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AFRICAN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR: LESSONS FROM HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF CAMEROON

By Patrick Manning

The Berg Report — the 1981 World Bank report on African economies — brought into the open a controversy on the state and economic growth in Africa that dominated policy discussions during the 1980s.¹ The report, while documenting the stagnation of the 1970s and anticipating the decline of the 1980s, asserted that independent African governments expanded their inefficient public sectors to unwieldy size, and thereby inhibited growth in their domestic economies:

When African states won independence, they inherited unevenly developed economies with rudimentary infrastructure. . . . To speed up development and make their economies more "national," the new governments expanded the public sector. It is now widely evident that the public sector is overextended, given the present scarcities of financial resources, skilled manpower, and organizational capacity. This has resulted in slower growth than might have been achieved with available resources, and accounts in part for the current crisis.²

The implications of the Berg Report led straight to the programs of privatization and structural adjustment which became the backbone of World Bank and IMF policies for Africa during the 1980s. In addition, the report portrayed rapid African population growth and urbanization as an urgent threat: "The consequences of rapid population growth for economic development and welfare are very negative."³

¹World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* (Washington, D.C., 1981).

²*Ibid.*, 5

³*Ibid.*, 112.

African governmental representatives and some development scholars contested the report hotly, seeing in it a blame-the-victim approach. They argued that it underestimated the influence of external constraints (such as trans-national firms, or world price trends) in Africa's economic crisis, and that its focus on growth neglected the importance of planning for equity in Africa's economic future.⁴

The World Bank's subsequent volumes on African economies reflect the evolution of the dialogue initiated by the controversy.⁵ By 1983 Elliot Berg and his team had been replaced: was it the rhetoric or the conclusions of the Berg Report which were to be replaced along with Berg himself? A new team worked through the 1980s, and its work culminated in a 1989 report prepared by Stanley Pease, Ramgopal Agarwala, and Pierre Landell-Mills, each of whom participated in earlier reports. Comparison of the 1981 and 1989 reports reveals a tantalizing mixture of similarities and differences.

The language of the 1989 report shows significant concessions to the outlook of African leaders, to the point that one may suggest certain basic World Bank assumptions have changed. The 1989 report, in contrast to that of 1981, gives far more emphasis to the achievement of economic equity, and it portrays population growth as an element of "investing in people" rather than as a threat in itself. In other cases, however, the 1989 report seems rather to restate the assumptions of the Berg Report in gentler language. Thus, while the 1989 report includes no direct attacks on bloated African state sectors, a table and some graphs subtly make the same point. They present comparisons of Africa and South Asia, showing the high African costs for water, transportation, road construction, education, and wages of government workers.⁶ The net change seems to me to have been more in rhetoric than in substance. That is, underneath the more polished language, the World Bank still holds to its assumption that decision-makers in African governments are largely responsible for poor allocation of resources and for the absence of significant growth in their countries.

My question is: what has been done to verify this assumption? In particular, do historical data provide any hope for sustaining it or rejecting it?

⁴Robert S. Browne and Robert J. Cummings, *The Lagos Plan of Action vs. the Berg Report: contemporary issues in African economic development* (Lawrenceville, Va., 1984). For a more recent discussion, see Bonnie Campbell and John Loxley, eds., *Structural Adjustment in Africa* (New York, 1989).

⁵World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: Progress Report on Development Prospects and Programs* (Washington, D.C., 1983); *Toward Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Program of Action* (Washington, D.C., 1984); *Financing Adjustment with Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1986-90* (Washington, D.C., 1986); *From Crisis to Sustainable Growth: Long-Term Perspective Study of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D.C., 1989).

⁶*From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, 266-67.

The statistical basis of the Berg Report was limited to the experience of African economies since 1960. All the subsequent World Bank reports are similarly based on post-1960 statistics, and the actual form of tables is commonly carried over from volume to volume.⁷ (By 1989, of course, this post-colonial time frame provided a 30-year perspective on African economies, a substantial improvement over the 20-year perspective of the Berg Report.) Further, the critics of the World Bank analysis have followed suit, presenting and documenting their arguments without reference to the period before 1960.⁸

Two basic lines of reasoning suffice to explain the neglect of pre-1960 economic statistics for Africa. First, such statistics are difficult to obtain and to compare with subsequent figures: governments and statistical systems changed with independence, and only in the independent era have national accounts been constructed with any consistency. Still, a number of sets of colonial African statistics have been published, so that the question is rather one of why they have not been linked to post-independence statistics.⁹

Second, and more important, the World Bank economists and their critics share the assumption that analysis of contemporary African economies will not benefit from investigation of the period preceding independence. This is in contrast to studies of other world regions where, although analysts make policy proposals primarily on the basis of recent data, they occasionally review long-term statistical series to check on policy-makers' basic economic assumptions. For Africa, in effect, policy-makers have assumed that the colonial economic history of Africa is

⁷The Berg Report and its successors include brief qualitative remarks on the colonial period -- I have quoted some of these in the text above and below -- but neither cite nor utilize statistical data for years before 1960.

⁸Critics of the World Bank's approach similarly discuss the period before 1960, but do not include the colonial period in their statistical analyses. Cummings and Browne, *Lagos Plan of Action*; Campbell and Loxley, *Structural Adjustment*.

⁹Examples of published, detailed series of colonial historical statistics for African countries include Gerald K. Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria* (Homewood, Ill., 1966), 387-591; G. B. Kay, ed., *The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana: A Collection of Documents and Statistics, 1900-1960* (Cambridge, 1972), 305-419; Jean-Philippe Peemans, *Diffusion du progrès et convergence des prix. Vol. 2, Congo-Belgique* (Louvain, 1970), 409-49 and *passim*; Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge, 1982), 344-414.

An additional constraint to preparing usable sets of historical statistics, as I have argued elsewhere, is the division of labor separating Africanist economists and economic historians: economic historians work on the years before 1960 and economists work on years after 1960, thus guaranteeing that no work will be done combining or comparing the two periods. Patrick Manning, "The Prospects for African Economic History: Is Today Included in the Long Run?" *African Studies Review* 30, 2 (1988), 49-62.

irrelevant to the problems of today. Here is the Berg Report's reasoning in reaching the latter conclusion:

Modern economic growth has a relatively short history in Sub-Saharan Africa . . . general and sustained development came only after World War II in most of the countries of the region.

In part because of this time factor, the African economies at independence were unevenly developed and dualistic, more so than most developing regions. Across the continent there were but few islands of modern economic development. . . . Thus, as the postcolonial period began, most Africans were outside the modern economy.¹⁰

But, while African governments have energetically addressed many of the fundamental problems, twenty years is not much time; the same obstacles therefore continue to restrain development.¹¹ This approach assumes a significant discontinuity in economic conditions and economic policies in about 1960. The "obstacles" to growth, as seen in the Berg Report, were simple absence of adequate education, technical training, and health conditions — rather than, for instance, more fundamental institutional or economic limitations on growth stemming either from domestic affairs or from external influences. The Berg Report assumes that African leaders had a fresh start at policy-making, and that subsequent policy actions reflected the influence of their will.

