this does not mean non-union. The union's role is to supplement the rational management by keeping the excessive pursuit of efficiency in check (ibid.: 91-92).

The edited volume by Ishida et al. examines the lean production system of companies T and MA from various angles. In the chapter on industrial relations, Hisamoto Norio, taking the mutually-dependent industrial relations" perspective, scrutinizes Company T's union activities at the factory level as well as labor-management consultations at the company level from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. At the company level, Hisamoto takes up the issues of introducing the continuous double-shift work system and revamping of the wage system. Labor

union leaders consulted with management while simultaneously relaying information to the workplace, aggressively seeking a collection of workplace opinions. In situations where differences between labor and management exist, compromise was sought for the creation of a preferable revision plan. At the factory level, Hisamoto considers the union branch to have a certain amount of voice, as it asserts its opinions on work force issues in labor-management consultations. However, a close reading of his accounts of the company-level consultation shows that, in situations where the opinions of the management and union differ, the management passes through their original plan. Furthermore, the collection of workplace opinion functions to promote union members understanding of the union leaderships position, rather than as an effort to reflect worker opinions in the labor-management consultation. At the factory level, the union has little impact on issues that regulate the efficiency management of the company, such as decreasing man-hour. Rather, the union exercises its influence in situations, such as when workers cannot take planned vacation time due to the excessive workload. In this regard, it seems rather questionable whether the role of labor unions can be so positively evaluated in labor-management consultations as claimed by Hisamoto.³⁾

Since the 1990s, Company T attempted to improve operations of the production system in order to deal with changes such as decreased labor supply and the ageing of factory employees. Asao Uichi et al., 1999 *Transformations of the Social Environment and the Automobile Production System (Shakai kankyo no henka to*

3) Hisamoto takes the position that the antagonistic relation's perspective (labor unions using solidarity as means to keep efficiency and labor management in check) does not relate well to analysis of Japan's industrial relations. For Hisamoto, as long as union members are employees, company-based unions function as employee unions which happily cooperate to raise corporate performance (Ishida et al., 1997: 269-70). Using this type of analytical category, then, perhaps Hisamoto's assessment and evaluation of the role/voice of the union is adequate. However, even if this is the case, there should be an explanation of how the company has treated workers as employees. As it was pointed out in the edited volumes by Koyama and Nohara/Fujita, the reality in which numerous workers, incapable of keeping up with the production line, are discharged is this situation not weakening the argument that company T is viewing union members as "employees?"

jidosha seisan sisuternu), addresses the issue of labor-management consultations regarding reforms of the production system. According to the first chapter "Improving the Work Environment" (Yamashita Motohiko), labor and management began consulting on how to improve work towards the end of the 1980s. The union asserted their stance on the question of workforce, which has long been the managements sanctuary, by stating the necessary numbers of workers not involved in the production line. However, management held to their position of not establishing a quota and did not respond to the union's request. In regard to the improvement of work activity, handling heavy materials decreased, as did operations requiring awkward positions, but the short time-cycle with numerous tasks and no leeway did not change, and highly intense and dense production continues. Moreover, in the chapter titled *Wage management and Industrial relations* (Saruta Masaki), the author argues that, despite changes in the surrounding environment for industrial relations, little change has occurred in the trend towards harmony and unity in labor-management relations and the non-democratic situation of the union elections.

(b) The debate over the function of Company N's Labor Union

At least up to the mid-1980s, the "voice" of Company N's labor union and its labor-management consultation was in stark contrast to that of Company T. Company N's labor union, similar to that of Company T's, took an accommodating line towards the company, but was deeply involved in human resources management and production issues. In the early 1980s, tensions heightened between the company and the union. Research on this companys labor union includes the following: Yamamoto Kiyoshi, *Industrial Relations in the Automobile Industry (Jidosha sangyo no roshi kankei)*, (1981), Totsuka Hideo/Hyodo Tsutomu eds., 1991. *The Shift in Industrial Relation and its Options (Roshi kankei no tenkan to sentaku)*, and Kamii Yoshihiko, 1994. *Workplace Regulations by Labor Unions (Rodo kumiai no shokuba kisei)*. These studies made differing evaluations on the actual role of the labor union.

Yamamoto's research takes an explicitly Marxist stance and pays attention to how

the economic base influences the institutional and political superstructure (industrial relations, labor unions) (Yamamoto, 1981: 15). The labor-management negotiations of Company N, formed during the high-growth economic period, worked through the channels of collective bargaining (for wage and working conditions) and two types of labor-management consultation (for issues of production and human resource problems). However, the ties between the company and the union are linked through the connections in the human resources department. The company supposedly exploits these connections and steers the union's wage negotiation. While the union maintains a certain amount of regulation over production concerns and personnel issues, Yamamoto argues that this does not necessarily indicate the strength of the union's "voice." Why? Only a limited number of union officers and leaders are involved in the labor-management consultations and negotiations, and the negotiation processes are closed to non-ranked union members. So, the union regulation did not reflect the will and intentions of its members. Such realities as the secretive negotiations and the unions oppressive internal operations (the lack of union democracy) lead Yamamoto to state that Company N's labor union "cannot be called as a bona fide union."⁴

