The Perceptions/Views of Cameroon–Nigerian Bakassi border conflict by the Bakassi people

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ABSTRACT

The Bakassi conflict which emanated between Cameroon and Nigeria during the 1980s, border conflicts just like civil wars in Africa had attracted different interpretations and ideas from the inhabitants of that area. Bakassi is found in the Ndian region of the Republic of Cameroon, It has a long border with Nigeria extending from the Lake Chad to the gulf of Guinea. Different opinions were raised by the Bakassi people concerning the Bakassi border conflict. The aim of my thesis is to analyses the opinions of the Bakassi people concerning the Bakassi border conflict, in doing this one also gain insights in to other issues such as nationality and ethnicity.

I conducted my work in the light of case study research design, and I used interviews as my method of research. I conducted interviews over four different localities in Bakassi, while my interviewees Cameroonian and Nigerian were also divided in to three groups, this enable me to explore the differences and similarities.

The findings of my research work show the different opinions of the Bakassi border conflict. These opinions range from; gendarme brutality, crime rate and piracy, accusations of different nationalities, and governments concerned, witchcraft, fishing problems and others. The significance of my study lies in the fact that, it portrays the different opinions of the Bakassi people concerning the crisis contrary to what outsiders may hold, thus direct the government the way forward for rehabilitation or therapy needed for the restoration of peace and the development of the area.

Keywords: Border, conflict, Boundary, Perception interviews, Cameroon, Nigeria.
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I bestow my abundant gratitude to God, and I dedicate my thesis to my mother Ebot Ashu.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction; Aim, Question and Methodology.

Border disputes similar to civil wars are some unfortunate legacies of Africa. Numerous volumes of literature have been devoted to it. Sometime after independence, in 1960s, border skirmishes between African States were relatively rare and governments more or less adhered to the sacrosanct nature of the former boundaries. After the independence of most African States, and recently, boundary disputes such as those between Ethiopia and Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and its neighbours, as well as Cameroon and Nigeria, began to be perceived as a desire to control resources considered to be vital, but could also be perceived as being part of the political evolution of the continent.

It is importance of studying border conflicts such as the Bakassi, lies in the fact that, it help us understand the different issues that affect the life of the people in that area. We may also understand issues about ethnicity nationality and tribalism, and how they affect the lives of the people. In another dimension, it helps us to understand the past problems of that region, and better solutions for the future. For the case of Bakassi border conflict, I wish to make it clear that, while studying the Bakassi border conflict,

I do not focus on the issues of ethnicity, tribalism, and nationalism, but I focus the people’s opinion about the crisis, and partly point out the people’s nationality, even though I could manage to point out other issues but which are not my focus.

Cameroon and Nigeria share a common boundary which has often encouraged trade amongst the people at the borders. Even after the independence of both nations, there seem to be no actual boundary between the two countries until the wake of hostilities over the area of Bakassi in the 1980s. Misunderstanding continued with numerous clashes, even though both countries adhered to the doctrine of Uti possidetis Juris, which insist on the respect for colonially made borders. The
most important of these border clashes occurred in the years 1981, 1993, and 1994. These incidents brought the two countries to the brink of war.

We know that, just like other border disputes in the continent, the origins of such border disputes have always been interpreted in different ways by different groups at the continental level, as well as the level of the state. While the views of the local population have always been neglected. The effects of such disputes are usually difficult, long-lasting and calamitous, and often involved the summoning of former colonial masters. The Cameroon-Nigerian border disputes, often involved the Bakassi conflict, which continued on for many years, and is the example relating to border dispute in Africa after independence. The interpretations are yet a mystery to many. The raison d'être relating to my investigations, reflects the opinions (views) of some of the people on the Bakassi border dispute. Hence, through interviews, I will studied the views of the people, and I will focus on what their views, what it tells us about the crisis, this will indirectly reveal issues about the relationship of the different nationalities in Bakassi and the opinions they hold about the each other.

For me, it is important and interesting to study the views of the people because, it will provide the social and cultural settings, as well as the identity or identities of Bakassi. Therefore, my research in this domain will contribute enormously not only to inter-state disputes or the history of the Bakassi region, but also to the academic world.

Perception could be seen as awareness through the senses, an example is the perception of pain, it involves a process of external stimuli. In other words, it is the ability to see, understand and interpret

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2 In 1919, Cameroon was partition between Britain and France. Britain administered her section , Southern Cameroons as the League of Nations mandate 1922-1946. The British section of Cameroon both Northern and Southern Cameroon were ruled as part of Nigeris for administrative convinience. Northern Cameroons voted for independence by joining northern Nigeria during the UN plebiscite of February 1961, while Southern Cameroons opted for independence by joining French Cameroon, see , Ngoh Victor Julius (ed) : Cameroon from Federal to Unitary State 1961-1972. A critical study, Limbe Designe House , 2004.
events this means that, when we talk of perception we are actually talking about interpretation of things events or problems. The ability of the Bakassi inhabitants to recall and express their perceptions in other words opinions about the Bakassi border dispute, is an act of perception. The people must be aware of what happened, and therefore can interpret this problem in their own way. This is not different from the word opinion whereby, a person formed and expresses judgment which could be or could not be based on facts gathered.³

1.1 Aim/purpose of the Study

Many research work concerning conflicts in Africa, are designed toward offering an explanation of the desire for power by different war lords, often related to the struggle for control over vital economic resources. Be it internal cohesion or problems between two or more states. The underlining causes of most of these conflicts, especially border disputes, varied but were similar in nature across the continent. The people’s views about such conflicts are sometimes neglected. Therefore my thesis focuses on the (views) of the people on the Bakassi border conflict. The different aspects in the people’s views are of interest for my work. In order words, the purpose of my study is to analyze the people’s opinion about the Bakassi conflict. This is important because, in analysing how the people perceive the border dispute, that is when one looks at issues such as why and who they supported and other issues, one will also gain insight into other issues such as, nationality and ethnicity.

The opinions of the people on this crisis are of interest to me and not the actual crisis. I want to understand how people interpret the crisis today. I will fulfill this aim by, seeking and analysing the views of the people through interviews. This will contribute to research with a new perspective in the field of border conflicts.

1.2 Research Questions

The outbreak of border skirmishes at Bakassi became intensive from the decade of the 1980s. The livelihood of the people were greatly affected, even after the judgment at the ICJ in The Hague. Many questions still loom in the minds of students as well as researchers as to how the crisis originated and most importantly, the people’s views on the conflict. Even unsubstantial commentary could be considered as facts when narrating the Bakassi story. As I have made it clear above. The aim of my research is to find out the views of the Bakassi people concerning the Bakassi border conflict. My work will focus on the following categories of people
(a) Farmers and traders of Bakassi
(b) Traditional authorities of Bakassi
(c) Administrative authorities of Bakassi.
Below I will explain the reasons for the choices.
My topic will focus on the following questions.
(A). How do the various groups (farmers, traders, traditional authorities, administrative/government authorities) perceive the origins of the crisis?
(B). Who has benefitted from the crisis according to the various groups?
(C). What importance does ethnicity, (tribe), nation have for the various groups in the explanations of the crisis?

Below I will later explain the reasons for the choices. Due to the fact that, there are many different conflicts in Africa, ranging from ethnic disputes, internal civil wars, to border disputes, it is of utmost importance to verify and understand the people’s views on any particular dispute. Thus, the above questions could help in establishing the different views as concerns the Bakassi border disputes. As concerns the main causes of the conflict, I will provide a summary, as this might be due to several reasons which may include quarrels, to the need for resources, and colonialism. As I would provide through my literature reviews.
Finally, I will provide some solutions for the post Bakassi problems. However, it is important to know what provoked the crisis.

Through the prism of the above questions, I will be able to find out how the people in the region perceived the crisis. I will be able to contribute, indirectly, to other issues, concerning the people’s identity and class.

1.3 Method

My method of research is geared at answering my research questions. In order to carry out my research work, I will adopt a case study research design. I will use interviews as my research method. I will conduct interviews in four different villages. I decided to select these places because, they are well known amongst the villages in the Bakassi area. They are also amongst the biggest localities in this region, and their level of development is better than other villages due to the fact that, some iota of government images are found here either through structures such as, schools and hospitals or individuals like, the police and the military. I cannot in anyway confirm that, these places were the most affected simply because they are the renowned places in the Bakassi area. Since I do not have statistics of the number of people, who died in these places or, the level of destruction caused here during the period of dispute, compared to other places in Bakassi. Of course, these villages are also big, what I mean by renowned is that, they are well known for different reasons.

