

Studying the Spread of Volleyball in Pre-War Physical Education in Factories From the Perspective of Gender and the Labor Movement

TAKAI Masashi

**Keywords : Physical Education in Factories, Gender,
Labor Movement, Volleyball**

I . Purpose of the Study and Previous Research

There have been many studies in recent years focusing on the history of physical education and sports in Japan. In particular, there has been a rise in studies that have examined the status of sports in wartime Japan and the history of physical education in schools from the Meiji era to the early Showa era. Representative studies include Yasuhiro Sakaue and Hiroyuki Takaoka's *Maboroshi no Tōkyō orinpikku to sono jidai* ("The Age of the Missing Tokyo Olympics") (2009), Shunya Yoshimi's *Undōkai to nihon kindai* ("The Sports Day and Modern Japan") (1999), Isamu Kuroda's *Rajio taisō no tanjō* ("The Birth of Radio Gymnastics") (1999), Katsumi Irie's *Nihon Fashizumu ka no taiiku shisō* ("The Philosophy of Physical Education Under Japanese Fascism") (1986), and Kō Takashima's *Teikoku nippon to*

supōtsu ("Sports and Imperial Japan") (2015).

However, physical education history or sports sociology scholars have tended to primarily focus on pre-war competitive sports or military sports, school physical education practices and systems, and nationality in mass gymnastic exercises (radio gymnastics etc.). Moreover, there has been very little research on sports for factory workers. Importance should also be placed on sports activities outside large competitions, such as the Olympics, Meiji Jingu Athletic Games, military sports, or the mass gymnastics led by the State, as sport was often "enjoyed" also during rest periods in the workplace and after work. These activities were sports for popular mass entertainment; a typical example of which was the focus on physical education for factory workers.

This paper focuses on factory workers from the Taisho era to the wartime period; further, it seeks to identify the status of factory physical education as a popular sports activity in the pre-war era, the process of its transformation, and the factors that led to its popularity. In particular, this study focuses on volleyball, a popular factory sport, and the relationship between the genders (male workers at ammunition factories and female workers at spinning mill factories), the politics of hierarchy within the factory, and the influence of the labor movement. Through this examination, this study examines how gender and factory hierarchies were associated with leisure time factory sports and analyzes the connections between the social context of factory sports and the labor movement.

II. Spread to Female Factory Workers

1. Health, Hygiene, and Factory Sports

Until the pre-war period, sport had primarily been focused on school students and there was a strong belief that such activities were generally for the elite. Regardless of these beliefs, however, social physical education for workers and particularly for factory workers was quite widespread in the Taisho era. From the Meiji period, a male labor force was not exclusively used in the development of Japanese modern industry. As light industries developed, there was an increase in textile mill industries, so female workers also contributed to Japanese industrialization. In the first part of this paper, the role of female textile mill workers is examined, and the rise of social physical education from the perspectives of gender and the labor movement is discussed.

[Factory Recreation and the Introduction of Volleyball]

In the late Meiji period it was believed that a social form of physical education should be encouraged for factory workers and particularly for female workers. Hyozo Omori, who introduced volleyball to Japan in 1908, noted the following about the necessity for a social form of physical education for female workers:

With the development of industries and their subsequent impact, women have left rural areas and gathered in urban areas, which have very poor air quality. They have to work in factories which are one of the unhealthiest environments. Although manual labor may have decreased compared to farming households thanks to industrial

machines, it has led to an increase in nervous exhaustion.¹⁾

Omori was lamenting the weak state of school physical education programs and social physical education in Japan and advocating the necessity for physical education. He pointed out that female factory workers suffered from long working hours and unhealthy working environments and therefore should be encouraged to participate in social physical education activities.

Whether Omori's proposals had any impact is unclear but, after the 1910s, new sports such as volleyball began to be played at spinning mill factories. For example, an in-house volleyball competition was held in Kurabo in 1918²⁾ and volleyball was introduced in 1923 at Nichibo (called Dainippon Spinners Co. Ltd. at that time and Unitika Ltd. from 1969 onwards).³⁾ At that time, volleyball was being introduced in many factories as a women's sport or for recreation. For example, Ryutaro Hashimoto, President of Kojo Sekaisha⁴⁾ said that he and Tada Norio, a teacher at Kobe Koto Commercial School in 1923 worked together as volleyball coaches at

1) "Pioneers", Young Men's Christian Association, April 1908, p.23(Tokyo)

2) "Volleyball Monthly", Sports Publishing Co. Ltd., February 1951, p.6

3) Edited by History Compilation Committee, "Seventy-five Years of Nichibo's History", 1966, p.550(Tokyo)

4) Hashimoto continued to publish a magazine related to factory workers and factor management from the "Factory Workers' Companies". For example, from the 1920s to the 1930s he published monthly magazines such as "Madoi" or "Factory World" in Kansai related to factory labor. In addition, he also published the "Narratives of Spinning Mill Factory Personnel(1931)". The preface of the book was assigned to Muto Sanji(former Kanebo Chairman and Upper House Speaker), Kikuchi Kyojo(former President All-Japan Spinning Mill Factories and House of Peers member), and Abe Fusajiro(President of Toyo Spinning Mill)and consisted of many members and one can understand Hashimoto's authority in the spinning mill business world.

spinning mill factories in various areas and claimed that at all the factories, everyone was pleased and they were welcomed by both the female workers and the instructors.⁵⁾

While its introduction had started in the Taisho era, as is well-known, after the war women's volleyball at textile mills saw significant developments as a competitive sport. In the 1920s, the idea that a new form of social physical education for the general public and factory workers should be implemented was being proposed by both the Japanese YMCA and academia. In 1928, Rinjirō Deguchi, who was a teacher at Meiji University and who belonged to the Social Welfare Bureau of the Ministry of Home Affairs, noted the following with respect to the necessity for physical education for workers:

I think sports, which should be called a religion or a savior, is truly necessary not for the privileged class, but for the general public that maintains the national community through their dignified labor. In other words, I believe that sports are for those below the middle class; in short, for the general masses that are getting the least rewards despite their suffering. I actively support the need for physical education or a social form of physical education for workers.⁶⁾

Deguchi felt that volleyball was a suitable sport for women and in his book "Handball: Supplement Volleyball" (although the book says

5) Hashimoto Ryutaro "Narratives of Spinning Mill Factory Personnel" Kojo Sekaisha, 1931, p.270, (Tokyo)

6) Deguchi Rinjiro "Handball: Supplement Volleyball" Japan Artisans' Club Publishing Division, 1928, pp.2-3, (Tokyo)

“Supplement Volleyball”, more than half of the book is a description of volleyball), he described the rules and techniques in detail.