Articles in the Totsuka/Hyodo edited volume argue that Company N's labor union maintained regulatory control over the workplace until the mid-1980s, and characterize labor-management relations within this company as one of collective industrial relations. However, with deteriorating corporate performance, Company N's management saw the union's workplace control as problematic, and tensions heightened between management and the union. In 1986, the very moment union leadership changed, Company N broke down the union's control over the workplace,

4) Saga Ichiro, 1984. *Corporations and Labor Unions (Kigyo to Rodo Kuriai)*, states that it is very difficult to argue, as Yamamoto did, that company Ns labor union can be characterized, in the truest sense, as a labor union, noting the repressive internal administration (particularly Chairman Ss despotic reign) and the lack of union democracy. Thus, company Ns union is characterized as a mammoth faction dwelling within the company (Saga, 1984: 200).

in pursuit of Company T's flexible production system and a new type of industrial relations where managerial authority is respected. However, the authors argue that one should not characterize the change in Company N's industrial relations as convergence into the model of Company T, because Company T's model is not a fixed system, and also has internal contradictions (Totsuka/Hyodo eds., 1991: 261).

This Totsuka/Hyodo edited volume provides a contrastive evaluation to Yamamoto's research on Company N's industrial relations and union. The opposing assessments may result from the use of different analytical frameworks. While Yamamoto takes a Marxist perspective, the Totsuka/Hyodo volume takes an industrial relations' theory perspective, focusing on institutional and political superstructure. The latter perspective is not premised on the differential power between labor and management (capital). Depending on the configuration of industrial relations' institutions, there is possibility for relative equality between labor and management.⁵⁾ Based on this perspective, the Totsuka/Hyodo volume takes the position that Company N's union had the makings of a labor union. They argue that the union was not "a company union, controlled by the will of the managers until the mid-1980s, but rather, characterize it as "an independent actor that raises its own demands and interpretations regarding production matters and management strategy (ibid.: 270). For example, while Company N's union agrees with increasing productivity, they also put out QWL-like arguments. It opposes dangerous operation and stepping up of labor intensity, while demanding for "worthwhile work."

Tabata Hirokuni's chapter "Collective Agreement and Union Administration" in the Totsuka/Hyodo edited volume also emphasizes the strength and vitality of Company N's union. Tabata analyzes the internal administration of Company N's union and views it as an organization with unique ground rules, as seen by its lively workplace

5) This study's analytical framework based on industrial relations theory is reflected on the employment of the following research method: [We] analyze the formulating process of the rules of industrial relations by collecting information and documents, approaching the major actors within industrial relations system, both of management and the union (Totsuka/Hyodo, 1991: 8).

activities led by officers with blue-collar consciousness (many of them are team leaders) and networks beyond the confines of the company. Thus, his argument partially rebuts Yamamoto Kiyoshi's stance that Company N's union is a repressive organization that lacks democratic procedures. Tabata argues that, while union leadership thoroughly regulates workplace activities with a top-down style, individual union members enjoy a very high level of freedom of expression on workplace-specific issues. In regard to the union's networks outside of company confines, Tabata points to the central role played by N's union in the industry-level union federation (Confederation of Japan Automobile Workers' Unions), as well as strong involvement in political activities to promote the unification of national confederations. In other words, N's union was not limited to corporate-oriented movements, but also pursued activities on the industry/national economy level. This chapter also touches on the tensions in industrial relations between 1985 and 1986, the change in leadership, and the resulting transformation of Company N's industrial relations and union. The new labor relation, in which the management power increased, is characterized as extremely close to non-unionism. Thus, Tabata argues that this union's transformation is evidence of its strength prior to the change in the leadership.

This author thinks that Tabata's assertion, that N's union fulfilled the request for "union democracy" to the extent that it reflects the interest of the union members in its policies (*ibid.*: 213), is questionable. As even Tabata has admitted, minority opposition groups were suppressed, and general union members' expression of interest were not conducted directly, but rather, delegated to the team leaders (foremen) -workplace leaders. One can ask whether the oppression of the minority opposition functioned to suppress, not only the minority's, but also the general union members expression of opinions. Also, this study does not illustrate the extent to which the team leaders dipped into the opinions of the general union members, and how they are represented to the union leadership.⁶⁾

Kamii's study maintains a middle ground vis-à-vis Yamamoto's analysis that the union does not have potential within, and Tabata's argument that this union maintains its own theory of action, and has a certain function of representativeness. He analyzes the history as well as the current situation of Company N's industrial relations, and examines how union regulations, through labor-management consultation, were formulated and transformed. This study focuses on the system of labor-management consultation, but distinguishes between the procedural and reality angles to analyze the union's control of the workplace. The procedural angle refers to the degree of vocalization of the union towards the management, while the reality angle points to the degree of influence that these union voices have toward the actual management policies. Based on investigation of labor-management consultations and union regulations on workforce, transfers, work hours, and the introduction of new technology, Kamii argues that Company N's labor union was strong from the procedural angle, as well as maintaining a certain amount of power within the reality angle, over the regulatory issues of transfers and overtime.