For example, Isangelle is well know because, of it is a big ethnic group, the name of a village, with sub tribes, and it is well known for its fishing activities. Bamusso is known for its big fishing port, new buyers of fish, and visitors are always excited to visit these places in Bakassi before any other localities. K. Abedimo and Akwa are known, not just for its fishing activities, but also due to its brutality, the stories of kidnapping. To say that, one has been, to Bakassi without passing through some of these villages, one will be left with comparatively smaller villages or unimportant cities. I
will be dealing with the views of the people. I will explain below. I will gather their opinions with the use of questionnaire interviews. I selected these areas not really in a special order. These questionnaires were finally fixed by my supervisor.

According to Dr CR Kothari, in his book Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques (2008), explained that, a case study involves an in-depth analysis that is, a thorough investigation of a limited or particular unit or event, the fact that this method of research is intensive, it deepen our perception about that particular issue of investigation, hence, it is a qualitative study in which, the researcher sets limits, and conduct a microscopic detail study which enrich the general knowledge. Thus it differs from a mere observational method of conducting research. However, the limited degree of this research method could lead to false generalisation of a whole. Since most researchers could assume that, they possess the full knowledge of a situation or unit, it becomes dangerous if generalisation is made. Despite its disadvantages, this method has proven to be good because it enriches the shallow or general knowledge.4

With data collected from these four localities (Isangele, Akwa, K. Abedimo and Bamusso), from a substantial number of people (a total of 30 that is, 5/25, from each village). In order words, with an intensive study in this area, I will be able to understand, and deepen my perception about the subject matter, and make general inference on the views of the Bakassi people in general concerning the dispute. It will also enrich the shallow knowledge on the subject of the Cameroon- Nigerian border dispute.

My research method, will also be qualitative and quantitative with the use of questionnaire form of interview, both in-depth interview and non in-depth. Qualitative method of research in simple terms, is that which is geared towards the analyses of phenomena and how people interpret them. It endeavours to uncover the underlying motives and this could be done by a way of case study, in-depth interviews and other techniques. It is designed to unveil what people think or feel about a

particular issue or situation or event, it finds out the reason for human behaviour. Thus, it is convenient to use this method to seek for opinions or people’s views. Quantitative method is much based on measurement, for me, this method is therefore very good for a sampling strategy on a broad base or larger samples. Most researchers sometimes adopt both method and this often depends on their subject of inquiry. In the case of gathering the views (opinions), of the people of Bakassi, I will simply gather a pool of views, from some number of people which makes sense.5

I also mentioned that, my method of collection of primary data will be through questionnaires. Jan Vansina articulates that “interviews are social methods of common accommodation during which transmission of information takes place”. This could be done through the provision of multiple questions to the informant, or through a face to face discussion. The author explains some techniques of interviews; firstly any interview has the performer and the researcher as authors. These people should have different inputs, the contribution or input of the researcher should normally be minimal when he listens and becomes maximal when he is involved in asking questions. The informant should do much of the talking, even though the researcher sometimes acts as a guide when the discussion is missing the track. Therefore, the researcher should try most at times to structure the interview in order to keep the discussion on track.

Due to the fact that, the period of interview is sometimes stressful, because the interviewee, may doubt about what the researcher really wants, and does not know how to please or gain from the interview. Sometimes a questionnaire is not suppose to be used, because the researcher may prefer a lengthy talk with the interviewee, in this process he build trust, because, some interviewees may not express themselves well in a guided manner (the questionnaire), this is why, some researchers conduct interviews repeatedly so as to enable both parties to build trust for each other, while others will prefer to spend a longer period of time with the people of that particular area, in an attempt to build trust. But I will not conduct my interviews repeatedly I will do it just once. This is due to factors such as, time and financial limits and sometimes, even the talent and experience of the

5 Ibid, pp1-4
researcher, may be suitable for research of a small scale, with questionnaire, and not necessarily repeated interviews. (This could be the case when we consider research done by beginners).

I will not use group interviews in this case because of its drawbacks. According to Jan Vansina (1985), during group interviews, most informants rarely air out their own opinions. Some of the informants often turn to agree with others, this might be because they do not want to hurt each other.\(^6\)

Another important technique of interview is its confidentiality. Interviews should be confidential in nature, this signifies that, the researcher is not suppose to share the information provided gotten from informant A with informant B or C since it might generate problems especially in a small community like Bakassi where some people greatly preserve secrets. Or one party could compromise and adopt the views of another. A good example could be a situation where by, an informant from Isangele village of Bakassi, and another informant from Bamusso village of the same area, holds the same opinions that, their tribes were the first settlers of the Bakassi region. This information is to be preserved, while I will now try to use other means in order to investigation, the truth by verifying other information’s such as, which tribe first erected a settlement in the area, which tribes began fishing etc.\(^7\)

An interview demands a great deal of social relationships, from the interviewer in order for the informants’ to happily release information. One will notice that, the issues required by the researcher are of great importance to the informants as well as the whole community. The informants or interviewees usually try to know the reason for the interview. If it does happens, he is likely to share the information with his friends. Some of these people might hide the truth from the researcher, especially, if he or she does not like the reason for the interview. (an example of such interviews which informants may not like could be an issue which project his village or people as weak during a battle with a neighbouring village). Contrarily, most at times, the truth is being released when the

\(^6\) Vansina, J, 1985, p61

\(^7\) Vansina, J, 1985
interviewer, become used to the society and knows best how to go about his interview. Unfortunately time and material are often limited, especially in small researches projects often conducted by students. Yet when the interviewer knows something already about the community in which he is investigating, and is comfortable with the language, he often gets though these huddles. The fact that I can easily communicate with the Bakassi people through English, French and the developed Creole language this will make my work easy.\(^8\)

Interview can be viewed as a common occasion in social life. Different forms exist such as; job interviews, social work interviews, media interviews, police interviews, appraisal interviews and research interviews (which is what I am concern with). Some examples of research interviews are structured interview, semi-structured interview, unstructured interview, focused interview, group interview and others. In my work, I will use the following types of interviews.

The semi-structured interview. The word semi-structured interview envelops a broad range of instances. With this type of Interview, the interviewer prepares a series of questions to be used for an interview. These questions are often in a general form, while in the field, the interviewer can ask further questions, this will depend on the responses he receives from the respondents and these further questions are seen as significant as well.\(^9\)

Important characteristics to be noted for this type of interview are the use of open ended questions. This is to allow the respondent to express their views or opinions in their own words, to be free from a tense situation that might occur between the interviewer and the respondent.

Another importance of this method lies in the fact that, the researcher must have prepared some questions as interview guide, which would be used in the field before going to engage in a formal interview with the respondents. This method is suitable, and can provide comparable qualitative

\(^8\) Ibid, p 63.
\(^9\) Bryman, A, 2004, pp113
I will use this method especially when conducting the long interviews since I have pre-planned questions for my respondents. This may be changed depending on the interviewee’s responses. I will use the semi-structured alongside the structured interview, but with open ended questions.

One of the characteristics of a structured interview is the fact that I, the researcher, provides all respondents with the same questions. These questions can be asked in the form of a questionnaire, or by reading out the questions to the interviewees. The aim here is to bring out differences and similarities in the responses of the interviewees. But in this situation, I will use open ended questions instead of closed-ended. This is because my topic is sensitive and it entails the opinions of different people. Therefore this method will be best suited when I am sampling the opinions of people.

I will hand the questionnaires to the people, and allow them to write out their opinions. And I will also conduct long interviews. This other interviews will be long, since it will also involve asking personal questions. In each village, I will select the people randomly. They might be educated as well as uneducated. They will range from the different classes of the society, from all works of life. They will constitute the fishermen, farmers and traders, as well as the administrative and traditional authorities. The reason for the variety is to acquire information and have a wider pool of views (opinions).

I will limit my selection. These people would be classified in to three different groups. The first group includes farmers and traders, the second group will be that of the traditional authorities. This group includes the chiefs and some of his collaborators, like the village elders. The third group is the government authorities. This group could be made up of those who represent the state. They range from government teachers to nurses, military personnel, police men and others. It is important to

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note that, in Bakassi, teachers at the secondary school, headmasters and principals of colleges are highly respected and considered government authorities.

Selection or choosing the interviewees was done randomly, but not inappropriate. I did not just choose the first thirty people I came across on the street. This was never possible because I had to stop someone, introduce myself to him or her and we talked for some time. At some instances, I moved a certain distance, before deciding to go in to a compound, and knock on a door, sometimes I simple decided to talk to someone who sat at a quiet corner, and then moved to a different direction. It is better to bear in mind that, some of these instances depended on my mindset. Therefore, I had to walk to different directions and for a certain distance before talking to one person. This means that, I could not meet ten motorcycle drivers at the motor park and talk to all of them. I just had to talk to one of them and walked to a different place.

These people will be selected for specific reasons. As for the government officials, such as the Mayors, teachers, nurses. To my opinion, some in this group might be more politically inclined, like the Mayors and Divional officers might be political fans of the regime and so, some of these people might not unveil the truth, in order to preserve their jobs, or the fear of not being appointed during a cabinet shake off. This is the reason why I do not concentrate just on one group or class of people, this is to enable me compare the views from the different groups.

