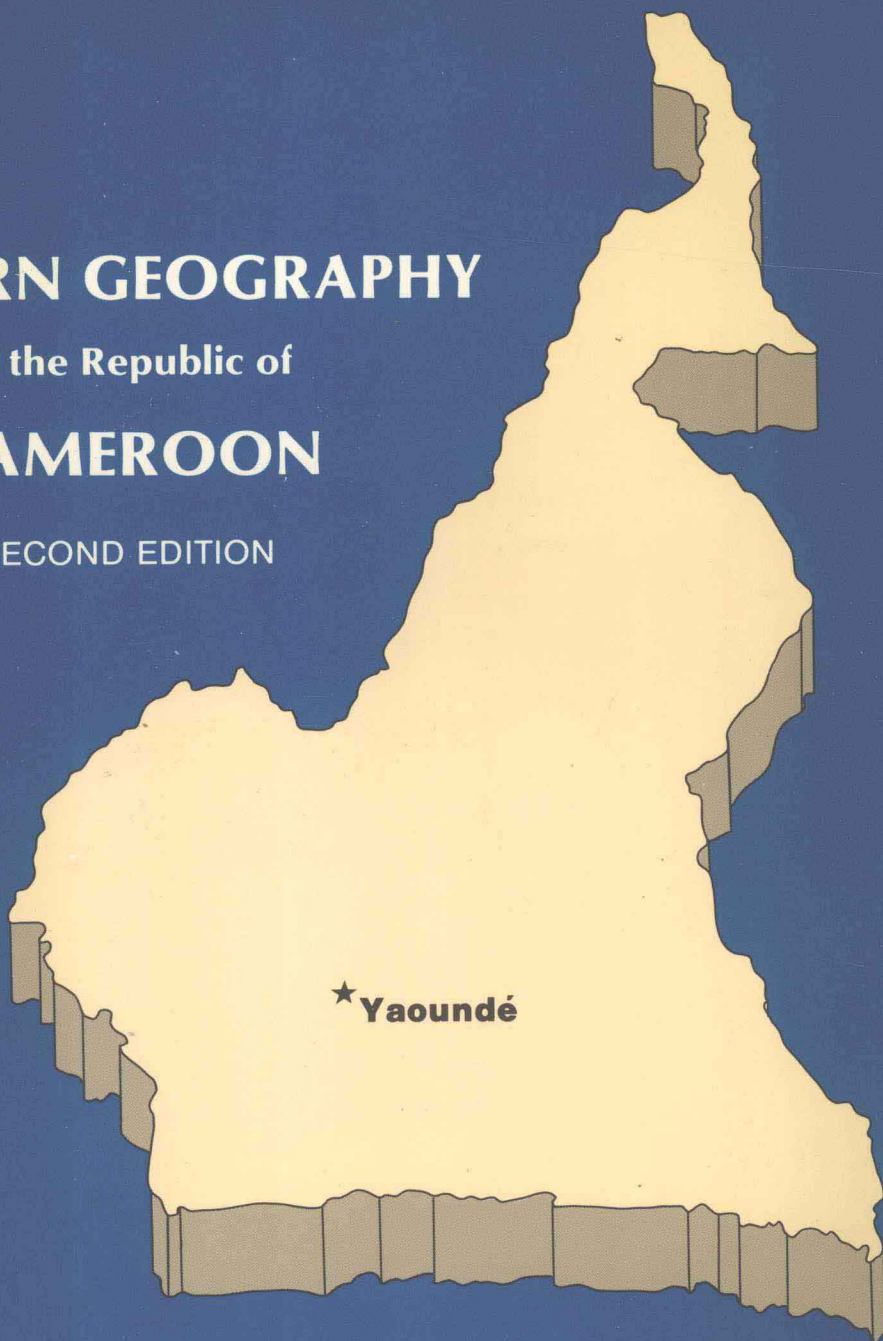


MODERN GEOGRAPHY

of the Republic of CAMEROON

SECOND EDITION



Aaron S. Neba

MODERN GEOGRAPHY
of the Republic of
CAMEROON

SECOND EDITION

Aaron S. Neba

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, PHILADELPHIA

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Books grow in unique ways as a result of the experiences of their authors, and this is no exception. In late 1982, when I wrote this book, I did not know that it was going to receive the wide readership it later achieved.

At the time of publication, I was also not aware of the fact that many people would be eager to read about Cameroon. When they did, they became alarmed at the uniqueness of this country, and in particular, the many and varied aspects (of the society) which differentiate it from the rest of the other African countries. Despite that, some readers, including myself, were aware of the shortcomings of the book. Many topics were treated superficially, others were completely omitted, and the organization of the material was sometimes haphazard.

As I plunged into more serious studies, reading extensively on Africa, and Cameroon in particular, I acquired more knowledge of how the world operates. I realized that many issues on Cameroon can better be understood by going beyond the circumscribed field of geography to borrow from economics, history, sociology and politics.

In this edition, therefore, I have added three new chapters at the end of the book, which deal with politics (or the role of government) and development. Chapter 25 examines the principles for government policy, especially in economic activity; chapter 26 deals with *Government and Administrative units of Cameroon*; chapter 27 gives an outline of Cameroon's foreign relations, and the last chapter elaborates on what we mean by *Third World and Development*. The concept of development is given a broader and a more humanistic definition, which takes the reader beyond the narrow view of industrial (or economic) growth.

Elsewhere, a number of sections in the old edition are either new or completely rewritten, and a few topics of marginal importance omitted. In chapter 15, *Tourism in Cameroon*, I have taken a more critical approach by challenging the traditionally held view that the tourist industry is a

profitable undertaking to less developed countries and stating the conditions under which the industry can be more beneficial to the society at large while at the same time remaining profitable.

Colour is now found throughout this edition; new photographs, coloured as well as black and white, are also included. Most significant, this edition has an elaborate glossary, a detailed bibliography and an expanded index. For the classroom teacher, there are a number of revision questions at the end of the text.

The second edition of this book, as would be expected, involves past and present contributions of numerous people. With the publication of this edition, I wish to acknowledge all those associated with the first edition. This book continues to reflect their ideas and expertise.

