

It is rare to get the opportunity to be challenged and engaged on aspects of sleep that often are neglected but are clearly central to the way we understand how sleep and sleep disorders affect individuals, cultures and societies. For example, the current Western concepts of what is necessary for good sleep hygiene to encourage a monophasic sleep cycle, with the major sleep period at night, are compared with cultures where biphasic or polyphasic sleep are the norm, including the Japanese concept of *inemuri*, the Chinese custom of *wushui* and the more recent Western predilection for power naps. The medical anthropology and sociology of sleep are explored and provide an insight into cultural variations and thresholds of acceptability of what is considered

normal and abnormal sleep in children and the elderly. The influence of religions and literature on sleep and attitudes towards sleep provide some fascinating insights.

The editors and contributors are to be applauded and I would highly recommend this book to a broad 'target audience', ranging from those with a passing interest in sleep to those who manage sleep disorders on a daily basis.

Manny Bagary UK Centre for Mental Health, The Barberry, Vincent Drive, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2SG, UK. Email: many.bagary@bsmhft.nhs.uk

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Patricia Casey

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