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## *Social Welfare in East Asia and the Pacific.* Sharlene B. C. L. Furuto (Ed.). Reviewed by James Midgley.

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*Free Time* is an impressive account of evolving thought about work, leisure, and progress in American history. It succeeds admirably in showing how prominent the shorter-hours vision was and provides many of the answers as to why that vision faded. Hunnicutt is thorough in documenting the various voices calling for Higher Progress through expanded leisure (perhaps too thorough in places, where there is repetition of a broadly similar vision by many individuals). One limitation is that the book sidesteps the additional obstacles to a shorter-hours vision created by growing inequality and the shift in relative power from labor to business since the 1970s. Many workers have been getting neither increased material consumption nor shorter hours, and face a greater struggle to keep up with the ever-upscaling consumption standards of the rich.

In his conclusion, Hunnicutt makes clear that he is not only an academic observer, but an advocate of shorter hours and a vision of Higher Progress as an alternative to the “current dream of eternal consumption, wealth, and work that now threatens human communities and the natural world.” While the forces opposing this vision are powerful, in light of growing climate instability and other signs of the environmental limits to consumption growth, Hunnicutt’s plea to revive the forgotten American Dream deserves a wide hearing.

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Sharlene B. C. L. Furuto (Ed). *Social Welfare in East Asia and the Pacific*. Columbia University Press (2013). \$90 (hardcover); \$30 (paperback).

Research into social work and social policy in different countries around the world has expanded exponentially over the last 20 years. Many more publications on international social welfare are now available, and they provide important insights into the way societies around the world seek to promote social well-being. Initially, international scholarship focused narrowly on government welfare, but its scope has now been expanded to include nonprofit organizations, community development programs, “nonformal” social welfare

and professional social work. However, the literature tends to compartmentalize these different fields, providing only partial insights into social welfare practices and institutions. It is a major strength of this book that its contributors provide a broad overview of social welfare in the East Asian and Pacific region that encompasses government policies and programs, nonprofits, and traditional practices, as well as professional social work.

The book was compiled for social work students at Brigham-Young University in Hawaii with the express purpose of providing them with information about social welfare in the East Asia and Pacific region. Many of these students come from the countries discussed in the book, and most of the chapters are written by social work academics and practitioners from the region. The book's chapters deal with Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Micronesia, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Samoa. The editor provides a useful introductory overview of social welfare in these countries, and she concludes the book with an interesting discussion of several key themes raised in the different chapters. Generally, the chapters follow a standard format and sequentially discuss the historical background to social welfare in each country, prevailing social problems, the major population groups served, the role of social work as a profession and social work education. Some of the chapters also speculate about the future direction of social welfare, and a few contain recommendations for improving social welfare services. Although most of the chapters are descriptive, they raise interesting questions. They also provide useful insights into the nature of social welfare in different East Asian and Pacific nations.

Although some countries, such as Japan and the Philippines, are noticeably absent, the book includes countries that are seldom covered in the literature. For example, there are interesting chapters on Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, which are sizeable and rapidly developing countries, as well as smaller nations, such as Micronesia and Samoa. While social welfare in some of the countries, such as China and Korea, is now well documented, little is known about developments in the other countries. The chapter on Cambodia is particularly helpful. Although there are major differences in the region's welfare systems, they share common experiences. They also

face similar challenges such as poverty, population aging, child neglect and substance abuse, as well as under researched issues such as migration, trafficking and the oppression of minority groups.

In her concluding chapter, the editor reviews these challenges, as well as issues that are not always given adequate attention in the international social welfare literature. They include the impact of colonialism on social welfare, the role of the traditional culture and values in shaping family and community interventions, and the relationship between social welfare in the region and the wider world. The editor is to be commended on covering a range of topics in a succinct and readable way. Of particular interest is the way social work is evolving within the region. Although there is a clear tendency towards professionalization and standardization, the need for cultural appropriateness is also recognized. However, it is not clear that social work's clients in the region are best served by adopting a standardized practice approach based on direct intervention. The editor and some of the contributors are sensitive to this issue, but it remains to be seen whether social workers in the region will forge unique practice approaches that can inform the profession in other parts of the world.

The book is a useful reference guide to social welfare in East Asia and Pacific nations which will be particularly useful to social work researchers and practitioners engaged in collaborative projects in these countries. By documenting current services, it is also a useful resource to academic researchers seeking to obtain more information about social welfare institutions in different parts of the world. As noted earlier, one of its strengths is its broad encompassing view of social welfare that transcends a narrow focus on statutory social services and professional social work. By broadening its conception of social welfare, the editor and contributors may help to foster a greater awareness of social welfare's multidimensional features and promote a broader perspective that enhances understanding of how different nations promote social well-being.

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