

RACTICAL GEOGRAPHY IN AFRICA. T.E. HILTON. xiii, 348 pp. London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd. 1961. U.K. Price 21s.

This book, by a university lecturer in Ghana with a long experience of teaching African students, deals with the requirements for teaching practical geography in senior secondary schools at both the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate levels. As such it is a valuable addition to the literature on this subject, and the focus upon Africa renders the book especially interesting. Naturally, Ghana and other English-speaking West African countries provide many of the examples, but East Africa is not entirely neglected and the conscientious teacher could substitute local examples.

Unfortunately the book is marred by an unevenness of treatment within the individual sections, and some entire chapters are very inadequate. The chapter on elementary surveying for instance, seems very satisfactory, but the following chapter on map projections is very thin. Within certain chapters there is also a considerable range of level — for example, from elementary map reading to isogonic charts. It is, therefore, that one can so readily find points of criticism. Many of these arise from an attempt to cover too wide a range of subjects. The section (without a diagram) on the grid systems of West, East and Central Africa is unhelpful. Likewise Chapter 10, which examines the availability of maps in various African territories, concentrates too much on the 1:50,000 series and makes very little reference to maps at other scales. Yet, at the same time, both these sections would have been omitted from a lesser book. A better section of the book is that which deals with topographical maps; though even here the page-size restricts the map extracts to areas rather smaller than is desirable. The range of scales of the thirteen extracts is also limited. Nevertheless, the exercises and descriptions accompanying these maps offer useful material on map-work. All aspects of practical geography at the senior secondary school level are treated, though the degree of success of each section varies. A feature of particular note is the inclusion of a chapter on the study of photographs; but even this could be greatly improved by the use of more aerial and landscape photographs, especially if these could have been related to topographical maps. A further notable feature is the liberal supply of exercises, most of which are suitable for student use. The placing of a group of exercises between pp.140–158 is rather odd, and the purpose of Fig.75 is not clear.

On the whole, this is a well-produced and inexpensive book which will be of assistance to school-teachers in East Africa in spite of its many shortcomings. An East African edition of the book would be necessary before it could be recommended as a class text-book in East African schools.

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