For this edition I would like to thank the following for permission to publish photographs: Cellucam for page 161; Sonel for page 109; Infocam for pages 7,8,11,12,13,14,18,21,33 bottom, 42 top, 56,86 bottom, 93 bottom, 94,110,111,113 bottom, 120,121 bottom, 123,125,136,137 bottom, 141 bottom, 145,147,155,160,167,171,178; United Nations Organization for pages 49 bottom, 86 top, 88 top, 91,103,122,177; Photo Prunet for pages 30,137 top; General Delegation for Tourism for pages 48,52 bottom, 55 and 88 bottom. My thanks also go to Carlisle W. Baskin of Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, Virginia, U.S.A., for permission to reproduce the illustration of "Central Places" on page 83.

Above all, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the help and encouragement I received from friends and family members. All other people who helped me to get the information I needed to write this text, are entitled to my heartfelt thanks. My undertaking would not have been successful without such assistance.

Aaron S. NEBA.

Philadelphia, U.S.A.
March 1987.

IMPORTANT FACTS ON CAMEROON

Official name: Republic of Cameroon

Area: 475,000 km² **Capital:** Yaounde

Population: 10,446,400 (1986 estimate)

Official Languages: English and French

Largest Cities: Douala, Yaounde, Nkongsamba, Maroua, Bamenda, Bafoussam, Garoua.

Ethnic Composition: The main ethnic groups are the Bantu, Semi-Bantu and Pygmies in the south; the Fulbe, Sudanese and the Shuwa Arabs in the north. Tribal groupings are over 200 in number.

Religion: Christians — 33% (mainly in the south); Moslems — 15% (mainly in the north); and the rest are engaged in traditional religions. However, almost all Cameroonians, whether Christian or Moslem, adhere to some form of indigenous beliefs and practices.

Flag: Three vertical stripes from left to right — green, red, yellow — with a yellow star in the centre of the red stripe.

National Anthem: O Cameroon, thou cradle of our Fathers ...

National Motto: Peace, Work, Fatherland

Location: West-Central Africa, bordered by Lake Chad in the north, by Chad and the Central African Republic in the east, by the Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in the south, by the Republic of Nigeria in the west.

Physical Regions: Five main physical regions: 1) The coastal lowlands; 2) The southern plateau, covered by equatorial rain forest; 3) The western highlands; 4) The Adamawa Plateau; 5) The northern lowlands, all covered by tropical grassland.

Minerals and Power: Large deposits of bauxite, limestone, crude oil and natural gas. Main sources of power are hydro-electricity from Edea, Song-Loulou and Lagdo, and thermal electricity from many diesel engines.

Currency: African Financial Community Franc. (Communaute Financiere Africaine Franc; 50 CFA francs = 1 French franc)

Foreign Trade: Exports mainly cocoa, coffee, timber, cotton, rubber, tea, bananas and petroleum. Imports mainly vehicles, industrial equipment, electrical and pharmaceutical apparatus.

Principal Trade Partners: European Community countries (mainly France), the United States, Japan and neighbouring African countries.

The country derived its name from "Rio dos Camaroës" in the 15th century. Impressed by the swarming prawns in the mouth of the Wouri River, Portuguese explorers termed it *Rio dos Camaroës* ("River of Prawns") and this name was later extended to the whole territory.

Cameroon has long been one of the major racial crossroads of Africa as a result of Bantu migrations from the east and Fulani from the far west. Stretching for over 1200 km from the Equatorial region to the fringe of the desert, Cameroon is a cross-section of Africa from desert north through a central grassland elevation to a southern plateau covered by rain forest.

A former German protectorate since 1884, Cameroon was divided between Britain and France after World War I, with the French getting about four-fifths of the area. In 1961, the country was reunited as a Federal Republic after a U.N. plebiscite, but at this time part of the British Cameroons was lost to Nigeria. The two parts, West Cameroon (formerly British) and a larger East Cameroon (formerly French), were governed as constituent states, each with its own legislature. After a referendum on 20th May 1972, a new constitution went into effect establishing a Unitary State.

Cameroon is the only African country in which English and French are official languages, and the *University of Yaounde*, established in 1962, is the first in Africa to teach courses in both English and French.

Cameroon has been one of Africa's *quiet* countries in which the single-party government has maintained a measure of political and economic stability. Prior to independence (1960), the former French part of the country was torn by an anti-colonialist revolt. Prolonged guerrilla activities, mainly in the forested central part of the country, were suppressed in 1970. Despite the diversity of its peoples, cultures and religions, Cameroon has escaped the civil wars and coups that have plagued neighbouring countries.

The country's great diversity of tropical products, and more importantly, the favourable economic and investment climate, have been the reasons for the steady economic growth. Though France is the main trading and investment partner, American, British, West German and Japanese interests are growing considerably. Petroleum production, which began in 1978, seems to hold most of the country's prospects for economic development. However, Cameroonians are aware of the dangers of depending solely on oil, and therefore share the common belief that agriculture, not oil, constitutes the backbone of their nation's economy.

Education and health facilities are also increasing tremendously and Cameroonians are proud of the fact that over 70% of the children attend school, a high rate for developing Africa.

CAMEROON IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT



CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>List of maps and diagrams</i>	ix
<i>List of photographs</i>	ix
<i>Important Facts on Cameroon</i>	x
<i>Cameroon in the African Continent</i>	xi

PART ONE: PRESENTATION OF THE COUNTRY

Situation, Shape and Size	1
----------------------------------------	---

1. Brief History of Cameroon	2
The Birthday of Cameroon	2
Early Missionaries in Cameroon	2
More Europeans at the Coast	2
Anglo-German Agreements	3
Franco-German Agreements	3
Cameroon as a Mandate Territory 1922-1946	5
Cameroon as a Trust Territory of the U.N.O.	5
The Route to Independence	5
A) The French Cameroon 1946-1960	5
The 1955 Riots and the Ban on UPC	6
From ATCAM to ALCAM 1956	7
B) The British Cameroon up till 1961	9
The Lyttelton Constitution	10
The 1954 Election and its Consequences	10
The 1957 Election	10
The Plebiscites and Reunification	11
The Formation of One National Political	
Party	11
The Formation of the Unitary Government	12
From Ahmadou Ahidjo to Paul Biya	13
From CNU to CPDM	13

