

**MALI**  
**Hamady B. Sow**

**AUGUST 1979**



## M A L I

I. INTRODUCTION

Mali is a large inland country covering 1 240 192 km<sup>2</sup> in the heart of Western Africa and has frontiers with seven other states. The nearest port, Konakry (P.R. Guinea) is at least 700 km away. It is a country of immense plains, dominated in the south by the Mandigue Plateau and in the centre by the cliffs of the Dogon Plateau.

The Niger, of which 1 700 km flows in Mali, and the Senegal, with their numerous tributaries, constitute its hydrographic backbone.

The climate is characterised by two seasons:

- the dry season, which is the longer, from November to May
- the rainy season, from June to October (rain is very unevenly distributed)

The population remains little known. Only the latest census, the results of which have not yet been published, will provide a more realistic picture.

II. SOURCES OF DATA

Mali does not possess very detailed documentation on demographic matters, hence the scarcity and incompleteness of data.

1) Historical estimates

If estimates prior to 1960 (year of independence) are considered as historical, the following information extracted from the "Tableau Economique et Social des Etats et Territoires d'Outre-Mer 1978" is available.

Table 56

MALI - POPULATION ESTIMATES UP TO 1960

	1921	1931	1946	1951	1956	1960
Population	2 475 000	2 856 000	3 797 000	3 347 000	3 708 000	4 100 000

These figures should be regarded with the greatest caution bearing in mind the frequent territorial changes which occurred at that time: in 1944, the areas of Néma and Aioun El Atrous were transferred to Mauritania whereas other areas of Upper-Volta were attached to Soudan (1932-33). On the other hand, with the reconstruction of Upper-Volta, other areas (Tougan, Nouma, etc...) became part of this territory.

Bamako, which became the capital of the country in 1908, witnessed rapid growth:

Table 57

MALI - POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR BAMAKO UNTIL 1960

	1921	1945	1956	1958	1960
Population	14 400	36 700	59 300	62 900	129 300

2) Administrative censuses

The censuses carried out by local authorities are aimed mainly at providing information for tax purposes to the authorities. Without an adequate and statistically proved form of methodology, they do not lend themselves easily to demographic uses and remain to this day neglected by statistical offices, though they do represent the beginnings of population study. However, the Regional Offices for Planning and Statistics have used them in setting up village lists.

In 1974, for election purposes, the town hall of Bamako carried out a census of the town which was used by the "Office Malien du Bétail et de la Viande" (OMBEVI) to assess the needs of the population in meat; an indicative figure of 327 000 was obtained.

3) Statistical censusesa) The 1976 census

The sole nationwide demographic census was carried out between 1st and 16th December 1976. It included both sedentary and nomadic populations. A quick count of the summary cards filled in in the field by controllers and supervisors revealed the population of the main administrative divisions, that is around 6 308 320 out of which 49.06% were of male sex.

In addition, the urban population was counted, grouping together the population of regional capitals, communes, and any other locality of 5 000 inhabitants or more. It amounted to 1 054 502 or 16.7% of total population. Only Bamako, the capital of the country, with a population of 403 613, counted more than 100 000 inhabitants.

Table 58  
MALI - POPULATION BY REGIONS (1976 CENSUS)

Regions	N° of "cercles"*	N° of "arrondissements"*	Area	Population		
				Rural	Urban	Total
Kayes	6	48	119 313	779 279	92 592	871 871
Bamako	7	38	90 100	831 670	488 500	1 320 170
Sikasso	7	49	76 480	1 052 190	119 671	1 171 861
Segou	5	35	56 127	838 945	145 668	984 613
Mopti	8	62	88 752	1 118 196	117 976	1 236 173
Gao	9	47	808 920	633 538	90 095	723 633
TOTAL	42	179	1 240 192	5 253 818	1 054 502	6 308 320

\* Administrative divisions

b) Census of the town of Bamako

This operation took place in 1965-66. It only gave rise to a provisional publication showing the population by ethnic groups and activities. The resident population amounted to approximately 162 000 inhabitants.

4) Surveys

These have not been numerous:

\* The first one carried out in 1956-58 by the socio-economic mission of Sudan, in the central delta of Niger, had several objectives and was divided into several parts:

- demography,
- agriculture,
- fisheries,
- budget/consumption,
- habitat.

The observed population amounted to 235 295; two booklets were published [3].