In an ironic twist, the World Bank, arguably a neo-colonial institution, expresses an anti-colonial bias in its dismissal of Africa's pre-1960 economic history: "When African states won independence, they inherited unevenly developed economies with rudimentary infrastructure." Such a bias may stem from the fact that authors of the reports came from countries other than Britain, France and Portugal. Further, such sentiments may have soothed discussions between the Bank and African leaders, providing a shared assumption to offset their disagreements on so many other issues. To anticipate the example I will explore below, meanwhile, it is unlikely that a French administrator of colonial Cameroon would rate the colonial experience as so lacking in influence on the path and pace of subsequent Cameroonian economic growth. More importantly for my purposes, the anti-colonial bias of World Bank reports reinforces a shallow, post-1960 historical perspective. It combines with the pro-growth, pro-private-sector, world-market-oriented and current-oriented outlooks of contemporary economists to result in neglect of African experience before 1960.

¹⁰*Accelerated Development*, 11-12.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 15.

My point here is not to contest the World Bank's critique of African economic backwardness under colonial rule. But I do contest the readiness of the World Bank reports to assume that the period before 1960 is lacking in influence on the period since 1960. The assumption is illogical, as it neglects the possibility that structures, institutions, and patterns dominant in the colonial period might have continued their influence in post-independence Africa. For instance, if patterns of public expenditure in the 1970s are shown to be similar to those of the 1920s, one would be well advised to seek out the reasons for that continuity.

Taxes and Exports: The Case of Cameroon

As the reader has anticipated, I will argue that colonial economic statistics can contribute to evaluating modern policy choices. There is no doubt that African state sectors were disproportionately large in the 1970s and early 1980s, just as there is no doubt that economic crisis and structural adjustment programs have since caused them to shrink. Yet two explicit propositions, widely accepted, remain unproved: (1) that African state sectors expanded rapidly in the 1960s, and (2) that state sectors expanded because of the decisions of African policy-makers.¹² A simple graph constructed from a century of historical statistics for Cameroon tends to suggest that each proposition is false. (See Figure 1 on the following page.)

Figure 1 shows current tax revenue as a proportion of current export value for Cameroon in most years from 1894 to 1985.¹³ To the degree that exports provided the income from which taxes were paid, the figure shows the proportion of export earnings which was paid over to the state. This ratio, observed over time, provides important data for assessing the thesis that the public sector has grown at an unreasonable rate in post-independence Africa. (Gross domestic product would make a better denominator for the ratio than export value, but GDP estimates are not available for years before the 1950s.)¹⁴

¹² The Berg Report, for instance, states these two hypotheses in a single sentence: "To speed up development and make their economies more 'national,' the new governments expanded the public sector." *Accelerated Development*, 5.

¹³ Sources for Figure 1 are Tables 2 and 4 (see Appendix).

¹⁴ GDP is constructed as an index of economic welfare. Export value, while comprising a significant minority of GDP for Cameroon, is not an index of economic welfare: it is simply the most easily quantifiable portion of total output. Nonetheless, in Cameroon and in most other countries, export value and GDP correlate very highly over the long run; the short-run fluctuations of exports and of GDP, on the other hand, can be quite distinct.

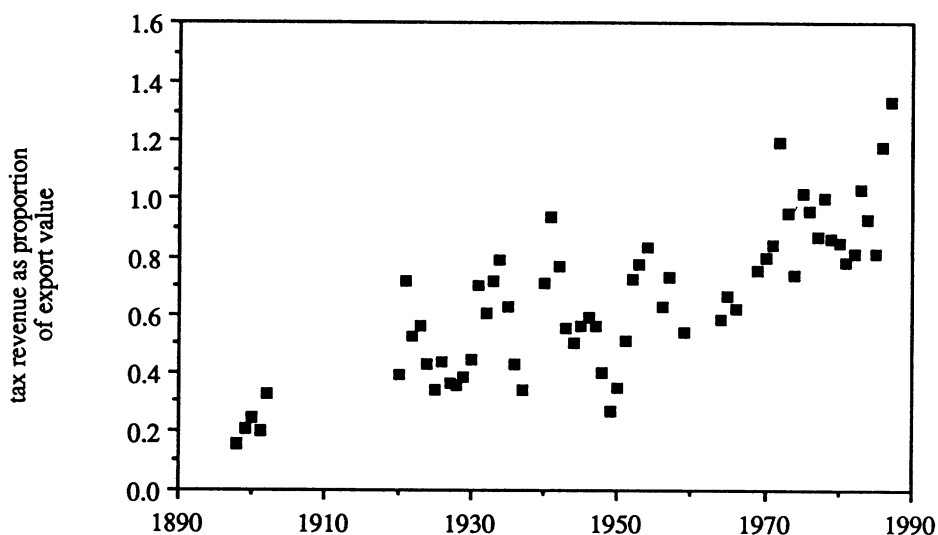


Figure 1. CURRENT TAX REVENUE AS A PROPORTION OF
CURRENT EXPORT VALUE

The results show that the ratio of taxes to exports has grown consistently since the 1890s, with wide fluctuations but with no sharp break on Cameroon's accession to independence. The colonial-era high points in this ratio include the 1920s when export volumes were low, the 1930s when export prices were low, and the 1950s when state investment expenditures were high. The peak post-independence years (1972, 1986 and 1987) were years of unusually low export value. I believe that this evidence supports the following conclusions:

1. Growth in the state sector of the Cameroonian economy is a long-term trend, not simply a post-independence phenomenon.
2. Cameroonian policy-makers did not initiate state growth, but rather followed in an established pattern: their conscious decisions were not the main factor for continued growth of the state sector.
3. By implication, growth in the Cameroonian state was sustained by entrenched institutional factors; that is, the growth of the state sector was initiated either by conscious decisions of colonial officials, or by yet other factors influencing colonial policy makers.
4. No program of educating contemporary Cameroonian state officials to favor private rather than public sector expenditures is likely to be effective in

halting present or future growth of the public sector, unless it also changes the conditions in which they make decisions.

5. As I argue below in more detail, comparative evidence suggests that the Cameroonian case is not unique, and that many or perhaps most African countries have experienced long-term growth in the relative size of their state sectors, rather than sudden expansion after 1960.

Cameroon Historical Statistics and Their Lessons

As a more general conclusion, I wish to suggest that historical statistics of African countries can be useful not only in clarifying the above issue of public sector expansion, but in other policy matters as well. To that end, the remainder of this article discusses the contours of long-term change in Cameroonian exports and tax revenue, and shows the feasibility of developing complete and consistent series covering a full century of Cameroon's economic history.

Previous work on Cameroon, as with many African countries, has focused on relatively short periods, so that no long-term perspective has emerged. Various authors have utilized portions of available data on exports, tax revenue and other aspects of Cameroonian economic history both before and after 1960, but have not pulled the data together systematically.¹⁵ Long-run series of data, once constructed, have the advantage of permitting estimation of rates of growth, comparison of these growth rates with other countries, and demonstration of changes in economic structure.

