

Melte Monstead and Parveen Walji, A Demographic Analysis of East Africa: A Sociological Interpretation. The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1978. pp. 211.

The authors have written a serviceable introductory monograph on the demography of East Africa. It covers an extensive field ranging from a survey of the historical trends of world population and demographic theories to an analysis and interpretation of specific demographic variables related to the population of East Africa. Lists of supplementary readings are provided at the end of each chapter and definitions of basic concepts are appended in the last three pages of the book.

The aim of the authors effort was to produce a textbook in demography which ties the analysis of demographic data to a sociological framework. But what they achieve is a brief survey of a wide number of topics without providing the depth of analysis one would expect in a textbook. The chapter on demographic theories is particularly flimsy. The more interesting sections of the book dealing with the structure and characteristics of the population of East Africa provide adequate examples from recent censuses in the region but the authors seem to rely rather heavily on two earlier books, one on the analysis of the 1967 census in Tanzania and the other on a comparative study of the characteristics of the populations of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Thus in terms of new information, the book adds little to these earlier texts.

However this is the first book on the demography of East Africa which treats the subject systematically and raises problems of definition and of the use of conventional criteria developed in the West to classify different aspects of an African population. The authors select simple demographic techniques and illustrate how they may be used to study given characteristics of the population. There is an attempt throughout to relate demographic factors to development problems in East Africa. However the impact of the colonial experiences in East Africa and subsequent differences in development strategies adopted since independence by the countries in the region could have been given more weight in the discussion of population policies and past as well as future population trends in the region.

On the whole the book offers a useful framework for the study of the demography of East Africa and would be a handy introductory text for a course on the demography of the region.

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