PART TWO: PHYSICAL STUDIES

2. Relief and Structure	14
1. The Coastal Lowlands	14
2. The Southern Plateau	16
3. The Adamawa Plateau	16
4. The Western Highlands	17
5. The Northern Lowlands	17
Some Major Physical Features of Cameroon	17
Mount Cameroon	17
Mount Kupe	19
The Mandara Mounts	20
3. Geology of Cameroon	22
4. Climate	24
The Main Climatic Elements: Latitudinal	
Extent, Temperatures, Precipitation,	
Air Masses	24
A. The Situation in the Dry Season	26
B. The Situation in the Rainy Season	26
Climatic Regions of Cameroon	26
5. Vegetation	30
1. The Dense Equatorial Forest	30
2. The Tropical Grassland	32

6. Soils	34
The Soil Profile	34
Factors Involved in Soil Formation	34
A. Zonal Soils	35
B. Azonal Soils	36

7. Hydrography	38
A. The Atlantic Basin	38
B. The Congo Basin	40
C. The Niger Basin	40
D. The Chad Basin	40
Lakes	41
Lake Chad	42

PART THREE: HUMAN STUDIES

8. The Peoples and Peopling of Cameroon	44
The Major Ethnic Groups of the South	45
The Pygmies	45
The Bantu	45
Major Bantu Tribal Groupings	47
The Douala	47
The Bakoko and Bassa	47
The Pahouins (Fang-Bulu-Beti)	50
The Semi-Bantu (Grassfield Bantu)	50
Major Semi-Bantu Groupings	51
The Bamileke	51
The Bamum	51
The Tikars: The Bafut, The Kom	53
The Nsaw, The Bali	54
The Widikum	55
Major Ethnic Groups of the North	55
The Sudanese	55
The Fulbe (Fulani)	56
The Shuwa Arabs	58

9. Population and Demography	59
Recent Population Trends	60
Birth Rate, Fertility Rate, Infertility,	
Death Rate (Mortality Rate)	60
Infant Mortality Rate, Growth Rate,	
Life Expectancy	61
Population Structure: Age Distribution	
Sex Ratio (Sex Distribution)	62
Nuptiality	63
Forms of Marriage; Marital Status	63
Migration	64
Population Density and Distribution	66
A. Areas of High Population Concentration	66
B. Sparsely Populated Zones	68
The Population Debate	69
Influence of Economic and Social Development	
on Population Growth	71
The Theory of Demographic Transition	72

10 Urbanization in Cameroon	73
What is Urbanization?	73
What then is an Urban Centre?	73
Rapidly of Urbanization in Cameroon	73

Evolution of Cameroon's Urban System	73	16. Fishing in Cameroon	129
Distribution of Urban Centres	76	A) Subsistence Fishing	129
Urban Hierarchy, Urban Primacy	77	B) Industrial Fishing	129
Urban Problems in Cameroon	77	C) Inland Fishing	131
Urban Structure and Development	79	17. Forests and Timber Exploitation	133
The Concentric-zone Model	79	Importance of the Forest	133
The Sector Model	81	Forestry Legislation	133
The Multiple-Nuclei Model	81	Exploitation of the Forest	135
The Central Place Theory	82	Transportation of Wood	136
PART FOUR: ECONOMIC STUDIES		Species of Trees	137
11. Agriculture	84	Measures Adopted for Forest Conservation	137
Traditional Agriculture	84	Problems of Timber Exploitation	
The Cultivation of Local Food Crops	84	in Cameroon	138
a) Tubers b) Cereals c) Others	87	18. Transport and Communications	139
Cash Crop Farming	89	A) Road Transport	139
Plantation Agriculture in Cameroon	97	B) Railway Transport	141
Plantation types in Cameroon:		C) Air Transport	142
a) The Large Capitalist Plantations	97	D) River Transport	145
b) Peasant Plantations	98	Ports	145
Problems of Agriculture in Cameroon	98	River Ports	146
The Role of Agriculture in Economic		Telecommunications	146
Development	99	Conclusion	147
Ways of Improving Agricultural Productivity ...	100	19. Commerce	149
12. Animal Raising in Cameroon	101	Internal Trade	149
Factors Influencing Animal Raising in Cameroon:		Inter-Regional Trade, External Trade	149
a) Natural Conditions b) Human Factors	101	Problems of Cameroon's External Trade	150
The Types of Animals	104	The UDEAC as a Trade Bloc	151
Government's Participation in Animal		PART FIVE: REGIONAL STUDIES	
Raising	104	20. The Southern Plateau Region	153
Problems of Livestock Raising in Cameroon ...	105	Agriculture, Animal Rearing	153
13. Minerals and Power	106	CAMSUCO, MIDEVIV	154
A. Minerals	106	CTC, ZAPI	155
B. Power: a) Hydro-electric Power (H.E.P.)	108	Towns: Yaounde, Bertoua	155
b) Thermal Electricity	109	21. The Coastal Lowland Region	157
14. Industries of Cameroon	110	Physical Features, Climate, Vegetation	157
A) Local Crafts Industries	110	Population, The Economy: Agriculture	157
B) Manufacturing Industries	111	Livestock and Fishing, Forest Exploitation	159
Industrial Regions of Cameroon	114	Industries	159
a) The Douala Industrial Region	114	Towns: Douala, Nkongsamba, Limbe	162
b) The Tiko-Limbe Industrial Region	115	Kumba, Buea	163
c) The Edea Industrial Region	115	Edea	164
d) The Yaounde Industrial Region	115	22. The Western Highland Region	165
e) The Garoua Industrial Region	116	Physical Features, Climate	165
Problems of Industrialization in Cameroon	116	Population, The Economy: Agriculture	165
15. Tourism in Cameroon	119	Animal Rearing, Industries, Infrastructure	169
Factors Favouring the Development of		Towns: Bafoussam, Bamenda	169
Tourism in Cameroon	119	23. The Adamawa Region	172
Touristic Sites	120	Physical Features, Population, The Economy ...	172
National Wildlife and Forest Reserves	122	Transport Network, Industries	173
a) The Waza Wildlife Reserve	122	Towns: Ngaoundere	174
b) The Benue Wildlife Reserve	123	24. The Northern Lowland Region	175
c) The Bouba-Ndjida Wildlife Reserve	123	Relief, Climate, Human and Social Aspects	175
Regulations Governing Visits to National		The Economic Aspects	175
Wildlife Reserves	123		
Forest Reserves	124		
Critical Evaluation of the Role of Tourism	124		