Kamii's study also discusses the turning point in Company N's industrial relations and the deterioration of the union's control over the workplace. He argues that the cause of this deterioration derives not only from management pressure, but also from the union organization itself, with its various contradictions and problems. One factor in the deterioration of union workplace control was the vulnerability of the union organization itself. This problem originated from Company N labor unions unique perspective on union democracy, which placed greater emphasis on the leadership. Union members' autonomy, on the other hand, was not respected. Company N's union leadership excluded general union members from participation in the workplace regulating or administrative process, for the members-at-large were not autonomous decision-making subjects. For this reason, union members did not see the regulatory

6) If company N's labor union was, to a certain extent, democratic, the question becomes then why the union recognized delegation-ism by team leaders (foremen) only, and not direct expression of interest by the union members at large.

power of the union over management as a vested right, nor did they resort to acts of resistance or protest when management deprived the union of such power. In this way, despite their certain level of control over the workplace, Kamii characterizes Company N's labor union as lacking in union democracy, which accounts for the weakness of its organization.⁷⁾

(c) The 'voice' of labor unions and labor negotiations in other automakers-the diversity in industrial relations

Studies on automakers other than companies T and N have also examined systems of labor-management consultations and collective bargaining. These studies indicate the diversity of industrial relations within the automobile industry, and that Company T's model did not necessarily have a dominant influence on other automakers. Inagami (1983) argues, in his case study of Company D's industrial relations, that the labor unions voice to the management increasingly strengthened. This case study, spanning from the late 1960s until the early 1980s, is based on union documents as well as interviews with three top officers of D's union and its branch leadership. According to this study, D's union cooperated with the company to improve business, and by actively voicing their opinions, the union could achieve their goals of providing stability in and improvement of the union members lives. In regard to wage negotiations, the union kept the right to strike card in their pockets while conducting collective bargaining, and actually resorted to strikes in the negotiation periods of years 1972-1974. However, by the end of the 1970s, they no longer voted on the question of the right to strike, and industrial relations stabilized as the number of negotiations decreased with the establishment of one-shot wage offer. On the other hand, through both formal and informal channels, the union negotiated production

7) Kamii also argues that the strong regulatory power by company N's union originates from the N local of the leftist All Japan Autoworkers Union (Zenji) in the 1950s, which regulated Ns workplace. The Zenji N local disbanded after losing the 1953 struggle, but N's union, which formed in its aftermath, inherited the negotiating structure of the factory and the function of the foreman, and management accepted this

plans, redeployment, overtime, etc., with management, strengthening the unions jurisdiction over these issues since the late 1960s. Inagami assesses these changes within industrial relations as that of stability and maturity. The interesting aspect of this study is that Company D's industrial relations unfolded with its unique developments through the 1970s, despite the strong influence of Company T's production system, due to Company D's business tie-up with Company T. That is to say, industrial relations in Company D are characterized by collective industrial relations, such as negotiations with the threat of the right to strike lurking in the background and regulating labor conditions through labor-management consultations.

Hata (1989) vividly describes the process of collective bargaining on wage raises and wage distribution through a case study on Company H. This company's industrial relations, like that of Company D's, can be characterized as one of collective industrial relations. Labor and management sharply opposed each other in wage philosophy. The union supported a living wage philosophy, and opposed the implementation of a merit-based wage system on grounds that the living wage was still sub-standard. Management, however, maintained a position that heavily emphasized a merit-based system. In the eve of negotiations, the labor union took a stance so determined, the use of the right to strike was not out of the question even in the 1980s. In this period, the union did not win the demanded wage increase, but did obtain certain concessions, such as the diminishing of the difference in wage distribution between workers of different ranks, the rectification of the plateau effect on middle-aged workers wages, and relaxing of the conditions for automatic wage increases. Thus, the union, through collective bargaining, actualized their philosophy of wage distribution based on living wage to a certain extent, and regulated, to a certain extent, the merit-based management of human resources and wage system (Hata, 1989: 63)

The case studies on companies S and MA show that these two automakers' industrial relations are similar to that of Company T. The study of Company S's

industrial relations was conducted by an overseas researcher. John Price (Price, 1995) analyzes industrial relations of companies S and T (mostly the former). One purpose of Price's study was to contribute to the nature of Japan's lean production system debate. According to Price, Company S's union actively cooperated with management to improve corporate performance since the 1950s, and played an extremely important role in the establishment of lean production system for Company S. The role of the union was to warn the management when their exploitation approached the limits of toleration, and suppress criticisms by union members who opposed the production system. He argues that the flexibility of the production process and the active involvement of the employees in QC movements were made possible by the union's defective function as well as a merit-based wage system. So the lean production system operating in Japanese corporations is, in the aspect of separation of design and execution, post-Fordism, but in terms of the industrial relations characterized by management by stress, they have not left the threshold of Fordism.