[The Management View of Sports]

How did management feel about the introduction of physical education such as volleyball in factories? Tsutomu Fujita (Benji), the president of Kurabo, said the following about the introduction of volleyball in spinning mill factories before the war:

Due to the nature of the work, the spinning mill factories encouraged general sports to promote the employees' health and hygiene, so volleyball tournaments are held for this reason. If a strong team emerges from within the company, other teams will find it difficult to win in spite of participating a number of times, leading to a waning interest in the tournament. In some cases, this may lead to the tournaments naturally ending over the course of time. Therefore, volleyball is encouraged, but regarding improvements, the development of competitive volleyball is not desirable. In other words, measures to spread it for the purpose of recreation should be promoted.⁷⁾

Fujita explained that the reason women's volleyball at Kurabo was not “competitive” before the war, unlike student sports, was because it was encouraged only for health and hygiene reasons. In other words, for company managers, the main reason for playing volleyball was to improve the health of the female employees, so it was kept as a B-class or C-class

7) “Volleyball Monthly”, Sports Publishing Co, Ltd., February 1951, p.6

level sport and was thus inferior to student sports.⁸⁾ Managers did not think it was desirable for volleyball, as played by the female factory workers, to be competitive or for it to become a national-level tournament.

To begin with, in the early Meiji period, inferior labor forms had become common. Japan's light industries had developed at the expense of female labor. This had been recognized as a social issue in research, surveys, and reports from the late Meiji era to the Taisho period. In this regard, Gennosuke Yokoyama's *Nihon no Kasō Shakai* ("Japan's Lower Classes") (1899) was a pioneering work. Other major works included the medical scientist Osamu Ishihara's *Jokō no eiseigaku teki kansatsu* ("Observations of Female Factory Workers from the Perspective of Hygiene"), and *Eiseigaku jō nori mitaru jokō no genjō* ("The Current State of Female Factory Workers Seen from the Perspective of Hygiene") (both 1913), Yasutarō Ogawa's *Kikyō jokō no kenkō jōtai ni kansuru chōsa* ("A Survey of Health Conditions of Female Factory Workers Going Home") (1923–1925), Toyohiko Kagawa's *Hinmin shinri no kenkyū* ("Study on the Psychology of the Poor") (1915), and Wakizō Hosoi's *Jokō aishi* ("The Sad History of Female Factory Workers") (1925).⁹⁾ In addition, the inadequacy of the 1916 "Factory Act" and the labor disputes that had been erupting at the spinning mill factories since the later Meiji era were related to health and hygiene in the work environment. In this situation, from the Taisho period onwards, the health and hygiene problems of female workers at the factories were highlighted in society. Therefore, from the point of view of health and hygiene, factory sports were considered necessary and

8) About this point, see details in Arata Masafumi, "Theory of the 'Witches of the East'" (2013 East Shinsho), (Tokyo).

9) Taguchi Asa "The Emergence of Menstrual Leave" Seikyusha, 2003, pp.68–77, (Tokyo)

consequently spread to many other factories.

In addition, aside from health and hygiene concerns, from the latter half of the 1920s, the need for physical education in factories emerged for other reasons. Ryutaro Hashimoto, the president of Kojo Sekaisha, discussed the significance of introducing physical education in factories.

According to the new Factory Act, late night work from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. at the spinning mill factories was banned for girls and boys. Since there was then a lot of spare time, at least 2–3 hours, it was important to study what sport would be good if this time were to be used to cultivate mental discipline and sports.¹⁰⁾

Hashimoto stated that as the revised Factory Act in 1929 (the old Factory Act was enforced in 1916) legally banned late night work for girls, it became possible and necessary for female factory workers to have more recreational activities. Hashimoto considered athletic dance with rhythmic movements and volleyball to be the two sports suitable for female workers. Of the two, rhythmic dancing was not so popular, even though Hashimoto opened dance workshops at all the factories. In contrast, volleyball was successfully introduced in all factories from around 1923.

It was not only the managers at the spinning mill factories that tried their utmost to promote recreational volleyball. This trend was also seen at the national and prefectural level. For example, in the 1930s, there was a unique men's volleyball team [Prefectural Police Department Insurance Section] in the Nagano Prefectural Government Office, whose objective was to promote recreational volleyball activities for female workers at the

10) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, pp.265–266, (Tokyo)

factory.¹¹⁾ This example, too, implies that the objective was never to make factory volleyball a competitive sport.

Of course, not only volleyball was introduced as a factory sport as sports such as tennis, table tennis, and basketball were also actively conducted. However, the introduction of volleyball allowed many workers to participate at the one time and also did not require much funding. Hashimoto commented in regard to other group sports such as basketball.

When considering which sport is better, basketball or volleyball, it seems that basketball is a somewhat extreme sport for women. If this kind of exercise leads to more fatigue in addition to the fatigue from the factory work, then it is not at all desirable. In comparison to this, volleyball is a sport truly suitable for girls and, since it is played under the wide open skies, I think it can have a tremendous effect on health.¹²⁾

As was the case for Fujita, while Hashimoto also felt that volleyball was effective for health and hygiene, what was most important was “factory productivity.” If the women workers were fatigued, it would lower productivity, so because of this apprehension, he felt that volleyball was less fatiguing than basketball. Until the 1920s, there was a view in girls’ schools that extreme sports or sports in general were not elegant or compatible with “femininity” and were therefore not suitable for women. This view regarding the developmental stages of a girl was primarily

11) Shinano Mainichi Shimibunsha ed. “Nagano Prefecture Sports History”, Shinano Mainichi Newspaper publishing, 1979, p.311,(Nagano)

12) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.270

related to the physique considered acceptable for women higher up the social hierarchy. However, volleyball was encouraged for female workers because they needed to maintain a physical condition suited to physical labor.