Agriculture and Pastoral Farming	177
Industries	177
Some Important Agro-Industrial Projects:	
SEMR, SODECOTON, CEREAL BOARD ...	179
Towns: Garoua, Maroua	179

PART SIX: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

25. Principles for Government Policies in

Cameroon	180
1) Planned Liberalism	180
2) Balanced Development	181
3) Self-Reliant Development	181
Self-Reliance and International Trade	182

26. Government and Administrative Units of Cameroon

Administrative Divisions of Cameroon.....	183
Local Government	183

27. Cameroon's International Relations	186
1. Relations with other African States	186
2. Relations with other World Regional Organizations	186
3. Relations with France	186
4. Relations with the United States of America	186
5. Relations with the Eastern Bloc Nations	187

28. The Notions of "Third World" and "Development"

Development	188
What essentially is the Third World?	188
What really is development?	189
Conclusion	191

<i>Questions</i>	193
<i>Glossary</i>	195
<i>Bibliography</i>	198
<i>Index</i>	201

LIST OF MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

1. Cameroon in the African continent	xi	23. Marketing Regions in a System of	
2. Territorial Evolution of Cameroon	4	Central Places	83
3. Mandate Territories (1922-1946) and Trust		24. Cash crops	90
Territories (1946-Independence)	5	25. Animal Raising	102
4. Relief of Cameroon	15	26. Minerals and Power	107
5. Sketch section of Mount Cameroon	19	27. Industries	112
6. Mt. Kupe	20	28. The Douala Industrial Region	115
7. Geology	23	29. The Tiko-Limbe Industrial Region	115
8. Precipitation and Temperatures	25	30. The Edea Industrial Region	115
9. Prevailing winds in Cameroon	27	31. The Yaounde Industrial Region	116
10. Climatic Regions	28	32. The Garoua Industrial Region	116
11. Vegetation	31	33. Wildlife and Forest Reserves	124
12. A profile of the Equatorial forest soils	35	34. Fishing in Cameroon	130
13. A profile of the Tropical lateritic soils	36	35. Industrial Fishing	132
14. Drainage	39	36. Forest Exploitation	134
15. Capture of River Logone by Mayo-Kebi	41	37. Transport Network	140
16. Ethnic groups and some tribal groupings	46	38. Air Transport	143
17. Population Pyramid for Cameroon 1976	62	39. The Southern Plateau Region	154
18. Internal migrations	62	40. The coastal lowland Region	158
19. Population densities in 1976	67	41. The Western Highland Region	168
20. The Theory of Demographic Transition	72	42. The Adamawa Region	173
21. Major Towns (1976)	74	43. The Northern Lowland Region	176
22. Urban structure	80	44. Administrative Divisions of Cameroon	184

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Andre-Marie Mbida	7	38. Herdsmen from Sangmelima bringing cattle	
2. Proclamation of Independence for Cameroon ..	8	from the north	103
3. Dr. E.M.L. Endeley	11	39. Edea H.E.P. Station	109
4. John Ngu Foncha	11	40. Craftsmen at work in Bamenda	110
5. S.T. Muna	12	41. Brewery: Inside a Brasseries du	
6. President Paul Biya taking the oath		Cameroun factory	111
of office	13	42. Matches Factory in Douala	113
7. A Lagoon on the Douala Basin	14	43. Fertilizer industry at Bonaberi	113
8. Volcanic rocks at the rocky coast of Limbe ...	16	44. CIMENCAM: Cement factory at Bonaberi ..	115
9. Mount Cameroon	18	45. The Wouri bridge	120
10. Kapsiki Volcanic necks	21	46. Partial view of a traditional ruler's Palace ...	121
11. Mangrove Forest on the coastal lowlands	30	47. Musicians of the Lamido at Banyo	121
12. Rain Forest	32	48. A scene at a folk dance in Sangmelima	122
13. Guinea Savanna	33	49. Giraffes in the Waza Park	123
14. Sudan Savanna	33	50. Jubilant villagers with a dead elephant	125
15. Sahel Savanna	33	51. Fishing at the coast of Limbe	129
16. Lake Awing: a crater lake	42	52. Traditional method of Forest Exploitation ...	136
17. The Mefou Lake:	42	53. Felling of timber using a chain saw	136
18. A Pygmy dwelling unit near Kribi	48	54. Peeling of the logs	136
19. Rural dwelling units near Limbe	48	55. Transportation of timber on vehicles	137
20. Rural dwelling unit near Yaounde	49	56. Transportation of timber by water	137
21. Residents of Sangmelima help a neighbour		57. Section of Bamenda-Bafoussam Road	141
build his new house	49	58. Ferryboat on River Mbam	141
22. Semi-Bantu dwelling unit in Bamenda	52	59. Kumba railway Station	142
23. Semi-Bantu men in their traditional attire	52	60. The Abi falls in Mbengwi	145
24. The Palace of a Bamileke chief	52	61. Douala Port	146
25. A Musgum mud hut	55	62. Aerial view of the Zamengoe Station	147
26. Clustered settlements of the Mafa	56	63. Yaounde Central Market	150
27. A typical Bororo hut	57	64. Poultry farm at Mvog-Betsi	155
28. Women in the grassland area prepare a		65. Partial view of Yaounde city	156
field for planting	86	66. Petroleum Refinery at Cape Limbo	160
29. Terrace farming at Mora	86	67. Reception and Storage tanks	160
30. Women husking maize	88	68. The Paper pulp factory (CELLUCAM)	161
31. Millet farm in North Cameroon	88	69. A partial view of Douala city centre	163
32. Cocoa beans being sun-dried	91	70. A vast and modern rice farm at Ndop	167
33. Flowering coffee plant	92	71. Bafoussam town	170
34. Oil palm plantation in the Fako Division	93	72. Bamenda town	171
35. Cotton farm at Guider in North Cameroon ...	93	73. Collection of hides and skins	174
36. Rubber Plantation at Tiko	94	74. Women walking to a community well	177
37. Ndu Tea Estate	94	75. Cotton spinning in Garoua	178

PART ONE:

PRESENTATION OF THE COUNTRY

SITUATION, SHAPE AND SIZE

The Republic of Cameroon is situated at the extreme northeastern end of the Gulf of Guinea. It lies between longitudes 8° and 16° east of the Greenwich Meridian and between latitudes 2° and 13° north of the Equator.

