

# FAMILY DEMOGRAPHY IN ASIA, A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FERTILITY PREFERENCES<sup>1)</sup>

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This new book by Edward Elgar Publishing Limited is the result of work of more than fifty authors and a new contribution to fertility analysis. Book is edited by Stuart Gietel-Basten, John Casterline and Minja Kim Choe.

The publication presents itself as the first book providing comprehensive and detailed view of the fertility situation in Asia, through the perspective of demographers. The aim is to investigate fertility preferences in terms of the factors that may affect them and generally find the reasons, which leads to the currently preferred family size in each state. In the case of the least developed countries, there are also no available a lot of demographic articles dealing with fertility, which the book tries to at least partly remedy. Another big theme of the book is the issue of gender preferences. In the case of Asia in particular, son preference. On nearly four hundred pages, there are twenty four chapters to find. The first chapter “Exploring Family Demography in Asia through the Lens of Fertility Preferences” is the work of two editors of the whole book, John Casterlin and Stuart Gietel-Basten. It can be considered as a general introduction that aims to very briefly present the situation of fertility preferences in whole Asia and factors affecting it. It also generally addresses why fertility issues in populous Asia are important for global demographic development.

The second chapter “Son preference and fertility: an overview” by Sylvie Dubuc deals with the introduction to the gender preferences in Asia.

Then follows the chapters of various authors, each dedicated to a particular country. In the alphabetical order of the name of each country, the chapters are devoted to the states Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Central Asia, China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Timor-Leste and Turkey. It is not necessary to describe the exact title of each chapter, because they are all devoted to the same topic. Thus, a separate chapter with analysis of fertility for twenty-two Asian states can be found in the publication.

Basically, the authors of this chapters try to focus specifically on fertility preferences and put these issues into the overall context of family behavior and fertility in the country under review. In addition to second chapter, the section on gender preferences with the impact on fertility is also often addressed. From these two points of view, the publication maintains internal unity. Otherwise, the content of the chapter was obviously more about the choice of authors, because the analyzed data and points of view from which the issue is examined varies between chapters. Of course, this is partly necessary due to the large number of countries in different Asian regions that are at a different level of demographic development. For example, Taiwan is one of the countries with a world's lowest total fertility rate. The next chapter describes the situation in the young state of Timor-Leste, where, on the contrary, total fertility rates are similar to those

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1) Stuart Gietel-Basten, John Casterline, Minja Kim Choe (eds.): *Family Demography in Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Fertility Preferences*. Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar Pub, 424 p. The eBook version is priced from £22/\$31 from Google Play, ebooks.com and other eBook vendors, while in print the book can be ordered from the Edward Elgar Publishing website.

prevailing in states before the first demographic revolution and are among the countries with the highest total fertility in the world. The availability of analyzable data and other understandable implications of this varying level of demographic development of countries are undoubtedly one of the reasons why the view of some countries is much more concise and others are analyzed from more points of view or with using advanced statistical methods and so on. Many chapters begin with an interesting historical insight into the political development and population policy of the state, which is necessary for an ordinary reader because of the number of countries included in the publication. As a result, it is possible to observe the demographic consequences of war conflicts, uprisings or measures to facilitate the establishment of a family. At the same time, the authors do not neglect to focus on many factors affecting fertility preferences and gender preferences, such as the impact of changing the status of women in society, the spread of contraception

and abortion, family planning, availability and length of education, inheritance, family patriarchy, or the influence of agricultural culture. Of course, a lot of space is devoted to describing differences between personal ideal number of children and actually realized fertility. The authors also focus on the specific features of the course of demographic transitions that differ from analyzed country to for example European countries. From a formal side, the book is on a high standard and does not contain serious flaws. The publication is a very interesting tool for demographers interested in the situation in Asia. It really offers a comprehensive view of fertility on this continent. Reading this book is very useful for getting to know this issue. Even to the professionals on the topic it will definitely bring them new knowledge due to the large amount of analyzed data in publication, some of them were even less accessible in past. The publication will also bring new pieces of knowledge to readers interested in gender preferences.