2. Factory Sports and the “Good wife and Wise Mother Education” Policy

[The transformation of spinning mill factories into education sites for girls]

However, health, hygiene, and recreation were not the only reasons for the introduction of sports such as volleyball. From the latter half of the 1920s, there were obvious signs of change. Takutarō Sakugawa, who served as a plant manager at the Toyobo Himeji Factory, said the following in 1928:

Boys place greater emphasis on physical education with other education receiving moderate emphasis. In the case of girls, the circumstances are different and emphasis is on education for discipline, with sports being only supplementary in nature. In other words, the objective is to educate girls to nurture ladylike women who can maintain a household.¹³⁾

From the Meiji era to the beginning of the Taisho period, spinning mill factories employed girls who had just completed their compulsory education as cheap labor. A majority of the female workers worked in harsh environments and led a laborer's life. However, from the end of the Taisho period, girls were given education within the company and, apart from improving their level of education, companies also took on the

13) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.546

responsibility to nurture women to be suitable brides.¹⁴⁾ After the revision of the Factory Act in 1929, it became compulsory, in most cases, for female workers to gain an education above that of an ordinary elementary school level; the welfare facilities at the spinning mill factories also became better equipped. Under these conditions, volleyball was adopted in factories as part of the physical education recreational environment. From about the mid-1920s, a girls' school kind of education focused mainly on the "good wife and wise mother" that has been popular in girls' schools since the Meiji era was introduced at the spinning mill factories. Because of this, female employees were not just "women workers" but also "women who were bestowed with education and the foundations to become 'good wives and wise mothers.'"

For example, in the latter half of the 1920s, Kanebo established an affiliated girls' school for female factory workers. Nonaka Masashi, who conducted research on Kanebo, noted the following in 1930:

Today, the importance of girls' schools within the spinning mill factories has been duly recognized. The selection of the subjects and improvements in educational methodology will not only benefit their factory life but also prove highly beneficial in the future when they start family life. I feel that in the recent ordinary girls' schools, even though they may be prestigious, this kind of educational content is not adequately provided.¹⁵⁾

14) Sawano Masahiko "The Glory and Frustration of Company Sports", Seikyusha, 2005, pp.45-46, (Tokyo)

15) Nonaka Masashi, "The Anatomy of Kanebo" Nihon Shoin, 1930, p.225, (Tokyo)

Nonaka explained the benefits of bestowing a certain degree of culture on female factory workers and evaluated the education at Kanebo's girls' school very highly seeing it as superior to ordinary girls' schools at that time. Kanebo was one of the largest textile companies in Japan and other textile companies that had affiliated girls' schools may not have been equipped with health and welfare facilities as good as at Kanebo. However, it is a fact that several other factories had study courses where the female workers could learn tailoring, the tea ceremony and culinary arts or had access to sports facilities.

As a result, from the perspective of education to nurture a "good wife and a wise mother," strenuous physical education or athletic training was not recommended. Therefore, the physical education in the factories had a strong asymmetry between males and females in terms of the philosophies applied and the actual conditions. Factory sports were encouraged to physically train the female factory workers so that productivity did not decrease, or, in other words, to build "a body for physical labor" in addition to nurturing a "feminine body" and "a healthy body for giving birth to children."

[The Birth of the Body of a "Competing" Woman]

However, factory women's volleyball as a competitive sport was gradually emerging. In particular, several spinning mill factory teams with competent players emerged around the mid-1930s. Volleyball was the most popular women's sport at Kanebo, for example, and from around 1930 onwards, there were internal company competitions, so each factory team practiced with the aim of participating in these competitions. Over time, the Shinmachi factory team became a powerful team, winning at the Meiji

Jingu Athletic Games in 1942.¹⁶⁾ The Nichibo Sports Association was formed in 1928, at which time organized competitions including volleyball began in earnest. Nichibo Amagasaki won the All-Japan Championships in 1937 for the first time and went on to be five-time national level championship winner before the war. Although it was not a spinning mill factory, the Hiroshima Senbai Women's Volleyball section also had great success as a factory team before the war. At the Hiroshima Senbai factory, volleyball games had been organized as lunch time entertainment since before 1930, but around the spring of 1931, a kind of club-like organization was formed and in the following year, a volleyball section was formed.¹⁷⁾ In the beginning, the group consisted only of amateur players, but with the addition of active players from the girls' school, it went on to win two consecutive All-Japan Championships in 1934 and 1935. It could be said that, in this case, the women's physiques were undoubtedly "bodies built for competing."

Of course, the majority of female sports at many factories were recreational. It was only after the war that factory sports for women became truly competitive. As mentioned earlier, factory sports such as volleyball, were initially introduced for health and hygiene reasons and were closely intertwined with the intentions of the plant managers "to maintain productivity in the factories." There were some factories at which volleyball was very popular but most of these were only internal competitions. However, at that time, developing a "body built for competing" was in opposition to the philosophy that emphasized

16) Compilation of the History of Kanebo Co. Ltd., Guest ed. "Kanebo Centennial", 1988, pp.960-961, (Tokyo)

17) Chugoku Shimbun "100 Years of Hiroshima Sports", 1979, p.142, (Hiroshima)

“productivity” and the ideology of a “good wife and wise mother.” In addition, this idea also ran counter to the existing class consciousness that competitive sports were only for students.

3. The Rise of the Labor Movement and Gender issues

[The Labor Movement for Male Workers and Female Workers]

What was the situation with respect to the introduction of sports for male workers? Physical education for male workers was introduced under conditions quite different to that of the female employees. Of course, the focus on the male workers' health and hygiene was also important but the significance of physical education was seen quite differently by factory managers. First, we discuss how factory managers viewed the labor movement and the socialist movement at that time. In the 1920s, many trade unions were started which were not restricted to spinning mill factories. Hashimoto compared the education for male and female workers in spinning mill factories at that time and presented the following views on the leaders of the labor movement:

The education policy for female factory workers was not so difficult but the education policy for male factory workers and the implementation is extremely difficult in the present ideological situation. In recent years, the ideological world has been disturbed and the struggle between labor and capital has intensified, not because of the female workers but because of the influence of the male factory workers. The female factory workers in Japan are not working women who have a vocation. Rather, they are working temporarily as it allows them to prepare for their marriage or enables them to earn more than

farm labor or because they can support their parents for some time; in other words, they are still nothing more than *koshikake* (temporary seat) labor. Therefore, there are almost no serious labor disputes arising because of female workers at spinning mill factories. Labor disputes arise because of the influence of the male factory workers and it is also due to these workers that labor conditions have improved.¹⁸⁾

Hashimoto's view at that time was not necessarily correct because records show that there was a strike by female workers at the Amamiya Silk Spinning Mill Factory in Kofu City, Yamanashi Prefecture in 1886 and there were violent labor disputes at the Toyo Spinning Mill Shikanjima Factory, the Dai Nippon Spinning Mill Shimofukushima Factory, and the Temma Spinning Mill Factory. In addition, in 1920, labor disputes by female factory workers were recorded at the Fujigawarano Spinning Mill Oshiage Factory and the Toyo Spinning Mill Uji Factory. All these labor disputes had female workers at the center, with demands including a five percent increase in salary, an eight-hour work system and a ban on the night shift.¹⁹⁾