To the south the country is bordered by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Congo; to the west by Nigeria; to the east by the Central African Republic and Chad; and finally to the north by a narrow portion of Lake Chad.

The territory has the shape of a carelessly drawn triangle with a base of about 700 km and a height of 1,200 km. The whole territory covers an area of 475,000 km², with a population of 10,446,400 inhabitants (following the 1986 estimate). This gives an average density of 22 inhabitants per km².

The country's boundaries were determined at the end of the 19th century by the colonial powers during the Partition of Africa. These boundaries

in most cases are artificial, except in certain sections where natural boundaries are found, such as river courses, mountain chains, and the ocean to the southwestern part of the country.

Cameroon presents a lot of diversities in its physical, human and economic aspects. Physically, it has distinct regions which include mangrove swamps, coastal lowlands, plateaux, highlands, plains and several volcanic massifs. This diversity can also be noticed in its climate, vegetation and soils.

On the human aspect, the country has a number of ethnic groups who are involved in different economic activities especially at the local level. A more unique social aspect of Cameroon is its bilingualism, which resulted from a peaceful merger in 1972 of the former French-speaking East Cameroon State and the former English-speaking West Cameroon State.

CHAPTER I

BRIEF HISTORY OF CAMEROON

THE BIRTHDAY OF CAMEROON

The land of Cameroon is as old as the rest of the world, but when we talk of Cameroon in terms of a geopolitical entity with its present territorial boundaries and government, one may say that Cameroon did not exist before the arrival of the Germans.

In the ancient times, Hanno, the Carthaginian navigator, saw Mount Cameroon and called it the "Chariot of the Gods". It was the Cameroon mountain presumably under serious volcanic eruption as seen from what he wrote — "We saw at night," he said, "a land full of fire. In the middle was a lofty fire larger than all the rest touching seemingly the stars."

In 1472 a Portuguese navigator Fernando Po arrived on an island situated some thirty-five kilometres off the coast of Limbe and gave his name to it. More Portuguese citizens arrived and settled there with him. As time went by and especially during the second half of the 16th century, Portuguese traders who had come up the Wouri estuary found a great variety of prawns in the river and named the river "Rio dos Camaroes", meaning "River of Prawns". The Spanish version of Camaroes is Camerones which later gave rise to the name Cameroons. It is from this Spanish version that other spellings were derived following the colonial powers involved. The Germans spell it Kamerun, the French spell it Cameroun, and the English spell it Cameroon. Today there are two official forms: "Cameroon" and "Cameroun", used in English and French, respectively.

EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN CAMEROON

The earliest evangelists to arrive and establish in Cameroon were Protestant missionaries. The very first one was a black Jamaican Baptist missionary called Joseph Merrick, who arrived at the end of 1843 and founded the Cameroons Mission in Bell-Town, Douala. In 1844, he founded another mission in Bimbia, translated the Bible into Isubu (the Bimbia dialect), set up a printing press, and developed a machine for making bricks out of local materials. Merrick was one of the early non-Africans to climb Mount Cameroon. On his way to England for leave in 1849, he died during the voyage.

The second Protestant missionary to Cameroon was Alfred Saker. He arrived and established a Christian mission at the Cameroon coast in 1845. His first baptisms were administered in 1849. Saker stayed in the country for thirty-one years and during this time he accomplished many tasks. He spread the word of God and opened many schools. After studying the Douala language, he translated and published the Bible on the press built by Joseph Merrick. Saker founded two other missions at Deido and Bonaberi. On June 5, 1858 he travelled and founded the town of Victoria, now Limbe. Saker finally retired back to England in 1876 where he died four years later.

In 1890 Catholic missionaries began arriving in the country. Pallotine fathers, Vieter and Walter, arrived and established the Marienberg Mission near Edea, situated at the mouth of the Sanaga River. At the outbreak of the First World War, the activities of the Catholic Mission had increased tremendously in the country. In 1922, the first Catholic Bishop, Monseigneur Francois Xavier Vogt, was named, and in 1935 the first indigenous priests were ordained.

MORE EUROPEANS AT THE COAST

It was not until the nineteenth century, when Portuguese influence reduced considerably in West Africa, that other European powers began to come in. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, British and French. Many of them had established trading posts on the West African coast as early as the sixteenth century. The trade in human beings to serve as slaves in the plantations of the New World had become very lucrative to all European countries. Apart from slaves, West Africa also offered ivory, animal skins, gold and palm products. But the principal article of export from 1517 on along the coast remained the slave, and all European nations took their full part in the trade. In exchange the natives received gun powder, weapons, tobacco, spirits, beads, silk and woven goods. By the year 1850, many more European traders were already at the coast of Cameroon especially at Douala. British and German rivalry in particular had risen very significantly in this area.

Local chiefs — Douala and Bimbia — at the coast quarrelled among themselves and as a result were asking for protection of their territories from

European powers. Some of them applied for British protection, but their request was turned down by Britain because she was no longer interested in colonial expansion in West Africa.

British traders at the coast, however, also needed British protection against approaching French traders who were going to be a big threat to their trade. Through the persuasion of the British traders probably, the local chiefs, Akwa and Bell, addressed many letters to Queen Victoria of England. Conscious of the activities of the French and Germans at the coast, Hewett, the German Consul to Calabar, was commissioned by the British government in 1884 to travel and sign treaties of annexation with the local chiefs.

Hewett delayed and only reached Cameroon on July 19, 1884. Before his arrival, the German Consul, Nachtigal, had already arrived and hoisted the German flag on the territory on July 14, 1884. The hoisting of the flag was the formal acceptance and backing of the German government of the agreement signed earlier on July 12th, 1884 between local chiefs and German businessmen.

Until the 12th of July it was impossible to delimit Cameroon. By signing an agreement between the chiefs of Douala and German businessmen, Cameroon was delimited as follows as can be seen from the agreement.

"We, the undersigned, kings and chiefs of the territory named Cameroon, situated along the River Cameroon, between rivers Bimbia in the north and Kwakwa in the south, and up to longitude* 4° 10' north, have in a meeting held today in the German factory on king Akwa's beach, voluntarily concluded as follows: We surrender this day our rights of sovereignty, legislation and administration of this our territory to messrs Edouard Schmidt, agent of the firm C. Woermann, and Johannes Voss, agent of the firm Jantzen and Thormahlen, both of Hamburg and merchants for many years among these rivers.

