

CHAPTER 1

THE EARLIER CLASSIFICATION OF THE
PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN NIGERIA

Talbot's classification of the peoples of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria and of the adjoining Cameroons (Talbot, 1926) was regarded as tentative pending the results of a survey based on physical measurements. In the earlier study the terms 'tribe' and 'clan' were freely used without any precise anthropological significance. A tribe was described as a group speaking the same language, with approximately the same customs, religion and state of civilization and often claiming a common descent. On this broad basis of classification, some of the tribes, notably the Ibo and the Yoruba, were so large that they might almost be considered as nations. Most of the larger tribal entities were further subdivided into sub-tribes and clans. In view of their implications in social anthropology, the use of such terms was unfortunate, even in a tentative classification. The vagueness of the nomenclature is admitted in *Southern Nigeria* (Talbot, 1926), where it is stated that 'nearly all tribes are divided into sub-tribes—or perhaps "phratries", though none are exogamous—a term used whether the partition is due to different ancestry, geographical position or some other cause'.

Concerning the word 'clan', Talbot (1926) later says:

the . . . term is not used in its strict sense—that of an exogamous division, the members of which are related to one another or bound together by a totemic or other tie. In Southern Nigeria, while there is practically no real exogamy and not much totemism, the members of a so-called clan are often descended from the same ancestry. In other cases the word is loosely used to depict simply a division—however caused—in the sub-tribe, especially when this is large and unwieldy.

In view of the lack of any clear distinction between sub-tribe and clan in *Southern Nigeria*, it will be more appropriate, in the present study, to speak of 'groups' and 'sub-groups', terms having no particular technical connotation.

Some idea of the total population represented by the survey may be gauged from the following estimates (here rounded-off to the nearest 100,000) of the population of the whole of Nigeria, covering the period over which the measurements were taken; they are quoted by Lord Hailey (1938, p. 108) from the *Statistical Year Books of the League of Nations*:

1925	1930-1	1935-6
18,500,000	19,100,000	19,100,000

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The latest estimate, for 1957, is that of 34,000,000 given in the 1959 edition of *Whitaker's Almanack*. Although the 1930-1 estimate was based on a census result, there were some undesirable features associated with that of 1931. In the Southern Provinces, owing to the political uncertainties prevailing at the time, the enumeration of a large part of the country was defective. Compared with the 1921 census, the 1931 figures showed a marked increase in the numbers of the Yoruba, but a decrease in the numbers of the Ibo and the Ibibio. The Census Commissioner for 1931 considered that the estimates of the Ibo and the Ibibio were deficient. For the purpose of this study, the population figures serve to give some idea of the sizes of the groups represented by the various samples. The above estimates indicate that the population has been fairly stable, and it is unlikely that, even since 1921, the relative sizes of the groups measured would have undergone significant changes. The 1921 census figures were used in *Southern Nigeria* and also by Meek (1925, II, pp. 173-263) for the Northern Provinces. At this time, the total population of the Southern Provinces was a little more than 8,000,000 and that of the Northern Provinces some 10,000,000. These totals are probably of the same order of magnitude as the present population.

The classification adopted in *Southern Nigeria* was broadly linguistic; three major groups, the Bantu, the Semi-Bantu, and the Sudanese were defined, the last of the three comprising the overwhelming majority of the peoples of the Southern Provinces. Very extensive sub-divisions of these major groups were described in *Southern Nigeria* but not all of them have been considered in the present survey. Some were represented by such small samples that their inclusion in the statistical analysis has not been practicable. There remains, however, a substantial body of data, fairly representative of the three major divisions and having a reasonably good geographical distribution.

At the time of the 1921 census, the total populations in the Southern Provinces of the two larger linguistic groups were approximately: Semi-Bantu, 1,480,000; Sudanese, 6,760,000. Since no Bantu peoples are found in Nigeria, the Bantu groups included in the survey were selected from the adjoining Cameroons. The Semi-Bantu live in the eastern region of the Southern Provinces, while the central and western regions are occupied by the Sudanese.

The total number of Bantu peoples in Africa is, of course, extremely large, probably about 60,000,000, and as Lord Hailey (1938, pp. 20-1) states:

The Bantu... inhabit Africa from coast to coast, south of the so-called 'Bantu Line'. This boundary runs from the mouth of the Rio del Rey along the frontier of Nigeria and the Cameroons, thence eastwards across French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo, south of the Uele River to the head of Lake Kioga, south of Mount Elgon along the eastern

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shore of Lake Victoria, thence across Tanganyika and northwards to the hinterland of Mombasa, whence a narrow enclave runs north-west to Mount Kenya.

Those groups classified as Bantu which have been included in the survey are given in Table 1.1; all are either from the British or French Cameroons.