The results of this initial effort, presented in Figures 2 and 4, give an indication of growth and fluctuation in the Cameroonian economy during the past century.¹⁶ The results show a rapid and fluctuating growth in export volume, with

¹⁵ Short-term analyses of the Cameroonian economy include the following: Philippe Hugon, *Analyse du sous-développement, le cas du Cameroun* (Paris, 1968); Jane Guyer, "Head Tax, Social Structure and Rural Incomes in Cameroon, 1922-37," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 79 (1980), 305-30; Wilfred Ndongo, *Economic Management in Cameroon* (Yaounde, 1986); Victor Julius Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*; and Mark Delancey, *Cameroon: Dependence and Independence* (Boulder, 1989). For an analysis covering the period 1947-1966, but in which Cameroon is lost within a larger "bloc Ouest-africain," see Boris Maldant and Maxime Haubert, *Croissance et conjoncture dans l'Ouest africain* (Paris, 1973). The Institut d'Etude du Développement Economique et Social (IEDES), founded by Maldant, collected and mimeographed a wide range of historical statistics for former French African colonies.

¹⁶ I should emphasize that these figures are not definitive. There remain significant issues in their construction and revision, as I note in the text below.

an average growth rate of 2.3 percent per year. Tax revenue grew at a more rapid average rate of 3.8 percent, and with a distinct set of fluctuations.

Exports. Data on exports from Cameroon, as given in the sources, are summarized in Table 1 (this and other tables are presented in the Appendix). Table 2 summarizes the same data, summed over the whole territory of Cameroon and converted first into current CFA francs and then converted into constant (1970) CFA francs. Figure 2 presents exports in 1970 CFA francs, and is thus a statement of the changing quantity of Cameroonian exports.¹⁷

A first analytical point to emphasize is the importance of deflating the figures and converting them into a constant-price series. Figure 3 shows both current and constant-price series for exports, and shows by comparison how the current-price series exaggerates the rate of growth. Too many analyses have been done on a current-price basis with the result, in this century of inflation, that analysts have assumed first, that a great success story occurred in colonial-period economic growth, and second, that early levels of economic activity were so low as to be negligible, so that early periods may be left out of the analysis. On the other hand, the constant-price series, with its average growth rate of 2.3 percent per year, reveals an impressive long-term growth rate.

A second outstanding aspect of export trends is the sharp fluctuation. After rapid growth in the German period (at an 11 percent annual rate conditioned largely by the coming into production of cocoa plantations), exports collapsed during and after World War I. Exports may only have been partially reported for the years from 1914 to the early 1920s, because of wartime disruption and the change from German to French and British regimes. Still, it appears that export values in the interwar years reached but did not exceed those of prewar years. While the tonnage of exports in the interwar years exceeded that in prewar years, relative prices fell so that constant-price exports did not grow. World War II had an effect on exports nearly as severe as that of World War I.

¹⁷For the period up through 1944, I have taken 1 CFA franc as equal to 1 metropolitan franc. For 1945-1948, 1 CFA franc equalled 1.7 metropolitan francs. From 1949, 1 CFA franc equalled 2 metropolitan francs. In 1960 the "nouveau franc" was coined, equal to 100 "anciens francs" — so that 50 CFA francs equal 1 new metropolitan franc.

Figure 2. EXPORTS IN BILLIONS OF 1970 CFA FRANCS

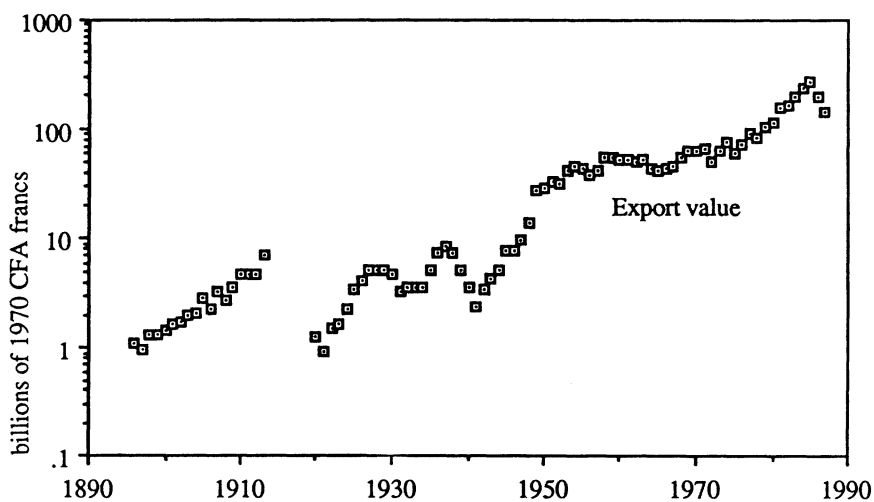
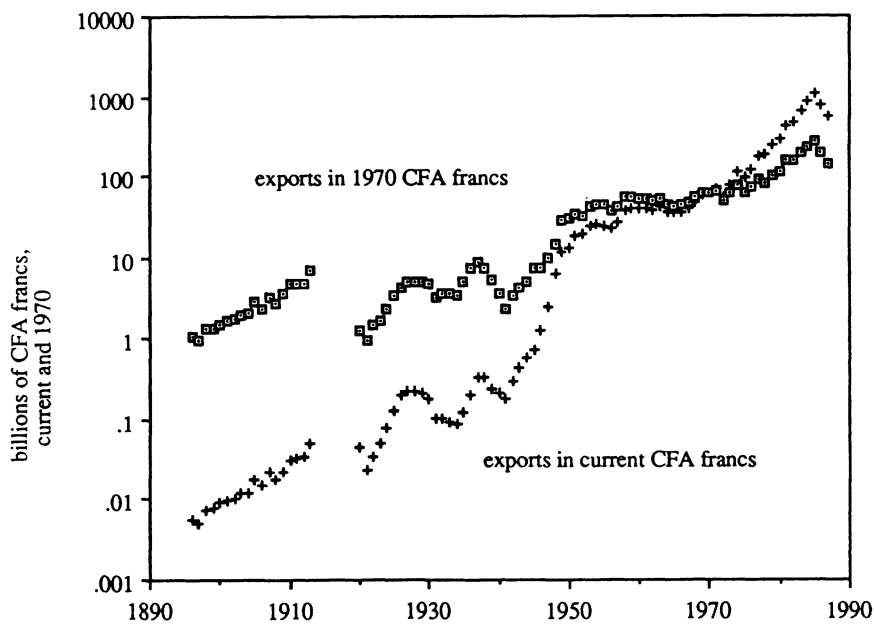


Figure 3. EXPORTS IN CURRENT AND REAL TERMS



As a sequel to the halt in trade during World War II, exports from Cameroon appeared to be growing at a fantastic rate in the 1940s and 1950s. Studies which focused only on the postwar years thus readily concluded that Cameroon was undergoing rapid and unprecedented growth, and that such growth was the result of state investment policies. These interpretations underrated the importance of changes in relative prices (which favored Cameroonian exports in that period), as well as underrating the importance of domestic private investment over the long term.¹⁸ More generally for the postwar period, Figure 2 shows a reversal of growth in the early 1960s, and a return to rapid growth with the beginnings of oil exports in the mid-1970s.