We have transferred our rights of sovereignty, of legislation and of administration of our territory to the above-mentioned firms, with the following reservations:

1. The territory may not be ceded to a third party.
2. All the treaties of friendship and commerce which have been concluded with other foreign governments shall remain fully valid.
3. The lands cultivated by us, and the sites on which villages are situated, shall remain the property of the present possessors and their descendants.
4. The payments shall be made annually, as in the past, to the kings and chiefs.
5. During the initial period of the establishment of an administration here, our local customs and usages shall be respected.

Cameroon, 12th July 1884.

Signed: King Akwa

Signed: Ed. Woermann

Signed: Ed. Woermann

Witnesses:

O. Busch, Endene Akwa, Ed. Schmidt, Coffee Angwa, John Angwa, Manga Akwa, Scott Jost, Lorten Akwa, Ned Akwa, David Meatom, Joh. Voss, King Bell, Joe Garner Akwa, Big Jim Akwa, William Akwa, Jim Joss, Matt Joss, David Joss, Jacco Esqre, London Bell, Barrow Peter, Elame Joss, Loo-kinglass Bell."

The above-mentioned text as was drawn could not involve the rest of the country. It should be understood that the territory referred to was that portion of land occupied by the Douala people. It was not enough to sign these treaties without actually setting up territorial boundaries of lands acquired by each European colonising power. A conference at Berlin, called at the request of Von Bismarck and held from November 15th, 1884, to February 25th, 1885, specified conditions under which possessions could be made in Africa by the nations scrambling for territories on the continent.

Some of the important resolutions at the conference were as follows:

1. Nations were to own coastal lands before proceeding into the interior.
2. Treaties were to be signed with other powers to fix the territorial boundaries of land already acquired.
3. From the coast, explorers had to move into the interior. They would stop further acquisition of lands as they met other explorers, and there, boundaries could be established.

It is important to mention here that at this time the French were already in the Congo Basin, and the English were in Nigeria, so that the Germans had to acknowledge these two powers of their presence in Cameroon and consequently fix the boundaries with them.

Cameroon boundaries were fixed between 1885 and 1908 with adjustments coming later. Within this period the Germans signed agreements with the British and French delimiting each nation's territorial possessions.

ANGLO-GERMAN AGREEMENTS

1. The arrangements between Germany and Britain, which led to the first agreement on Cameroon-Nigerian boundaries, lasted from the 29th of April to the 16th of June 1885. There was an exchange of correspondence between the two governments fixing the southern frontier at Rio-del-Rey and the northern frontier up to the Cross River rapids in Mamfe. This frontier gave to the Germans the Cameroon mountain.

2. The second convention lasted from the 27th of July to the 2nd of August 1886. It extended the northern frontier up to the town of Yola.

3. In another Anglo-German agreement of July 1, 1890, the southern boundary line was modified.

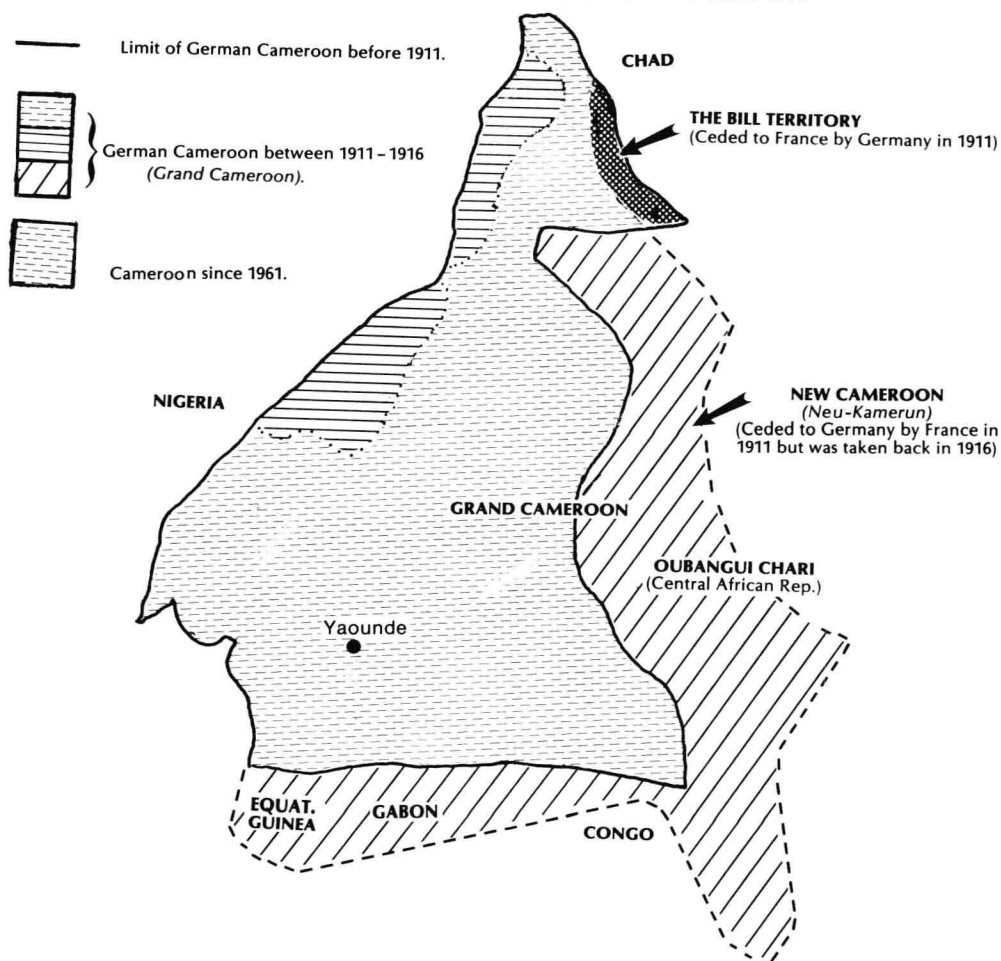
4. The next agreement was on November 15, 1893. It extended the frontier from Yola to Lake Chad.

