In 1964 Michael Drake defended his comprehensive doctoral thesis on *Population and Society in Norway, 1735-1865* (Drake 1969). Nearly four decades passed before the smaller but somewhat more populous of the Scandinavian countries got its sequel, covering a longer period, comprising more demographic phenomena and employing new methods and technology. The third Scandinavian country with its extensive longitudinal records still lacks a similar overview, although Gustav Sundberg published comprehensively on Swedish population statistics of 1750-1900 a full century ago. Johansen wrote his latest volume while directing the Danish Center for Demographic Studies at Odense University, a richly funded project to study all aspects of Denmark’s demography. Ironically, the centre is being shut down at the same time that its director proves the value of the work carried out there.

The book divides the demographic history of Denmark into five periods: the early seventeenth century; the old (demographic) regime, 1665-1775; the early mortality decline, 1775-1840; the nineteenth-century population growth, 1840-90; and the simultaneous fertility and mortality decline, 1890-1939. The main criterion for this, as indicated by the chapter titles, may be significant changes in the trends of the most important demographic elements, but the improving quality of the source material is of equal importance. The nominative church records start around the mid-seventeenth century, from 1787 there are censuses at irregular intervals, from 1840 there are quinquennial or decadal nominative censuses, and in 1891 the type of ministerial records were introduced which have been used until recently. Each chapter starts with sub-chapters dealing with the historic demographers source material and a brief overview of previous research. Then the main population history topics are covered: mortality, nuptiality, fertility, and migration, often dealing with sub-topics such as infant or child mortality, before each chapter ends with an (all too short) summary. When compared with *The Population History of England, 1511-1871*, Johansen’s book gives a frugal impression, but he adds to the solidity of his project by nearly always sticking to essentials—and fortunately he adds some local detail here and there.

With the author’s background in social economic history, the demographic trends are naturally discussed and analyzed with a view to Danish economic and social developments. Johansen likes facts, preferably quantitative evidence, which often flows sparsely even from the comparatively rich Nordic archives. Rather than launch speculative hypotheses, the book mentions several alternative causal factors, often adding skeptical remarks when the author has not been convinced by earlier researchers or his own results. It adds to the frugality of the text that its scope is so consistently Denmark, seldom referring to research in other countries even for comparison. With the marked regional contrasts inside Denmark in mind, there may be good reasons for this, but this reviewer cannot suppress the thought that, e.g., the recent findings on smallpox in Sweden or on infant mortality in Iceland must be relevant also for explaining the Danish mortality decline.

In 1645 the Danish king ordered the bishop of the Copenhagen region to make his priests start church records, entering information on births, marriages, and deaths. By the 1660s, the other six dioceses were also keeping registers of sufficient quality that a representative picture of the demographic development in Denmark can be reconstructed. The fragmentary evidence left from the previous half century indicates a period...
of unstable conditions due to wars and epidemics, with marked regional differences and frequent spikes in particularly the death rate. The wars with Sweden continued after 1660, but were fought outside Denmark. For the pre-demographic transition century until 1775, Johansen finds a more stable population development. Death rates were still high, but apart from the plague in 1711, the mortality curve spiked less dramatically. A lagged regression model shows significant correlation between rye prices and fertility and mortality rates, results that are substantiated by a closer look at background factors in years with especially high death rates. The author has worked with Jim Oeppen to adapt the generalized inverse projection (GIP) technique from the Population History of England to Danish conditions and source material. The method seems quite robust given likely levels of migration and faulty stillbirth registration, giving a population increase from about half a million to about 800,000. Fertility rate levels changed little until the 1890s, as can be seen from the aggregate national series of births and deaths (but not marriages) from 1735 and the GIP-based results before that.

The late eighteenth century signals the start of the demographic transition, which in the three Scandinavian countries follows the classic scheme of first mortality decline with rapid population increase and a long century later a fertility decline creating once more a relatively stable population size. The primary, nominative data in church books and censuses have been used for a number of localities in (sometimes simplified) family reconstitution studies, showing that the early decline was mainly in child and infant mortality. Johansen concludes that the probable main causes were better nutrition and smallpox vaccination, thus agreeing with Michael Drake’s results for Norway, but adding improved birth techniques as a third likely reason behind the decline. He is, however, a bit skeptical about the effect of smallpox vaccine, since these epidemics became less severe before vaccination campaigns were launched in 1802, and rules out the possibility that inoculation had a significant effect since this method was mainly used in the capital. But are this and a similar reservation about the effect of anti-diphtheria serum (p. 189) valid? Epidemics were by nature cyclic, so a treatment introduced while incidents were fewer can still explain that future epidemics killed fewer people. For this period lists with causes of death exist only for Copenhagen and are difficult to interpret. Peter Sk=ld, on the basis of the good Swedish nosologies in his dissertation, convincingly claims “that vaccination had a great impact on smallpox mortality” (p. 532). Thus a Scandina-

vian or even Nordic perspective may be called for where evidence from one of the countries is too scanty to substantiate causal factors.