Cameroonian export growth underwent three major deviations from its long-term trend. World War I and World War II each brought dramatic declines in the volume and value of exports. The third was the whole inter-war period. Here the problem was not the lack of volume in exports, but that low prices kept real export earnings from growing markedly in comparison to the prewar years. Two smaller deviations from the long-term trend are worthy of notice: the decline in the Depression years 1930-1934, and the more modest decline from 1960 to 1965.

The composition of exports has shown significant but not extraordinary change over the course of the century. Exports were initially dominated by palm kernels and palm oil. Cocoa came to dominate exports by the 1930s. Rubber exports were occasionally significant. Bananas rose to significance from the 1930s through the 1950s. Wood exports grew modestly in relative importance from the 1920s. Coffee exports rose to significance in the 1930s, then retained a relatively constant share of exports from the 1940s. By the late 1970s petroleum exports had become the largest single source of export revenue; at the same time the export of processed wood and cocoa began to compete with unprocessed exports.¹⁹

¹⁸ Hugon, *Analyse*; Maldant and Haubert, *Croissance et conjoncture*.

¹⁹ Export commodities as percentage of total export value:

	1936	1943	1953	1974	1980
cocoa	31	22	54	27	15
coffee	6	16	14	25	21
palm kernels	21	14	4	2	
palm oil	9	6		2	
bananas	6		9	1	
rubber		13	2	2	
peanuts	9				
cotton		14			3
wood	5	4		10	8
petroleum					29
processed wood and cocoa					6

Revenue. Figure 4 displays current tax revenue collected in Cameroon, in 1970 francs, for most years from 1894 through 1975. The data for Figure 4 are given in Table 4; these in turn are summarized from the data as given in the sources, presented in Table 3. The growth in real tax revenue was rapid, averaging 3.8 percent per year over the past century.

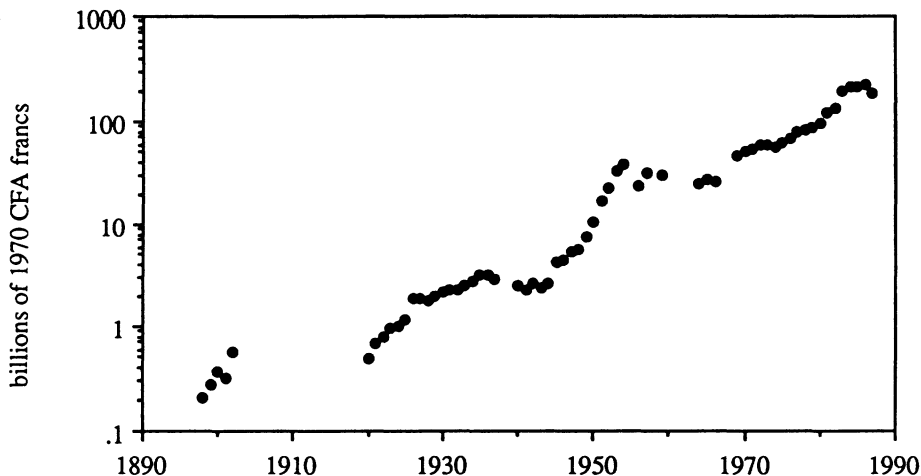


Figure 4. TAX REVENUE IN BILLIONS OF 1970 CFA FRANCS

Two major deviations of tax revenue from this long-term trend were, as with exports, the declines during World War I and World War II, although in the case of World War II tax revenue declined to a far smaller degree than did exports. The third major deviation of tax revenue, however, is quite distinct: it is the very high level of taxes in the early 1950s. This was the period of FIDES — heavy state investment in infrastructure. It should be emphasized, however, that the data shown in Figure 4 do *not* include grants from the French state, but only local tax revenue — that is, the ordinary and not the extraordinary budget. The investments under FIDES were not simply gifts to Cameroon, but required a substantial increase in tax payments by Cameroonians.

Aside from the major deviations from the trend, one may note such smaller deviations as the rapid growth of tax revenue in the German years, the rapid growth

of tax revenue in the 1920s, and the decreases in revenue at the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1960s.

As another reminder of the difference between current-price and constant-price series, Figure 5 shows a comparison of the two.

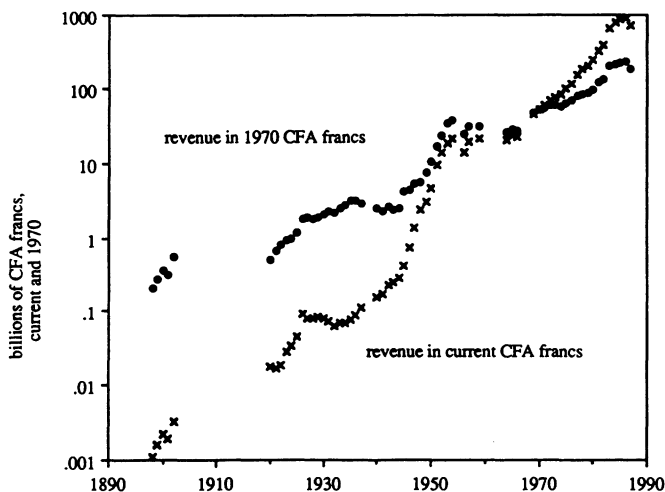


Figure 5. TAX REVENUE IN CURRENT AND REAL TERMS

The composition of tax revenue has changed relatively less than the composition of exports. Customs duties were 80 percent of tax revenues in 1905, and remained as high as 63 percent of revenues in 1974. By 1980, however, customs duties had fallen to 42 percent of revenues.

Regional Comparisons. Figures 6 and 7 display a comparison of Cameroonian exports and tax revenue with those of other African regions.²⁰ All these figures are approximate and may be revised significantly with more careful calculation, but the initial impression is clear: with the exception of fluctuations in wartime years, the experience of the Cameroonian economy has not been sharply different from those of other African countries. For the whole period of the twentieth century, Cameroon's exports and tax revenues have grown at a slightly more rapid rate than the average of other countries shown, but not dramatically so. For the UDEAC

²⁰Figures for other African regions are taken from Patrick Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, 1880-1985* (Cambridge, 1987), 51, 53, 124, 127.

nations, of which Cameroon forms a part,²¹ growth has been more rapid than for the former Belgian territories, and more rapid than for the francophone nations of West Africa. Within the UDEAC nations, Cameroon has grown as a proportion of the total, except in the recent years of increased oil revenues for Gabon and Congo.

Problems in Compiling Export and Tax Revenue Statistics

The construction of such figures as those for Tables 1 through 5 (see Appendix) is work of some intricacy. Here I describe the overall task by breaking it down into several portions. The first problem is identifying and obtaining the official sources in which the statistics are published. (See the Appendix for a list of the sources I used.) German sources cover the period from 1896 to 1906; I have yet to locate German sources for the years after 1906, though some French sources give figures for the German period. French and British sources cover the period from 1920 to 1959. In some cases they reported on the years 1914-1919; in other cases they did not. For the years 1920-1959, French and British colonial governments reported to their own ministries; they also reported to the League of Nations (for years up to 1938) and to the United Nations (for years after 1946). Data for the years 1939-1946 are in some cases missing. (Missing data are indicated by blank spaces in Tables 1 and 3.) Totals for Cameroon listed in Tables 2 and 4 are sometimes lacking in figures for either British or French Cameroon, and are noted as such. Data on independent Cameroon, the Federal Republic, and then the United Republic — are reported in statistical annuals, and also in publications of the World Bank and the IMF.

