

An Institutional Study of Chinese Industrial Relations

Descriptions and Analyses Using a Six-party Taxonomy

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Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Summary

In the context of China's growing influence over the global economy, its newly developed labour market and the subsequent series of industrial relations issues have captured much attention. However, research on industrial relations and labour problems in China is relatively underdeveloped. The classic three-party industrial relations model, which was developed for western economies, has often been difficult to apply to China's circumstances. The biggest difference between China and western countries in the matter of labour issues lies in the different institutional settings of the industrial relations systems. As a sub-system of the broader social system, the industrial relations system of a country is significantly affected by the fundamental socio-political system in that particular country.

In view of this, Chapter One of this thesis will first review the relevant existing industrial relations theories and explore their applicability to China. The thesis then continues with the proposal of a new six-party taxonomy for the analysis of Chinese industrial relations. The new taxonomy takes into account distinctive industrial relations actors with "Chinese characteristics" as well as their inter-relationships which form at different social levels. This taxonomy provides a useful tool for drawing a broad picture of the evolving industrial relations in China, which constitute the main content of the later parts of this thesis: in Part One (Chapters Two to Four), we analyse the historical and current situation of the six Chinese industrial relations actors, namely the party-state, employers' associations, the All China Federation of Trade Unions, grass roots unions, employers and

employees; while in Part Two (Chapter Five and Six), we describe the interactions between each of these actors from a historical perspective.

With the new taxonomy and the analyses that follow, this thesis aims to provide a new insight into Chinese industrial relations and labour studies. It attempts to present to the readers a broad picture of the Chinese industrial relations system. We believe that the discussion will be valuable for those interested in China's social development (in particular, the development of modern industrial relations in the context of the Chinese political economy).

Limitations of length, however, preclude the detailed discussion in this thesis of all Chinese industrial relations issues. Various future research topics have been identified in the concluding chapter, and we recognize that they are undoubtedly important questions in need of enormous research efforts. Therefore, we see this thesis as the beginning of a series of related works, which aim to contribute to a better understanding of industrial relations in the context of Chinese political economy.

Key Words: China, Industrial Relations, Labour, Union, Association

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