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Yuen-wen Ku.

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Yuen-wen Ku, *Welfare Capitalism in Taiwan: State, Economy and Social Policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. \$69.95 hard-cover.

It is rare to find a book that makes extensive use of theory to frame an account of a nation's social welfare system. Most country case studies of social welfare are historical and descriptive, seeking to depict rather than explain why a particular nation's welfare system has developed the way it did, and why it functions the way it does. Most studies of this kind make for dull reading and are soon rendered obsolete by changing social conditions and events.

Yuen-wen Ku's study of the evolution and features of the Taiwanese welfare system is very different, and is to be commended for its explicit use of theory. It is particularly interesting that the author has chosen to frame his analysis by using what is described as "an integrated Marxist account." Given the difficulties Marxist theories have encountered in recent years, and the ascendance of post-modernism as an alternative means for satisfying the aspirations of radicals, this is a valiant endeavor. But it is not really convincing. It is not simply that the analysis reads like a book that should have been published in 1977 rather than 1997, but that there are new and more helpful ways of looking at social welfare in other parts of the world.

For example, the study neglects accounts that emphasize traditionalism and traditionalist forms of statecraft in the region; these belie a simplistic Marxist explanations of the role of the state in social welfare. Similarly, the book's Eurocentric perspective impedes a proper analysis of the role of indigenous systems of support that have been so amply documented in Japan. The Taiwanese state's motives in creating a welfare system which would counteract the claims of its mainland communist archrivals is also neglected, and instead it is capitalism that is time and time again regarded as the primary motivation of state welfare in Taiwan. Despite this emphasis on capitalism as the driving force for welfare development, the author concludes that state welfare is underdeveloped and marginal to the nation's economic aims.

Although it is a pity that the author was so constrained by a particular theoretical allegiance, this book deserves to be widely read by anyone working in the field of international social welfare

today. Its knowledge and use of theory is sophisticated, illustrative of how theory can be used to frame narrative accounts. The book also provides a useful account of state social welfare policies and programs in a rapidly changing region of the world.