However, compared to the male factory workers, the female factory workers were less likely to cause disputes because they were essentially younger workers, with the majority being between 15 and 20 years of age. Moreover, after working for two to three years, most female factory workers returned to their farming villages and so it was extremely difficult

18) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.242

19) Sakurai Kinue, "History of the Maternity Protection Campaign" Domesu Publishers, 1987, p.47, (Tokyo)

for them to engage in disputes. In addition, from the mid-1920s, as health and welfare benefits for female factory employees gradually improved, they had less attachment than male factory employees to ideas that may have been considered dangerous by managers. Therefore, compared to the male factory workers, the female factory worker labor movement did not pose a threat to the managers. However, female workers were dissatisfied with this kind of situation. For example, in 1930, Kato Cho, Secretary of the "Nagoya Industrial Center" (*Roudo Fujin Iko no Ie* (recreation house for working women) or, "*Tomo no Ie* (house of friendship)," said the following about the conditions of the female workers who had been on strike the previous year at the Temma Spinning Mill Factory: "(they) lack the spirit to protest against harsh working conditions."²⁰⁾ The Industrial Center was a facility built by the YWCA in 1930 with the objective of improving the working conditions of female workers. The YWCA's decision to open the center was finally reached after research and many consultations to clarify their position with respect to their involvement in the labor movement and the relationship with capitalist organizations.²¹⁾ However, Kato, who became involved with the female factory workers' problems at the center, felt that the female factory workers movement did not have much vigor.²²⁾ Further, the factory managers were even more keenly aware of this atmosphere. Therefore, compared to the female factory workers, the male factory workers were a matter of greater urgency for the capitalists.

20) Japan YWCA 100 Years History Compilation Committee ed. "Japan YWCA 100 Years History: For Women's Independence 1905-2005", Japan Women's Christian Youth Association, 2005, p.24, (Tokyo)

21) Nagoya YWCA 50 Years history Compilation Committee ed., "Nagoya YWCA 50 Years History" Nagoya YWCA, 1983, p.7, (Aichi)

22) Of course, there were many large-scale strikes that female factory workers were the center of, for example, at Kanebo and Toyo Muslin in 1930.

[Sports and the Labor Movement]

In this situation, Hashimoto questioned journalists and each plant about the countermeasures that had been taken to thwart the male factory workers' labor movement. The journalists' opinions included: "(Labor) disputes are neither a vice nor a disease and hence cannot be prevented with discipline or injections." (Osaka Daily Mainichi Shimbun)²³⁾; and "This is an extremely difficult problem. It is difficult for the company factory to implement education for the male factory workers. This is because the approach of today's male workers is as if this is a class struggle." (Kojo Sekaisha Tokyo Bureau Chief).²⁴⁾ These opinions suggested that there were negative views about addressing labor disputes through education.

However, on-site plant managers and the President, as is natural, presented some concrete measures. Of these, some managers sought to find possible solutions in recreation and sports.

There are various methods to educate and guide the male factory workers, but first it is most important for the factory manager to voluntarily communicate directly with the male workers. In other words, it is important to go mountaineering, go on excursions, have musical concerts and play sports such as baseball and tennis or other sports together with the factory manager in the holidays so as not to allow any discriminatory sentiments to be aroused. It is important that both the factory manager and the male workers perform their respective duties to the best of their ability in order to live a

23) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.510

24) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.514

meaningful life (Fukushima Spinning Mill Factory Manager).²⁵⁾

To begin with, sports were often used as physical training in the factories and this tendency was especially prevalent for male factory workers. Hashimoto conducted surveys to find out about the principle and policies that had been implemented to train the male factory workers and the specific implementation methods.²⁶⁾ Quite often, the factories told him that they used sports activities. For example: “We have always encouraged a variety of sports such as sumo wrestling, judo and kendo, tennis, table tennis, baseball and swimming to provide mental training and are making full efforts to implement them” (Kanebo Spinning Mill, Sumoto Branch)²⁷⁾; and “The factory is equipped with various facilities for baseball, tennis, sumo wrestling, judo and kendo and an annual sports meet is conducted every year to encourage sports contests” (Asahi Kasei Corporation, Zeze Factory).²⁸⁾

Of the abovementioned sports that were encouraged, volleyball, which had the most recreational elements, was not included. However, there was a close relationship between volleyball, male factory workers’ sports and the labor movement. In the following section, we discuss this relationship.

III. The Development of “Manly” Factory Sports

1 . Men’s Hatred for society’s view of volleyball

From about the end of the 1920s to the 1930s, both men and women’s volleyball were popularized as part of desirable school or social education.

25) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.511

26) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.244

27) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.246

28) Hashimoto Ryutaro, *ibid*, p.246

Kamiyama Tatsuji, volleyball coach at Tokyo Prefectural Women's Normal School and the Tokyo Prefectural Third Higher Girls' School, said the following in 1929:

If the volleyball game is actually experienced, everyone, including the elderly, children, men, women, workers, artisans, and shopkeepers will definitely experience its value in their respective circumstances. Further, they will know the enjoyment of volleyball and will receive great happiness.²⁹⁾

This did not mean that there was no criticism that volleyball was merely a female or public-centric sport. For example, according to Yamato Chojiro, who played for Hiroshima No.2 Middle School and which was later known as a school with a powerful men's volleyball team, the team was ridiculed by people within the school in 1925 because they "played a girls" sport".³⁰⁾ At that time, men's volleyball was not a major sport. However, volleyball had been a popular sport with male school teachers in Hiroshima since the 1920s, but even in Hiroshima, negative opinions were heard. In addition, at the establishment of the Japanese Volleyball Association, Nishikawa Masaichi, a central figure in the world of volleyball,³¹⁾ lamented that there was an inadequate number of competitive volleyball players and doubted the future of men's volleyball:

29) Ueyama Tatsuji, "Volleyball Coach", Japan Physical Education Society, 1929, p.15

30) Chugoku Shimbunsha, *ibid.*, p.100

31) After the war, Nishikawa became the third Chairman of the Japan Volleyball Association, Chairman of the Asian Volleyball Federation, International Volleyball Federation Vice-Chairman.