A second problem was in attempting to make the data refer to a consistent regional unit. I have allowed for a minor inconsistency in the unit. I included German Kamerun from 1896 to 1914 (Kamerun was expanded in 1911, though this made only a minimal difference in either export value or tax revenue). From 1920 through 1960 I included the total of French Cameroun and British Cameroons (Northern and Southern). After 1960 I included the Republic of Cameroon — that is, shorn of Northern Cameroons which became part of Nigeria.

²¹The Union Douanière des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale (UDEAC) includes Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, and Gabon.

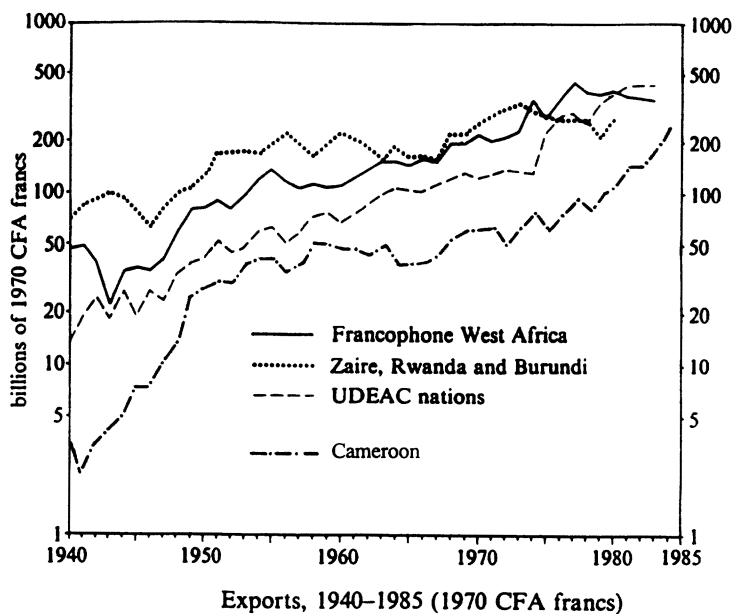
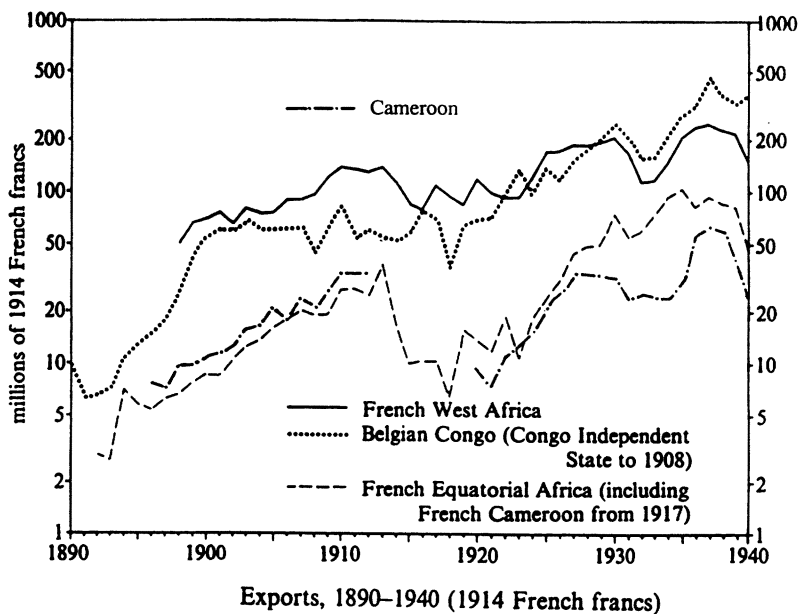


Figure 6. CAMEROON EXPORTS
COMPARED WITH OTHER AFRICAN REGIONS
Based on Table 2 in Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa*.

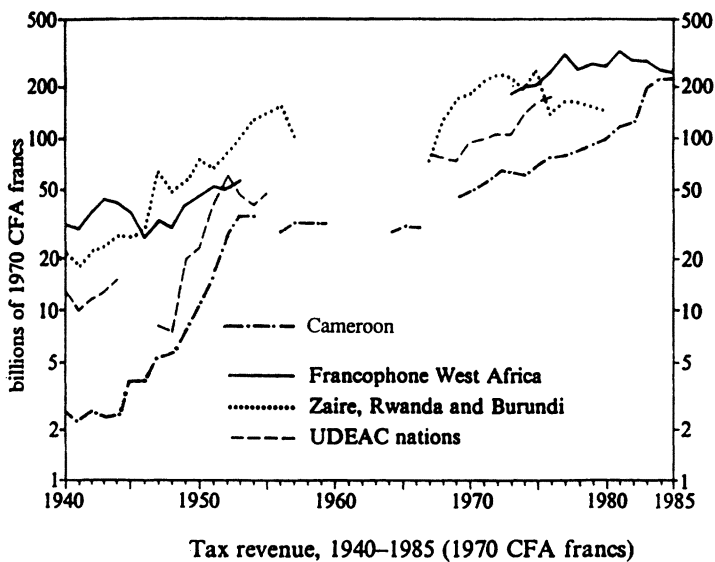
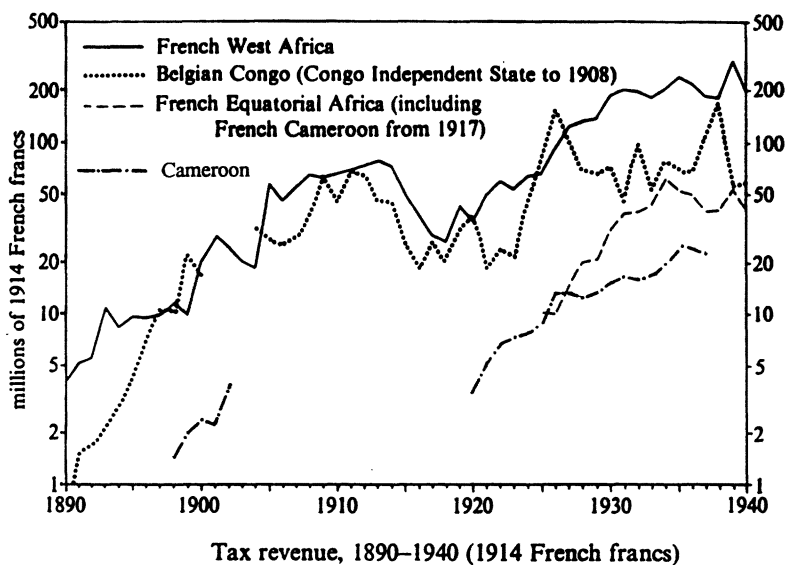


Figure 7. CAMEROON REVENUE COMPARED WITH OTHER AFRICAN REGIONS

Based on Table 4 in Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa*

A third problem was in listing totals that were constituted consistently. In exports, totals could include the value of domestic commodities only, or they could include exports of specie, or they could also include the value of re-exports. Where possible, I reported the latter and most inclusive figure; the difference between these three totals in practice was small. For taxes, however, the range of possible totals was greater. The total could be tax revenue only, or it could include all ordinary revenue (fees and fines), it could include extraordinary revenue (the amounts of grants, loans, and special taxes), and it could include withdrawals from reserves. I attempted to collect data referring to amounts of tax revenue collected in the current year within Cameroon, but some of the figures inevitably include other sources of revenue, and in some years not all tax revenue has been included.