Finally, Company MA's industrial relations were analyzed in the previously noted volume by Ishida et al. According to this study, the labor union at Company MA does not regulate labor conditions through the system of industrial relations. Labor-management negotiations at the workplace level act as the site for the union to voice grievances from the workplace and press its demands in response to production and administrative plans presented by the management. Whereas the union negotiates general issues concerning production or work force, it leaves actual implementation to the discretion of the management. But if there were a continuous eruption of sudden overtime work, heavily burdening union members, then the union would negotiate with the management to decrease the number of overtime hours. Thus, labor-management negotiation is understood as the site for necessary compromise between the voices from the workplace and the needs from the production structure. Furthermore, in the case of Company MA, the influence of older veterans representing the workplace is very strong. Although they are not fulltime

union officers, they keep the union management by the union leadership and their candidates in check (or under control). The purported purpose of this system is to prevent disjunctions between opinions of union members at the workplace level and the actions of the union leadership. However, it is not clear why such a check and balance structure is necessary, since full-time union officers are elected by the general union membership.

Studies of Industrial Relations in the Steel Industry

Overview

The study of labor-management relations in the steel industry after 1980 can be divided into three categories. The first category is those works that analyze the actual process of labor-management consultation and collective bargaining on issues of wages and working conditions. These studies focus on the issue regarding the response of labor-management (capital) to the economic environment surrounding the industry, which has greatly changed since the mid-1970s. The studies in the second and third categories analyzed the worker consciousness and the history of industrial relations and labor movements, respectively. The historical studies focused on the process by which the steel industry labor movements shifted from militant to cooperative lines from the late 1950s to the 1960s. This section will limit its coverage to scholarship on industrial relations and labor movements of major steel producers.

Industrial relations under downsized operations and the voice of the labor union

Ever since the Oil Shock, the steel industry became an overproducing and decaying industry. Major steel producers sought to downsize their operations, decreasing production while halting excessive production facilities. Furthermore, rationalization of

manpower created redundancy. Management dealt with this problem by transferring workers across steelworks. Management also loaned workers to subsidiaries or other companies, with or without the termination of employment relationships. For this reason, it has been pointed out that the system of lifetime employment, the basis for stable industrial relations, began to waver. Several researchers examined the function of the labor-management consultation system and the voice of the union in this greatly changing environment.

Analyzing industrial relations in B Steelwork from the late 1970s to the early 1980s in a series of articles (Ishida, 1986, 1989, 1995), Ishida Mitsuo, argues that production/personnel adjustment through downsizing was conducted calmly, because industrial relations of the company had reached the stage of stability and maturity. From the mid-1970s, B Steelwork proposed various methods of production and personnel adjustment, by way of redeployment, allocating workers to other companies, etc., yet the union did not oppose the production adjustment and accepted the personnel reallocation. The union took a cooperative attitude, for they recognized the grim market principles of competition between companies and even between intra-company steelworks, and acknowledged the necessity of personnel adjustment for fortifying the foundation of B steelwork. Ishida does not see this union-concession as reflecting collective industrial relations, or a relationship of quid pro quo. Rather, he characterizes it as participatory-model of industrial relations, based on sharing of information. However, there is a deep-seated desire among union members at the branch level for reciprocity for their cooperation with rationalization by way of spoil distribution of work conditions and/or wages. The union headquarters had the role of convincing the workplace, in place of the management, not to express such attitudes directly (Ishida, 1989: 31). Thus, industrial relations were reproduced within the union itself, as union leadership took on the role of management to repress opinions within the union.

On the other hand, Nitta Michio, 1988. in *The Participation of Japan's Workers*

(*Nihon no rodosha sanko*), emphasizes the strength of the union voice in labor-management consultations based on the analysis of industrial relations in the workplace, plant and company levels of S Steel in the 1970s. Nitta, taking mutually-dependent industrial relations perspective, contends that the union's voice did not regulate corporate efficiency but rather contributed positively to economic performance, as seen in the resolution of various labor issues generated by the oil shock and other socio economic changes. The collective agreement of S Steel restricted the labor union's voice vis-à-vis management decisions on issues of manpower and production within the system of labor-management consultation. Nevertheless, Nitta argues that the union had in practice a strong say in these matters. He observes the strong mutually trusting relationship between labor and management, which supports the solid labor-management consultation. For example, Union A, one of the plant unions for S Steel, demanded pre-adjusting negotiations in regard to the question of workforce streamlining in 1971. By 1977, the company accepted this demand. Since then, pre-adjustment negotiations have been established as a convention. Also, in labor redeployment consultations that transcend workplace borders, Nitta states that union demands are materialized to a great extent, in terms of education and wage assurance for those deployed.