I think the people of the world harbor misconceptions about volleyball. Of course, the development of other men's sports events is a major obstacle to the spread of volleyball. However, the more basic issue is the misconception among the public that volleyball is at most a "women's sport." Therefore, volleyball, one of the most familiar sports, is being monopolized by girls who have vulnerable bodies. To prove that volleyball can only be played correctly by men with their excellent bodies and brains, the next 9th Far Eastern Games is an excellent opportunity.³²⁾

This statement, of course, suggested that volleyball had already been strongly recognized in society as a women's sport, as Nishikawa appeared to be somewhat annoyed that women's volleyball had boasted it was Asia's number one most powerful sport. Incidentally, Nishikawa had participated as a player in the men's volleyball team in the 6th Far Eastern Games held in Osaka in 1923, at which the men's team had suffered a crushing defeat against the Philippines and China, unlike the women's team. To begin with, Japanese volleyball started out being a sport primarily suitable for women. The anger against the world's lack of recognition for men's volleyball overlapped with Nishikawa's personal feelings about women's volleyball being a "fragile" sport. In addition, an awareness began to emerge that volleyball was at most "a sport that can be played correctly only by the men with their excellent bodies and brains." At the 1972 Munich Olympics, after the men's volleyball team won the gold medal, Nishikawa commented

32) Nishikawa has cited from Nishikawa Seiichi "My Resume" Japan Economic Newspaper "My Resume 17 Financial Experts", 1981, p.335, institution magazine "Volleyball" Vol. 4, (1929).

that, “the fact that volleyball, which had been ridiculed as ‘not a sport for men’, won a gold medal, is a result of the efforts of all concerned for more than half a century.”³³⁾

Views similar to those of Nishikawa could be said to be symbols of pre-war male-centric views and a focus on competitive sports in the sports world. In other words, in the view of the sporting world, men’s sports were better than women’s sports and that competitive sports must be given more importance than just a social form of physical education at factories.

2. Physical education in factories and “masculinity”

[Workers at the Kure Naval Arsenal and the competitive Society]

Regardless of this controversy, however, a strong volleyball culture that resisted the women-centric views developed in the factories. In other words, although the students’ elite competitive sports were at the zenith of popularity, male-centric or “manly” competitive volleyball rose from the culture of the workers. The Hiroshima Kure Arsenal team was an example of this kind of factory sport. The Kure Arsenal team would later go on to become a powerful team, winning the national championship six times. What kind of a background led to the emergence of the Kure Arsenal men’s volleyball culture?

In Japan before the war, there were “naval yards” in Yokosuka, Sasebo, and Kure. At these naval yards, there were huge factories making weapons for the navy, one of which was the Kure arsenal, which boasted of having the largest scale in Asia. It was here that apprentice workers, who were elementary school graduates, developed a unique volleyball culture.

33) Nishikawa Seiichi, author and edited “The World Is One” Fujii Shokai Printing Division, 1973, p.369(Tokyo)

From the Meiji until the Taisho era, these skilled workmen at the navy yard included people from extremely low status in the social hierarchy. These workers repeatedly moved between the Mitsubishi Nagasaki, Sasebo, and Kure arsenals and saw themselves as “drifters.” For example, at the end of the parade ground there was a notice that said, “Oxen, horses and workmen cannot pass” which appeared to indicate that until about the Taisho period there was an obvious discrimination which classified these low status workmen the same as oxen and horses.³⁴⁾ However, in 1918, the Kure arsenal had a huge turning point. The workmen had until then learned techniques by watching and imitating, but the arsenal established a workmen training school to retain the workmen and improve their skills.

Following this, with the aim of eventually working and learning at the workmen training school, boys and young men who wanted to study for the factory entrance test began to appear. They came from poor households and could not afford to go on to the old system of junior high school. However, if they became apprentices, they could earn enough for their livelihood and would also receive an education to the same level as at technical schools. Therefore, for elementary school graduates (from 1922, graduation from higher than elementary school became the standard qualification), this was a highly attractive system which was widely known among elementary school children in the Chugoku and Shikoku regions. In 1918, this apprentice education continued for two years, but in 1924, a four-year system was also implemented. The 1924 recruitment drive advertising read, “You can be an engineer at the age of 31 and the chance

34) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. “Kure Navy Arsenal Apprenticeship Records”, 1990, p.1 (Hiroshima)

to further your career to become a plant manager is open for all."³⁵⁾

However, even when they graduated from the apprenticeship, they were basically workmen with little opportunity to rise in the hierarchy. In terms of qualifications, they were considered to be below former junior high school graduates and so were in a low social position.³⁶⁾

At that time, despising apprentices was a trend, so the apprentice school students felt inferior to the junior high school students under the Monbusho system (Ministry of Education) (Mr. A, 1927 entrant).³⁷⁾

The Electrical Experiments section at the Kure arsenal was considered the perfect place for summer practice for the Tokyo Imperial University's Navy students and every year we worked as their assistants. In summer too, students in black university uniforms and college caps took up posts the following year as senior ordinance officials with daggers hanging. From then onwards, they were above the clouds and we did not even exchange words with them (Mr. B. 1928 entrant).³⁸⁾

Therefore, rising in the hierarchy was practically impossible for these workmen. However, being in a skilled trade, they could aim for advancement in life. Thus, the factory entrance test became a fierce

35) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed., *ibid*, p.2

36) However, from 1953 after the war, the apprentice school graduates were positioned equivalent to the old system junior high school graduates by the Ministry of Education.

37) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. *ibid*, p.156

38) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. *ibid*, p.165

competition for male elementary school graduates. The employment rate was 19% in 1928 and in 1929 (as there are no records of employment rates before 1927), the apprenticeship was seen as “a narrow gate.” The factory entrance tests further intensified and for several years from 1930, the employment rate ranged from only 6% to 8% because of the London International Disarmament Treaty. The Kure arsenal downsizing of personnel had been continuing since the signing of the 1922 Washington Disarmament Treaty, but the London Naval Treaty resulted in further retrenchments and less hiring. This period also overlapped with the Showa crisis period, within which “I graduated from university, but...” became the buzzphrase in society; in the Kure region also, the atmosphere was the same. In this kind of atmosphere, if an elementary school student succeeded in entering the Kure arsenal, there was no need to worry about future employment. Therefore, competition in the factory entrance test as a “narrow gate” intensified, with the competition being even tougher than entrance tests for junior high schools.³⁹⁾

