

The present state of research on zaibatsu: The case of mitsubishi

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Abstrak

The objective of this article is to present a broad outline of studies on Japanese zaibatsu from the 1960s to the present day, viewed in the context of shifts in the postwar Japanese economy. Research on zaibatsu constitutes one of the most substantial bodies of work in Japanese business history studies. In tracing its development the paper identifies three distinct peaks in research activity: in the second half of the 1960s, in the late 1970s to early 1980s, and in the first half of the 1990s. The first of these periods was marked by monopoly capital research that focused on the biggest zaibatsu, especially Mitsui; the second adopted the methods of business history and expanded the research focus to take in smaller zaibatsu and the so-called 'newwave zaibatsu'; the third sought to explicate connections between prewar zaibatsu and postwar enterprise groups. From the mid1990s, however, Japan's prolonged recession and the accompanying pressures for economic structural reform brought a rapid cooling of interest in these representative institutions of the 'old' Japanese economy. The paper surveys these trends and introduces the latest research, with special reference to Mitsubishi, and suggests some possible paths along which zaibatsu research may develop in future.