TABLE 1.1

Group	Population
Bakoko	150,000
Bakossi	14,000
Bakundu	5,000
Bakwiri	20,000
Mbo	9,000
Mbonge	6,000
Yawunde	135,000

The Bakoko inhabit a coastal region in the French Cameroons. The majority of them live by the Sanaga River, but there are two other sections respectively north and south of Douala. The Bakwiri and the Bakossi are found in the coastal regions of the British Cameroons; the Bakwiri live on the coast, the Bakossi some forty miles to the north-east. They are said to speak different dialects of Bantu. The Bakundu are a small group inhabiting the south-eastern regions of the British Cameroons, speaking a language which was classified by Tessmann (1932) as Old Bantu and by Sir Harry Johnston (1919-22) as Bantu pushed back by Efik and Kwa. They are divided into two sections, one to the south and one to the north. The Mbo are a small group living principally in the French Cameroons, with a minor section on the British side of the frontier. The Mbonge are also coastal dwellers; their Bantu dialect is rather more distinctive and isolated than that of their neighbours, for example, the Bakwiri. The Yawunde live more to the south than the others described; according to Johnston they speak an emphatically Bantu language.

TABLE 1.2

Group	Population
Bafumbum-Bansaw	138,000
Ekoi	90,000
Ibibio	960,000
'Others'	287,000

In *Southern Nigeria*, the Semi-Bantu-speaking peoples were divided into broad groups with approximate populations as set out in Table 1.2.

Talbot introduced the term 'Bafumbum-Bansaw', deriving it from the names of two peoples inhabiting the extreme portions of the area occupied by a large

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number of groups which both Tessmann and Johnston regarded as separate 'tribes'. The Bafumbum-Bansaw live in the mountainous regions of the Cameroons adjoining the Nigerian frontier and north of the Cross River. Other Semi-Bantu-speaking peoples from the Cameroons are the Bangangte, a small group living south of the Bafumbum-Bansaw and speaking a Semi-Bantu tongue classified by Tessmann as North Cameroons Mountain Semi-Bantu; the Bana, a small group speaking a dialect similar to that of the Bangangte; and the Banyangi, a fairly small group classified linguistically as a sub-group of the Ekoi. In the present survey the Ekoi have been subdivided into the sub-groups Akajuk and Nkumm, and some measurements have been obtained from the Boki, a separate linguistic and cultural group. The largest Semi-Bantu group, the Ibibio, is not so adequately represented in the survey as it should be. Only one very large division of the Ibibio, the Anang, is well represented; there are also measurements of two fairly small groups, the Efik and Ekkett, each representing about 30,000 individuals, culturally and linguistically Ibibio.

It has been stated that the Sudanese constitute the majority of the peoples of Southern Nigeria, with a total population (1921 census) of about 7,000,000. More than half of these are Ibo and about one-third are Yoruba. Population figures (1921) for the principal Sudanese groups are given in Table 1.3.

TABLE 1.3

Group	Population
Edo	472,000
Ibo	3,927,000
Ijaw	174,000
Popo Ewe	39,000
Yoruba	2,113,000
'Others'	34,000

The Ibo have long been regarded as culturally homogeneous. They inhabit the most densely populated region of trans-Saharan Africa, have no tradition of migration from elsewhere, and appear to have settled in the thickly inhabited parts of the Nri-Awka and Isu-Ama areas for a very long period and to have spread out from there, their main expansion being southward, south-eastward, and eastward to the Cross River. They live on what was once forest land. The northern Ibo area was originally forest, although it is now grassland, but even here the village settlements lie among palm trees and degenerate forest which, protected from annual burnings, has grown up around them in the course of the centuries.

Ibo political organization resembles that of the Semi-Bantu-speaking groups of the Eastern Provinces. There are no chiefs or heads of villages or larger

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groups, and no kingdoms or large city-dwelling communities as are found amongst the Yoruba to the west of the Niger. Their environment and their numbers have protected them from attacks from outside and have allowed them to concentrate almost exclusively on agriculture and trade. In the process they have become organized into a very large number of independent local communities, each with a population of about 5000.

Although large numbers of Ibo were exported as slaves from Bonny, Old Calabar, and other Oil River ports, these were not obtained in slave-raiding expeditions or wars, but were mostly debtors, criminals, those who had committed abominations in their villages, and other people whom their communities wished to be rid of. The result of the slave-trade was, therefore, very different from that in other parts of Nigeria, and its effect on the growth and distribution of the population was negligible.

In the course of their history the Ibo appear to have kept very much to themselves, and intermarriage between them and other peoples, when it occurred, was a rare event. Among internal causes of depopulation, active conflicts have not been important and were in the great majority of cases limited to inter-village conflicts about the ownership of land. If these went far enough to reach the stage of actual violence, fighting was for the most part on a minor scale and any fatal casualties that resulted from it were few. It may be said that all women marry and that barrenness is exceptional. Broadly, the main energies of the Ibo were and are devoted to raising as many children and yams as possible, and they seem to have developed their social organization to this end with a considerable measure of success.