This competitive system continued for the workmen in the arsenal. The Arsenal Manager was at the top of the pyramid in the arsenal, followed by senior officials (military and civilian), middle management, junior officials, and non-managers. In the factory, the hierarchy was section man, job hands, foreman, corporal and regular factory workers, with those above the level of corporal managing a large number of workers.⁴⁰⁾ The gateway to success for the apprentice graduates was at the Naval Assistant Engineering Training Institute, at which the assistants were equivalent to

39) Kure City History Compilation Editorial Board ed., “History of Kure City”, Vol 6, 1988, p.273 (Hiroshima)

40) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. *ibid.*, p.2

junior officials. Further, there was also the possibility of progressing as specially selected students to the Hiroshima Higher Technical School or the Kumamoto Technical High School. Specially selected students could study at higher educational institutions and were at the same time paid salaries and travel expenses similar to practicing mechanics in the assistant engineer training.⁴¹⁾ In 1924, six people were promoted from worker to engineer (engineer corresponded to civil servant) and sixty were promoted to Assistant Engineer. At that time there were 2060 apprentices and from this data, it can be understood that apprentices who competed well could advance further.⁴²⁾

When I joined the factory, all the apprentice workers of the same period were honors students at school and internal competition for promotion was also fierce. (Mr. K, 1934 entrant).⁴³⁾

[A Blend of Volleyball and “Manliness”]

As discussed above, the Kure arsenal workers were characterized by their low social class and the fierce competition within this class. Kono Sanekazu got these apprentices together and formed a volleyball team, becoming the center of the team. Before the war, Kono was a draftsman for the Kure naval arsenal gun division. In 1922, Kono organized the Jinshi Club, which became the number one national volleyball team (a precursor to the Kure arsenal volleyball team), to which he was appointed captain

41) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. *ibid*, pp.39–40

42) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. *ibid*, p.49

43) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. *ibid*, p.221

and coach. At that time, the most powerful competitive volleyball teams nationwide were student teams. Kono developed the Kure arsenal volleyball team into a powerful team that went on to win the national championships six times.

However, even volleyball in the Kure arsenal was at first a recreational sport. In the Taisho era, volleyball in Kure city spread as a central part of student culture. In 1919, Kure city educators participated in volleyball training sessions (instructor Tada Norio) and the popularity spread among the teachers, leading to the formation of a teachers' team. Kono, on seeing the teachers' volleyball team tried to incorporate them in to the workplace.⁴⁴⁾ However, this also overlapped with coincidence. In 1922, a Kure city sports goods shop by chance donated a volleyball ball to the Kure navy arsenal gun division. Using this ball, those who were very interested, which included Kono, started playing half for fun.⁴⁵⁾ With simple hand-written rules as guidelines and using a net stretched between bamboo pillars, they played volleyball. By hitting the ball as in tennis and using various header styles, they enjoyed playing, while mouthing almost like a spell that "volleyball is all about not letting the ball touch the ground."⁴⁶⁾ However, this kind of play gradually became competitive.

After this, at the Torpedo Division Drawing Factory within the same Kure arsenal, the "Torpedo Club" and the "Mutsumi Club" at the Torpedo Experiment Division emerged, and in 1928, from these members, the Kure Volleyball Association was organized and established as competitive volleyball.⁴⁷⁾

44) Kure Volleyball Association ed., "80th Anniversary Commemorative Magazine", 2009, p.3(Hiroshima)

45) Kure Volleyball Association ed., *ibid.*, p.126

46) Kure Volleyball Association ed., *ibid.*, p.126

47) Kure Volleyball Association ed., *ibid.*, p.7

Therefore, considering that the Japanese Volleyball Association was established in 1927, competitive volleyball had been played from an early period at the Kure navy arsenal.

From 1930 to about 1933, there were fierce battles waged between the Jinshi Club and the Torpedo Club. At practice and games a song was sung to inspire the Kimiko Club players.

“Jinshi Volleyball Club Song”

Lyrics Kono Sanekazu

Composer Kure No.2 Middle School Music Teachers

The warship floating in the sea

Safeguarding our country Delving into the earth' axis

The flying defense The Torpedo protective charm Our greatest
capital

“Fight Song”

Lyrics Kono Minoru

Composer Tanaka Military Music band

Careful consideration of the bitter experience of ten winters

Choked with the ten spring and autumns

Men are moved to tears for name

Therefore, since we are men

We must fight so, must fight,

Under the name of our torpedoes⁴⁸⁾

Here the image of the transformation of volleyball in the arsenal from a

48) Kure Volleyball Association ed., *ibid.*, p.10

recreational sport to a culture of “manliness” associated with a fighting spirit can be clearly seen. In the midst of volleyball being considered a “women’s sport,” a culture of “manly volleyball” was developed by the workers and there was fierce competition between the two teams in the Kure arsenal, the members of which numbered as high as 70 in the heyday. The Kure Torpedo Club, the rival of the Kimiko Club, participated in the All Japan Volleyball Championships in 1932 and defeated teams such as the Normal School OB team and the Kobe Commercial College team. At that time, in particular, the Kobe Commercial College team had won eight years in a row, since 1924, and had not been defeated. After this, excellent players were recruited by the Kure arsenal from the Torpedo Club, the Jinshi Club and other teams and a new “All Kure Arsenal Team” was formed. This new team won for the first time at the Meiji Jingu Athletic Games in 1933 and won again in 1935 at the same contest. Kure arsenal volleyball was not played for welfare and hygiene and was not an educational training sport. What emerged was a culture of “manly” volleyball associated with a fighting spirit with the Kure arsenal at the center.

3. The Relationship between the Labor Movement and Competitive Volleyball

[Labor movement and sports]

As mentioned earlier, the Kure arsenal volleyball became highly competitive. In this section, we discuss the relationship this sport had with the thriving labor movement at that time. In addition, we also explore how the labor movement influenced the prosperity of sports as a whole in the Kure arsenal.

From the latter half of the Meiji era, sports had become extremely popular at the Kure arsenal. Baseball and tennis competitions and even sumo wrestling tournaments were held frequently. In particular, there were baseball teams in each section of the Kure arsenal and regular matches were held, both within the Kure arsenal and outside. Kure arsenal teams went to Hiroshima and matches were played with higher normal school and junior high school teams. For example, in 1913, baseball matches were held with industrial groups from adjacent prefectures and with the Hiroshima Commercial team, the Hiroshima Shudo Junior High School team, three teams from the Prefectural Hiroshima Junior High School, and all navy yard teams (shipbuilding division, machinery section, torpedo division, explosives division) from Kure City participated, which also involved the Kure arsenal teams playing against each other, such as the Shipbuilding Division against the Torpedo Division team. From about 1917, many famous baseball teams visited Kure from outside the prefecture.⁴⁹⁾ In this way, in the athletic milieu of Hiroshima, the Kure arsenal had become a major force.⁵⁰⁾

A minimal physique was required by people taking the factory entry test at the Kure arsenal which could be seen to have a parallel relationship with the popularity of sports. In 1918, from the start of the entrance test for apprentices, basic standards were set not only for the academic tests but also for height, weight, and chest measurements, which led to failure if minimum standards were not met. This could also be considered a factor that contributed to the development of sports at the Kure arsenal.

