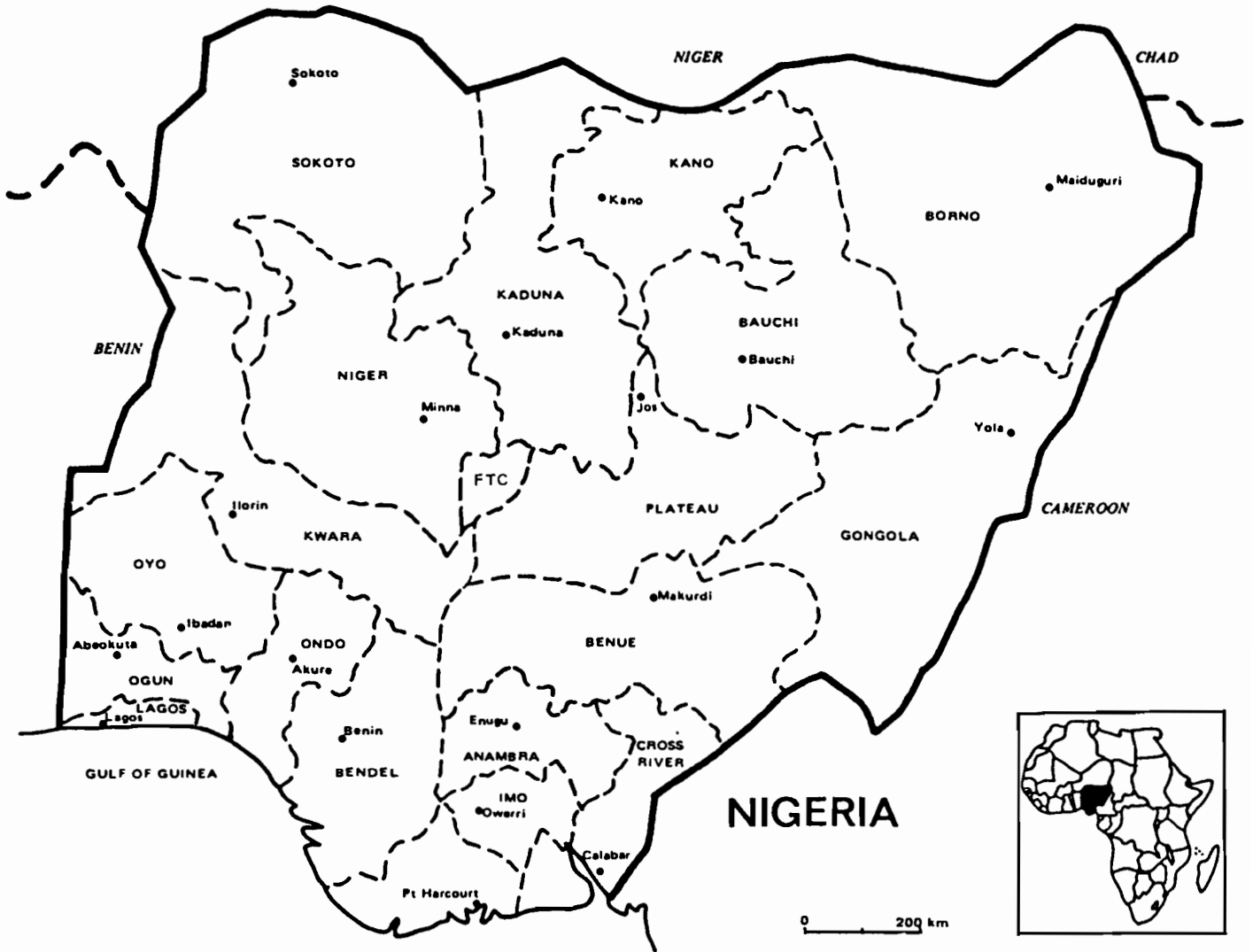


NIGERIA

Aderanti Adepoju

J.A. Ebigbola

MAY 1979



N I G E R I A

I. PRE-SECOND WORLD WAR ESTIMATES

Estimates of the population of the largest region of the country - Northern Nigeria - exist as far back as the middle of the 19th century. Heinrich Barth (1857) estimated the population of Northern Nigeria between 30 and 50 million. Lugard accepted these as correct estimates but in 1900 he also estimated the population of the same region at nine million. However, as Prothero [12] has pointed out, acceptance of both these estimates implies depopulation in Northern Nigeria during the period of 50 years. Kuczynski [6] was also highly critical of Lugard's standpoint; he concluded that these early population estimates were grossly exaggerated.

Estimates of the population of Nigeria for the first half of the 20th century are provided by the census returns of 1866 and 1868. Decennial censuses were taken in Lagos in 1871 and 1881 followed by a count in 1901.

In 1911, an attempt was made for the first time to broaden the coverage of the population in order to provide an estimate of the population of the country as a whole. In 1901, estimates of the population of Northern Nigeria ranged between 6.7 and 30 million people; the wide range amply suggests that these estimates were no more than mere guesses. The de facto census of 1911 was probably confined to government stations in Northern Nigeria while in the South, estimates were made on the basis of the best data available in each district. In total, 17 133 689 people were reported for the country - 7 858 689 and 9 275 000 for the Southern and Northern provinces respectively.

