LAND AND POPULATION IN THE WESTERN DISTRICTS OF NYANZA
PROVINCE, KENYA

by

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Abstract

The human drama in the Western Districts of Nyanza Province has been enacted against a physical background of the lower Lake Shore areas in marked contrast with the higher and wetter regions on either side of the gulf. Over this varied background, predominantly agricultural tribes have established themselves in close adjustment to the opportunities presented. The four main population regions established confirm this close adjustment to the characteristics of the land.

A summary of land utilization results show that in 1948, excluding the Reserved Forests of Elgon, and Kakamega, about 58% of the land area of the Western Districts was devoted to cropland, 28% to rough grazing, 1% to dense forests, 12% to scrub and 2% was fresh water swamps. The non-agricultural and unproductive lands each accounted for less than 1% of the total land surface.

The relatively high percentage of cropped area in contrast to other forms of land use is interpreted as a product of expanding demand on the subsistence resources of the land. The proportion of cropland to 1948 population figure is used as a basis for examination of the pressure of population on land.

A conclusion is reached that on the evidence of 1948 census, and land use, the problem of population which has continued to engage public attention is localised in certain areas and that there were areas of considerable extent which could still be regarded as empty.