FRANCO-GERMAN AGREEMENTS

1. The first agreement was signed on December 24, 1885 at Berlin, Germany, fixing the southern and eastern frontiers between French and German possessions.

*This should read, 'latitude'.

TERRITORIAL EVOLUTION OF CAMEROON



2. There was a draft agreement (protocol) on February 4, 1894 fixing the eastern line of demarcation in the region of Lake Chad, and settling questions pending between Germany and France in the region comprised between the colonies of German Kamerun and French Congo. The two powers then met at Berlin on March 15, 1894, to sign the agreement extending the boundary up to Lake Chad and giving formal recognition of each other's sphere of influence.

3. The next agreement was signed on April 18, 1908 fixing with precision the eastern geographical and political frontiers as determined by the rivers. The 1908 line did alter some portions of the March 15, 1894 boundary to establish the present Cameroon-Central African Republic boundary, between the Sangha and Mbere rivers.

The southern and eastern frontiers of Cameroon as fixed by the agreements were to be drastically altered later in 1911. This was because of

Franco-German rivalry for the possession of Morocco. The Germans were experiencing transportation problems in their newly acquired lands of Central Africa. Their only outlet was through the Congo River, so the French proposed an exchange of territory for German recognition of French claim to Morocco. The two powers agreed and France ceded some of its territory to Germany. This newly acquired territory from the French was referred to by the Germans as *Neu-Kamerun*. The former German Cameroon together with Neu-Kamerun, but excluding the "Duck-Bill" territory were referred to as *Grand Cameroon*. The Germans gave up their claims to Morocco and the "Duck-Bill" territory situated between the Logone and Chari rivers in return for the French territory covering part of the Congo, Gabon, Ubangui Shari (Central African Republic).

Unfortunately, this *Grand Cameroon* was not

going to last long. In September 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, combined French, British and Belgian armies attacked the Germans, who surrendered their claims in 1916.

By an accord signed between the French and British this Grand Cameroon was divided into three parts.

a) The territory *Neu-Kamerun*, which was ceded to Germany by France in 1911, was taken back and attached to French Equatorial Africa. The French retained the Duck-Bill territory by right of conquest.

b) The British took a narrow band of two discontinuous strips of land to the west along the border with Nigeria of about 90,000 km² in surface area.

c) The remaining territory of about 432,000 km² went to France.

CAMEROON AS A MANDATE TERRITORY: 1922-1946

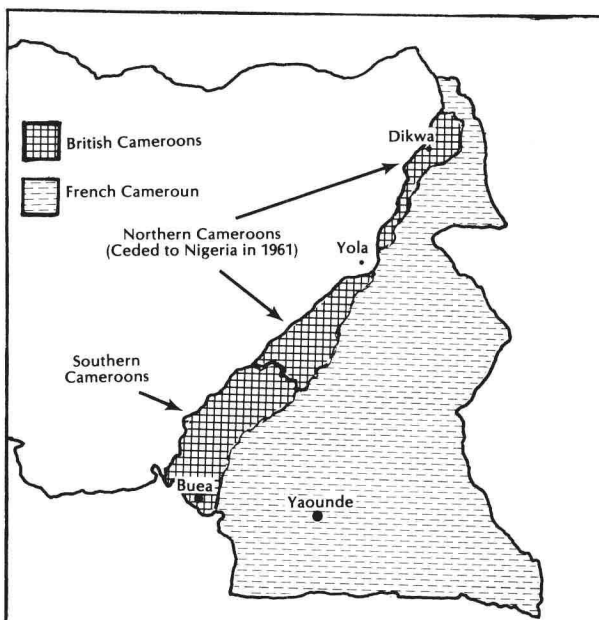
As indicated above, after the expulsion of the Germans, Cameroon was shared between France and Britain on March 4, 1916. The division was later confirmed by the four allied powers — Britain, France, Italy and the U.S.A. — in 1919 through the Treaty of Versailles.

The League of Nations, created after the First World War, later mandated Britain to administer and develop West Cameroon while France had to do the same with East Cameroon. West Cameroon was administered from Nigeria by the British for the simple fact that they were already well established in Nigeria, whereas East Cameroon was administered directly from France. Cameroon remained under the French and British as Mandate Territories of the League of Nations until the end of the Second World War.

CAMEROON AS A TRUST TERRITORY OF THE U.N.O.: 1946 UNTIL INDEPENDENCE

After the Second World War the League of Nations was replaced by the United Nations Organization with headquarters in New York. The two territories of Cameroon merely continued to be ruled by their “masters”, this time not as Mandate territories but as Trust Territories of the United Nations Organization. This status lasted until they achieved independence.

The political developments which finally ended in independence were pursued by the inhabitants of these two Cameroons separately.



Mandate Territories (1922–1946) and Trust Territories (1946–Independence)

THE ROUTE TO INDEPENDENCE:

A. THE FRENCH CAMEROON: 1946-1960

The French Constitution of 1946 outlined the position of every territory in relation to France. It established what was known as the French Union, composed of Metropolitan France (i.e. French Republic), the Associated States, and the Associated Territories. Under the 1946 constitution Cameroon became an Associated Territory of the French Union.

One of the Constitution's main objectives was to draw the inhabitants of France's overseas possessions closer to France and enforce the French doctrine of *assimilation*. In other words, it aimed at ruling out the possibilities of self-government and independence for Cameroon. In the French National Assembly, the deputies from the overseas territories represented their own territories. Cameroon was represented in the French National Assembly by Douala Manga Bell and Andre-Marie Mbida. Soppo Priso and Ahmadou Ahidjo were advisers in the French Union, and Arouna Njoya and Charles Okala were senators.

More significant was the creation of local assemblies in the overseas territories by the 1946 French Constitution. In Cameroon therefore, the

decree of 25th October 1946 created the ARCAM (Representative Assembly of Cameroon) which comprised both Cameroonian and French citizens. In 1952, for example, out of 40 delegates, twenty-four were Cameroonians and sixteen were French. Among those twenty-four Cameroonians, significant ones were Abega Martin, Ahmadou Ahidjo, Charles Okala and Soppo Priso.

Superficially these reforms appear to be important but in reality they meant little. No reforms were actually implemented by the administrators. Charles De Gaulle wanted to reserve all political authority to France as could be evidenced by the actions of French administrators in the country. In 1958 he (Charles De Gaulle) declared that it was unimaginable for any overseas territory to be thinking of independence out of the French Union. Guinea defied his speech and declared herself independent in 1958. She broke all diplomatic links with France until 1976, when relations were re-established.

