

# Imperialism in africa: cameroon essay sample

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



In the years leading up to the Age of Imperialism, Cameroon was relatively primitive. The first known people to inhabit the area of Cameroon were the pygmy Baka people. They were replaced by the Bantu tribes and absorbed into the Bantu culture. Of a religious point of view, a powerful Islamic movement in the country largely replaced traditional native beliefs. Christian missionaries also began to have some influence later on, with the coming of Europeans. Fernao do Po was the first European to reach the shores of present-day Cameroon. He gave Cameroon its name, Camarao the Portuguese word for prawns, which there was an abundance of in the Sanaga River. Following him were slave traders who set up ports at the colonies of Bimbia and Douala to name a couple.

Bamileke, Bamoum and other kingdoms farther inland provided the slaves available for trade. In the 1800s the slave trade declined and instead trade of goods and produce grew, specifically in the trade of natural rubber. There was influence from many countries along the coast, with none managing to penetrate the interior due to malaria, however successful trade companies being implemented resulted in the colonization of Cameroon. Gustav Nachtigal on behalf of Germany set sail for Cameroon and obtained a treaty of chiefs from the coastal region asking for German protection.

In the beginning natives had wanted a protectorate because it would ensure them safety from the slave trade and other foreign powers and guarantee peace among the tribes. Conflict arose however, with the strong desire the natives had to control their monopoly of trade with the interior. The Germans knew that direct trade with the interior would be more profitable so they tried to penetrate farther inland. Aside from how difficult it was to travel

inland, the natives resisted all attempts by the Germans to do so. There were constant attacks on the station of Yaunde, which would be completely cut off from communicating with the coast for stretches of time. Also there was some degree of corruption, as with any other colony, on behalf of the government.

There was no consistency of rule between the governors. Some would be kind and advocate for Native rights, and others would see the indigenous people as nothing more but labour. As well, administration could sometimes be greatly left up to commercial companies. These companies (and sometimes the governors themselves) ruthlessly used force to push the reluctant Natives into working. That was another problem, there was a huge demand for labour as the economy was greatly supported by agriculture and plantations but the natives refused to work for long periods of time. Many natives died as a result of the conflicts that occurred over the issue.

Under the rule of Germany reform did occur, however just when the colony was at the height of its improvements Britain and France invaded and exiled Germany. Up until that though, the German colonial government slowly taught the values of agriculture, the need to make up for losses in trade and introduced civilization. They discouraged uncivilized behavior, such as the act of polygamy. There were bumps and bruises along the way but eventually, by the beginning of the 20th century, the colony was controlled and pacified and armed resistance had come to an end. As well military commanders were no longer in place. Instead civilian district officers were implemented. Even the natives were integrated into the lower levels of the

administrative system in some cases. Infrastructure was developed even though all building materials had to be imported. Douala was developed into a city with schools, hospitals and railroads. Germany's rule was strengthening Cameroon, even though they had to subsidize the colony more every year in order to balance the budget. After the war when the colony was spilt up between Britain and France the colony still continued to develop and is today, one of the most prosperous countries in Africa.

The rule that Germany originally set up was not nearly as harsh as some other examples of imperialism. The development in Cameroon was more for the benefit of growth, then dominating another country. This probably is due to the development of a protectorate. Depending on which way you look at it though, imperialism was a negative experience because it ended a lot of the native culture, but it was a good thing because it helped develop the country into a civilized productive country. Looking into the future however, some imperial countries exploited their colonies so harshly that even to this day the colony suffers from poverty. Cameroon has had quite the success story, it has hit rough patches but still to this day has been prosperous which leads to believe that imperialism in Cameroon was a positive experience.