Nitta's argument about S Steel's strong union voice has been criticized. For example, Kamii, from the perspective distinguishing the two aspects of union regulation as noted earlier, argues that Nitta's study tends toward positively evaluating union regulations as a whole, while examining only the development of the procedural aspects of union regulations, and not studying the reality aspects enough. Furthermore, Kamii points out the possibility that the management accepted the union's role in procedural aspects as long as it does not exercise actual regulation (Kamii, 1994: pp.9-10). In the author's view, the acceptance of the union's role in procedural regulation was motivated by the management's desire to strengthen cooperative union official's legitimacy among union members at large and thereby to

ease the implementation of its streamlining policy.⁸⁾

Analysis of the power balance between labor and management (capital)

As discussed in the preceding section, various studies analyzed how steel companies overcame the post-Oil Shock structural adjustments through the labor-management consultation system. These studies placed great emphasis on the act of sharing information and seemingly mutual trust between labor and management. On the other hand, a group of new studies have focused on the shifting power between labor and management. These studies took the perspective of collective industrial relations and examined the process of negotiations and content of labor conditions, wages, and employment. Researchers in this group indicate that the power balance has shifted to the management/capital side's advantage.

Matsuzaki Tadashi, 1982. in *Analysis of Japanese Steel Industry (Nihon Tekko Sangyo Bunseki)*, analyzes industrial relations as a social condition for the rapid increase in labor productivity within the steel industry. After examination of the labor negotiations and the consequences regarding wage increases, the distribution of the fruits of work force rationalization, and the reduction of working hours with a new shift system implementation, he argues that the management demands were struck through, and the union conceded. In regard to work hours, the union demands for shorter working hours were met in 1970 through the increase of days off under the newly introduced four team three shift system. However, this increase in holidays did

8) Another study that examines industrial relations and the voice of unions under downsized operations of a steel company is JIL Document Series, 1997. *Industrial Relations and the Human Resource Development in the Steel Industry (Tekkogyo no Roshikankei to Jinzai Keisei)*, especially Chapter 3 written by Mori Tateshi. In the case study of X steelwork, Mori suggests that the union possessed a significant voice in the consultation process with management concerning the streamlining of workforce. The study also shows that union leadership positions are occupied by work group leaders (i.e., lower-ranking managers), and that these work group leaders cum union representatives are expected by management to prevent union members dissatisfaction and potential trouble from opposition to the streamlining policy.

not result in decreased productivity or increased wage bills. Management, as compensation for the reduction in work hours, shortened/segmented rest time, monitored working hours more strictly, and actualized thorough streamlining of the workforce. Matsuzaki points out that the management had virtually nothing to lose from reduction of work hours, but rather were able to get hold of methods to increase labor intensity (Matsuzaki, 1982: 233).

In regard to wage negotiations, Matsuzaki mainly analyzes wage policies of the Japan Federation of the Steel Workers' Unions (the JFSWU, the industry-level federation of enterprise unions in the steel industry) in the latter half of the 1970s and collective bargaining of the annual rounds of wage negotiation, commonly called the Spring Offensive (*Shunto*). The JFSWU took a policy of Social Contract, which aimed to obtain government commitment to price control. This was in compensation for their concession to wage restraint policy (wage determination emphasizing economic rationality). However, this policy of Social Contract was a contract without a partner, and the union's sincerity was left to walk alone (ibid.: 251). As for the question of Spring Offensive collective bargaining, Matsuzaki presents an aspect of collective industrial relations, as the different positions of labor and management were made apparent. However, in reality, unofficial negotiations between union leadership and management officials play an important role in wage negotiations. This is because the union has a policy of not resorting to mass mobilization, even if the union is unsatisfied with the management's one-shot wage offer. Therefore, the importance and significance of this unofficial negotiation reflects on the power balance between labor and management (capital).

Like Matsuzaki, Yamagaki Masahiro (2000) is concerned with the power balance of labor and management up to the 1990s from a collective bargaining perspective. Yamagaki takes up labor unionism (*rodo kumiai shugi*), the operating principle of the JFSWU since the late 1960s, and examines to what extent the steelworkers' unions lived up to their principle. Labor unionism was one of transacting relationship (pie

theory of give and take): promoting rationalization and labor effort (give) → company growth (increase of pie) → wage increase (take), on the premise of lifetime employment." He examines how much the union conceded in terms of labor power supply (working hours, work intensity), how much the company succeeded in increasing profits and retained earnings as a result, and finally, how much the company, with its increased pie, gave back to the union through increased wages. The author argues that, while the union contributes to business profits through their concessions, the company payback (wage increase) is meager. The transaction-based relationship of labor unionism was a one-sided compromise by the union. Furthermore, Yamagaki notes that lifetime employment that underpinned this relationship disintegrated after 1980. Until the 1970s, redeployment of workforce within the factories supported the principle of job security. However, due to the increase of loaning workers to other companies from the mid-1980s, as well as the full-scale enforcement of the virtual dismissal of workers on-loan (by transferring their employment from the sending to the receiving companies) and early retirement schemes in the mid-1990s, this basic principle was no longer protected. Moreover, corporate performance had not worsened to a great degree in this time period. Yamagaki explains the broken pie theory by showing that the two supporting pillars of labor unionism, the transaction-based relationship and lifetime employment, ended up being subordinate to the third pillar of "company growth-ism."

