

# Preface and Acknowledgments

The aim of this volume is to provide a comprehensive account of recent demographic change in Asia's three most populated countries. The idea for this book germinated in 2012 when we realized the wealth of data stemming from the censuses recently conducted in Asia. While we were both individually involved in the analysis of census figures from China, India, or Indonesia, we discovered that there was hardly any comparative work done on demographic trends across these Asian countries beyond the level of national indicators. Yet, these countries whose combined population has now reached 40 % of the world's total are far from homogeneous. In fact, as this volume should make clear, the diversity of demographic trajectories within each of these countries is extreme. Individual provinces, with populations often larger than 50 million, are now going through very distinct stages of the demographic transition – from rapid population growth to ultralow fertility regimes, with formidable migration exchanges often making the analysis of regional situations even more complex. National averages for such large countries are indeed very poor indicators of their actual demographic circumstances and rather incomplete instruments to decipher the dynamics at work.

This realization led us to opt for a more systematic analysis that would recognize both the main demographic components of the recent transformations and their various regional configurations in each country. Such a venture required identification of the best specialists from Asia and elsewhere to carry out this systematic disaggregated analysis and to bring them together for an intensive engagement with their findings. In this, we were fortunate to receive the full support of the National University of Singapore, through its Global Asia Institute. Not only were several authors invited for a stay of several months at the J Y Pillay Comparative Asia Research Centre (directed by the second editor and part of the Global Asia Institute), but we were also able to host a 3-day conference in May 2013 in Singapore (“40 per cent of the World: Population Change, Human Capital and Development in China, India and Indonesia”). This meeting led us also to select the priority entry points to explore the demographics of China, India, and Indonesia that have now become the five main parts of this volume. The book's structure is intentionally analytical, with the key aspects of demographic change – from mortality to changing

age structure – in each part and further divided into individual chapters on China, India, and Indonesia followed by a brief synthetic analysis. Each chapter discusses in some depth the lessons of recent trends, but also provides a summary of some of the real estimation issues that demographic analysis faces in countries with no reliable civil registration sources. We believe this should provide readers with easy access to the most informed comparative analysis of these three countries' recent demographic developments.

We are first indebted to our contributors and to other conference participants. They have helped us shape this project and give it its rich substance. Our authors have also patiently borne with the usual delays and contradictory requests that are inevitably associated with a volume of more than 20 chapters. We are also grateful to our colleagues in Singapore who have made it possible. First, Professor Ho Teck Hua, Director of the Global Asia Institute, for his understanding of the importance of the project. Second, Therese M. Chan and Divya S. Ramchand, for their help in organizing the conference in Singapore. Most particularly, we would like to thank Divya Ramchand who has made major contributions to this volume, both substantive and administrative, from birth till completion although she makes only a small appearance in the final product. Finally, we acknowledge the continuous support our book received from Yves Charbit and Ian Pool who welcomed it in their series. The Springer team also deserves our gratitude for their excellent professional assistance. We would also like to extend our special thanks to Ian for the many ways he strived to give more rigor and readability to our manuscript (we believe successfully) during the last stages of the book preparation.

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