Cameroon experienced very little political change at this time except for slight increases in the number of representatives to the French Assembly (i.e. from 3 to 4 in 1952) and in the local Representative Assembly, ARCAM (from 40 to 50). Of these fifty representatives there were eighteen French and thirty-two Cameroonians.

From 1946 to 1952 the local assembly was called ARCAM but from 1952 it was called ATCAM (i.e. Territorial Assembly of Cameroon). This assembly concerned itself with public works, concessions, scholarships, infrastructure, the management of goods, urbanization problems, taxation, etc. In short, it had prerogatives in the administrative and financial domains. Unfortunately, it had neither legislative powers nor rights to embark on any political decisions.

It was the French High Commissioner who was responsible for giving instructions on matters which had to be presented to the assembly. The High Commissioner could nullify decisions of the Assembly. He had to judge whether decisions were legal, in which case it was he who had the political powers of the country.

In the local assembly two groups of Cameroonians could be distinguished. The *Evolutionaries* on one hand, included mainly chiefs, notables, syndicalists who though not entirely satisfied with the framework for political advancement by the French policy of assimilation were willing to work within it for the time being and to seek reforms later as the territory advanced. They favoured gradual development within the French Union towards independence.

The *Radical Nationalists* on the other hand,

were those Cameroonians who were entirely dissatisfied with the framework to the extent that they were determined to have French policy altered in order to permit a political evolution towards self-government and independence. The Radical Nationalists were led by such people as Um Nyobe, Felix Moumie and Ernest Ouandie. They wanted immediate independence for Cameroon and reunification of the two Cameroons.

To the French, the Radical Nationalists were subversive because they wanted immediate and genuine self-government. These nationalists, under the leadership of Um Nyobe met and formed the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) on 10th April 1948, with three stated goals, namely: (1) the suppression of the "artificial boundaries" created in 1916 between the two Cameroons; (2) abandonment by France of its policies of assimilation; (3) fixing of a time limit for ending the trusteeship, after which Cameroon would achieve independence. Such a platform was enough to set the UPC party at odds with the French government and surely it did

THE 1955 RIOTS AND THE BAN ON UPC

The UPC, except for the mass following it was gaining, had hardly made any political successes when French administrators embarked on sabotaging its activities. The administration aided anti-UPC groups, such as the *Rassemblement du Peuple Camerounais* and on many occasions used the police and these anti-UPC groups to disrupt UPC meetings. For its part, the UPC stepped up its resistance against increased intimidation and repression especially at the arrival of Roland Pre, the new French Administrator who was perceived to be very ruthless and unsympathetic to the UPC.*

Between 22 and 30 May 1955, Cameroon was plagued with a series of violent riots which brought the UPC and the administration into direct confrontation. Many deaths and injuries resulted from these riots.

* It is important to note that in recent history colonising powers of the 'west' have always attacked and destroyed anti-colonialist movements advocating self-rule (i.e. freedom fighters) by terming them either communists or terrorists. This has always led to a gross misunderstanding of liberation movements, and so has been the case with the UPC. Liberation movements have received support from both capitalist as well as communist nations and this does not necessarily make them capitalist or communist. These are ideological terms often used to confuse the quest for self-rule.

In July 1955, at the request of Roland Pre, the UPC was banned by the French government, and it was no longer able to participate in political processes in the country.

FROM ATCAM TO ALCAM, 1956

In 1956, France made another giant step which would eventually lead to independence for its west African Colonies. The French National Parliament passed a bill granting self-government to her territories in West Africa. Each territorial assembly was transformed into a Legislative Assembly and was given the right to elect an Executive Council from its members and it was to be presided over by a Governor. The African member of this Council whose party had the majority vote during the election was to become Prime Minister.

The Legislative Assemblies had the powers to make laws on all subjects of local interest but leaving the economic policy, currency, defence, and foreign affairs to the Metropolitan Government in Paris.

The year 1956, therefore was a remarkable one for French Cameroon because on the 23rd of December, the Territorial Assembly was transformed into the Legislative Assembly of Cameroon, ALCAM (Assemblée Legislative du Cameroun).

Members of the new assembly had already arranged themselves into parliamentary groups according to their geographical areas of origin. The main results of the 1957 elections in the ALCAM were as follows:

- a) *Union Camerounaise (UC)*, had thirty deputies from the Central and Northern regions. The leaders of this party were Ahmadou Ahidjo, Arouna Njoya, and Jules Ninine.
- b) *Democrats Camerounais (DC)*, had twenty deputies from around Yaounde and its leader was Andre-Marie Mbida.
- c) *Paysans Independants*, had nine deputies from the Bamileke lands. It was led by Mathias Njoudmessi and Michael Njine.
- d) *Action Nationale*, had eight deputies and was headed by Soppo Priso and Charles Assale. Its base was the coastal region.

It is worth recalling that at this time the UPC had already been eliminated from the political scene by the French administration, and that is why it could not be represented in the ALCAM elections of 1957.

Because none of the political parties had a clear majority in the above elections, a Coalition Government had to be formed, which was composed of members of the first three parties; Andre-



André-Marie Mbida: First Prime Minister of East Cameroon.

Marie Mbida was chosen as Prime Minister on the 15th of May, 1957, and Ahmadou Ahidjo was his vice.

Mbida's government faced serious problems. First, Um Nyobe, on the 13th July 1957, petitioned the Prime Minister and High Commissioner in Cameroon to grant amnesty to the UPC party but Mbida gave a deaf ear to the request. This refusal led to a fresh outbreak of violent activities in the Sanaga-Maritime region. Instead, Mbida went to Paris and requested more French troops which he used against the UPC. Even with such assistance he failed to quell the violence.

Mbida's second problem came from his harsh and undemocratic attitude, which led to the resignation of many of the members of his cabinet. His third problem resulted from his agenda of priorities. He maintained that Cameroon was not ripe for independence, and worse still, he and his collaborators did not include reunification on their program. These were two themes that had become very popular to all political groups and nationalist leaders of the time.

In the midst of these problems, Mbida resigned and escaped to Conakry in Guinea on February 17, 1958. Ahmadou Ahidjo then took over on the