Actually, there have to be some iota of connection between informant A and B, which often proves the truth even if they have different stories. This actually influenced my research in the field. Firstly, I had to spend more time, asking the same questions in different ways and in simple language, in order to making sure that, the informant is certain about his or her story, and they understood the question. Thus, this made me to spend more time in the field rather than the actual time planned. Teachers and nurses will also be included in this category.

The traditional authorities are also important in this interview. Because, Bakassi is an area with people of mixed cultural background, and different nationalities. There could be many “hearsay” and
gossips. Some of this unsubstantial information, if well verified, could lead me, to established facts relating the nature of the place, could support some views, or led to the causes of the border disputes.

The fact that Bakassi was merely abandoned by the government of Cameroon and Nigeria, the traditional authorities became powerful and were considered the highest order of the land. They are often considered the custodians of culture and tradition of their people. Their opinions will also be taken in to consideration.

The third group is made up of traders farmers. All sorts of petit traders become important not just for the fact that, a majority of them are not politically inclined, but when anyone sets foot on Bakassi, he or she first comes in contact with these people. They are involved in the day to day affair of Bakassi. Therefore when I talk about people of different cultures and background interacting at Bakassi, I am mostly referring to these sets of people, who are involved in buying and selling, farming, fishing. They form the back bone of their own petit economy. Their interactions might produce quarrels or problems of all kind. Hence I have to reach out to people of all kinds of trade.

The group made of up the commoners is usually greater in numbers compared to the other groups like the traditional authorities, while even the government are also greater than the few authorities. This is the reason why I will not select equal numbers from each group; I will select ten people from the group of traders and farmers, and ten from the group of government authorities. While I will select five people from the group Traditional authorities. This will be added to five long interviews in each village, in total 5/25 from each village.

The people would be anonymous, for the in long interviews, I will also write on the papers since most of the people already contacted seem to reject the issue of taping their voice as they are afraid that it could lead to any future problems. Therefore I will use two questionnaires; A (this consist of three questions with sub questions) and B (this contains similar questions like A,) and the questions were re-arranged and accepted by my supervisor these questions were similar. Finally I selected
thirty people from each village. In terms of groups I selected the following number of people from each group;

40 people from the group of traders and farmers,

40 people from the group of government authority,

20 people from the group of traditional authority.

This amount to 100 for questionnaire A, and 20 for questionnaire B, it amount to 120 in total.

The difference in number between the first two group’s traders and farmers, and government authority, and the third group traditional authority is simply because, we have a smaller number of people as traditional authorities in each village compared to the first two groups which makes the bulk of the population in each village, therefore, this means that 20, which is half the number of other groups, will be representative enough.12

I understand that, there is a time gap between the interview and the occurrence of the events or my subject of discussion. Given the fact that, Bakassi conflict is not a very old one, this means that, I may encounter informants of all categories and might even be directed to more important witnesses. This means that I may came across even people who were born and grew up in this area, and were even present during the pick of the crisis this does not mean that they should be able to be first hand witness.

It is important to know that, it becomes even difficult for soldiers at the battle field to be authentic eyewitnesses, simply because they were involved in the fighting process. This is because, they could not observe all aspects of the war, and huddles like sounds of guns and smokes prevented many from observing numerous scenes. This means that, even the best witness cannot provide the best

12 The conclusion accepting 20people, which is half the number of interviewees as compared to the first two groups was after a discussion between my supervisor Prof Mats and I, this to enable equal representation , as the number of people as traditional authority in each village is far less than those of the traders and farmers, and government authority which forms the bulk of the population.
details of an event. Some of the people I will interview might not be eyewitnesses, but lived during the period. These people might have seen military people coming in and moving out with their trucks. Many of such people could have participated in some tribal quarrel, or may have heard sounds of guns. According to Vansina (1985), a witness account involved perceptions, personal experience, and even emotions. However in my case, I am not tied down to encounter just eyewitnesses. I am seeking just the views (opinions) of the people, as to how they perceived the conflict. Most of these people lived during this period.13

The use of open and closed questions becomes important in the investigation of any phenomenon. Proponents of open questions put forward their claim that, open question provides room for the informant to express what is in his mind, since he is not influenced. While close questions provide some kind of incomplete responses to the researcher. This may distort the responses of informants. Some authors prefer open questions at the beginning of a research, while the responses could be use for the construction of close questions. However, close questions are easier to answer. These questions are often shorter. It best suits situations where the researchers aim to conduct interviews with large numbers of people. Their answers can be computerise and analyse, in my research work I will use both open and close questions.14

Ethnicity could serve as a criterion of selection, but I do not deem it necessary since it will complicate the research work, because it was not really possible for me to be asking people about the tribes they come from, since it would had led to some suspicions about who i was, and if i was not acting for the government, but i made sure that in the group of people there should be Nigerians and Cameroonians represented, even though they could come from any tribe or ethnic group. Therefore I prefer to say that nationality was a criterion for selection.

In this group of people, they could be Nigerians or Cameroonians. Bakassi is a region where both Cameroonians and Nigerian tribes have lived here for many decades. In the selection, I made make

13 Vansina, J, 1985, pp4-5
sure both Nigerians and Cameroonians are involved in each group, since some nationalities may be more critical. It will also be important to distinguish the responses at the level of the villages, and even tribes because; most villages here are regarded as the home of some particular tribes who are the dominant population in that particular village. Some villages even carry the names of some tribes hence, a distinction at the level of groups, as well as villages, will make much sense.

Finally, I will explore the similarities and differences of the result from the different groups and villages, before this comparison, I will first present the geographical, socio economic and traditional setup of the village, I will compare the similarities and differences between the traders and farmers and the government authorities, and the similarities and differences between the traders and farmers, and the traditional authorities. Secondly I will compare the Isangelle with Bamusso and also, Kombo Abedimo and Akwa. (the names mentioned above are names of villages). The aim of this method adopted is to have knowledge on issues such as; how much the people blame colonialism, how much they blame themselves, how much they blame their government.

From my observations, the reader will recognise the fact that, the data does not reflect or provide the opinions of everyone, in the Bakassi area as well as in the country. Some will prefer a total national survey of opinions, this is the limit of my research work this of course, is due to the inadequate resources to conduct such a vast study.

While the people in Bakassi are not of the same level of education, at least half of the population cannot read and write, due to the fact that the government had earlier abandoned this area, it becomes difficult to select and in this case. Also, if some people may not write, what they say will be written down for them by myself.

1.4 Material and Source criticism

Historical pieces of work are done in their traditional manner such as, consulting similar existing materials, or collecting the ideas of different people by interviews, In order to bring out one’s own view or adopting the standpoint of other writers. In the drive to realise this project, I am using both
primary and secondary sources with the aim of providing answers to my research questions, which are the focus of my investigations. In simple terms, primary sources indicate the views of people. They provide the researcher with knowledge about the event that occurred in a particular time period. Thus, draws the researcher closer to the event. Primary sources could be Interviews be they online or life interviews. Letters, artifacts, audio recordings, minutes of meetings even photographs eyewitness account and materials from the archives. My main primary sources will be gotten by way of questionnaire Interviews as I mentioned above I will also make use of materials from the Buea national archives.

By Secondary source, which could include books, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, as well as, internet and printed materials from websites. I mean any piece of information written by different authors. It is second hand account of what some other person experienced. Both primary and secondary sources are of importance to the historian.  

To begin with my main sources which are the interviews. Normally the type of data collected in a qualitative research study depends on the questions that the research is intended to address, and also the characteristics of the population as target, must be taking in to consideration. In some cases, where the people are limited in their verbal ability, some researcher would prefer observational methods rather than interviews just like phenomenological research like most qualitative research would usually do, I will used semi-structured interview mixed with structured interview as I already explained above in my work in order to comprehend lived experiences since historical research allow the use of interview such as first person or survivor’s account.

Archival sources or archival material could be information or objects in any form which have some information that has been preserved for future use. These material are evidence of the past, they help the readers to recall and to be able to communicate occurrences of the past. Therefore, archival

materials could tell researchers something about the social economic lifestyle of a people in the past or an old community\textsuperscript{16}

At the archive, (Buea National archive), I was more concerned about materials which could help to answer some aspect of my subject. I was also interested in finding materials about the migration, and the socio-economic and traditional life of the Bakassi people. Actually I found important documents on the villages in Bakassi and on some specific villages, like Isangelie and the Bamusso people. These are the reports of the administrative officers or the region dating right back to the years 1920s right up to 1940s.

