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Pranitha Maharaj (ed.), *Aging and Health in Africa*, International Perspectives on Aging 4, Springer Science + Business Media, New York, 2013, 244 pp., hbk £90.00, ISBN 13: 978-1-4419-8356-5.

Bringing together articles from various parts of Africa by different authors, all based in Africa itself, makes *Aging and Health in Africa* an inside look at what shapes the debate on ageing demographics and health population contours on the continent. The book answers critical lacunae of understanding ageing and old age in Africa, including the nature of societal age relations and inequalities, health influences, quality of life and the impacts of urbanisation alongside paucity of health systems in old age.

Divided into three sections, the book flows from ageing gerontology and geriatric medicine to social policy. Starting with a general section, the introduction and overview usefully looks at demographic profiles and health situations of the elderly in Africa from 1950 to 2050. It then moves on in the second section to examine in more detail the social realities of ageing using case studies carefully selected to capture the diversity and distinctiveness of the ageing process, in some cases drawing on very limited data available on older people or health indicators. The final part is concerned with policy and operational implications of the rapid pace of ageing confronting poor countries, given the limited time-frame to respond in the absence of data and quality research.

The demographic and health profiling of the elderly in Africa is demonstrated by comparing how fast demographic changes occurred in countries in Africa compared to other regions' population transitions. Added to that, ageing is increasingly happening in the context of high levels of poverty, instability and conflicts, as well as inadequate health and social services. The scope of demographic change and the interplay with the burden of infectious diseases, particularly AIDS, is broad and ambitious, especially given the lack of data and empirical evidence, including from unstable contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; Chapter 4) where projected population growth is based on simple pilot surveys. Their inclusion, which is perhaps an attempt to move beyond conventional cross-cultural comparative analysis, underlines contextual dissimilarities of ageing. However, assumptions that traditional African society (Chapter 2) holds the elderly in high regard, with modernisation, urbanisation and migration being responsible for eroding the status of the elderly, resulting in their exclusion and neglect, indicates perhaps the dominance of demographic ageing neoclassical views in the book (p. 12).

The second part of the volume contains seven studies from six countries across Africa, namely DRC, Ghana, Cameroon, Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa. Topics vary from healthy behaviour, systems, gender, care in rural settings and post-apartheid trends of ageing. In order to remind us how different Africa was when today's 63.7 million people aged 60+ were born, the book projects the next hundred years' demographic time-frame by showing

while fewer than 11.9 million elderly lived in the continent in 1950, approximately 211 million people over the age of 60 are projected by 2050. This book is a well-intentioned contribution to the growing literature in Africa and would be useful for both academic and non-academic sociologists, demographers, health professionals and voluntary-sector readers.

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