Totals had to be converted into a single currency: I thus had to utilize exchange rates for German marks, British pounds, French francs, and CFA francs. Rather than work from foreign exchange tables, I averaged rates implicitly listed in the foreign trade data in Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics*.²²

Finally, to make figures comparable over time I had to deflate them by a price index. The index I chose to use is the index of French wholesale prices given by Mitchell, though I checked these results against an index of prices I had calculated for exports from Dahomey.²³ An accurate and appropriate index of prices is of the highest importance in making economic comparisons across time, and inappropriately deflated prices can lead to errors in historical interpretation. For instance, the index of French wholesale prices is based heavily on industrial goods, while Cameroonian exports have been dominantly agricultural. In the 1930s, agricultural prices fell more rapidly than industrial prices (in Table 5, compare the French and Dahomean price indices for the 1930s). As a result, Figure 2 probably understates the decline in Cameroon's export value during the 1930s.

Toward a Fuller Series of Historical Statistics

If the above preliminary results have indicated some of the promise of systematic time-series figures on Cameroon's economy, then it is relevant to suggest the

²²B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics, 1750-1975*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1980), 544-47, 600-602, 779-81. I calculated, for instance, French exports (in francs) as a portion of British imports (in pounds), French imports as a portion of British exports, and averaged the two to get an exchange rate for francs per pound in a given year.

²³For French wholesale prices, see Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics*, 773-76; for Dahomean export prices, see Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey*, 397-98. In addition, for the years 1981-1987 I used the GDP deflator as given by the World Bank, *World Tables* (Baltimore, 1990), 156-57. These indices, converted to a base 100 for 1970 CFA francs, are shown here in Table 5.

outlines of a more comprehensive project.²⁴ By extension, similar projects could be undertaken for other African countries.

Details of Cameroon's foreign trade should be collected, recording the volume and reported value of all major imports and exports, by region where possible. Values (especially of imports) should carefully distinguish between values before and after customs duties and other commercial taxes. Statistics on production and consumption have been collected in a more episodic fashion: at best, these can be collected and linked to the figures for exports and imports.

Details of revenue and expenditure can be collected from government reports. It is important to distinguish between the actual levels, on the one hand, and the projected levels given in budgets: the latter figures are more easily available but are far less significant. Revenue figures should distinguish the different types of revenue; at best these would be documented to indicate which groups in the population paid each tax. Revenue figures should also distinguish amounts of loans, grants, withdrawals from reserves, and revenues from government enterprises such as railroads and ports. Expenditures should distinguish payments for salaries, for materials, and for debt service, and should distinguish payments for each major heading (such as administration, police, agriculture, or education). For both revenue and expenditure, it will be necessary to construct common categories that are consistent over the whole period. This will involve reshuffling of categories given in the documents, and will also require estimation for some years. The greatest distinctions in budget categories may be between colonial and post-colonial years, but within each of these periods there were occasional shifts in budget categories, for which the analyst must compensate.

Price series for Cameroon need to be constructed in order to turn reported current values into constant-price data comparable over time. Domestic consumer price indices have been computed for many years after 1950, though it will be difficult to project these back into earlier years. Indices of import and export prices can, however, be constructed for the whole period since German colonization.

Money supply figures can be constructed from reports of the state bank, and also through estimation based on recorded imports and exports of currency.

Gross domestic product estimates have been constructed for Cameroon beginning in the 1950s. Based on observed and assumed relationships between GDP and the levels of foreign trade and government economic activity, it may be possible to propose speculative estimates of GDP for earlier years.

Population figures should be collected for Cameroon as a whole and for its regions. These figures should be criticized and made into the best possible

²⁴For further discussion of the problems in reconstructing British colonial statistics, see Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture*, and Kay, *Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana*; on French colonial statistics, see Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey*.

estimates of the changing size and composition of population. With these figures, it will become possible to make rough estimates of economic activity on a per capita basis for the main economic indicators.

Conclusion

African economies are small and weak by world standards, and have been buffeted about by external trends in prices, technical change, and policy formation. But these contemporary and global influences, however powerful, have not been sufficient to overwhelm African domestic economies, nor to determine the details of African economic change. The African past retains an influence over the present, and it remains a key to decoding some present dilemmas.

The role of the public sector in economic growth and transformation is a crucial issue in African policy; clearly all available data and the best possible thinking should be applied to determining that role. Yet the example of Cameroon suggests that World Bank economists have assumed a scale and a cause for public-sector expansion that is not supported by the historical record. At the very least this exercise suggests that economists should verify their assumptions about the public sector; at the extreme, the results of this broader analysis might result in substantial changes of policy toward public sectors in Africa.

The reluctance of policy-makers — both African and expatriate — to seek information in the historical experience of African economies is a costly myopia. Africans themselves pay the price of this myopia, as their governments unknowingly repeat errors made by their colonial predecessors. The policy-makers, in part, find it easy to neglect historical data because they are not readily available. The scholars and analysts have done little to cross their chronological boundaries and construct long-term historical statistics. The assumption of discontinuity in African economic history is thereby reaffirmed, yet never tested.

If it were an easy matter to construct historical statistics for the past century of African economic life, the work would already have been done. As I have indicated above, the construction of such statistics is intricate work: it requires wide-ranging research, information on many overlapping topics, and a great deal of estimation. On the other hand, the available data are remarkably plentiful, and the work of reconstruction and synthesis can at times lead to surprisingly detailed and verifiable series, which in turn can provide important analytical insights.²⁵ It is in

²⁵ In an important early example, Polly Hill consulted export statistics to confirm her impression that Gold Coast farmers began investing in cocoa years before the British administration provided them with any encouragement to do so. Hill, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Farmer* (London, 1956). In another case, my work on colonial public finance revealed the striking contrast in Dahomey between large budget surpluses throughout the colonial period and budget

the interest of African nations and of those associated with the formulation of economic policy in Africa to support the work of constructing systematic series of data on African economic life covering the past century.

The case of Cameroon is that of a relatively large and successful African economy, with a complex colonial history including German, French and British regimes. If it is possible to construct a consistent set of historical statistics for Cameroon, covering the period since the 1890s, then the same should be feasible for most African countries.

APPENDIX

Part I: STATISTICAL SOURCES

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Table 1. Current Export Value.