\*\* The second demographic survey took place between May 1960 and June 1961 and showed a population of 3 484 500 in the area covered. By adding to it an estimate of the population of the areas outside the scope of the survey (Office of Niger - nomadic areas), an overall population 4 100 000 is obtained.

This study provides information on individuals, as well as groups and migrations [2].

From the years 1963 to 1973, projections have been established on the basis of this survey. The tables below show the data derived under the assumptions of:

- constant fertility
- a moderate decrease in mortality accelerating from 1967 onwards

Table 59

MALI - POPULATION ESTIMATES 1963-1973 ON THE BASIS  
OF THE 1960-1961 SURVEY

Sex	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Male	2 189 000	2 335 900	2 882 400	2 310 100	2 360 600	2 407 800
Female	2 205 200	2 249 200	2 293 300	2 336 000	2 379 200	2 424 400
Total	4 394 000	4 585 100	4 495 700	4 646 100	4 739 800	4 832 200

Sex	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Male	2 456 900	2 500 200	2 562 800	2 620 500	2 676 700
Female	2 472 100	2 513 300	2 588 100	2 636 600	2 696 700
Total	4 929 000	5 013 500	5 150 900	5 257 100	5 373 400

Source: [9]

These projections, compared with provisional results of the Population Census of December 1976 appear to have underestimated the evolution of the population.

\*\*\* Another important survey is the Permanent Agricultural Survey set up since 1964. It provides information mainly on the following:

- farming population,
- cultivated area,
- yield and production,
- livestock and farming equipment.

This survey is conducted at regional level by the "Directions Régionales du Plan et de la Statistique".

Table 60  
MALI - EVOLUTION OF THE FARMING POPULATION BY REGIONS  
 (thousand of persons)

REGIONS	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Kayes	660.4	645.3	676.0	704.9	690.7
Bamako	771.4	714.5	720.8	728.7	719.0
Sikasso	876.7	872.5	912.7	932.7	912.8
Segou	671.3	686.0	705.6	694.2	748.2
Mopti	964.6	1 001.0	964.3	996.5	1 037.9
Gao	280.9	278.4	244.7	242.4	228.5
TOTAL	4 171.3	4 197.7	4 224.1	4 299.4	4 337.0

Source: [6]

### III. CRITICAL STUDY OF SOURCES

#### 1) Field and population reference

All the population studies carried out up to now encompass both de jure and de facto population.

However, differences in definition make difficult any comparison between administrative censuses and demographic censuses and surveys. The latest census only considers as resident population those normally living in the country and enumerated at the place where the census took place, and those absent for less than 6 months, whereas administrative censuses and the first surveys included people who had been absent for periods of up to 5 years.

In the case of Mali, external migration is very important and a substantial proportion of the population lives outside national boundaries for more than 6 months.

Furthermore, all the studies mentioned, with the exception of the General Census, have been somewhat localised and the nomads were never counted. It is therefore very likely that, due to the imperfection of the method (enumeration made around centres of settlement), and to the characteristics of this population, omissions were made.

#### 2) Factors which may have influenced the quality of collection

As the population is not used to censuses or statistical surveys and often does not understand the objectives of these undertakings, it remains constantly mistrustful and there is a tendency to provide information which is either inaccurate or incomplete. They have in mind taxes which are the prime objective of the administrative censuses.

Enumeration agents and interviewers are often not up to standard and are not effectively supervised, which is why they themselves give rise to many errors.

There are three types of geographical difficulties, which sometimes render transportation and communication non-existent: mountainous zones in the areas of Bandiagara and Kanieba; flood zones in the areas of Tenenkou, Djené, Mopti; and sandy or desert zones in some areas of the north. These geographical difficulties affect the quality and exhaustiveness of collection.

The mobility of population in urban areas compels the enumerator to make several rounds, which may discourage him and ultimately lead him to disregard his instructions, resulting in omissions and carelessness.

When training is not provided by the same people, it may produce different interpretations of instructions. In a country as large as Mali, it seems for the moment difficult to eliminate completely this risk; only a very advanced form of training for instructors could reduce these risks. Besides, the training (by categories) so far adopted leads to the same problem (reduction and homogeneity of questions and answers).

The major difficulty facing the sample surveys already made has been the setting-up of the sampling frame. In fact, there cannot always be found an exhaustive and up-to-date list of the various localities, which often results in incomplete frames.

Therefore it is difficult to speak of the consistency of sources; information generally differs according to sources; studies are most of the time very localised, and any generalisation would prove hazardous.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Knowledge of the population of Mali is limited especially on the subject of its evolution. The results of various studies hardly permit the assessment of the population at the beginning of the century bearing in mind the various changes which affected the boundaries of Mali (ex French Sudan).