Some of these Intelligence Reports, on the Isangeli Community of the Kumba Division, Cameroons Province, (By Mr F.A. GoodLife, District Officer, September, 1940, File 1080). Second Intelligence Report on The Isangeli Community, By GoodLife covering, other villages like Oron, Amuto, Bateka, Archibong, Massaka, and Akwa, February 1940. Assessments Reports on the Fish Towns of the Rio Del-Rey Area, and the Bakole Tribe by Mr Drummond Hay, Assistant District Officer of Cameroons Province, file Ag 6. This particular file reports about the socio-economic and traditional and political life of the entire Bakassi region, and the migration and settlement of the Bakassi people in general. Assessment Report on the Tribal Area of Balundu, of Kumba Division, 1923. This document is a report on the socio-economic and traditional setting about a number of tribes in the Balundu tribes and villages still in the Bakassi area.\textsuperscript{17}

The systematic manner in which material are collected from most African archives is greatly different from that of the West. This does not necessarily disqualifies the archives. Most of these African archives including the one I collected materials from were created by the colonial masters, and documents here are classified in their own systemic manner different from European archives, first of all most of the archives are not online. The European colonial masters began classifying documents according to their period of administration. for example, in Cameroon we have

\textsuperscript{16} Archivemati.ca/Archival Material. Apractical definition
\textsuperscript{17} Assessment Report on the Tribal Area of Balundu, Kumba Division, 1923, BNA.
documents classified according to the German administration 1884 to 1916, and Britias and French mandate from 1922 to 1946. etc, important towns are also distinguished.

In searching for documents on any subject, one must follow this system of classification. The villages of Bakassi were known as the fish towns during the British administration and they were placed under Kumba Division. These communities were later become under the South West Province after the Unification of British and French Cameroon. I had to check depending on my subject of interest, the files in the Kumba Division and those of The South West province.

At the archive, I immediately went in to shelves that contain files with information related to the Bakassi area. As concerns the new epoch, from the years 2000, I found little or nothing but news papers on the subject concerning Bakassi, this might be due to the government policy of allowing information in to the archives ten years after the event. In the files of Kumba Division and the fish towns, some of the files were very useful. First I was interested to recover generally any file concerning the Bakassi border disputes, and then I began narrowing my search to files that could say soothing about the geography, the people and their socio-cultural settings, their activities, any problem between these people in the past, official reports etc. At the archives.

I can not in any way write about the Bakassi people without a reconstruction of their socio-cultural and traditional settings, which are contained in these archival documents. These documents are important because they can provide enormous details about the social, cultural, traditional society of the people of Bakassi region, as well as, some information on the migration and settlement these people.

However, even though these documents are not reports about the present day, they were written between 1920s and late 1940. The activities of these places remain the same, and little socio-economic development has taken place. These documents contain the traditional and socio-cultural settings of the Bakassi people. These documents will help me to construct the history of the Bakassi

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18 Second Intelligence Report on Isangele Community. By Goodlife, February 1940.
people, and most importantly to reconstruct a background history of these people, one needs to turn back to their past old records which are these archival documents.19

Another important drawback about the documents is the fact that, they provide the bases of how the dispute began in Bakassi, after going through these files, one discovers that, some particular tribes like the Isangele holds the view that they were the original settlers of Bakassi and recommended that new comers should pay some form of taxes to them. One can sense the beginning or tribal quarrels and a possible dispute. I could began to imagine the possible causes of any kind of dispute which could likely erupt among the Bakassi people, due to the fact that the people come from different tribes.

I will have to make a comparison of these primary sources. I am also aware of the bias nature of certain sources. This makes me not to consider these sources at their face value. I tried to avoid bias by relying on interviews as well.

The different types of sources I gathered both from the archives, and from the interviews, could therefore say many things about the Bakassi people, on the border disputes, and the people's opinions about the crisis today. Most of the archival materials, can explain the different activities which took place in the Bakassi villages, socio-economically and culturally. It also identifies the different tribes of the peninsular, what they considered about themselves, in order words, what they think about themselves, as this will have something similar with the views they hold about themselves. And against others.

A good example, is the report Mr Goodlife, the story of the Isangele people. We learned that, the Isangeli people considered themselves to be the first settlers of Bakassi, and new comers provided them with bags of fish as gift. From these documents, we can also construct the background history of the Bakassi people.

19 Intelligence Report on the Isangelei Community of Kumba Division, Cameroons Province, By Mr F.A Goodlife. District Officer, September, 1940, File 1080.NBA.
CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Theory
The struggle to develop a conflict theory in the field of political science has been made in connection with the field of international relations. The theories I am about to consider are more general in nature that is, they could be applied to different conflicts. Some of the theories try to provide fundamental reasons for the occurrence of conflicts and shapes people’s perception about the origins of conflicts.

For my work, I will use the theories of ethnic conflict. I will dwell particularly on the writing of Donald. L. Horowitz in his book titled Ethnic groups in conflicts (1985), and in the third chapter titled conflict theory and conflict motives. An ethnic group is particular in characteristic, bearing some traits different from other ethnic groups; they often have a common myth which explains their
origin from the same ancestor like the Yoruba in Nigeria. Some are divided across countries and often link their disunity to a family quarrel, like the Fang in Cameroon and Gabon, and the Efik in Cameroon and Nigeria.

Most of the definitions of ethnic conflicts carry some elements of strife and incompatible goals. But concurrent theories of ethnic conflicts have been linked to the modernization theories in many ways. Firstly, as outdated traditionalism, secondly as traditional impediment to modernization and as a product of modernization.

Ethnic conflict here is seen or perceived as an anachronism, and something in the stage of disappearance since even political and military elites in Africa became divided and the result is the numerous conflicts in the continent.

Proponents of this theory perceived ethnic conflict as, the outcome of continuous traditional antipathy strong enough to resist the modernization waves. This partly explains the resolution of ethnic allegiance amongst the elite class in the modern nations. This conflict has been illustrated as noticeably potent when it reflects ancient enemies and old memories amongst tribes. Examples are Tamil and Sinhalese who fought in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), just as Mende and Temne in pre-colonial Sierra Leone. Even though followers of this theory holds the opinion that colonialism facilitated ethnic conflicts, this assertion has been justified on the basis that the amalgamation of different tribes and villages by the colonisers made many group to encounter each other for their first time and their relationship depended upon these first encounter. The struggle for power, land security and other valuable possessions began at this level. Therefore proponents of this theory perceived conflicts as an old age struggle between by different ethnic groups. A good example of this struggle has been between the Nigerian Tribes such as the Ibos, the Ibiobio, and the Efifs who had been in conflicts with the Cameroonian tribes such as the Isangelle, and the Akwa tribes in the Bakassi peninsular

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Ethnic conflicts have been viewed by some as a bi-product of modernization. It will be necessary to explain the origin of ethnic conflict through modernization theories. Horowitz borrows from Karl Deutsch ideas of social mobilisation and ethnic conflict. Any process of change in a society or country has been conceived as social mobilisation, it involves the transformation from the traditional to the modern lifestyle. It entails the replacement of the old pattern of behaviour.

It is observable when the people of a certain society began involving in different sectors like mass politics, the exposure to mass media and even the change of literacy rate. A shift in residence from rural to urban settlement, change from agricultural to non-agricultural occupation and other non-traditional characteristics. Thus ethnic conflicts are the consequence of something similar to a race between the rates of social mobilisation and the rates of assimilation. In another dimension, one could say that social mobilisation promote ethnic competition and these competitors resist the conditions of change.

For example, we learn from the colonial reports of Kumba Division that, the colonial administration faced difficulties in restructuring Bakassi administratively. This in itself was a wave of modernisation which was resisted by the people. The main problem was, Under which administrative Unit these fish towns were to be placed, as this could affect some tribes who had been considered the indigenes and were literally considered as those who where to benefit from this process. For example. Some communities expected to be the district head, or Division (the capital of many villages),

This also means that an important community (original settlers), could not accept to be placed under a less important community. (New comers) Thus, this explains why colonial administrators had to identify those whom they considered first or original settles. This I suggest was for no other reason but an important tool when considering restructuring and the benefits attached to it. This also explains why some people usually from a particular tribe, usually resisted the payment of tax, hence
claiming to be an original settler. This process could cause hatred among tribes or people, and future problems.\textsuperscript{21}

An important assumption underlying the modernization theory has been expressed in terms of join or converging aspirations. This simply means that people’s demands and aspirations changes these aspirations are both socio economic and even political in nature, such as good recognition and power. These situations, leads to clashes in the demands of more and more people. People became involved into conflicts because they have similar needs. In another sense, uneven distribution of the benefits that accrue from modernization amongst the different ethnic groups may fuel conflicts. Ethnic groups which benefit more through the sectors of the state bureaucracy will reinforce their boundaries against other ethnic groups this. A good example is the Bakassi region were some people holds the opinion that, some groups might provoked conflicts due to the fact that they are suppressed or relegated to the background by the powerful groups favoured the state. While other perceptions will agree that, it is also due to the fact that, the benefits of modernity are not spread amongst the different ethnic groups. These benefits often include things like education, healthcare and others.