Yamagaki's work can be considered a partial criticism to the work on B steelwork by Ishida Mitsuo (noted above). Ishida, maintaining that collective industrial relations are incompatible with industrial relations of Japanese companies, failed to see that B steelworks' labor union (an affiliate of the JFSWU) employed a transaction-like labor unionism as its basic principle prior to the Oil Shock. As the study by Yamagaki indicates, the union accepted the grim market principles under the difficult reality of downsizing of the post-Oil Shock era, and restrained from a transaction-like stance. As Ishida himself notes, however, regardless of this conscious restraint, the

philosophy of transaction-ism was deeply rooted among branch-level union officials.

Consciousness of the Steel Worker

There is little research conducted from below to examine workplace-level industrial relations in the steel industry since the 1980s. However, works depicting various aspects of steel workers' consciousness, based on interviews and opinion surveys, have been published. For example, Inagami Takeshi (1981) portrays workers with a strong corporate consciousness and a pro-active attitude toward technology innovations—a true member of the corporate community. This depiction is based on a survey of worker attitudes/consciousness conducted in 1976 at new, technologically-advanced steelworks (see also the JFSWU, 1980). When asked about technology innovation, 20% of the respondents answered it is necessary in order to compete with other companies, while 33% of the respondents said it is necessary, because technology innovation leads to the improvement of employment security and working conditions. Furthermore, their feeling towards their company as stably managed, with secure livelihood, a key industry supporting the nation, were strongly felt or somewhat felt by 75% and 65% of the respondents, respectively (Inagami, 1981: 80, 87-89; the JWSWU, 1980: 490-491). Inagami argues that this strong corporate consciousness, with a positive attitude toward technological innovations, is due to the deep internalization of workers' career life into the company.⁹⁾ Inagami's study relied upon the corporate community model, thus did not pay much attention to the variations in workers' opinions toward industrial relations or the potentially tense relations between labor and management.

For example, the same opinion survey shows that over 40% of respondents answered negatively or apathetically to the question of technological innovations.

9) In addition, Inagami touches on industrial relations at the workplace where the role of union is limited. He points out that a talkfest sponsored by the workplace management replaces the union role by taking up dissatisfied opinions. Like that of the automobile industry, collective industrial relations within the workplace are weak.

Furthermore, the attitudes of the workers towards their companies are much more ambivalent than Inagami makes it out to be. Quite a few numbers of workers feel alienated from their labor or have some sense of dissatisfaction with the standard of wages. (Inagami, 1981: 87-89; the JFSWU, 1980: 490-1.) Fujisawa Kenji (1981), using the same opinion survey, points out that there is a wide range of dissatisfaction by workers towards the meritocratic management.

Kamada Toshiko (Kamada, 1994), focusing on steel workers loaned out to other companies, delineates a different workers' consciousness from those at cutting-edge steelworks, portrayed by Inagami. Kamada's investigation is based on personal interviews with workers' on-loan and an opinion survey conducted by Company A's labor union. According to these sources, many workers considered the steel industry to be in decline, and deemed it inevitable for employment adjustments to occur. However, Kamada highlights opinions such as a worker who wondered why he, in particular, was picked, but reluctantly agreed to be loaned out after his superior's strong persuasion. After being loaned out, the workers were troubled by lower quality of working conditions or personal relations within a new and unaccustomed work environment, and felt bitter towards the company that reneged on the promise of life-time employment. In response to the question whether being on loan has changed their corporate consciousness, a large portion of the interviewed workers answered that they had, from the beginning, no sense of affiliation with the company. The survey conducted by Company A's labor union matches, to a certain extent, the results of the interviews. In the survey, a large percentage of workers criticized the loaning-out policy and/or its implementation. The group of workers who were loaned out had the lowest work motivation and morale, and the majority of these workers negatively evaluated the labor union. It is difficult to assess to what extent the attitude depicted by Kamada represents the workers' on-loan as a group, but it is interesting to see the stark contrast with the workers' attitude depicted by Inagami. It is possible to see the workers' on-loan as part of the corporate community, as long

as they do not lose the status as employees of the company of origin, but it may be that the workers do not perceive themselves as such.

"New interpretations" of the history of industrial relations and labor movements

There are more historical studies of the steel industry's industrial relations and labor movements than that of the automobile industry. This is perhaps due to the fact that the automobile industry's labor movements (particularly those of company T and N) had become apolitical based on the hegemony of harmonious labor-management line by the mid 1950s. The labor movement within the steel industry, in contrast, maintained a militant position well into the late 1950s, and even after the harmonious line gained hegemony, militant minority groups remained. Thus the apoliticization of the union did not occur immediately. The majority of the research published after 1980 aimed to explain the transformation of the workplace industrial relations from the 1950s to the 1960s, as well as the conversion of labor union leadership from the left to the right wing. The following focuses on those studies that aimed for a new interpretation of the labor movements of the steel industry.