Year	Kamerun, marks	Kamerun, gold marks	French Cameroon, francs	French Cameroon, 000 CFA	British Cameroon, pounds
1896	3,691,308				
1897	3,385,463				
1898	4,601,620				
1899	4,840,781				
1900	5,886,458				
1901	5,984,576				
1902	6,264,099				
1903	7,139,456	7,565,000			
1904	7,602,668	8,021,000			
1905	9,042,774	9,315,000			
1906		9,946,000			
1907		15,891,000			
1908		12,163,000			
1909		15,447,000			
1910		19,923,000			
1911		21,250,000			
1912		23,336,000			
1913		36,000,000			
1914					
1915					
1916			3,295,000		
1917			6,724,000		
1918			7,861,000		
1919			29,891,000		
1920			45,592,000		
1921			20,430,000		43,381
1922			25,237,000		140,424
1923			42,305,000		74,363
1924			66,877,000		112,195
1925			113,085,000		126,668
1926			155,306,000		227,040
1927			163,239,000		303,747

Year	French Cameroon, francs	French Cameroon, 000 CFA	British Cameroon, pounds	Cameroon, 000 CFA
1928	159,321,000		386,460	
1929	170,275,000		307,607	
1930	136,793,000		279,039	
1931	82,181,000		154,550	
1932	83,912,000		158,294	
1933	77,562,000		168,037	
1934	72,528,000		194,012	
1935	97,997,000		318,146	
1936	168,311,000		445,459	
1937	263,307,000		526,554	
1938	251,959,000		426,921	
1939	243,181,000			
1940	217,387,000			
1941	179,474,000			
1942	299,592,000			
1943	412,514,000		187,867	
1944	545,514,000	546,000	234,707	
1945		649,000	282,476	
1946		1,025,000	330,000	
1947		1,632,000	939,400	
1948		4,283,000	1,787,000	
1949		6,741,000	2,403,700	
1950		8,190,672	2,708,600	
1951		11,372,000	3,553,600	
1952		11,041,541	3,943,600	
1953		13,180,645	5,571,900	
1954		15,246,856	4,912,442	
1955		16,550,455	4,041,773	
1956		13,150,000	4,237,037	
1957		15,005,000	5,351,053	
1958		22,291,000	6,923,248	
1959		26,767,000	5,270,000	
1960		23,951,000	5,683,000	29,634,000
1961		24,203,000	5,482,000	29,685,000
1962		25,516,000	4,530,000	29,656,000
1963		29,681,000	4,161,000	33,278,000
1964		30,850,000	4,486,000	34,552,000
1965				34,362,000
1966				35,882,000

Year	French Cameroon, francs	French Cameroon, 000 CFA	British Cameroon, pounds	Cameroon, 000 CFA
1967				38,985,000
1968				46,722,000
1969				58,573,000
1970				62,777,000
1971				69,351,000
1972				55,699,199
1973				78,321,437
1974				114,481,522
1975				96,129,776
1976				122,029,000
1977				172,851,000
1978				183,618,000
1979				238,699,000
1980				290,615,000
1981				414,540,000
1982				479,520,000
1983				649,650,000
1984				852,800,000
1985				1,093,662,000
1986				772,065,000
1987				546,766,000

Table 2. Current and Real Export Value.

Year	Exports: Current 000 CFA	Exports: 1970 000 CFA
1896	5,557	1,088,040
1897	5,106	987,683
1898	7,222	1,348,367
1899	7,746	1,337,330
1900	9,054	1,468,435
1901	9,715	1,642,073
1902	10,192	1,740,979
1903	12,054	2,016,190
1904	12,377	2,114,249
1905	17,718	2,902,925
1906	14,903	2,300,941
1907	22,666	3,338,869
1908	31,530	4,687,682
1909	22,782	3,621,759
1910	31,530	4,687,682
1911	33,503	4,760,609
1912	34,293	4,666,359
1913	51,080	7,070,413
1914		
1915		
1916		
1917		
1918		
1919		
1920	45,592	1,270,671
1921	23,187	941,011
1922	35,628	1,526,247
1923	50,139	1,680,938
1924	79,866	2,309,367
1925	133,734	3,437,342
1926	209,019	4,204,454
1927	224,992	5,153,093
1928	225,491	5,113,894

Year	Exports: Current 000 CFA	Exports: 1970 000 CFA
1929	219,019	5,066,249
1930	181,062	4,814,263
1931	104,709	3,273,222
1932	103,007	3,665,853
1933	95,224	3,552,837
1934	89,928	3,525,856
1935	124,660	5,149,477
1936	207,394	7,380,844
1937	333,672	8,576,293
1938	329,707	7,404,794
1939	243,181*	5,208,689*
1940	217,387*	3,541,341*
1941	179,474*	2,386,024*
1942	299,592*	3,413,946*
1943	446,330	4,374,885
1944	587,761	5,111,423
1945	732,810	7,664,342
1946	1,256,054	7,625,362
1947	2,444,758	9,750,578
1948	6,175,390	14,293,628
1949	11,378,463	27,972,054
1950	13,082,995	29,688,334
1951	18,568,074	32,865,490
1952	18,726,380	31,567,326
1953	23,970,012	42,426,921
1954	24,897,587	44,968,091
1955	24,506,712	44,262,123
1956	21,991,595	38,151,885
1957	25,945,872	42,522,402
1958	37,605,196	55,009,254
1959	39,728,271	55,808,761
1960	38,634,236	52,601,998
1961	38,362,415	51,440,510
1962	37,762,586	49,146,895
1963	40,881,590	51,319,442
1964	34,552,000	42,767,161
1965	34,362,000	41,945,338
1966	35,882,000	42,912,932
1967	38,985,000	46,623,953

* French Cameroon only

Year	Exports:	Exports:
	Current	1970
	000 CFA	000 CFA
1968	46,722,000	54,050,941
1969	58,573,000	62,454,343
1970	62,777,000	62,777,000
1971	69,351,000	65,293,229
1972	55,699,199	49,541,499
1973	78,321,437	61,612,864
1974	114,481,522	75,048,998
1975	96,129,776	61,204,929
1976	122,029,000	70,659,525
1977	172,851,000	90,308,777
1978	183,618,000	80,996,030
1979	238,699,000	102,008,120
1980	290,615,000	113,079,767
1981	414,540,000	156,785,174
1982	479,952,000	160,615,350
1983	649,650,000	193,843,490
1984	852,800,000	229,142,712
1985	1,093,662,000	267,115,604
1986	772,065,000	193,931,019
1987	546,766,000	140,162,505

Table 3. Current Tax Revenue.

Year	Kamerun, marks	Kamerun, gold marks	French Cameroon, francs	French Cameroon, 000 CFA	British Cameroon, pounds
1896					
1897					
1898	700,000				
1899	985,000				
1900	1,440,000				
1901	1,175,000				
1902	2,031,500				
1903	2,082,900				
1904	3,032,761				
1905					
1906					
1907					
1908					
1909					
1910					
1911					
1912					
1913					
1914					
1915					
1916			3,685,919		14,646
1917			6,281,984		49,454
1918			6,620,303		39,092
1919			8,007,645		46,142
1920			14,035,606		57,832
1921			13,339,436		51,575
1922			14,463,000		56,299
1923			21,073,000		66,324
1924			25,791,000		71,507
1925			32,041,000		85,153
1926			68,925,000		90,224
1927			59,395,000		107,922