Talbot's classification in *Southern Nigeria* was provisional only. The most recent attempt is that made by Jones (Forde & Jones, 1950). This divides the Ibo geographically and culturally into five main divisions. The groups represented in the anthropometric survey have been arranged according to these divisions in Table 1.4.

The northern Ibo comprise most of the Ibo of the Onitsha Province; the Abaja group occupy the eastern highlands of this province which include most of the Nsukka and Udi administrative divisions, the Awtanzu occupy the southern extremity of these highlands, the Nkanu and Eshielu occupy the plains to the east of them, the Awka group and administrative division occupy the area to the west of the Abaja in the centre of the province; and the Onitsha group and administrative division the area further west between the Awka and the Niger.

The southern Ibo are contained mainly in the Owerri Province and have been divided into three main sub-divisions, Isu-Ama in the north and centre,

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Oratta-Ikwerri in the south, and Ohuhu-Ngwa in the east. The Isu group are western Isuama, the two Abaja groups are eastern Isuama, the Abaja-Owerri being the southern and the Abaja Osu-Obowo the northern sections of it. The Ngwa Ohonhaw-Oloko group form the northern, and the Ngwa and Ndokki groups the southern, sections of the Ohuhu-Ngwa sub-division, while the Oratta group is the northern section of the Oratta-Ikwerri sub-division.

TABLE I.4

Cultural divisions	Group	Population
Northern	Abadja	640,000
	Awtanzu	40,000
	Nkanu	151,000
	Eshielu	9,000
	Awka	213,000
	Onitsha	398,000
Southern	Isu	247,000
	Abaja Osu-Obowo	85,000
	Abaja of Owerri	73,000
	Oratta	155,000
	Ngwa Ohonhaw-Oloko	64,000
	Ngwa	211,000
	Ndokki	23,000
Western	Ika Agbor	49,000
	Ika Asaba	110,000
	Ika Abaw-Kwale	66,000
Eastern or Cross River	Edda-Unwana	3,000
	Aro	56,000
North-eastern	Ezza-Ikwo	141,000
	Awhawzara	54,000

The western or Ika Ibo are on the western side of the Niger, the Ika Agbor and the Ika Asaba being in the Benin Province with the Agbor nearer Benin and Asaba nearer Onitsha. The Ika Abaw-Kwale group is in the Warri Province and comprises the inhabitants of the Abo and of the Kwale administrative divisions.

Two of the largest north-eastern Ibo 'clans' (tribes), the Ezza and the Ikwo, are contained in the Ezza-Ikwo group, while the Awhawzara group are marginal to the north-eastern, Cross River, and northern Ibo main divisions. The Unwana are a small 'clan' of the Edda or northern section of the Cross River Ibo. The Aro represent the southern section but the population figure of 56,000 is very dubious, the actual number of Aro living in the Cross River area, according to the 1953 census, being 6000. The Aro are a tribe of traders and ritual specialists whose members are scattered over most of the eastern pro-

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vinces, and the majority of those persons classified as Aro in the 1921 census were persons resident elsewhere who could lay claim to this name by reason of their having had an Aro father or, more frequently, an Aro master. It will be seen that, apart from the numerically unimportant Cross River Ibo, all the major Ibo divisions and sub-divisions have been covered in the survey.

TABLE 1.5

Group	Population
Ekiti	251,000
Oyo	1,000,000
Ijebu	139,000
Jekri	34,000
Egba	189,000
Popo Ewe	39,000

Rivalling the Ibo in total population, the Yoruba inhabit south-western Nigeria from the coast to the river Niger, north of its junction with the Benue. In the earlier classification the Yoruba were described as comprising two important divisions, the Egba and the Ekiti-Oyo. Linguistically allied to the Oyo and classified separately in *Southern Nigeria* are the Ijebu and the Jekri. The Popo Ewe, although classified separately in *Southern Nigeria*, are culturally allied to the Yoruba. Groups classified under the general heading of Yoruba, represented in the survey, are listed in Table 1.5.

TABLE 1.6

Group	Population
Sobo	217,000
Bini	68,000
Esa	93,000
Kukuruku	94,000

Edo is the name given by Northcote W. Thomas, after the native name for Benin City, to the Sudanic language spoken by the Bini and the Sobo. The Bini, numbering some 250,000, are a well-known people living to the west of the lower Niger. The large Bini group has been subdivided into the Bini proper, the Esa, and the Kukuruku. The Sobo inhabit the western Niger Delta and although they were originally subdivided into Uzobo and Isoko, the physical similarity of these two sub-groups indicates that they should be treated as representing a single group, the Sobo. Table 1.6 shows the groups, originally classified as Edo, represented in the survey.