In 1921, an attempt was made to widen the coverage of the census operation: it was conducted on a de facto basis but in two parts - the township census and the provincial census. The township census was conducted on a single day i.e. 24 April, 1921 and the provincial census lasted two months (March to May, 1921). The township census, which was confined to non-natives, was reported to be fairly complete and that the results might be taken as "nearly" correct. In the case of the provincial census, the enumeration was successfully conducted in only very few areas. The result of the census was as follows: 8 371 459 and 10 259 982 for Southern and Northern provinces respectively (i.e. 18 621 441 for the entire country). Cox [4] in his comments on the 1921 census concluded that the 1921 census of Southern Nigeria was reduced to a mere compilation of existing data. With respect to Northern Nigeria, the report stated that "whilst it is not pretended that the count made of the natives in the provinces was anything more than approximately accurate, the statistics, nevertheless, furnish a great amount of valuable information" [3]. According to Talbot, [13] while the township census was about 95 percent accurate, the reported statistics from the provincial census could only be regarded as approximate.

In 1931, another country-wide census was conducted, but this was hampered by many difficulties, including the severe economic depression of the early thirties and the Aba riots of 1929 that spread to parts of Owerri, Onitsha and Calabar provinces. Under these circumstances, the attempt to count the population in these areas was abandoned on the order of the Governor who ruled that the census in the South should consist merely of a compilation of existing records with an intensive census of the Egba division and of Lagos. The 1931 census was much less successful in the South than in the North; as a result the census of the Southern provinces also became "a mere compilation of existing data". A total population of 19 928 171, comprising 11 434 924 and 8 493 247 was reported for the Northern and Southern provinces respectively.

II. THE 1952-53 CENSUS

The second world war obstructed the conduct of any census in 1941. In 1952-53, the colonial government planned and conducted what turned out to be the first comprehensive census on a de facto basis in Nigeria. This census took place in Northern Nigeria in May, June and July 1952, in Western Nigeria in December 1952 and January 1953 and in Eastern Nigeria in May, June and August 1953. The result of the count gave a total of 31 500 000 for the country comprising 16 840 000 living in Northern Nigeria, 6 087 000 in Western Nigeria, 7 218 000 in Eastern Nigeria and 272 000 for Lagos Federal territory. There were 15 354 non-Africans.

At the close of the census operation, a 95% degree of accuracy, later adjusted to 97% in the Northern Region, 97% in the East, and 95% in the West, was claimed. However, in terms of the actual population size, the census has certain shortcomings. Available evidence shows that certain areas were undercounted; examples include Ilorin Division, the Fulani nomads in the North, Ede town and children 2 - 3 years in the West and Ibibio fishermen from Eket division of the East. Olusanya argued in 1967 that there must have been about 18% under-enumeration; hence he arrived at an estimated population of 36 725 340 in contrast to the reported 31 500 000. The 1952-53 census report did not provide information on rural and urban classification of the population.

III. THE 1962 AND 1963 CENSUSES

The 1962 census was country-wide and was conducted between 5 and 21 May, 1962, hence it was completely national in its scope and coverage. The census report, presented in July, 1962, gave 22.5 million for the North, 12.4 million for the East, 10 million for the West and 675 thousand for Lagos - a total of 45.575 million for the country.

These reported figures aroused considerable controversy, the more so as they had political implications for the distribution of parliamentary seats for the impending 1964 Federal elections [11]. This caused a political conflict between the East, dominated by the NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon) and the North, dominated by the NPC (North Peoples' Convention). However, the controversy was nipped in the bud when in February 1963, the results of the 1962 census were cancelled. Another census was conducted between 5 - 8 November 1963.

The results of the 1963 census were released in February 1964: 55.6 million for the whole country, of which 29.8 million in the North, 12.4 million in the East, 10.3 million in the West, 2.5 million in the Mid-West, and 0.675 million for Lagos. These figures caused a serious constitutional crisis leading to court action. Eventually, the census results were accepted. In spite of this, several estimates have been made by researchers. Olusanya estimated in 1967 the population of Nigeria in 1963 as 47 932 902; later Olusanya and Ebigbola estimated the 1963 population as 44 828 000. Okonjo's estimate falls between both figures, being 45 332 179 [7, p. 116].

IV. THE 1973 CENSUS

The 1973 census was conducted in late November and early December, 1973. On May 8, 1974, a provisional census figure of 79.76 million was announced to the nation (Daily Times, 1974). The announcement later generated serious controversy over the reliability of the provisional census figures. Eventually, a new military regime, in September 1975, cancelled the reported 1973 provisional census figures on the grounds that the census figures could not receive general acceptance from the masses. Since then, the 1963 census figures have been used for planning purposes.

United Nations estimates of Nigeria's population in 1973 was put as 59.61 million (UN 1973). Olusanya and Ebigbola estimated it to be 58.72 million, while Olusanya and Pursell [9] estimated the 1973 population to be 59.44 million.