Matsuzaki Tadashi's study of the labor disputes of 1957/1959 over wage increases can be considered the first to historically analyze them (especially that of 1957). Matsuzaki shows how the JFSWU overcame the weakness of company-based unions in the 1950s by establishing industry-based organizations, and analyzes why the unions engaged in industry-based struggles were defeated in the disputes of 1957 and 1959. Previous research explained the union's defeats in these disputes as caused mainly by the unity on the management-side, i.e.; the major three corporations' staunch stance of no wage offer or one-shot wage offer. Despite the defeats, the JFSWU maintained its policy for industry-based organization.¹⁰⁾ While acknowledging

10) For example, see Rodo Sogi Chosakai (a study group of labor disputes) ed., 1958. *Steel Industry Conflicts (Tekko Sogi)*, Takanashi Akira, 1967. *Industrial Relations of Japan's Steel Industry (Nihon Tekkogyo no Roshikankei)*.

the importance of the management-side unity, Matsuzaki points out that the union's solidarity at the industry-level was already weak in 1957. According to Matsuzaki, the weakness of industry-level unity of labor unions was brought about by the conflict between enterprise unions with different policies (i.e., leftist and rightist lines) as well as the trickle-down effect of corporate competition to the workers themselves.

Hirachi Ichiro (1985) analyzes the 49 day struggle, which took place in 1959 at Nihon Kokan (NKK) Tsurumi steelwork, and the changes in industrial relations following turnabouts in union policy. Hirachi points out that the central roles in the 49 day struggle were played by young and unranked workers, who were dissatisfied with the senior workers. Hirachi disproved, with substantiating evidence, the commonly accepted narrative depicting the senior workers as leading this conflict. He also shows that the young workers' dissatisfactions were gradually alleviated after the defeat, as the management adopted a wage system based on job evaluation as well as a new foremen system. Furthermore, the youth, who had participated in the 49 day struggle, ended up becoming the central members of the right-wing bloc when it established control within the union in the late 1960s.

Andrew Gordon also conducted a historical study of the Nihon Kokan's industrial relations and union (Gordon, 1998). Based on interviews with union activists and labor specialists within the management, Gordon traces the history of industrial relations at Nihon Kokan Kawasaki and Tsurumi steelworks from the immediate postwar to the early 1970s. Through this study, Gordon demonstrates that harmonious industrial relations were established in the 1960s, out of the internal ideological struggles within the union (among activists who held competing views of how the union movements should be run) and the management intervention of it. Gordon also analyzes how harmonious industrial relations were maintained thereafter. According to Gordon, the union leadership took an extremely harmonious line, but this policy did not necessarily represent the opinions of the average union member. In order to maintain their legitimacy, the harmonious union leadership repressed

opposition while making efforts to gain concessions from the management in an attempt to obtain the general union membership's understanding and support toward their policy. By demonstrating the political aspect of harmonious industrial relations, Gordons research provides a differing interpretation from the accepted narrative, which identifies sources of Japanese-style industrial relations in workers' company consciousness and the internalization of their careers in the company.

Michael H. Gibbs and Suzuki Akira offer new interpretations of the history of industrial relations and unions of Yahata Steelwork (Shin Nittetsu Yahata). Gibbs' research (Gibbs, 2000) analyzes the sense of purpose of union leaders, activists, and management officials, as well as competing definitions of purpose among the above-noted actors, over the period between 1943 to 1984 (in particular the first twenty years). The author bases his analysis on sources such as union and management history and biographies of activists and managers to provide a detailed examination of the development of labor movements and labor management. The interesting aspect of this study is that he also provides subjective interpretations made by those individuals who were directly involved in the industrial relations.

Suzuki's research (Suzuki, 2000) analyzes the transformation of the Yahata union's operating principles in the 1960s. Previous scholarship on this issue maintained that the steel union movement converted from political and militant line to economic and harmonic line in the 1960s. In contrast, Suzuki argues that in this transitional period (the first half of the 1960s), the Yahata Union was willing to cooperate with rationalization, but not willing to surrender the right to conflict in its demands for wages. Why? Although the rightist faction controlled the union, a group of union leaders pursued economic militancy based on the vision of Euro-American styled labor movements. In addition, the policy debates between the rightist majority and the left-wing minority were still lively at that time, influencing the rendering of a militant union policy. Since their policy of economic militancy exceeded the managements level of tolerance, these leaders were replaced, after the labor dispute in

1965, by those who maintained a position much closer to that of the management. Thereafter, the union's operating principle became much more enterprise-oriented and cooperative with the management.