Worst still the theories also places emphasis on the political elites who merely deviate from their role as watchdogs of the society and agent of detribalisation to seek for their personal interests by invoking ethnic support, which goes along to trigger enmity amongst tribal groups, given the fact that African politics in the twenty first century is nothing less than tribalism and favouritism, in a region like Bakassi, some groups might be considered.\textsuperscript{22} themselves abandoned and less important hence, they may seek to redefined their community which most begin from their boundary. Modernization theories therefore best explains the multiplicity of conflicts in Africa whether border

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{22} Horowitz, D , 1985, pp, 96-103.
\end{footnotes}
conflicts or civil war. The people of Bakassi could perceive the crisis as a fight for the benefits of modernism between the deferent tribes especially as the area is still much undeveloped by the state.

Modernization theories can be criticised for the following reasons. Firstly, the theory assumes that colonialism acted strongly for the present African conflicts. This accession might not be totally true for the fact that, in the 21st century even countries in Africa with relative peace and stability for a long period of time, such as Cameroon which has encounter no civil war over a period of thirty years now, are still involved in border disputes with their neighbours thus, the perfect reason might not be colonialism alone, but also the quest for important resources such as petroleum and gas, and others.

A modernization theorist also perceived or views ethnic conflicts as an outcome of traditional opposition which could be strong enough to resist the waves of modernization. To my understanding, this should not be the only source which people could perceive as the genesis of conflicts, the holders of these views thus limited themselves to this basis without considering other possible ways in which conflicts might have instigated which is what i will prove in the Bakassi affair. 23

Also, modernization theory assumes that, the increase in the aspirations, demands of people leads to conflicts, in other words, changes in aspirations leads to conflicts due to the increase in demand for socio-economic goods and even political power. Thus the need for more resources might provoke conflict. In my opinion, the increase in the demands and aspirations should leads to innovations, a better way of solving disputes amongst states and not increase in the rate of conflicts.

In my understanding, modernization could also come as a result of government action such as, in the situation of the Bakassi whereby the government efforts to modernise the area is by securing its borders. This action might have been motivated by the drive to secure resources and to fully exploit the land even though; some of these reasons might have been underground. This action may instead

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23 Horowitz, D , 1985, pp, 96-103
help educate the people who may now be aware about themselves, viewing themselves as of
different nationalities and countries, in another word, as different peoples, they may not be even
aware of the fact that their land contains any kind of resource which may be government target.

Yes, some these people may have been living in peace for a long time as some informants even
testified, Hence, government actions, co result to any form of crisis, may shape the Bakassi, people’
views about such crisis today. In another way, this also explains why some how the crisis as
something fuelled by their governments. For example, those who talked of the brutality of the
Cameroonian gendarmes, this is an arm of the government and the Bakassi situation became well
known when the government took the matter to the ICJ because, the people of the area where
scrambling for ownership of Bakassi. The introduction of government authorities like the
gendarmes and police as well as a tax system were other ways securing its land, as well as part of
modernization. Ulterior motives such as the quest for mineral resources could have been a hidden
agenda, but might politically manufacture a problem such as intruding in to a minor tribal squabble,
and complaining about high crime wave. In this light, new ideas eventually nurses in the minds of
the people.
CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Previous Research

Due to the fact that my topic is new, there are not many issues written related to this previous research directly on my subject. This is the reason why I have decided to use different issues related to Bakassi conflicts as previous research. The Bakassi border dispute remains a popular topic since the military confrontations between Cameroon and Nigeria in the 1980s. This ignited scholars who became concerned and began writing about the different issues that concerned the Bakassi conflict. But these scholars wrote mostly the issue at the court, and the joint history that had existed between the two countries, and left out the issue of the people’s opinions about the crisis. Therefore, little is known about how the people in the region perceive the crisis.

Amongst the literature I am going to bring out below, some were concerned about the judgement at The Hague, others concentrated on the pre-independence era when relations between former British Southern Cameroons and Nigeria were very positive. These writings often struggle to portray the commencement of the crisis but never investigated in to the views of the Bakassi people themselves as to what concerns the origins of the conflict. This is what drove me to focus on the people’s perception of the crisis. The literature below focus on three major issues; Perception, the causes or factors that motivated the conflict and generally border conflicts in the continent, and the judgement at the I C J. Concerning the causes of the Bakassi border dispute.

The following authors focuses directly on the occurrence and nature of boundary disputes in Cameroon and tries to provide general reasons for the existence of boundary disputes in Cameroon as well as the Bakassi boundary dispute.

Emmanuel Mbah “Popular Culture and the Resolution of Boundary Disputes in the Bamenda Grassland of Cameroon”, in Africans and the Politics of Popular culture. Toyin Falola and Augustine Aguele(eds), University of Rochester Press,2009 . (2009), and Walter Gam Kwi, Sons and
Daughters of the Soil: Land and Boundary Conflict in the North West Region of Cameroon 1955-2005, Langa Research and Publishing company initiative Group, Mankon Bamenda, 2001. In their works brings out numerous reasons for boundary disputes in Cameroon with examples in the grassland area such as the Banbanki Tungo and Bamenssing disputes of 1945 in the Ndop, the Bali Nyonga and others, they regard ethnic considerations as a serious factor which often leads to boundary disputes in Cameroon and particularly in this region of Cameroon. According to Mbah most of these disputes arise when an ethnic group cut across the boundary or is favoured by the administration, the situation of Banbanki Tungo, is similar to that of Bakassi people who where the Cameroon tribes like the Ejaghams the Ekoi and Bayang and the Isangele and the Bodam people who settled on either side of their boundary. This piece of writing is limited due to the fact that it concentrates on just one region in Cameroon, even though it tries to portray these issues as being general. This it provides some strong explanations for the origins of boundary disputes which could be the same in any area in Cameroon.

Piet Konings, “The Anglophone Cameroon- Nigerian Boundary; Opportunities and conflicts”, African Affairs; April 2005, Vol.104 Issue 415, P275. Explains the viable trade and commerce that transpired between Southern Cameroons and Nigeria this trade system actually was due to the fact that the colonial boundary was ignored as traders had no restrain to the genesis of the Bakassi conflict which emerged as a result of the reunification between the two Cameroons, and the relaxation of trade along the Cameroon Nigerian border during the 1990s due to tensions. However, the author did not expose the consequences of relaxation of trade which is due to boundary system. This enable helps in the understanding of the genesis of this crisis, the period of trade and how the issue of domination began therefore, a historical investigation should be able to analyse the effect of the implementation of boundary, which is the border dispute.

Ngoma-Roth, Rose. The challenges of conflict resolution in Africa: the case of the Cameroon-Nigerian border conflict. Munster 2008. She looks at the Bakassi problems from the historical background during the colonial and post colonial period. She also examines the causes of conflicts generally in Africa throwing some lights on the Bakassi conflicts. Even though she brings out the involvement of other

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issue related to natural resources mostly petroleum, she does not bring out the opinions of the people of Bakassi which is the focus of my studies.

Mohamed A El-Khawas & J. Nkumbe Anyu. *Case studies of conflict in Africa: the Niger Delta, the Bakassi peninsula, and piracy in Somalia*. Lewiston. Edwin Mellen Press., 2012. The authors analyzed the historical economical and ecological motive and that produces conflicts in the Niger Delta, including the Bakassi peninsular and, also emphasized on the issue of piracy in Somalia, while they laid emphasis on the discovery of oil of in Nigeria, is considered a good reason which stimulated the crisis. This is important as it also exposes the history of the Bakassi region.

Fowler, Ian et al. *Encounter, transformation and identity: peoples of the western Cameroon borderlands, 1891-2000*. New York, Berghahn Books, 2009. The authors, examines the entire history of Cameroon dating back from the European encounter with the Cameroonian tribes to the making of the boundaries of modern Cameroon the history of joint administration and the making of the boundaries of Cameroon, helps to untangle the background history between Cameroon and Bakassi and Nigeria, it helps in the construction of a background history of the disputed Bakassi area.

Some writers dealt with the perception of African boundaries from pre-colonial colonial and present day Africa and by different schools of thought. Boubacar Barry, “Histoire et Perception des Frontieres en Afrique aux XX siecles; Les problems de Lintegration africaine,” Catheering Coquery-Vidrovitch. (2005) looks at the meaning of boundaries in the African, from the ancient period to modern Africa to post colonial Africa, they agreed that, these boundary were altered during colonialism.

Petri R (2009), Due to the changing political system of Tanzania, in the early 1990s, with the introduction of multiparty democracy, wanted to find out the how the villages understood and interpreted the political changes in their country. The author selected the Maasai pastoralist group and dwelled on two villages, with the aim of examining the perceptions of the local people concerning the political changes in Tanzania from a one party system to a multiparty democracy.
Saadia Touval “African Frontiers: Reaction to a Colonial Legacy, in Royal Institute of International Affairs 1994” Vol 42. Looks at African borders generally as artificial and not very different from the views of other researchers because, they are all humanly made and have been amended continuously over time. The agreements between the British and French over the Nigeria in 1890 as well as the Anglo –Portuguese agreement of 1891 over the Zambia-Angola border crisis are examples. Most of these border disputes are ethnic claims or ethnic nationalism like the case of the Somalis claims over a portion of Kenya and Ethiopia and French Somaliland as their rights to a nation state. This work does examines numerous border disputes and does not seek in to the opinions of the people as to what concerns the origins of these border disputes. it expose and compares some of these border disputes which could be similar to the Bakassi case.26

Jan Paulson “Boundary Dispute in the Twenty First Century Why, How and who”? In the American Society of International Law Vol. 95 (2001) looks at the economic motives which often produce boundary disputes the existence of oil and gas deposits are amongst the most important reasons. Petroleum deposits or reservoir cut across boundaries like the Bakassi oil between Cameroon and Nigerian, the fight for important resources is not however limited to hydrocarbon but even other resources like fisheries, as well as marine environment has also becomes important for some, This work does not examines one particular conflicts deeply, but brings out a number of disputes, but it is important in my work because it examines the reasons for some of the boundary disputes in Africa as well as in the world this ease the understanding of the Bakassi border dispute as the issue of oil and fishery resources are important and seem present in the issue of Bakassi.27


Some researchers concentrated on particular cases in portraying the liaison between colonialism and boundary disputes in Africa. Most of these researchers trace the origins of African boundary problems back to colonialism as well.

R Banulo Bening (1983). “The Ghana–Togo Boundary, 1914-1982. In Africa Spectrum V18, No2 1983 Institute of African affairs at GIGA, Hamburg Germany, URL: http://www.Jestor.org/Stable/40174115, Examines the roots of the Ghana Togo boundary disputes. the occupation of Togo by Britain and France and its eventual partition after the first world war, while the Ewe tribe became the most affected. Western Togoland was governed as part of the Gold Coast and was later incorporated in to the new independent Gold Coast, while Eastern Togoland later became the Republic of Togo. His motive was to show how this partition cut across the land of the Ewe people who had been in interaction with their Ewe brothers on the other side for a long time. Hence the future boundary dispute between Ghana and Togo.

William Hartman in his article “The politics of Boundaries in North and West Africa” (1965) The Journal of Modern African Studies, Volume 3, pp155-173, doi: 10.1017/S0022278X00023600. Concentrates on the numerous boundary disputes in North and West Africa both resolved and unresolved boundary problems, the Algerian Tunisian border dispute, the Liberia border dispute against Ivory Coast, the Algeria-Niger border dispute, the Mali Mauritania border dispute and others. This proposes the engagement in technical discussions as a solution to some of these disputes.

Another group of researchers also looked into the Bakassi affair from top to bottom, most of these writers are concerned with the level of the Bakassi crisis at the International Court of Justice and they focused on the judgement of the I C J and the modalities of retrocession of authority from Nigeria to Cameroon.

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Muluh Mbuh; The Bakassi Peninsular Dispute” www.postwatchmagazine.com/files/bakassi/-notes/pdf. 2004. These writers emphasise on the issue of judgement between Cameroon and Nigeria at the ICJ, Even though they make a review of the colonially drawn boundaries as a great contributing factor for the boundary dispute. 29

Hilary V Lukong Cameroon-Nigeria border dispute: Management and Resolution, 1981-2011. Langa Research Publishing Group, Bamenda, Cameroon, 2011, pp12-20, 22-43. the author also agrees or opined that, the Bakassi border crisis is as a result of colonially made boundaries, the decision of the ICJ, greatly considered the old colonial boundaries 30

The above literature help to trace the origins of boundary disputes in Africa and throws more light on the relationship between colonialism and boundary disputes. It provides strong explanations on the origins of boundary disputes in Cameroon and the nature of international boundary

The literatures help for the understanding of the perception of boundaries in Africa from ancient, to modern Africa. However, some of these writers do not investigate in to the views of the people as to the origins of these boundary disputes in Africa. My prime objective is to seek the opinions of the Bakassi people.

A common problem with the previous is that, most of the writers try to link the issue of African boundary problems to the direction of colonialism. In my research I will go further by investigating other possible reasons for the cause of boundary disputes in Africa as well as Cameroon.

Numerous previous researches above geared towards border conflicts as well as, the opinions of a group of people concerning. The previous research above span from the examination people's perceptions, as well as border conflicts in some regions of the world mostly Africa. These literatures had themes and different directions or aim. For examples, Mulluh Mbu and Muarice Kamto, tried to uncover the reasons for the conflicts and the role of colonialism., Lukong(2001), Tekeste and Kjetil, and Paulson, were more concerned in relating border problems to colonialism and economic gains.

Nevertheless, a gap has been neglected. Most of these work especially those on the subject of border disputes, had not really looked in to the perceptions, that is, opinions of a people, concerning a border disputes. This is where I differ with these writers, the gap between these literatures and my research is that, my research will fill this gap as it uncover, looked in to the opinions of a people concerning a border dispute which is the Bakassi border dispute.

I think that, understanding the opinions of the people, concerning this particular border dispute, will go a long way to help, governments and organisations seeking to help resolve the numerous border conflicts in Africa, as well as in the entire world today.

However, my work is just a tiny skeleton there is a call for responsibility, a call for further the examination of the entire area of Bakassi not just some few villages as carried out by my work, in order to uncover the opinions of the people about the border dispute. Therefore I strongly recommend further studies to be carried out on a holistic view that is, on the opinions of the entire population of Bakassi concerning the Bakassi border conflict.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Background of the study

A synopsis of the Bakassi region, demands an identification of the region, its people and the socio-cultural settings, its proximity or connectivity with the rest of Cameroon. However, this region was affected by colonialism and most importantly, its socio economics and cultural context. Most of my sources which I used to construct my background are mostly the report of the Pan African Association in Cameroon known as Africaphonie, the reports of the Eden New papers and other relevant literatures.

Bakassi is found in the Ndian Region of the Republic of Cameroon. It lies between latitude four degrees two south, four degrees two south and latitude five degrees ten north. And longitude eight degrees twenty and nine degrees eight east. It is a swampy resource rich low line terrain and it is largely made up of mangroves. It has a 1600km long border area between Cameroon and her neighbour Nigeria extending from the Lake Chad up to the gulf of Guinea. Covering an area of about 665km square. It is positioned at the extreme eastern end of the gulf of Guinea, at this point, the warm east-flowing Guinea currents meets the cold north-Benguella current.\(^{31}\) The interactions of this ocean current generate huge foamy breakers which persistently advance towards the shore, building submarine shores, raising fish, streams and animals of all varieties. This is what makes Bakassi a fertile fishing ground similar to Newfoundland in North America\(^{32}\)

An important source holds that, the name Bakassi was coined from the dialect of the original Isangele people “Obakassi” meaning, Sea with a variety of fishes. Somewriters had maintained that, the Bakassi kingdom was founded around the year 1450 by the Efik people of coastal south eastern Nigeria and it was incorporated within the political framework of the Kingdom of old Calabar.\(^{33}\)

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The Nigerian town of Calabar ruled by its King also known as the “Obong” was a very important town in the south eastern corner of Nigeria inhabited mostly by the Efik and the Ibiobios people united by their secret society called Ekpe. During the 14th century, triggered by internal factors of lineage tensions most of the Efiks travelled along the banks the of the Cross River and encountered some Ejagham tribes the Qua, and or Akon and the Efut around the South west area of Cameroon. Most of them settled on the land which became known as old Calabar, this interaction later produced cultural and linguistic semblance between the Efiks, the Ibiobio and some Cameroonian tribes of the Ejagham and Banyans. Important towns in the Calabar kingdoms such as, Duke and Creek towns were important trading centers in West Africa hence, its trading activities, extended to the Southern part of the Cameroon Nigerian border, including the Bakassi region.\(^{34}\)

According to Konings (2001), Bakassi was part of this ancient kingdom of Old Calabar. England took advantage of the treaty of protectorate, signed on the 10th of September 1884 with the Obong (King) of Calabar to cede the area including the Bakassi peninsular of Cameroon to Germany the colonial master of Cameroon, through a number of agreements.\(^{35}\)

As an important trading region, between the 17th and 19th after the annexation of Cameroon by Germany, Bakassi was carved out in to the Rio del Rey Berzirk(Division) in 1884, as one of the 26th German administrative Units in Kamerun. The German Rio del Rey covered an area of about 4500 metres square, and was described as the Rio del Rey division. It is bounded to the North by the Isangelli, Ballundos and Archibong town, Calabar people on the north east by the Akpe yafe, which is the boundary between Cameroon province and Calabar province of Nigeria. The southern Boundary is formed by the Bight of Biafra and the open sea. While, to the west is the cross river, and the Meme division and Kumba Division are found on its eastern corner.\(^{36}\)

Today, Bakassi which is part of the Ndian Division of Cameroon, is made up of five subdivisions. Also called sub regions namely; Isangelli, Idabato, Kombo Itindi, Kombo Abedimo and Bamusso.

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\(^{36}\) Ibid, pp, 154-159
Its population is estimated to about 20,000 people, mostly made up of the Efik, Ibiobios, the Bakole people, the Barombi, the Balondo, and some Bayanui. It has an average density of 133 persons per square kilometres. The area has 75 km of coastline and dense river network. It is a common belief that the Isangelli people were the original settlers of the area, while other tribes came in as a result of migration. The region has a maritime climate, with an average annual rainfall of about 4000 mm which often reaches 7000 mm during the rainy season. The average temperature of the area stands around 25 to 35°C; the relative humidity is above 85%.\(^{37}\)

Bakassi contains numerous forest resources including, a variety of animals and plants species. There exist both the timber forest and the non timber forest, and other forest resources such as Eru, Njangsanga, bitter cola, Bush mangoes and others, are being exploited and traded by the inhabitants. Farm produce such as, “ghari (kasava)” is made locally, traders of salt and cloths are present.\(^{38}\) There are found small scale provision stores that deal with products mainly from Nigeria, even beer is of Nigerian fabrication, while buying and selling takes place at home and at small locations since there is no better constructed market square. While the medium of exchange is mostly the Nigerian currency known as Naira, except in Isangelli where one may find Cameroon’s Francs.\(^{39}\)

The main activity in the area is fishing. The people have constructed fishing bands (nuts), where the dry their fish especially in Bamusso which has a fishing port, where buyers both from Nigeria and Cameroon meets. There are also smaller fishing ports in other villages but most of the people here take their produce to Ikan in Nigeria to sell, this becomes easy as there are no custom barriers.

Internal circulation in the area is mostly done by boat, or on foot. There are no constructed roads. While communication is difficult in the area with just Isangelli and Akwa having dotted network system mainly from the Orange Cameroon Company. The other small towns have no network

\(^{39}\) Interview with Martin Ekpechack, Civil Engineer.
In the area, one can find some government schools such as the government and primary school at Akwa, Bamusso, Isangelli and Itindi, there exist technical colleges at Itindi, Akwa, and Isangelli private secondary school. In these schools the enrolment is poor because, most parents prefer that, their children be involve in fishing. Since the colonial period, both the Roman Catholic and the protestants, established their footprints in the Fish towns, Isangelli Itindi and Babusso has Catholic and protestant churches, a majority of the people are Catholics.

Bakassi has a health center at Isangelli, Combo Abedimo, and Itindi a general hospital at Akwa with just one resident doctor, which is largely insufficient for the population. These health units have mostly military nurses. Most of the people here uses generators for electricity, especially in the military base because the area has no electricity. Even their source of drinking water is from the wells. At Isangelli, the few taps draws their water from wells this will signify that cholera would be rampant in this area.

Bakassi is a place of mixed population, Nigerians and Cameroonian this is due to its location. And nearness to Nigeria. Of course there are few others here such as Malians, Gabonese, and Chadians, who are also involved in fishing and farm work. Many of the new generation could be product of intermarriage, which had existed since the colonial days. It is easier to identify people during conversations. According to the official document of the government of Cameroon, Bakassi had about 8,562 inhabitants in 1987, but did not specify which nationality outnumbered the other, while Omeje looked at the population to be about 250,000 inhabitants.

Therefore, there is a blend of cultures, the secret societies are similar to those of many of the tribes in the south west region of Cameroon. The Ekpe secret society is the most important in the region, and chieftaincy is hereditary. Most of the people practice polygamy, and marriage is common and cheap too, since very little or nothing is demanded for the dowry. Most of the population speaks the

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40 Interview with Martin Ekpechack, Civil engineer.
Efik language which is a Calabar language, even though everyone speaks the local Creole form of English, and English in a good form.\textsuperscript{44}

4.2 History of the conflict of Bakassi

The boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula begins from the issue of territoriality to cultural affinity. Numerous reasons could be advanced for the causes of the dispute. In this section of this chapter I will handle some of the causes of the Bakassi disputes vividly, this is to enable the reader to have the dynamics of what transpired between Cameroon and Nigeria, and to point out where tension between both countries were at its peak. In order to put it clearly, I have decided to group these causes under historical, politico-strategic and economic factors. The aim of this section is to clearly portray the position of these countries that is, how each country view what provoked the crisis, also to portray a general picture of the causes of border disputes in Africa.

Historically, I can say that the legacy of colonialism also hunted Cameroon and Nigeria, and as well as it did shape their history. Nigeria and Cameroon were colonial entity of Britain, Germany and France. Most of the current boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria were establishment of their colonial masters, through the singing of accord or agreements without prior consultation from the African people themselves. Some of these boundary agreements are, the April-June 1885, which defined the German and British territories from the coast to Gulf of Guinea. Other important agreement such as those of 1890, 1893, March 1906, April 1906, 1907, October 1909, and the most significant being the March 1913 agreement. This is considered very significant due to the fact that, it was not just the last Anglo-German agreement, but it addressed many issues of the Cameroon Nigerian boundary.

Article 18 of this agreement specified that, the boundary at the coast follows the thaweg of Akpakorum river. It divides the mangroves Islands near king Ikang, and follows the Akwa yafe river

\textsuperscript{44} Omeje Kenneth, 2007, p16
joining Bakassi point and king point. And other articles 45 of this agreement such as 19, 20, 212, 27, and 29 placed Bakassi under German Cameroon territory Article 20 made it clear that, in case the Akpa yafe river changes, the ownership of the territory does not change. Despite these colonial agreements, the boundary still remained difficult and complicated for further interpretations this is due to the numerous modifications of the boundary.

Even after the outbreak of the first world war. Britain and France signed different accords beginning from 1916, the most important of which were the 1919 agreement which shared Cameroon between the two nations. According to Francis Nguendi (2004), These agreements did not however alter the former Anglo-German agreement of 1913 however, with this division , Britain administered the southern portion of Cameroon British Southern Cameroons as part of the eastern region of Nigeria. Thus the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria could be linked to the failure of their colonial masters to create a well defined boundaries.46

Politico-strategic motive also led to the Bakassi border dispute. Along the Cameroon -Nigerian border and Bakassi is the bone of contention.it is the strategic importance of the peninsular and its potentials which makes it important for both nations. Bakassi is found at the Gulf of Guinea, it is not only an access point between west and central Africa, but also for the Calabar Port in Nigeria. As concerns surveillance in the gulf of Guinea this Bakassi is the good point. The British used the area as a passage for its merchant ships to Calabar. The importance of Bakassi was also realised by both nations during the Nigerian civil war. The Nigerian federal governments used Bakassi with the permission of the Cameroon government to block supplies to the rebel secessionist faction known Biafra during .This has made many to believed that ,Nigeria’s realisation of the importance of Bakassi the 1966 civil war, motivated the nation to lay claims on the region.

Cultural factors, also greatly contributed to the Bakassi border disputes. The demographic composition of Bakassi and its environs, will attest to the reason why Nigeria became unyielding

46 Ibib, pp13-14.
over her claims over Bakassi peninsular. The majority of the Bakassi people are of Nigerian decent, specifically from the Efik Oron stock. Most of them could trace their origin back to the old Calabar Kingdom, because Bakassi, was part of old Calabar. In the 1990s population census proved that, about 3million Nigerians were residing in Cameroon and that even in some Cameroonian villages, Nigerians outnumbered Cameroonians. Nigeria legitimised her claims due to the evidence of exclusive and continuous habitation of Bakassi by her population. Cameroonians counter this argument by positing that, it therefore means Nigeria could take advantage to lay claims to different areas along the other neighbouring countries, where there is high concentration of Nigerian nationals, this will be another form of imperialism. Therefore Nigeria’ insistence over Bakassi, laying claims over her larger population in the area is evidence that cultural factor ignited the Bakassi border dispute.  

Economic motives, had been advanced to explain the outbreak of the Bakassi border dispute. The desire to control resources considered important for a nation, have often triggered border disputes in the African continent. Most of those mineral resources that occurred at the boundaries between states, have oftenled to border disputes, the example of Ethiopia and Kenya over the Gadauna wells or the Tunisia and Algeria over the oil rich desert can testify.

Bakassi region is rich in oil, gas and fishery resources. In 1975 according to the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research (OIMR), the continental shelf in the South Eastern section of Bakassi is very rich in minerals resources, including oil as well as fish, and could yield about 100,000 metric tonnes of fish per year. As I mentioned before, Bakassi is also the gateway to the Calabar port of Nigeria. According to Ikome (2004) the largest section of Nigeria’s oil resources occurs in a zone 10 to 41 nautical miles off the Calabar coast, and the country equally owned tree oil refineries in this area, and a number of oil wells. Cameroon is a nation which also relies on its sources of crude oil, which account for at least 35 percent of her foreign income. The country exploits oil fields not far

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48 Ibid, pp21
from Nigeria hence; the importance of natural resources at Bakassi caused the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Following the occupation of Bakassi by Nigerian troops on December 12th 1993, Cameroon took the matter to the International court of Justice (ICJ), and the court called for the removal of police and military by both nations present on the territories. And on the 10th of October 2002, the ICJ declared its opinion by ruling that, Bakassi belongs to Cameroon. The decision of the court was largely respected the colonial boundaries especially the Anglo-German boundary agreement of 1913.50

4.3 Socio-economic, cultural and ethnic Context of the Villages

The aim of this section is to provide the reader with a clue about social, economic, cultural and ethnic atmosphere of the communities I choose for my case study. This section will therefore reveal to the readers the importance of these places in the whole entire Ndian Division, and Bakassi. From Interviews, Intelligence reports and the video survey made by the Cameroon Africaphonie Organisation I was able to gather information about these places.

Isangele or Isangelle, as it is written in some text, is one of the most important community in the Bakassi region this is simply because, most people perceived that, the people of this community are the original inhabitants of Bakassi. Different intelligence reports had been written about Isangele, and the Fish towns of Kumba Division which are the places we refer to as Bakassi such as, the Adderson Report (District officer) in 1934, G.A Willaims report in 1937 and the Goodliffe reports in 1940, which contains much of the Mr Andersons’s report. Isangele is found in the North Western section of the Kumba Divison along the Calabar- Cameroon boundary. This place was the name of a village of the Enyong clan. This clan was made up of the villages of Isangeli such as Asang, Iko-Ekpeme, Ndor and Akan Obio Enyong. These villages were like households, and it made up the entire Isangele. The Land Scape of the area is flat and it is estimated at about 800 inhabitants.

History holds it that, the Issangelle people first settle in a place called Udah in Calabar, in their quest to trade with the Europeans, and later near their present site in the Rio-Del Rey area. And that, they first encountered the Europeans and knew how to use European guns before other tribes in this area. They later invited other tribes to live with them; these tribes formed villages around them such as, the Balundus who formed their village known as Bateke, other villages Akwa and Akpa and others were later formed.  

Today Isangele Village which has grown due to the merger and growth of some of its quarters into small villages, but it is like a small town with the main village known as Isangelle. The main occupation of these people is fishing and farming, this explains why they are constantly quarrelling over land. Andi Moki, an inhabitant of Isangele says, the main problem in the place is that people at the upper section and those at the foot of the village are constantly fighting for land so peace is absent in the area.

Certain societies took important places in the ancient indigenous society of Isangele. The people claimed to be the originators of the Epe society, also known in Calabar as Ekpe. Which is also known in the Mamfe and Kumba regions of Cameroon as Nyankpe. This society was the strongest administrative unit of the society, through which executive orders were issued and enforced.

The main system of transportation in Isangele is by motorcycle or trekking, and internal circulation is mostly by boats. The area has some dotted network system, and most of the military people here use military radio for communication. In Isangele one can find government secondary schools, and lay private school. A health unit with mostly military nurses. The majority of the people are Catholic Christians.

51 Good Liffe (District officer) Intelligence Report on the Kumba Division, Cameroon Province, file No 1080B U A 1940, pp.1-7
52 Good Liffe (District Officer) Intelligence Report on the Kumba Division, Cameroon Province, file No 1080B U A 1940, pp.15-16.
Isangele has no better water system with pipe bone water drawn from wells while most houses use Nigerian petrol in order to have light because there is no electricity in the area.

Kumbo Abedimo, is one of the villages which has grown in to a small town. It is also known as Abedimo and it is the head of the administrative unit actually. It is located along the Cameroon Nigerian border.

In Abedimo community is made up of Nigerians tribes such as, the Ibiobios, the Efiks, the Ifialis from Calabar and others, while Cameroonians tribes such, the Barombi, Balue, Balondo, Batanga Bayangi and others, are also found here. The area is made up of creeks and mangroves swamps and other small rivers. The medium of exchange in this place is the Nigerian currency known as the Nira, while the Cameroonian authorities are still struggling to implant the Cameroonian francs in the locality. 53

The main occupation of the people is fishing, the men, women and children are all involved. Usually, the whole house is involved. The fishing season is all round the year, with some breaks due to the rains. 54 Abedimo people usually move to Bamusso fishing port the biggest in the area in order sell their catch. Some of the fishermen and farmers operate small businesses as well, buying products of their provision stores from Nigeria. In their daily activities they face custom Gendarmeres officers at the high sea and rivers.

With the very poor road network, internal circulation is mostly by boat and motorcycle, this is worst during the rainy season when people had to move from one house to another by boat. Most of the people speak their local languages like Oroko, Isangele, and korup and efik.

There are few private and government secondary and primary schools in this area, most of these schools are created by Nigerians. The language of instruction in schools is English, but a larger majority of the people, mostly illiterate also speak a kind of colonial broken English. The most

53 Assessment Report on the Fish Towns of the Rio Del Rey area and the Bakole tribes, By Drummond Hay, Ag(6) B NA.pp, 2-11
important society in this area is the Ekpe traditional society, other “juju” groups and football clubs like the Akwa FC brings people together. Social amenities here are limited with just a health center, malaria is common in the area. With no electricity the people are using petrol from Nigeria in their generators.55

The Roman Catholics established their roots in the fish towns in the colonial days, and most people in Abedimo are Catholics, while a vast majority of the people are not involve in politics.56

Bamusso is a village, and can also be seen as a small town. It is the head of an administrative district know as Bamusso Sub Region. The entire administrative district with many villages contains about 24,742 people while Bamusso village contains about 600 to 1000 people.57

The Bamusso people are also known as the Bakole people. Like any other region in the Bakassi peninsula, this village is made up of Nigerians and Cameroonians. Its neighbouring villages around are Isangele, Calabar, Kombo Itindi and Abedimo. The Meme River, the Cross River and the open sea are also visible. Bamusso is made up of dense forest and mangroves swamps, a common phenomenon in this place is the fact that, the water usually invades the houses and this makes it difficult for houses to have solid floors.58

The main occupation of the people of this village is not different from that of the rest of the inhabitants of the entire Rio-del-Rey area. They are involved in fishing which is all round the year and partly farming. Most families have their fishing bands(huts) which is used to dry fish. Bamusso has a fishing port, where buyers from other sectors of the fish towns comes to sell their fish, even though small fishing ports exist in other villages, that of Bamusso is the biggest and where many buyers from Nigerians come to buy this makes many people to carry their produce there. Connected

55 Africaphonie, the peace project in the Bakassi peninsular, 08/.2010, pp3-5
56 Interview with Martin Ekpechack, Construction engineer, 8th feb, Kumba Town.2012
58 Assessment Report on the fish towns of the Rio- Del Rey area and the Bakole Tribe , by Drumunde Hay, pp, 1-4
to fishing are other occupations like the sale of firewood sellers. Apart from fishing some people are also partly involved in the rearing of livestock like the Native bull, ships, goat and swine.\textsuperscript{59}

The Cameroon government is struggling to erect a market place but buying and selling takes place in small stores, different meeting points known as bush markets, the old colonial market existed at a place known as Boa where many from different villages use to go there. The currency used here is mostly the Nigerian Nira even though the Cameroonian government has been struggling to make the people get use to the Cameroonian Franc.\textsuperscript{60}

Movement in Bamusso is mostly by motorcycle and boats, with no dot of network system. Not many children enroll in schools in Bamusso, the number is 77 young people for the government school and just 7 for the lay private school. English is the language of instruction from nursery to the highest level in the schools, but the children also peak the local languages such as Efik, and Bakole language.

It is difficult to point precisely to the custom of the Bamusso people, since ¾ of the people are Nigerians. Therefore, there is a blend of cultures, most of the “juju”(traditional gods) here, are like those of the people of Calabar,and their traditional dances are similar as well, andEkpe is the most respectful secret society. Even though the people are Christians, they do practice polygamy.\textsuperscript{61}

There are some dots of social amenities in Bamusso, one can find a health unit even though there is no church, and the people uses dug up wells as a source of drinking water, the government of Cameroon is currently setting up pipe born water. The area has very poor road network with virtually no constructed road, most of the people here have actually been used to the Nigerian television programs and political parties instead of Cameroon.

\textsuperscript{59} Assessment Report on the fish towns of the Rio- Del Rey area and the Bakole Tribe , by Drumunde Hay, pp,12,14
\textsuperscript{60} