

NOTES ON TWO KENYA PROVINCES

The following notes on Rift Valley and Western Provinces, Kenya, were compiled in the first instance for *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but owing to a recent change of editorial policy on the insertion of articles on provinces they will not be printed in that work of reference. If these sample gazeteers are found to be useful to the readers of the *Review* the series could be extended in future issues to cover the remaining five provinces of Kenya and the Nairobi area.

RIFT VALLEY PROVINCE.

Rift Valley Province, the largest of the seven provinces of Kenya, has an area of 67,131 square miles, occupies the west central part of the country and extends from the Sudan frontier in the north to that of Tanzania in the south. The province includes the whole of the broken floor of the rift and also the low plateaux west and south-west of Lake Rudolf. The rift is diversified by the presence of volcanoes and lakes, the principal lakes being Baringo, Nakuru, Naivasha and Magadi. Westwards the unit stretches across the Mau and Elgeyo escarpments into the West Kenya highlands. The central part of the eastern escarpment and the Aberdare mountains are within the adjacent Central Province, but on either side of these highlands eastward salients of the Rift Valley Province coincide with Laikipia and Samburu in the north and with the Masai district of Kajiado in the south. Tertiary and Quaternary volcanics, with Quaternary lake sediments on the rift floor, overlie the Precambrian Basement system which outcrops in parts of the flanking plateaux of the rift.

Mean annual rainfall is 30-40 in. in the highest, central part of the rift, declining to 10-20 in. in the southern rift and to less than 10 in. on the shores of Lake Rudolf; but totals of more than 70 in. occur in the Kericho highlands. Highland grassland and forest occupy the West Kenya highlands and the neighbourhood of Nakuru, whilst at the other extreme desert grass-bush prevails in the Lake Magadi section of the rift and desert scrub in the area adjacent to Lake Rudolf. Elsewhere low grassland with or without scattered thorn trees is the prevalent vegetation. Lake Nakuru national park is a bird sanctuary famous for its flamingoes; Oloikisalie (Olorgesailie) national park is a prehistoric site; and Masai Mara (645 sq. mi.), Masai Amboseli (1254 sq. mi.) and Samburu (44 sq. mi.) are county council game reserves.

The total population of this vast province is 1,750,500 (1962 census), but with few exceptions the density is moderate or low. Belonging to the Nilo-Hamitic group, the population includes *inter alia* Turkana, Pokot (Suk), Marakwet, Elgeyo, Samburu, Nandi, Kipsigis and Masai. The chief towns, with 1962 populations in brackets, are:— Nakuru (38,181), Eldoret (19,605), Nanyuki (10,448), Kitale (9,342), Kericho (7,692), Gilgil (6,452) and Thomson's Falls (5,316). These towns, among which Nakuru, Eldoret and Kitale are municipalities, owe their origin to European farming activities. Counties, of which there are eight, are the units of local government, and the provincial headquarters is at Nakuru.

African and European agriculture both play their part in the economy of the region. Important products of the highlands are coffee, tea (especially in Kericho district), wheat, maize, potatoes, sisal, pyrethrum and wattle; good quality cattle and sheep are reared; and there is a significant timber industry in the West Kenya highlands. The drier parts are used for low density grazing. Lake Magadi yields soda ash, the most valuable mineral export of Kenya, and salt; and diato-

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mite is quarried at Kariandus, near Gilgil. Manufacturing industry is concentrated on Nakuru and Eldoret and has cereal products, dairy produce, woollen goods, sawn timber and pyrethrum extract as principal components. The main rail route between the coast and Uganda traverses the region diagonally, passing through Nakuru and Eldoret, with a branch line to Kisumu; and trunk roads follow the same directions.

WESTERN PROVINCE.

Western Province, the smallest of the seven units of regional government set up in Kenya in 1963, is 3,206 sq. mi. in area. It extends between the equator and 1°10'N.; its north-western boundary coincides with a section of the Kenya-Uganda boundary; and Rift Valley and Nyanza provinces lie respectively to the east and south. A south-south-west trending corridor yields a narrow frontage on Lake Victoria, whilst away to the north the province includes a southern sector of the volcanic mass of Mount Elgon and the second highest point (14,140 ft.) on the caldera rim. An eastward salient protrudes between Trans-Nzoia and Uasin Gishu districts into Rift Valley province. The southern section of the eastern boundary corresponds with the faulted Nandi escarpment, and in the south-east beyond the rocky granitic outcrops of the Maragoli hills the province reaches the Nyando escarpment and thus overlooks the Kavirondo gulf. Within this framework a re-dissected peneplain, developed on Precambrian rocks invaded by granites, slopes gradually westward from a height of 5,000-6,000 ft. above sea-level to below 4,000 ft. in the Lake Victoria lowlands. The swift-flowing Nzoia is the principal river. Mean annual rainfall varies from 35 in. at the mouth of the Nzoia to 75 in. below the Nandi escarpment. The prevalent scattered tree—grassland, man-induced in the east, gives way to closed forest on the slopes of Mount Elgon and in a small relict patch east of Kakamega.

The population numbers 1,014,500 (an adjusted figure from the 1962 census) and provides a provincial average of 316 per sq. mi.; but the irregular density rises to more than 1,000 per sq. mi. in the Maragoli, Bunyore and Tiriki locations of the south-east. Population presses hard upon local resources, with labour migration to other parts of Kenya and to Uganda as a distinctive feature of the economy; and with its eastward extension into the highlands the provincial boundary was drawn so as to include an area in which settlement schemes might be provided. Western province is the homeland of a congeries of Bantu-speaking sub-tribes known collectively as the Baluhya, but in the north-west there is a considerable population of Itesyo, belonging to the Nilo-Hamitic language group. There are three districts, Kakamega, Bungoma and Mumias, each administered by a country council. Kakamega, the largest township, contained in 1962 a population of 3,939.

In the period 1931-52 gold to the value of about £3,500,000 was produced from the Kakamega goldfield, but there is no longer any appreciable production. The resources of the province are primarily agricultural, but there is in addition an interest in stock-keeping in the north. The main food crops are maize, eleusine, sorghum, sesame, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, beans and bananas; maize, cotton and coffee are the chief export crops. The province is well served by communications. The railway from Mombasa to Uganda passes through it and the Kisumu-Butere branch-line taps its produce from the south. The Nairobi-Kampala trunk road, coming in from Eldoret, traverses the province, as do the Kisumu-Busia and Kisumu-Kitale main roads.

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