V. DEMOGRAPHIC SAMPLE SURVEYS

As a result of the dearth of reliable census figures in Nigeria, serious efforts have been made recently by individuals and institutions to conduct ad hoc demographic sample surveys. The objectives of these surveys are diverse; these include measurement of the rate of internal migration, rural-urban fertility differentials; impact of family planning programmes on the fertility behaviour of respondents of certain areas or groups; housing needs; agricultural productivity; etc. However, information on births and deaths is usually collected; these sometimes yield estimates of vital rates. In nearly all cases, the validity of the population base to which the measures are related

is still questionable. The two surveys that are nation-wide are the "Rural Demographic Sample Survey 1965-66" which was conducted by the Federal Office of Statistics, Lagos and the "Fertility and Family Planning Survey 1971-73", conducted by the former Institute of Population and Manpower Studies, University of Ife. Neither of these national surveys provided estimates for the population size of the country. Rather, they only provide information on births and deaths from which vital rates could be and are sometimes computed.

VI. POST-ENUMERATION SURVEYS

During previous census exercises, no post-enumeration surveys were conducted either to assess the coverage and content errors of the main counts or to collect detailed information that could not be included in the main census. The plan to hold a post-enumeration census in 1973 did not materialise; the census figures were eventually nullified.

Thus, it becomes obvious that Nigeria still relies largely on estimates and projections of her population; the 1963 census which is still used for planning purposes is remote in time, the information collected is severely limited and the quality of the data is subject to wide margins of error. Unfortunately, there are no recent sample surveys to provide supplementary information on the size of Nigeria's population. At present, planners assume that the country's population is in the region of 75 to 80 million.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

It has been noted that prior to 1952, various estimates of the country's population were advanced by administrators. The decennial censuses since 1866 were limited in scope and in coverage; the 1952-53 count appears to be the most comprehensive in spite of the speculations of an undetermined margin of undercount. Then, the reasons for the undercount were associated with fears of taxation and taboos relating to enumeration of children, illiteracy and poor publicity. By 1963, the intense publicity was misconstrued: people associated the numerical size of their localities with economic and political considerations, including revenue allocation, representation in houses of legislature, etc. Mass census migration to areas of origin was widespread; eventually, the reported figure was claimed to have been grossly inflated. The hope of researchers that the 1973 count would provide more accurate data on the country's population and its characteristics was frustrated when the figures were nullified as being unacceptable. Thus, the 1963 census remains the latest acceptable figure for planning purposes in the country.

It is expected that, after the forthcoming elections, researchers would explore non-conventional sources of data, e.g. electoral lists and voters cards, including the proposed identity cards to provide plausible estimates of the country's population. So far, Nigeria has no comprehensive, country-wide vital registration system and therefore no register of vital events are available as is the case of her neighbouring Francophone countries. Worse still, another census is not anticipated for the next five years - if this materialises, there would have been a 20-year intercensal period with no supplementary data in the form of nation-wide surveys or register of vital events to update, adjust or evaluate the census data. Thus, the precise size of the country's population is yet unknown.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1.- "Annuaire démographique 1973", UN, New York, p. 101
- 2.- BARTH (H), "Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa", 1932, London
- 3.- Census Commissioner, "Population Census of Northern Region of Nigeria, 1952, Census Reports and Tables", p.2
- 4.- COX (H.B.), "Census of Nigeria 1931, vol. III, Census of Southern Provinces", 1932, London
- 6.- Daily Times, 9 May, 1974, Lagos, pp. 1 and 5
- 7.- KUCZYNSKI (R.R.), "Demographic survey of the British Colonial Empire, vol. I", 1948, London, p.15
- 8.- OKONJO (C), "Une estimation préliminaire moyenne de la population du Nigeria au milieu de l'année" in "La population de l'Afrique tropicale", 1978, The Population Council, New York, pp. 106-128
- 9.- OLUSANYA (P.O.), "Socio-economic Aspects of Rural-Urban Migration in Western Nigeria", 1969, NISER, University of Ibadan
- 10.- OLUSANYA (P.O.), PURSELL (D.C.), "The Prospects of Economic Development in Nigeria under the Conditions of Rapid Population Growth", 1975, NISER, University of Ibadan
- 11.- OLUSANYA (P.O.), "La croissance démographique et ses composantes, nature et direction de l'évolution démographique" in "Croissance démographique et évolution socio-économique en Afrique de l'Ouest", 1973, The Population Council, New York, pp. 349-376
- 12.- POST (K.W.J.), VICKERS (M.), "Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 1960/65", 1973, Heinemann, p. 81
- 13.- PROTHERO (R.M.), "The Population Census of Northern Nigeria, 1952 Problems and Results", November 1956, in Population Studies vol.X, n° 2, pp. 166-183
- 14.- TALBOT (P.A.), "The Peoples of Southern Nigeria - vol. IV: Linguistics and Statistics", 1969, Frank Case & Co. Ltd., London, pp. 1-3

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^{ème} 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^{ère} partie : Sources des données
 - 2^{ème} partie : Ajustement de données imparfaites
 - 3^{ème} 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^{re} partie : Monographies méthodologiques » - Paris, novembre 1980 et février 1981.
- « Recensements africains - 2^e 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