

**A Sociology of Work in Japan**, by Ross Mouer and Hirosuke Kawanishi, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, vii + 303 pp., US\$27.99 (paperback), ISBN 0-521-65845-4

This book makes several contributions previously lacking in scholarship on postwar Japan. Ross Mouer and Hirosuke Kawanishi examine how the structural aspects of employment in Japan determine the choices made by most Japanese. *A Sociology of Work in Japan* is a solid and valuable addition to the survey literature on Japanese labor. In 10 chapters, parsed into six sections, this book presents an impressive literature review and comprehensive explanation of the trajectory of work and labor in Japan from the political upheaval of the 1950s to the economic restructuring of early twenty-first century.

Mouer and Kawanishi begin with an exceptional chapter, 'The Japanese at Work', in which they address the questions most commonly raised by those interested in the topic of work and labor in postwar Japan. The authors skillfully introduce the major questions about 'Japanese-style management' and the 'Japanese work ethic', which have been the central focus of labor scholarship on Japan for much of the fifty years since the mid 1950s.

As a historian of labor in postwar Japan, I was most drawn to the second and third chapters, 'Towards a Sociology of Work in Postwar Japan' and 'Competing Models for Understanding Work in Japan', in which the authors survey the field of labor studies and identify eight 'intellectual traditions' that characterize the study of labor in Japan. The second chapter, 'Toward a Sociology of Work in Postwar Japan', introduces major models used to approach the study of labor in Japan. A fascinating table neatly lays-out what Mouer and Kawanishi have identified as eight approaches ('social policy', 'labor studies', 'industrial sociology', 'industrial relations', 'human resource management', 'labor economics', 'labor sociology', and 'labor science') to the study of work and labor in the twentieth century (pp. 26–7).

The third chapter, 'Competing Models for Understanding Work in Japan', is unique for the way it provides the reader with a broad perspective on the various approaches to the field of labor studies in Japan. The chapter identifies four theoretical frameworks used by scholars ('conflict', 'institutional', 'behavioral', and 'cultural'), and then briefly narrates the work of four representative scholars as a means of introducing a cross-section of the Japanese language scholarship. Because of the intensity of ideological conflict that has shaped the field, however, the 'approaches' and 'intellectual traditions' identified in the second and third chapters are still better explained as 'schools' or 'factions' (*gakuha*). In an apparent effort to be succinct, Mouer and Kawanishi have understated the ideological divides between labor scholars that defined the field in Japan. Despite this minor quibble, the section will be very useful to those seeking a comprehensive overview of the trajectory of labor studies in Japan.

I was particularly struck by the discussion of workforce participation that comprises the core of the fourth chapter, 'Hours of Work, Labor-force Participation and the Work Ethic', which examines the 'commitment to being at work' seemingly exhibited by most Japanese (p. 67). In this, Mouer and Kawanishi offer a comprehensive survey of the time spent working and commuting to work by men, and some women, primarily employed fulltime by medium to large firms. While this chapter offers a useful look at the structures of work and workplaces that have characteristically defined the experience of a significant segment of the workforce, long hours at work do

not necessarily mean that workers are working harder. The chapter would have been more persuasive had it also taken into consideration the differing patterns in white-collar and service work examined by a growing body of studies that demonstrate how Japanese workers also practice 'foot dragging' strategies. Recent participant-observer studies of the Japanese workplace, for example, demonstrate how at least some employment sectors appear rife with 'clock-watchers' and autonomous 'work-to-rule' slowdown strategies that if taken into account might have added weight to the chapter's assessment of the Japanese 'work ethic'.

Nevertheless, Mouer and Kawanishi have also done a fine job of presenting aggregate data that includes women's part-time employment as well as the hours of unwaged work done by women at home (pp. 74-5). Yet, the chapter does not reflect relatively recent studies that engage the importance of women's experiences in the Japanese workplace. Indeed, several recent studies in labor sociology, anthropology, and history focus on the continuation of wage and promotion disparities between men and women *despite* legal reforms that have tightened requirements on employers to allay workplace inequalities. Despite the authors' attempts to include women in their narrative, the net result left still more questions unaddressed than answered.

Despite a few understandable weaknesses, Mouer and Kawanishi have constructed a book that will prove very useful for scholars outside the field of labor studies who wish to acquire a better grasp of the complex trajectory of employment in postwar Japan. More importantly, the book will make a fine source of comparative data on Japan for labor scholars not conversant in the Japanese language literature.

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**Japan's Business Renaissance: How the World's Greatest Economy Revived, Renewed and Reinvented Itself**, by Mark B. Fuller and John C. Beck, New York, McGraw-Hill, 2006, ix + 240 pp., US\$27.95 (hardcover), ISBN 0071455078

In facing new challenges under globalization, advanced capitalist countries have readjusted their existing political-economic systems. What direction should be taken? How can it be achieved? In the debate on readjustment, considering the high performance of the US economy in the 1990s, neo-liberals have argued that European and Japanese coordinated economies do not work any more, and that they should adopt a US-style political economy. In contrast, many theorists of institutionalism, such as David Soskice and Ronald Dore, based on a path-dependent national track, hold that every national economy has its own distinctive system and that it will not necessarily move toward an American liberal model. Throughout this debate, Japan in particular has attracted attention, because it developed a successful model different from the American liberal model.

Fuller and Beck's *Japan's Business Renaissance* attempts to search for an alternative of adjustment method as well as a new theoretical perspective by examining how Japan revived its economy. Unlike neo-liberals including Rudi Dornbusch, Brink Lindsey, and Aaron Lukas, Fuller and Beck hold that the Westerners including Americans should learn