1. Historical population of Africa – the sources and controversies

The new estimate shows that the population trend was basically increasing throughout the period which support the point of view of Durand or McEvedy and Jones(1978), except for the notable decrease from 1600 to 1700. This decline is due to both Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa but the degree of decrease is far more apparent in North Africa. The slave trade was most virulent in 18th century (Lovejoy:1982), a century later. It can be noted that during the 17th century, the world is under Maunder Minimum, colder climate, which might be one of the causes of population decline.

As for the historical city distribution, most cities in Sub-Saharan Africa were concentrated in fewer regions, such as West Africa (Mali-Niger-Nigeria) and Sudan-Ethiopia (Figure 2). However, this pattern of distribution had changed since 1900 (Figure 3).

2. Estimating smaller region – case of Nigeria

If there are sufficient city population data, it is also possible to calculate the total population. In case of Africa, for the moment the city population data available to author is limited but one can try calculating the country level historical population such as Nigeria. Figure 4 shows the trend of population of Nigeria. The population of Nigeria was around 10 million in 1500 and until 1700 it was almost unchanged but for the 18th century, there is a substantial increase. A population dip in 1850 is followed by gradual increase until 1950, then sharp increase started.

3. The changing urban structure in Africa after 1900

The stability of city population ratio is only found until 1900 and since then, the growth of top 10 cities’ population speeded up compared to the total population. Since 1950, this speed is unchanged until 2000 (Figure 5). For the period from 1950 to 2000, the biggest city in Africa is Cairo, but its growth slowed down in comparison to total population growth. Among the most populous cities, the growth of Lagos, Kinshasa and Khartoum is notable.

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