Despite the shortage of means, an improvement of sources could be obtained by:

- co-operation between regional statistical offices and regional administrative authorities in the implementation and uses made of administrative censuses;
- a better co-ordination between studies; none of them should be undertaken without the consent or even the participation of the "Service de la Statistique";
- improvement in the recording of vital events for Civil Registration (study under way).



---

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1.- "Bamako : recensement 1958, enquête démographique de 1961 - Résultats définitifs", 1969, Service de la Statistique, Bamako.
- 2.- "Enquête démographique 1960-1961", 1969, INSEE, Paris, 349 p.
- 3.- "Enquête démographique dans le delta central nigérien - 2ème fascicule. Résultats détaillés", INSEE, Paris, 203 p.
- 4.- "Outre-Mer 1958, tableau économique et social des Etats et Territoires d'Outre-Mer", 1959, service des statistiques d'Outre-Mer, Paris, 862 p.
- 5.- "Perspectives démographiques du Mali 1963-1973", November 1973, Direction de la Statistique, Bamako.
- 6.- "Rapport de l'enquête agricole 1973-1974", Direction de la Statistique, Bamako.
- 7.- "Recensement national de la population 1-16 décembre 1976, résultats provisoires", February 1977, Direction de la Statistique, Bamako.
- 8.- "Recensement, ville de Bamako, 1965-1966 - Rapport provisoire", June 1967, Direction de la Statistique, Bamako.

**Groupe de Démographie Africaine**

IDP\_INED\_INSEE\_MINCOOP\_ORSTOM

**POPULATION SIZE  
IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES :  
AN EVALUATION**

Volume I

Paris  
1986

## **Le groupe de Démographie africaine IDP - INED - INSEE - MINCOOP-ORSTOM**

est un organisme de liaison non officiel entre les statisticiens, démographes et autres techniciens qui s'intéressent aux questions de population dans les pays d'Afrique.

Il effectue des travaux de synthèse ou méthodologiques à partir des données recueillies ou des techniques mises en oeuvre dans ces pays ; il rend compte des travaux qui y sont réalisés dans le domaine de la démographie et d'une manière générale s'efforce d'informer les personnes intéressées par toute question ayant trait à la démographie africaine.

### **PUBLICATIONS DU GROUPE**

- « Démographie africaine », bulletin de liaison :
  - n° 0 2<sup>ème</sup> trimestre 1971 à n° 28 septembre-décembre 1978 (poursuite de cette publication à Yaoundé - IFORD)
  - numéros spéciaux 1 à 13.
- « Études et documents », prolongement des numéros spéciaux du bulletin de liaison.
- « Afrique Noire, Madagascar, Comores - Démographie comparée » tomes I et II - INSEE, INED, DGRST, Paris 1967.
- « Les enquêtes démographiques à passages répétés » Application à l'Afrique d'expression française et à Madagascar - Méthodologie - ORSTOM, INSEE, INED, Paris 1971.
- « Sources et analyse des données démographiques » - Application à l'Afrique d'expression française et à Madagascar - INED, INSEE, MINCOOP, ORSTOM, - Paris 1973-1977.
  - 1<sup>ère</sup> partie : Sources des données
  - 2<sup>ème</sup> partie : Ajustement de données imparfaites
  - 3<sup>ème</sup> partie : Analyse des données (tomes I et II).
- « Le traitement informatique des enquêtes statistiques » - Groupe de démographie africaine, INSEE - Paris 1978.
- « Le recensement des nomades mauritaniens » - Yves PACCOU - Paris, 1979.
- « Recensements africains - 1<sup>re</sup> partie : Monographies méthodologiques » - Paris, novembre 1980 et février 1981.
- « Recensements africains - 2<sup>e</sup> partie : Synthèse méthodologique » - Paris, octobre 1981.
- « Les structures par sexe et âge en Afrique » - Gilles ROGER, Dominique WALTISPERGER et Christine CORBILLE-GUITTON - Paris, 1981.
- « L'évaluation des effectifs de la population des pays africains », tome I, Paris, janvier 1982.
- « L'évaluation des effectifs de la population des pays africains », tome II, Paris, octobre 1984.
- "Contribution à l'analyse des données démographiques imparfaites des pays africains" - Rémy CLAIRIN - Paris, octobre 1985