49) Kure City History Compilation Editorial Board ed., "History of Kure City", Vol 4., 1976, pp.575-576

50) Chugoku Shimbunsha, *ibid*, pp.33-34

Next, I would like to consider the social environment of the laborers from the Taisho era to the beginning of the Showa period. In the first half of the 1920s, there was a marked increase in the labor movement. In 1905, after the Russo-Japanese war ended, there was a recession in Japan, the fallout from which spurred the rise of the labor movement, with the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia further adding fuel to the fire. The "Yuai-kai (friendship association)" established in 1912 was renamed the All-Japan General Alliance of Laborers, which became the Japanese Confederation of Labor Unions in 1921. The Japanese Confederation of Labor Unions was a representative labor union in the pre-war era. The first May Day labor celebrations were held in Japan in 1920.

Concurrently, there were significant developments in the Kure arsenal labor movement. In 1912, a large-scale strike was called that involved almost all workmen at the Kure arsenal; however, this action was immediately suppressed by management. After this, mainstream labor movement activities moved outside the Kure arsenal, gradually becoming a street-based citizens' movement. At the Kure arsenal, the labor movement was sluggish for a long time because of strict enforcement by the arsenal officials, meaning that the Kure Labor Association, founded in 1919, was a relatively moderate association. As the association had little effect, it faded naturally in 1921, and was replaced in 1924 with a new "Kure Government Enterprise Labor Association." However, the strict management by Kure officials meant that labor movement activities could not be freely conducted.⁵¹⁾ Mr. C who entered the factory in 1913 and belonged to the Torpedo Division said the following about the labor movement in the Kure

51) Kure City History Compilation Editorial Board ed., "History of Kure City", Vol 4., 1976, pp.584-596

arsenal in the first half of the 1920s:

In the somewhat feudal Kure arsenal also, there was a moderate surge in socialism and in 1924, the Kure Government Enterprise Labor Association was formed. However, of course it was a company (kept) union and fierce labor movements were not possible. Rather, by creating this association, it is a fact that discontentment was minimized.⁵²⁾

According to Mr. C, the labor union was in name only and the Kure Government Enterprise Labor Association had little functionality. In the Taisho period, the labor movement spread nationwide and from 1922 onwards, because of navy disarmament, there were large-scale personnel layoffs at the Kure arsenal. Regardless, there was no genuine labor movement at the Kure arsenal.

[The Proletarian Sports Movement Misfire]

What was the relationship between the sluggish labor movement at the Kure arsenal and the prosperity of sports? For example, Lieutenant General Sunagawa Kaneo, who was at the center of the Kure arsenal organizations, worked as the Chief of the General Affairs Department at the Kure arsenal for four years from 1931 onward, and in 1939 became the Arsenal Manager. Before 1931, Sunagawa had had considerable influence within the Kure arsenal. At that time, what policies did Sunagawa implement at the Kure arsenal? The following description is related to

52) Kure Navy Yard Arsenal Academy Alumni Association Editorial Board ed. *ibid*, p.142

sports and the labor movement.

When Sunagawa was Chief of the General Affairs Department, he encouraged sports which led to the healthy development of the trade unions, making him highly valued. The effect of sports extended even to labor measures and additionally even served as “a proper ideological guidance.”⁵³⁾

While “proper ideological guidance” appeared to be a laudable aim, in reality, the encouragement of sports in the arsenal tended to weaken the labor movement. In other words, the dominant class used sports as countermeasure to the labor movement. Such measures were not limited to Kure arsenal officials and similar policies were seen in other factories and also in the Ministry of Education policies.

In Japan it was not as if sports were not conducted for workers around 1922. A majority of the factories had official sports groups and even in schools, sports were incorporated as a measure to “prevent the spread of communism.”⁵⁴⁾

Sports were actively encouraged as a measure to prevent the influence of extreme ideologies and this led to improvements in the spread of physical education activities in factories and mines.⁵⁵⁾

53) Kure City History Compilation Editorial Board ed., “History of Kure City”, Vol 6, 1988, p.456

54) Sawada Toshio “Proletarian Sports Manual”, Dojinsha Shoten, 1931, pp.48–49

55) “Asahi Shimbun”, August 22, 1930, Evening Edition Front Page

At that time, proletarian sports were in vogue. It is difficult to define proletarian sports but it generally referred to “sports organizations not controlled by capitalists, but by sports groups operated by worker class members for their own benefit.”⁵⁶⁾ This was rather vague and the definitions were inconsistent. This seemed to have a somewhat Marxist stance and indicated the clear differences between the sports theories being espoused by social democrats such as Abe Isoo.⁵⁷⁾ Capitalists and the Ministry of Education recognized the spread of socialist ideologies in society and felt that sports should be encouraged “as a measure to prevent contamination by extreme ideologies.”

Sawada Toshio discussed the relationship between sports and the class struggle and said the following about the function of the sports promoted by the bourgeoisie. It is a little lengthy but major portions are cited.

“Passive Functions of Sports”

First, sports are interesting when one participates and even when one watches. Therefore, compared to theater, sumo wrestling or vaudeville, which are expensive, it is easy for most to accept. By getting workers, farmers, and the petty bourgeoisie, who are living miserable lives in factories, farm villages or offices, engrossed in sports, they can temporarily forget about the reality of their disadvantaged economic, political, and social conditions.⁵⁸⁾

“Active Functions of Sports”

- By using the unity in sports, it is possible to consolidate the

56) Imizu Yoichiro “About the Workers’ Sports Groups” “Battle Banner”, September 1930, Senkisha, p.146

57) Sawada Toshio, *ibid*, p.50 (Tokyo)

58) Sawada Toshio, *ibid*, p.3

petty bourgeois young men and students in urban areas and use them as soil for bourgeois control.

- By disciplining the body and combining this with patriotism, a provincial fighting spirit can be nurtured; brave people are to be created by providing military training.

