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*Gender Struggles: Wage-Earning Women and Male-Dominated Unions in Postwar Japan*, by Christopher Gerteis. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010, 275 pp., \$39.95 (ISBN 978-0-674-03569-0)

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Japanese trade unionism made a fresh start during the occupation period following Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers in August 1945. Left-wing trade unions led the union movement in Japan in the late 1940s and 1950s. *Sanbetsu-kaigi*, or the Congress of Industrial Unions, was initially the leader of left-wing trade unionism before it declined in the early 1950s. Sōhyō, or the General Council of Trade Unions, shifted to the left immediately after being set up as a moderate national confederation of trade unions in 1950, and from that time on, it served as the center of left-wing trade unionism.

Sōhyō, or the left-wing trade unions in general, not only made economic demands such as demanding wage increases but also made political demands against the Japanese government, and organized struggles against the US government and its military forces stationed in Japan. Sōhyō's campaigns reached a peak in 1960, when the Miike Coal Miners' Union affiliated with Sōhyō put up a struggle against the mass-dismissal plan of the employer, and when Sōhyō itself mobilized the anger and objections of the common Japanese people against the revision of the US–Japan Security Treaty, which they believed had plunged Japan into entanglement in the Cold War.

In this book, Christopher Gerteis takes up some of the social movements that the left-wing trade unions in Japan took part in or themselves organized from 1945 through 1960, and he rethinks and re-evaluates them from the viewpoint of gender, or the feminization of labor. Needless to say, Japanese labor historians today have considerable knowledge about these movements, as do some foreign labor historians of contemporary Japan. What Gerteis has aimed to do is not to scrutinize the details of these movements, but to review them from the viewpoint of gender/the feminization of labor. Such a viewpoint is new in the field of Japanese labor history, and it presents a real challenge to Gerteis. In line with this new perspective, Gerteis finds that Sōhyō (as well as other left-wing trade unions) did not truly consider women union members as wage-earning workers, even though one-third of the union members affiliated with Sōhyō were women.

Given this finding, Gerteis devotes his attention to two types of organization. One type is the women's department, which consisted of women union members, and was set up in a trade union's structure. According to Gerteis, female union members or women's departments played important roles in organizing the left-wing trade unions to participate in the political struggle of anti-Americanism, and furthermore, in mobilizing common housewives who had nothing to do with the trade union movement for the same struggle. I do not understand exactly what Gerteis intends when he interprets women's departments in this way. Perhaps he implies that the left-wing trade unions did not think seriously about the improvement of employment conditions, such as wages and working environment, for female union members.

Another type of organization that Gerteis pays attention to is the housewife association, which organized housewives of male union members outside the trade unions. The housewife associations succeeded in calling out wives as association members in the struggles to protect the working conditions of their husbands as union members. According to Gerteis, one of the reasons Sōhyō, or the left-wing trade unions in general, did not fundamentally consider female union members as wage earning workers is that their male union members continued to harbor discriminatory feelings against women, as was common among Japanese people before and during World War II. He demonstrates this by interpreting, from a gender viewpoint, political cartoons published in trade union magazines.

Gerteis also suggests that left-wing trade unionism up to the 1960s exerted a considerable influence on the feelings of later working women. Japanese working women from the 1970s to the present came to have feelings of indifference or hostility against trade unionism, which men dominated, and also against other organizations dominated by men. Gerteis stresses throughout this book that there was a gender bias in left-wing trade unions in post-war Japan.

The biggest contribution of this book is Gerteis' partial success in re-thinking and re-evaluating social movements in postwar Japan from the viewpoint of gender/the feminization of labor. This is clear when we consider the current research situation in Japan. To begin with, the amount of research of this kind remains very small: few female researchers have engaged in this type of research, and have produced only slight results so far. There has been virtually no research of this kind conducted by Japanese male researchers.

There are several reasons for this. First, research on trade unionism has generally stagnated recently. Furthermore, most researchers of trade unionism are male, and lacking in gender sensibility. The same can be said for trade unionism itself, and for left-wing researchers. In fact, I think that one reason for the stagnation in research, particularly among left-wing researchers, is their lack of gender sensibility.

Shifting our gaze to the individual topics in this book, we can see that Gerteis took up and evaluated them from a gender viewpoint, and succeeded in producing an innovative perspective. His use of this new viewpoint to examine the early years of *shuntō* in the late 1950s is particularly interesting. *Shuntō*, or the spring wage offensive, refers to the annual wage bargaining offensives by enterprise-based unions. Every spring, many enterprise-based unions simultaneously demand wage increases, coordinating their demand activities. They aim at achieving results through the synergy of their demand activities.

*Shuntō* began in 1955, and it is commonly believed by Japanese researchers that it was successful in the late 1950's in gaining wage increases for workers. Gerteis points out, however, that the pay gap between male and female workers increased in the late 1950s. He also points out that in the late 1950s the tendency of female workers to quit jobs after getting married became stronger than before. In fact, the latter is one of the reasons for the former, as the mean wage level of female workers decreases when the mean length of service for female workers shortens, under the age or seniority-based wage and promotion practices. In addition, Gerteis points out the importance of the Income Tax Law revision in the 1950s, which substantially reduced the amount of income tax that married male wage-earning workers had to pay. This means that the government policy encouraged female workers to quit their jobs and become housewives after getting married. Gerteis adds that there was virtual cooperation among employers, government and trade unions in establishing these practices and policies. According to Gerteis, the success of *shuntō* meant the promotion of the male breadwinner wage system in Japan, as it is not so difficult to understand that the Japanese age or seniority-based wages in issue in *shuntō* are, in reality, the embodiment of a male breadwinner wage system from a gender viewpoint.

This interpretation by Gerteis, that *shuntō* accelerated the formation of the male breadwinner wage system in Japan, is completely original. This is in sharp contrast to the common practice among Japanese trade unionists and Japanese labor researchers today, including left-wing researchers, of paying attention only to the large wage increases as a result of *shuntō*.

Gerteis's interpretation is an important contribution to the existing research and his objective is partially achieved, I think. However, this book does not fully succeed. The topics that Gerteis took up are scattered, and it is not so easy to understand the history of the left-wing social movement and left wing trade unionism from 1945 to 1960 in Japan. The methodology that Gerteis utilizes is also somewhat eclectic. He uses the symbolic interpretation of tears of female activists and trade union cartoons in some chapters and conducts a sociological analysis of very concrete organizations in another. The general explanation of each topic is often too long and detailed, while the descriptive interpretation of the topic from a gender viewpoint is often too short and simplistic. As a result, although Gerteis's intentions and claims are clear, the book as a whole lacks persuasive power. In addition, typographical errors appear on some pages.

That said, I am deeply moved that the gender perspective, now widely utilized in research conducted in English-speaking countries, has been extended to research on other countries. In contrast, I cannot help thinking that the gender perspective in Japan lags in research on trade unions, as well as in research on almost all other social phenomena.