This might be even more true when it comes to explaining the decline in infant mortality, which cannot be studied in statistical series covering all Denmark until 1835. From local studies, Johansen proves beyond reasonable doubt that the infant mortality rate (IMR) fell by a third during the period 1775 to 1849, after initial levels around 20 percent. This explains about a third of the fall in the crude death rate. Rather than a reduction in smallpox incidence among infants, the author finds that the most probable explanations were better midwife services and more adequate nourishment among the mothers. The problems inherent in the latter explanation are both that grown-up women did not experience a similar decline and that infant mortality was higher among farmers’ than among cottagers’ children. Several studies of the infant mortality decline in the Nordic countries have pointed to the prime importance of more widespread breast-feeding (Br=ndstr=m 1984, Gardardsdottir 2002, L=kke 1998, Thorvaldsen 2002). Johansen postpones his discussion of this factor to the book’s chapter about the second part of the nineteenth century. On the one hand he thinks Anne L=kke’s findings are based on medical reports from too few localities to reach firm conclusions (p. 142). On the other he tentatively explains the larger spacing of children after 1850 as a result of more mothers breastfeeding (p. 157). This reviewer finds that a Nordic perspective, combining insights into the big regional differences in IMR levels with qualitative and quantitative evidence about breastfeeding practices, convincingly highlights the crucial importance of the latter factor for bringing down infant mortality in the period ca. 1780 to 1920.

The fertility decline is the new key factor in demography of the book’s fifth period, covering the decades from 1890 to the start of World War II. Here the results for Denmark are well in line with findings about declining fertility in Norway (Sogner 1986)—strangely this aspect of Sweden’s demographic history still awaits a detailed national study. There was a clear center-periphery gradient with the most marked early decline in Copenhagen and rural areas in the western Jutland peninsula still experiencing relatively high marital fertility in the 1930s. A sample design employing the retrospective number of children variable in the 1901 census indicates that the lowest fertility was found in the upper social groups. Also like in Norway, the Danish Parliament prohibited preventive article advertisements (1906), but there are in-
dications that mail order companies were still distributing condoms widely. The motivating background factors were probably several, ranging from various religious and cultural influences to children becoming more of an economic burden than an asset in urban areas. As summed up by a contemporary economist: “The number of children seems to vary inversely with the social position which the family finds it appropriate to maintain” (p. 216).

The higher birth rates in the rural areas partly explain the main domestic migration flows towards the urban areas. For the period before the creation of a national population register in 1931, our knowledge is chiefly limited to statistics about the net flows constructed on the basis of the censuses. Agricultural laborers from Sweden traditionally dominated immigration to Denmark, in the twentieth century more often settling in Copenhagen. Another major immigrant group came from the areas in southern Jutland that Denmark lost in the nineteenth-century wars with Germany and in part got back after World War I. More significant, however, was the emigration to overseas destinations which econometric modelling shows fluctuated with business cycles on both sides of the Atlantic and Danish population growth. As Johansen writes (p. 170), emigration rates from Norway and Sweden were significantly higher. He explains this by migration to urban areas being a more viable alternative in Denmark in years with a booming economy. Also, the Danish immigrants behaved differently from other Scandinavians in the New World, living more scattered and leaving less of an impact on U.S. localities. It may be difficult to tell whether this primarily was caused by the relatively small number of Danish immigrants or if rather the lack of a social-psychological multiplier effect communicated from ethnically homogeneous immigrant groups limited Danish emigration? (=kerman1976, pp. 73f). The low emigration rates from densely populated Denmark still seems paradoxical and should make us sceptical towards any hypothesis about the connection between migration and a “population surplus.” It would be interesting to know more about why farmers and their children were less frequent among Danish than among Norwegian and Swedish emigrants. And how important was the new agricultural territory won by dyking along the coasts and draining interior moorlands? (Also the Netherlands experienced low emigration ratios.)

In summary, Hans Chr. Johansen has condensed the demographic history of Denmark into a comprehensive volume which more than matches any similar overview for other countries. He has sacrificed most international comparison, many speculations, and lots of details, which is a reasonable price to pay provided he could deliver a text based on what source material is available and up-to-date demographic methodology before retiring. Hopefully, rather than seeing the book as a worthy final to the remarkable career of an economic and demographic historian, I expect reading several future articles from his hand on some puzzles that his latest book leaves us pondering.

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