- Encouraging sports among young workers and farmers and by providing technical guidance, small grants, equipment donations and the donation of championship banners and trophies, class collaboration can be visualized.

- Transferring the competitive energies of the young workers and the farmers into sports infuses the sporting spirit with hierarchical and bourgeois ideologies. Because of this, lending an ear to proletariat ideologies can be prevented.⁵⁹⁾

Sawada emphasized that it was important to activate the workers' class struggle but he thought that sports could have a negative impact on this activation. Sport was seen as "a soil for bourgeois control," a "visualization of class collaboration," which "infuses the sporting spirit with hierarchical and bourgeois ideologies." Sawada was promoting sports for proletarian reasons, but said the following about the Kure arsenal sports:

Kure arsenal sports were not merely something to be watched or cheered, but an activity for which everyone used their meager resources to acquire equipment, organize sports groups, and play matches against one another. The workers at the Kure arsenal practice in the vacant areas at the factory with engineers and practice

59) Sawada Toshio, *ibid*, pp.3-4

students as their coaches. Capitalists use these circumstances to encourage workers to create sports groups, to give them financial assistance, and to arrange the facilities. Also, sports are played in break periods and on holidays.⁶⁰⁾

In addition to these descriptions, in “The Proletarian Sports Manual (1931),” Sawada noted that there were 28 sports organizations being exploited by the bourgeois class. Of these, the Kure naval arsenal was mentioned again and criticized. What emerged here was a theory about the influence of sports on the labor movement and its affinity with the characteristics of the Kure arsenal sports activities.

Imizu Yoichiro, like Sawada, also had an anti-investor or anti-capitalist stance and considered that factory sports, the Meiji Jingu Athletic Games and the All-Japan Junior High School Baseball Games (sponsored by Asahi Shimbun) were all symbols of “capitalist exploitation,” and therefore completely rejected them. What must have been Imizu’s opinion about the relationship between the labor movement and sports? Imizu was of the same opinion as Sawada, as he said in 1930:

So far, it cannot be ignored that from various viewpoints sports were criticized by labor movement fighters. (1) Workers who were enthusiastic about sports, literary, and theatrical activities were among those leading the way, and there were others who acted like company dogs. (2) There were those among the young fighters who were related to such sports organizations, so when it was time to act together, they derailed the union’s struggles and others just avoided

60) Sawada Toshio, *ibid*, p.5

the struggle. However, these tendencies and criticisms were minor as it was the early days of the labor movement and sports were not as popular as they are today. Now, the unions don't have a suppressive approach towards sports. In other words, today, due to technical advancements and the popularity of sports, the economic and political benefits and values have become significantly lower than in the past.⁶¹⁾

Like Sawada, Imizu attempted to analyze the situation in 1930 from the point of view of the influence of sports on the labor movement. To sum up, in the early stages of mass sports and the labor movement, sports were seen to have a negative influence on the rise of the labor movement. In other words, it was seen as a capitalist tool. However, Imizu claimed that if sports had been popularized and the labor movement had flourished, it would not have led to this situation. The background to this analysis was the 1926 labor dispute, the so-called Kyodo Insatsu Dispute. This massive labor strike ended in defeat; however, during this period, large sports meets were held with sponsorship from the disputed group, which reinforced Imizu's concept of "sports for the working' class" and gave him the confidence to realize the development of proletarian sports.⁶²⁾ Of course, proletarian literature probably had a significant influence at the same time. Imizu was thinking of worker sports as a means to continue the workers' struggle.

Currently, it is a time when young workers are getting involved in sports with great vigor. Therefore, workers themselves are organizing

61) Imizu Yoichiro, *ibid.*, p.142

62) Imizu Yoichiro, *ibid.*, p.142

sports groups and strengthening the solidarity of workers and it is urgent that this be used for our struggle. Militant workers must spearhead the participation in sports groups and this must be developed into voluntary workers' mass organizations.⁶³⁾

However, there was something unrealistic about Imizu's ideas as sports had become a lot more than a recreational past time. Nationwide competitions had developed such as the Meiji Jingu Athletics Games, taking the "workers sports" well beyond just the labor movement. For example, at the Kure arsenal, rather than being devoted to the labor movement, the workers concentrated their strengths on the fierce competitions within the arsenal. In addition, a great deal of training was needed to maintain the sports skills. Further, to maintain competitiveness and to travel to matches, aid was needed from the arsenal. The Kure arsenal volleyball team required significant funding for travel and accommodation to participate in the Meiji Jingu Athletics Games in Tokyo. Therefore, as this funding came from the management at the Kure arsenal, excessive labor movement activities would have prevented the growth and maintenance of the competitive sports teams. In other words, it was extremely difficult to balance sports activities and intensive labor movements.

Further, it was perhaps because the labor movement was weak that the Kure arsenal competitive sports developed. In short, as the labor movement was not expanding, competitive sport activities became more popular. Therefore, competitive sports and the labor movement had a circular rather than a causal relationship.

63) Imizu Yoichiro, *ibid*, p.143

IV. Conclusions

In the pre-war period, volleyball, which was generally considered a “sport suited to women,” first became popular as a recreational sport for female factory workers as it was seen as a suitable exercise to increase production efficiency. However, the Kure navy yard volleyball team developed a more “manly” volleyball culture with a fighting spirit that led to success in national competitions. However, the prosperity of this “manly” volleyball culture had a parallel relationship with the “sluggishness of the labor movement” at the Kure navy arsenal. In other words, a “manly” sports culture related to the dominant class coexisted with a submissive worker class culture.

Studying the Spread of Volleyball
in Pre-War Physical Education in Factories
From the Perspective of Gender
and the Labor Movement

TAKAI Masashi

This paper focuses on factory workers from the Taisho era to the wartime period; further, it seeks to identify the status of factory physical education as a popular sports activity, the process of its transformation, and the factors that led to its popularity. In particular, this study focuses on volleyball, a popular factory sport, and the relationship between the genders, the politics of hierarchy within the factory, and the influence of the labor movement.

Volleyball was introduced as a suitable exercise and for increasing the production efficiency of women workers and it was considered a “sport suited to women” in Japan. However, the Kure navy yard volleyball team created a volleyball culture that had a “manly” fighting spirit, and was successful in national competitions.

On the other hand, the prosperity of the “manly” volleyball culture had a parallel relationship with the “sluggishness of the labor movement” in the Kure navy arsenal. In other words, a “manly” sports culture related to the dominant class coexisted with a submissive worker class culture.

Keywords : Physical Education in Factories, Gender, Labor Movement,
Volleyball