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Changes in Censuses from Imperialist to Welfare States: How Societies and States Count

by Jean Emigh, Dylan Riley, and Patricia Ahmed

Palgrave Macmillan (Division of Nature America, Inc.) New York, NY. 2016

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This book is the second of two volumes. The first volume is *Antecedents of Censuses from Medieval to Nation States: How Societies and States Count*. I state this at the outset because as soon as I started reading the book in question (Volume II), I found references to “Volume I,” but I had to go on line to find the full title of the first volume. Aside from this small annoyance, *Changes in Censuses from Imperialist to Welfare States: How Societies and States Count* is an excellent book and while it could be read as a stand-alone publication, I highly recommend reading its preceding volume before taking it on (the first volume also is priced at US\$105 for a hardcopy version). The book consists of eight chapters, references, a combined name and subject index, one figure and three tables. The eight chapters are presented in three parts. The first part is *How Societies, States and Their Interactions Affect Information Gathering* and it consists of only one chapter, “States, Societies and Censuses.” The second Part, *The Emergence of Interventionist Censuses, consists of four chapters, respectively*, “The Dominance of Class in the UK Censuses,” “The Development of Race and Occupation in the US Censuses,” and “Regionalism, Nationalism, and The Italian Censuses.” The third Part, *The Consolidation of Interventionist Censuses*, is made up of four chapters, respectively, “The Turn to Race and Ethnicity in the UK Censuses,” “Interest Groups, Racial

Mobilization and the US Censuses, “The Insulation of the Italian Censuses,” and “Conclusion.”

As you can tell from the titles of the chapters, the book compares census histories in three countries, Italy, the UK, and the USA. It does this to facilitate the central argument made by the authors that censuses evolved through an interaction between the state and society. This argument is worthwhile to consider in that censuses may have largely been initiated to further state interests but that as they evolved social factors other came into play and interacted with the interests of the state. The book provides a well-documented factual basis for these emergent tendencies and interactions. In the process of providing these facts, the authors provide a lively social history of events and actors, one that sets the stage for the controversies found today in terms of social issues and census counts (Cork and Voss, 2006; Edmonston, 2001; El-Badry and Swanson, 2007; Swanson and Walashek, 2007).

I recommend that this book (and its predecessor, Volume I) be read by anybody with an interest in the history of census taking and the role of censuses in public policy. As such, it not only complements, but significantly extends the work by Anderson (1988) on the US census. In addition to the many insights it offers, the theoretical arguments found in regard to the evolution of censuses are worth hearing in that they offer an important basis for understanding the social and other issues that underpin what will likely be the next step in the evolution of censuses – the matching of administrative records, both those in the public sector and in the private sector (Statistics Finland, 2004; Swanson, 2013; Swanson and Walashek, 2011).

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