Conclusions

This article has reviewed scholarship, published after 1980, on labor-management or labor-capital relations of the automobile and steel industries. These works analyzed various aspects of industrial relations-workplace industrial relations, labor-management consultations, collective bargaining, internal administration of unions, workers' consciousness, and the history of labor movements. Depending on the researchers' theoretical frameworks, these works differed in the evaluation of industrial relations within their particular case studies. Researchers who have adopted the collective industrial relations (labor union versus management) framework articulate the imbalance in power between labor and management, and the decreasing role of the labor union as representing their members' interests. They are generally critical of past developments and the current situation of industrial relations. On the other hand, those researchers who consider the mutually-dependent relationship of labor and management as indicative of the maturity of industrial relations provide a different picture. They evaluate the union as playing an important role for forming consensus between labor and management, as well as within the union members themselves, and believe that the management has the good faith of taking the union's voice seriously. Thus, these works tend to depict the industrial relations in a positive light.

In this authors view, there are three problems with the latter group of scholarship. First, since they treat a labor union as the unitary actor representing members' interests that are assumed to be largely homogenous, the representation function of

the union is not problematized. Other studies reviewed in this article, however, have shown the disjunction of interests between union officials and rank and file members and the absence of policy debate within the union. Second, while these studies stress that the union can voice various managerial issues through labor-management consultations, they do not pay attention to the distinction between the procedural and reality aspects of union regulation (if the distinction made by Kamii is used) and tend to inflate the influence of the union by focusing on the procedural aspect. Third, one of the major premises supporting this positive assessment of industrial relations appears to be invalidated. According to these studies, the mutually-dependent industrial relations contributed to market competitiveness of the enterprise, by enabling the very flexible response of the enterprise to the post-Oil Shock recession. This argument, however, seems to be weakened by the fact that many companies, while maintaining this type of industrial relations, have suffered from economic difficulties under the Heisei recession since the early 1990s.

How does the scholarship reviewed in this article provide basis for a comparative analysis of South Korean and Japanese industrial relations? Industrial relations of the two countries are similar in the sense that their institutional structures are decentralized at the enterprise level. Despite this structural similarity, South Korean industrial relations are much more adversarial than in Japan. What are some of the influential factors which may accounts for this difference in industrial relations?

First, the range of union membership differs between the two countries. Enterprise unions in South Korea mainly represent non-managerial blue-collar workers, while those in Japan represent white-collar workers and lower-ranking managers, in addition to blue-collar workers. The marked presence of white-collar workers and lower-ranking managers within Japanese labor unions can be regarded as contributing to the cooperative stance taken toward higher management, as overlaps exist between union leadership and lower management positions (as well as their reserves). Blue-collar domination, on the other hand, contributes to the more militant

behaviors Korean unions exhibit concerning wages, working conditions and personnel policies (see Jeong, 1995).

Second, active rank and file participation and internal policy debates of some Korean unions seem to render union behavior to be more militant than their Japanese counterparts (see Cho, 2001). As the studies reviewed in this article have shown, Japanese enterprise unions are very weak in their representative functions and are almost devoid of internal policy debates, as policies are decided in a top-down manner by union officials who maintain the relationship of mutual trust with the management.

Third and finally, Korean companies are more authoritarian than their Japanese counterparts, as chaebol owners exercise their managerial authority in a rather dictatorial way, and often take hostile attitudes toward unions (see Kwon and O'Donnell, 2001). This management style, coupled with repressive government labor policy, seems to provoke Korean Unions' militant reactions. Japanese companies retain their prerogatives in devising and implementing rationalization programs, but their management style is much less authoritarian. As shown in this article, management try to secure the consent of the union by consulting with union representatives, based on the assumption that the union leadership would accept them and would cooperate in implementing the programs.

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국문요약

이 논문은 1980년 이후 일본 자동차, 철강 산업에서의 노사관계를 주제로 한 기존 연구의 흐름을 검토하고 있다. 필자는 자동차 산업의 노사관계를 다룬 연구 중 생산현장수준에 초점을 둔 연구는 노동조합이 노동자의 대표로서 협상력을 제대로 발휘하지 못하였다고 논의한다. 한편 조합 수준의 노사관계에 초점을 둔 연구는 노동조합이 사업경영에 상당한 정도의 목소리를 내었다고 논의하고 있다. 물론 노동조합의 영향력의 정도에 대해서는 연구자들 사이에 열띤 논의가 이루어졌다. 철강 산업에서 노사관계에 대한 연구는 크게 오일 쇼크 이후 경제환경의 변화에 대한 노동자와 사용자의 대응, 노동자 의식, 그리고 노사관계와 노동운동의 역사와 같은 세 쟁점을 중심으로 이루어졌다. 자동차 산업에 대한 연구에서와 같이, 1970년대와 1980년대 이후 철강산업이 크게 합리화 되면서 노동조합이 사업경영에 미친 영향에 대해서도 상이한 입장이 존재한다고 논의하고 있다.

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