Y.-G. Paillard — *Demographic Research on Madagascar at the Beginning of the Colonial Period and AMI Documents.*

According to the estimates made at the end of the 19th century, the population of Madagascar was then varying between two and eight million. When the island became part of the French territory in 1896, the colonial authorities proved most anxious to know the number of native taxpayers and the supply of labour force they could reasonably reckon on. Difficulties of all kind, however, did not permit for a long time to collect reliable statistical data, and only that questionable information is available to historians. It is yet certain that the island was really sparsely populated, which considerably hampered its ‘exploitation’. Hence a series of steps with a view to increasing the population as soon as Gallieni (1896-1905) came into power; the main initiative was the creation in 1899 of the AMI (Native Medical Assistance), a pioneering undertaking which was then repeated in other places, and the results of which proved quite significant. Thanks to these efforts, a large quantity of reports and publications is now available, the systematic exploitation of which, together with that of other sources of various kinds, should permit to have a better idea of the actual population of the island at the beginning of the 20th century (between two and a half and three million?), to study its distribution, the changes in birth and death rates, the effects of epidemic diseases such as malaria, etc. The particularly large amount of documents on the capital, Tananarive, permits an in-depth analysis.

J.-P. Chrétien — *Demography and Ecology in East Africa at the End of the 19th Century: An Exceptional Crisis?*

Recent publications on East Africa in the 19th century and surveys on the history of the plains bordering lake Tanganyika in Burundi permit to criticize the stereotyped opinion opposing a ‘traditional’ demographic standstill to a progress due to colonization. A relative prosperity is, indeed, broken off by a both demographic and economic crisis which reaches its peak between 1890 and 1930: the insecurity created by the Arab slave trade and European expeditions combines with droughts, locust invasion, cattle-plague, smallpox and sleeping sickness. It might be that the population of some regions then decreased by at least fifty per cent. Other crises probably affected East Africa (in about 1830 and 1870–1880), but their importance and impact can only be assessed through a cautious interpretation of scattered and indirect sources (hydrographical data, oral traditions...) which should be systematically put back in their geographical and ecological setting. The history of societies and that of landscapes are closely linked.

C. THIBON — *A Century of Demographic Growth in Burundi (1850-1950)*.

From 1850 to 1950, Burundi population developed in three very clear-cut stages. Not affected by disturbances due to exogenous factors, epidemic diseases and the slave trade, the country experienced a noticeable growth during the 19th century, as evidenced by the population pressure and expansion indexes. The ending of isolation and colonization coincided at the turn of our century with a demographic crisis, the imbalances brought about by colonization delayed the reconstitution of the population, and the first stage of the transition period, which started rather late, is marked by such after-effects. The article analyses the respective impact of natural and biological conditions as well as of precolonial and colonial policies; it demonstrates that such factors developed independently and present conflicting characteristics.

B. FETTER — *Déchiffrage et interprétation des dénombrements centrafricains : données vitales d'un témoin équivoque*.

Les dénombrements conduits par les autorités belges et anglaises permettent l'analyse des structures de la population coloniale par région et par époque. Le pourcentage des filles de moins de quinze ans peut être estimé en divisant le nombre de garçons de moins de quinze ans par la population féminine globale. Les estimations extrapolées des tables de Coale et Demeny montrent que la diminution pourrait s'expliquer par l'esclavage domestique aussi bien que par les impositions coloniales. Les grands accroissements ne datent que d'après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

B. JEWESIWEICKI — *Towards a Historical Sociology of Population in Zaire : Proposals for the Analysis of the Demographic Regime*.

The author asserts that it is unthinkable to separate phenomena which are biological, such as birth or mortality, from the social, cultural, political and economic ones. To speak of a demographic regime characteristic of Africa is an abuse of language. At present, the empirical data necessary to document the variety of African demographic regimes and their transformations are limited. However, historical information is ample enough to reject the idea of stagnation. The readiness of local institutions to manipulate the demographic regime is beginning to be documented. Political regulation of the social status of dependents was one way to manipulate socio-economic and demographic behavior. The demographic model of very high fertility results from reorganization of power relations within colonial society. To carry out research successfully, we must begin by analysing the transformation of units of reproduction, production and consumption.


Demographic estimates and censuses do not only provide quantified information and an opportunity to engage in statistical criticism, whether in the field of demography or of historiography. They can be subjected to a 'quantitative' analysis. With regard to the population figures ascribed to 'ethnic groups', they can provide insights on the real meaning of ethnic identity on the basis of the social history of a regional unit seen by census officials as constituting a discrete entity. The case of the 'Baule' country and ethnic group presents an additional interest in that this
population is, rightly or wrongly, considered as having a significant 'political' weight. Rather than its 'historical demography', its 'demographic history' reveals the weakness of conventional wisdom, which is essentially based upon an analysis in tribal terms, on this domination.

C.-H. PERROT — The Influence of Demographic Fluctuations on the Akan Societies of South-Eastern Ivory Coast.

Should oral sources be abandoned in the search for information on population history, despite the lack of numerical data before the 20th century? The way in which African societies are nowadays affected by demographic fluctuations encourages to look for the traces left by those of the past. In the case of the Anyi-Ndenye (Ivory Coast), ritual practice and the 'reign names' given to the 'men's gatherers' and to the authors of a settlement policy refer to periods of demographic growth. The traces left by demographic crises are however the most significant. Confronted to such crises, the society turned to anti-witchcraft practices (and this long before contemporary movements of a similar nature) or even adopted foreign cults—as local customs proved unable to fulfill their role in protecting society and consolidating the lineage human strength. On the other hand, it is essential to carefully integrate into the historical corpus and interpret magico-religious events referring to corrupted spirits entering into an alliance with the witches and killing villagers during the night without being seen. Indications of this type make it possible to draw the demographic picture of Ndenye during the 18th and 19th centuries and to trace the main lines of its transformation.