

Reviews

The Maori Population of New Zealand 1769-1971. By D. Ian Pool. Auckland University Press/Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1977, 266pp. N.Z. price: \$9.00.

THIS is an important and useful volume which has significance for two major fields of research in New Zealand. First, it makes a substantial contribution to the study of the Maori, with both historical depth and progressively more comprehensive statistics providing an alternative perspective for the anthropologist, the historian, and many others. Secondly, it is the first major published study of population in New Zealand. Although focussing on only one segment of New Zealand's population this is the first substantial study to provide a detailed analysis of its major demographic components. As the reviewer has no competence to deal with the first of these contributions it is primarily in terms of the second that the following comments are made.

The study underwent a long period of gestation, originating as a Ph.D. thesis at the Australian National University in 1964, and does not quite escape the imprint of that initial presentation. Much of the substantive analysis terminates with 1961 data although selected measures and the major studies published during the 1960s and early 1970s are incorporated in the final chapter which looks at 'some socio-economic correlates of Maori population growth until the end of the century'.

The year 1961 also looms large because Pool identifies this point (inevitably at a census date) as the end of a major phase in the demographic experience of the Maori. The superimposition of this structure on the volume will not satisfy every critical reader familiar with the demographic literature. The author adopts the concept of the demographic transition as a framework for analysis, generalizes the Third World into a second of three stages and views the Maori population as analogous to Third World populations set in the context of a largely Western population. For those to whom the transition theory is anathema and its application to Third World countries even more inappropriate this ploy may be wholly unacceptable. However, if such antipathies can be put aside, the use of this conceptual structure will be found to offer considerable coherence and the opportunities needed to explore systematically some of the demographic characteristics and mechanisms of the Maori population over a period of some two hundred years.

Inevitably, treatment of a subject which relies heavily on statistics for its analysis is extremely uneven over such a lengthy period of New Zealand history. For the decades before substantial European settlement (and even after the first census in 1857-58) the discussion is as discontinuous and localized as the extant accounts of contemporary observers. Nevertheless, it is the use of this rather dif-

fuse and wide-ranging material, written throughout much of the two hundred year period, which represents an important contribution to the study of New Zealand populations. It painstakingly and comprehensively puts together not only the trends of fertility and mortality but the epidemiological and related circumstances influencing these vital rates and in the process disposes of a number of common misconceptions (such as the belief that Maori fertility rates were low during the nineteenth century).

The discussion of population growth until 1961, as the author notes, is largely restricted to factors of natural increase, and virtually one-third of the entire book is devoted to mortality and related information. This constraint is somewhat relaxed in the final chapter but since it is only sixteen pages long the opportunity to elaborate on additional aspects of the Maori population is severely limited. Important issues such as internal migration and urbanization are touched on but mainly as a resumé of work published by others and without any of the fundamental analysis that characterizes the earlier chapters. A small amount of additional material appears in five appendices but these deal mainly with more technical aspects of measurement and conceptual organization. Consequently, important facets like the age-sex distributions and occupational structures, despite their considerable current and future significance, receive only cursory treatment although they could readily be incorporated within the transition framework.

The author provides an extended discussion of the problems of definition associated with identifying the Maori population and of the accuracy and quality of the data ostensibly describing 'the' Maori population at different times. The incompatibilities of self-identification, official definitions, statistical classifications and an uncertain degree of 'inter-ethnic migration' are recurrent problems for this as for many other studies of the Maori. Their significance to demographic studies is apparent in the irregularities which can arise in misregistration of births and inconsistent responses to census and other questionnaires from which most statistical data derive.

The volume is not lavishly illustrated. A few more graphs or maps of the extensive tabulated material may well have commended this most useful book to the reader interested in the subject matter but unable or unwilling to interpret the statistical summaries provided. It is a little unfortunate that the age and sex pyramids in one of the few diagrams included (Figure A.1) invite direct comparisons between male and female populations which, because the percentage distribution of each sex is calculated as a discrete universe, cannot validly be made.

This work, then, provides a substantive statement on the Maori population of New Zealand and must be crucial to subsequent studies of that community for many years to come. It will be a reference work for researchers in many related fields and at many levels, and will long hold a central place among the studies of population in New Zealand. However, if you should contemplate purchasing a copy, be sure to check the binding. My review copy arrived in loose-leafed condition.

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