The peoples originally described as Ijaw speak a peculiar Sudanic tongue and live in the Niger Delta. Their country consists of a huge mangrove swamp with

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pieces of dry land scattered here and there; the inhabitants live principally by fishing. In the present survey the Ijaw have been subdivided into two groups, the Ijaw proper and the Kalabari, the total population, in round figures, being 86,000 for the Ijaw and 77,000 for the Kalabari.

Although the survey was concerned primarily with the Southern Provinces, some representatives of the northern Sudanese peoples were included. In the Northern Provinces the Hausa inhabit chiefly the north-western and central regions but they dominate almost the whole of the country since they form the largest and most important group with a population (1921 census) of more than 3,000,000. Their language is Sudanic in vocabulary but largely Hamitic in grammar, especially in the two principal points, the possession of a gender and the formation of plurals by suffixes. Opinions differ as to whether it is a Sudanic Negro tongue influenced by Hamitic or vice versa. The following comments by Meek (1925, I, p. 23) are of interest:

The most widely distributed tribe—or rather nation—is the Hausa. Socially and economically the Hausa may be said to dominate the country. They are centred principally in the Muslim Emirates of Sokoto, Katsma, Kano and Zaria, but Hausa towns are to be found in every one of the twelve provinces. . . .

The term Hausa, like that of Bantu, is primarily linguistic and also to a considerable extent religious and cultural, but historically and physically the Hausa are not a race at all. They have no racial history and they are in fact a hotch-potch of peoples of various origins, speaking a Hamitoid language and recruited indiscriminately from Negroid and Negro tribes (p. 27).

Meek has given the distribution of the Hausa throughout the twelve northern provinces, but only four of the provinces, Bauchi, Kano, Sokoto, and Zaria, are represented in the survey. However, these four groups represent the majority of the Hausa, having total populations of 98,000, 1,958,000, 946,000, and 221,000 respectively.

The Fulani are the other important people of the Northern Provinces. The subjects measured were the so-called 'settled Fulani' who are said to be very different from the nomad Fulani. Meek has observed (pp. 23, 28) that:

Nomad Fulani wander all over the provinces but their principal settlements are in the northern and Yola Emirates. Settled Fulani—or Fulanin Gidda, as they are called in Hausa—exercise the chief political control in all the Muslim states except Bornu, and so are to be found in all the principal political centres. . . .

Whereas the nomad Fulani tribes. . . have preserved to a marked degree the purity of the Hamitic stock, the settled Fulani are daily becoming more and more Negroid. 'Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit.' By free intermarriage and wholesale concubinage with the races they have conquered, the settled Fulani are fast being absorbed by the Negro.

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Like the Hausa, the nomad Fulani are found in greatest strength in Kano (1,112,000) and Sokoto (367,000), with some 250,000 in Bauchi. Their total population (1921) is about 2,000,000. Only one other group from the northern provinces, the Kanuri, is included in the survey. They are described by Meek as centred in Bornu and as being Negroid rather than Hamitic. The peoples of the Northern Provinces are not well represented but some interesting comparisons are possible.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATISTICAL METHOD IN
PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The science of statistics evolved from demographic studies. References to 'political arithmetic' and 'state-science' are found in the seventeenth-century writings of John Graunt, William Petty, and Johan de Witt, pioneers of actuarial science, and there is an element of statistical inference when Defoe states, in *A Journal of the Plague Year*: 'and the weekly bills [i.e. of mortality] showing an increase of burials in St Gile's parish more than usual, it began to be suspected that the plague was among the people at that end of the town and that many had died of it, though they had taken care to keep it as much from the knowledge of the public as possible'.

It was not until the nineteenth century that Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874) wrote his 'Essai sur la développement des facultés de l'homme' in which he introduced the notion of 'l'homme moyen' and laid the foundations of anthropometry. Significantly, Quetelet's work, in its second edition, contained a preface by the astronomer Herschel, outlining a theory of probability. This association of probability concepts with statistical data was a major step forward at a time when the science of statistics was about to emerge as a discipline in its own right, destined to influence research in every domain of science.

The demographic associations of statistics have their legacy in the nomenclature, which has been extended to all fields of application. The statistical method is no longer confined to the study of human populations, but is applied to data derived from aggregates of units of various kinds. Nevertheless, in all contexts the aggregates are described as *populations* of *individuals*. The science of statistics includes all techniques for investigating the properties of populations when interest is centred on the group rather than on the individual.

In common with other quantitative sciences, statistics is concerned with measurement. It is assumed that the individuals of a population have certain well-defined and measurable characteristics. Stature is a familiar anthropological character; it is obvious that the measurement of stature of one individual can give no information about the variability of stature throughout a population. The population is, therefore, something more than a collection of individuals; it has variability which can only be measured by observing several of its members.