

and allow them greater respect in scholarship and the wild.

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Gregory J. Kasza, *One World of Welfare: Japan in Comparative Perspective*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2006. 189 pp.

The European and American scholarship on welfare states has long suffered from a navel-gazing tendency. When scholars such as Gøsta Esping-Andersen, Evelyne Huber and John Stephens have taken the time to look beyond Europe and North America to see if their theories and categorization schemes hold up in places like Japan, they have inevitably found that the welfare programs in these far-off places fit awkwardly, if at all. Esping-Andersen famously declared Japan's welfare state a strange 'hybrid' with elements of all types of welfare states found in Europe: the liberal, social democratic and conservative-corporatist models. Many volumes on 'comparative welfare states' do not mention Japan at all.

Kasza's volume is a welcome antidote to this literature. Rather than spending his energy trying to fit Japan into the Euro-centric categorization schemes, Kasza uses the Japanese case to raise questions about the whole enterprise. The dominant 'power resources' perspective on welfare states argues that nations with weak labor unions and dominant center right parties (like Japan) ought to end up with miserly welfare states. On the contrary, Kasza argues, Japan's pension and health programs – which make up the bulk of its welfare spending – are very similar to those in place in Western Europe. Both

cover the entire population and offer quite generous benefits.

His argument is not limited to the present day. Kasza begins his analysis in the prewar period, pointing out that Japan adopted disability (1910), health (1925) and pension (1940) programs at a relatively early stage of its economic development. It extended its health and pension benefits to the entire population in 1958–60, again at a time when it was relatively poor and ruled by a conservative party. Instead of asking why Japan has such a small welfare state, as most comparativists and most Japan scholars have done, he argues, we should be asking why Japan adopted welfare programs *so early*.

Kasza's aim in marshalling this evidence of Japan's early welfare expansion is not to re-label Japan 'social democratic' or adopt any of the power resource terminology. Instead, he challenges the entire categorization scheme and the associated 'divergence' claim by arguing that there really is not much systematic difference between the welfare systems labeled 'liberal', 'social democratic' and 'conservative corporatist'. It is not just Japan that is less different than traditionally argued. Virtually all advanced industrialized nations (and many nations aspiring to that status) have adopted very similar welfare systems.

Kasza thus advances what he calls a 'modified theory of convergence' (p. 173). Borrowing from Harold Wilensky, he credits much of the similarity in welfare programs across advanced industrialized states to economic development. He points out that most states – including Japan – have adopted the same programs in roughly the same order at roughly the same point in their economic development, starting with

disability programs for valued industrial workers and ending with child allowances. When nations have adopted programs 'earlier than they should have', he notes, they usually did so: (1) because policy-makers were influenced by examples set by other nations; and (2) because specific historical circumstances, such as war, made change suddenly possible.

Drawing on examples from Japan's experience, he shows how policy-makers from a variety of political backgrounds (a general operating during wartime, politicians operating under Japan's postwar democratic institutions) drew on foreign examples to respond to specific needs of the moment. Japan's key pension and health policy decisions had virtually nothing to do with the rise of the labor movement or the power of the left, as the power resources model argues. They had much more to do with elites responding to 'the development of common policy scripts among the industrialized countries' (p. 166) and the exigencies of war.

While much of Kasza's argument about pension and health policy in Japan and other industrialized nations is convincing, I was less happy with his tendency to downplay differences across nations in their employment policies and gender- and family-related policies such as child allowances. He admits that welfare programs in these areas came later to Japan and remain less generous than in many nations. Unemployment insurance was adopted under the postwar occupation regime, rather than at Japan's own initiative. After the Occupation, it was kept within tight bounds, with many workers left outside its coverage and benefits capped at levels similar to those in the United States and well below those in Western Europe. Instead of spending money on unemployment insurance, Japan chose to reduce the risk

of unemployment by protecting farmers and small businessmen and by spending heavily on public works.

Differences have been equally pronounced in gender- and family-related areas. Child allowances were adopted 'late' (in 1971) and provide only a token sum to parents facing the high costs of child-rearing. Similarly, Japan had few nursing-home beds as late as 1980, and the proportion of Japanese elderly living with their children remains much higher there than in other advanced industrialized nations.

Although Kasza notes these differences, he sticks to his convergence claim based on two arguments: first, because these programs are everywhere much smaller than those covering health and pensions; and, second, because Japan is becoming less different in these areas as it reduces its public works spending and protectionism and increases spending on elder care and child allowances in response to ageing and declining fertility.

Neither of these arguments is entirely convincing. Just because the budget lines for employment and family care are smaller does not mean they are less important. The number of people affected by the latter – those in their working, child-care and elder-care years – is actually much larger than those benefiting from pensions and health, whose benefits are concentrated on the elderly. Furthermore, work and gender policies are much more intertwined with a nation's production regime. It is for this reason that the 'varieties of capitalism' literature has rested its claim of divergence primarily on differences in these latter areas.

It makes a big difference whether work-related policies provide a right to individual unemployment compensation and training benefits or promise farm

protection and public works jobs. The former encourage market-conforming structural adjustment and tend to reflect the power of labor unions. The latter discourage structural adjustment and are the product of clientelist, center-right politics of the type practiced by the LDP and encouraged by Japan's political structures. Kasza cannot quite push politics out of this story and make it a story about policy elites borrowing from other countries' models and responding to the pressures of wartime.

Kasza's point about recent trends has some merit. The long-term care insurance program has indeed gone a long way toward reducing the reliance of bedridden elderly on family care. But in the other areas, convergence has not proceeded as far as Kasza argues. Child allowances were increased slightly, but mostly by reducing child benefits provided through the tax code. Most women are still being forced by their child-care responsibilities and the rigidities of the employment system to give up their careers after they have children, and a tiny child allowance does little to offset this male-breadwinner-oriented work-and-welfare regime. Protection also continues at a high level in agriculture and in other areas. During the 1990s, Japan did not rush to substitute unemployment compensation for its system of supporting firms and lifetime employment through the convoy system of regulating banks and other sectors. Instead, it held out as long as it could until the collapse of banks forced it to allow the system to begin fraying. Unemployment benefits were actually reduced for workers in most age groups.

These disagreements on some strands of welfare policy should not distract, however, from the overall value of this book. Scholars from outside the Japan field who are looking to improve their

understanding of Japan's welfare state could not find a better place to start. Even those of us inside the Japan field would do well to reflect on Kasza's claims about the generosity of Japan's pension and health programs and the overwhelming public support for the welfare state in Japan. Despite the LDP, or perhaps I should say because of it, Japan has conformed with the 'one world' norms in these areas, at least.

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Carolyn Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, Authenticity, and Power*. Routledge, London and New York, 2008. 184 pp.

Carolyn Stevens' *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, Authenticity, and Power* addresses 'questions regarding Japan's cultural, social, and economic practice in the field of twentieth-century popular music' (pp. 1–2). In contrast to recently published ethnographic accounts of specific musical genres/trends – jazz (Atkins 2001), *enka* (Yano 2002), hip hop (Condry 2006) and idol singers (Aoyagi 2005), for example – Stevens' work provides an analysis of the wider social, cultural, historical and economic framework within which popular music is produced and consumed, with the aim of defining and analysing 'developments in Japanese popular music since 1945' (p. 1).

Stevens, a musically trained anthropologist and American-born 'convert' to Japanese popular music, provides a suitably 'holistic' approach to her subject, examining in a collection of 'five connected yet self-contained essays' different aspects of the production and consumption of popular music, orientated with reference to three broad themes: culture, authenticity and power.