Year	Kamerun, marks	Kamerun, gold marks	French Cameroon, francs	French Cameroon, 000 CFA	British Cameroon, pounds
1928			64,714,000		88,904
1929			70,327,000		82,590
1930			66,913,000		81,945
1931			62,679,000		73,461
1932			56,159,957		48,787
1933			58,497,550		91,336
1934			62,385,053		94,624
1935			69,618,131		100,730
1936			78,549,091		111,775
1937			96,988,000		125,075
1938					110,249
1939					
1940			153,828,000		
1941			168,430,000		
1942			215,323,000		85,563
1943			232,710,000		76,460
1944			279,437,000		77,330
1945				385,000	89,540
1946				665,000	106,870
1947				1,221,000	167,660
1948				2,020,000	394,000
1949				3,019,000	
1950				4,334,000	118,800
1951				9,200,000	138,100
1952				13,200,000	169,000
1953				18,300,000	130,200
1954				20,400,000	213,200
1955					221,100
1956				13,200,000	276,400
1957				18,300,000	298,500
1958					357,400
1959				20,400,000	416,300

Year	French Cameroon, francs	French Cameroon, 000 CFA	British Cameroon, pounds	Cameroon, 000 CFA
1960				
1961				
1962				13,790,000
1963				18,340,000
1964				20,050,000
1965				22,770,000
1966				22,250,000
1967				
1968				
1969				43,843,000
1970				50,089,000
1971				58,045,000
1972				66,553,000
1973				74,500,000
1974				84,000,000
1975				97,718,000
1976				116,594,000
1977				150,855,000
1978				183,953,000
1979				205,162,000
1980				246,678,000
1981				323,675,000
1982				389,210,000
1983				668,140,000
1984				795,320,000
1985				885,680,000
1986				912,220,000
1987				731,180,000

Table 4. Current and Real Tax Revenue.

Year	Exports: Current 000 CFA	Exports: 1970 000 CFA
1896		
1897		
1898		
1899	1,099	205,114
1900	1,576	272,119
1901	1,908	322,401
1902	3,305	564,614
1903		
1904		
1905		
1906		
1907		
1908		
1909		
1910		
1911		
1912		
1913		
1914		
1915		
1916		
1917		
1918		
1919		
1920	17,842	497,261
1921	16,617	674,388
1922	18,629	798,034
1923	28,060	940,735
1924	34,069	985,135
1925	45,923	1,180,337
1926	90,879	1,828,054
1927	81,336	1,862,874
1928	79,936	1,812,867

Year	Exports:	Exports:
	Current 000 CFA	1970 000 CFA
1929	83,412	1,929,527
1930	79,913	2,124,822
1931	83,412	2,294,091
1932	62,045	2,208,088
1933	68,097	2,540,748
1934	70,871	2,778,696
1935	78,060	3,224,513
1936	88,356	3,144,449
1937	113,702	2,922,460
1938	20,078 #	450,920 #
1939		
1940	153,828 *	2,505,934 *
1941	158,430 *	2,239,199 *
1942	230,724	2,629,177
1943	246,473	2,415,903
1944	293,356	2,551,153
1945	411,566	4,304,507
1946	739,972	4,490,678
1947	1,366,057	5,448,331
1948	2,437,237	5,641,255
1949	3,019,000 *	7,421,708 *
1950	4,548,579	10,321,775
1951	9,479,654	15,778,987
1952	13,529,328	22,806,581
1953	18,552,118	32,837,249
1954	20,818,842	37,501,377
1955	435,237 #	785,091 #
1956	13,776,775	23,906,757
1957	18,910,319	30,991,912
1958	790,567 #	1,145,450 #
1959	21,423,867	30,095,432
1960		
1961		
1962		
1963		
1964	20,050,000	24,817,133
1965	22,770,000	27,795,103
1966	22,250,000	25,509,797
1967		

Year	Exports: Current 000 CFA	Exports: 1970 000 CFA
1968		
1969	43,843,000	46,748,259
1970	50,089,000	50,089,000
1971	58,045,000	54,548,750
1972	66,553,000	59,195,382
1973	74,500,000	58,606,667
1974	84,000,000	55,066,667
1975	97,718,000	62,216,137
1976	116,594,000	67,512,449
1977	150,855,000	78,816,614
1978	183,953,000	31,143,802
1979	205,162,000	87,526,451
1980	246,678,000	95,983,658
1981	323,675,000	122,418,684
1982	389,210,000	130,248,979
1983	668,140,000	199,361,451
1984	795,320,000	213,698,041
1985	885,680,000	216,320,250
1986	912,220,000	229,137,676
1987	731,180,000	187,438,796

* French Cameroon only

British Cameroon only

Table 5. Price Indices.

Year	France Wholesale Prices, 1970 CFA	Dahomey Export Prices, 1970 CFA*	Cameroon GDP Deflator, 1970 CFA
1896	0.511	0.616	
1897	0.517	0.591	
1898	0.536	0.604	
1899	0.579	0.749	
1900	0.617	0.780	
1901	0.592	0.497	
1902	0.585	0.604	
1903	0.598	0.610	
1904	0.585	0.566	
1905	0.610	0.572	
1906	0.648	0.572	
1907	0.679	0.610	
1908	0.629	0.629	
1909	0.629	0.604	
1910	0.673	0.667	
1911	0.704	0.774	
1912	0.735	0.843	
1913	0.722	0.862	
1914	0.735	1.000	
1915	0.994	0.648	
1916	1.340	0.749	
1917	1.859	0.988	
1918	2.421	1.623	
1919	2.507	1.497	
1920	3.588	2.799	
1921	2.464	1.988	
1922	2.334	1.629	
1923	2.983	2.057	
1924	3.458	3.107	
1925	3.891	3.856	
1926	4.971	5.516	
1927	4.366	3.975	

1928	4.409	4.258
1929	4.323	3.849
1930	3.761	2.906
1931	3.199	1.931
1932	2.810	1.371
1933	2.680	0.981
1934	2.551	0.780
1935	2.421	1.076
1937	3.891	2.711
1938	4.453	3.403
1939	4.669	2.214
1940	6.139	2.585
1941	7.522	2.617
1942	8.776	4.787
1943	10.202	5.636
1944	11.499	5.718
1945	9.561	6.290
1946	16.478	11.385
1947	25.073	20.505
1948	43.204	45.603
1949	40.678	49.502
1950	44.068	64.158
1951	56.497	90.576
1952	59.322	50.384
1953	56.497	90.576
1954	55.367	63.529
1955	55.367	63.529
1956	57.627	56.547
1957	61.017	59.000
1958	68.362	69.190
1959	71.186	72.964
1960	73.446	
1961	74.576	
1962	76.836	
1963	79.661	
1964	80.791	
1965	81.921	
1966	83.616	
1967	83.616	

Year	France Wholesale Prices, 1970 CFA	Dahomey Export Prices, 1970 CFA*	Cameroon GDP Deflator, 1970 CFA
1968	86.441		87.97
1969	93.785		92.69
1970	100.000		100.00
1971	106.215		103.54
1972	112.429		111.79
1973	127.119		119.10
1974	152.542		131.60
1975	157.062		156.37
1976	172.700		169.58
1977	191.400		188.44
1978	226.700		207.31
1979	234.000		218.87
1980	257.000		235.85
1981	264.400		263.68
1982			298.82
1983			335.14
1984			372.17
1985			409.43
1986			398.11
1987			390.09

* Originally calculated on base 1908 = 1.0;
scaled to make 1908 = 0.629.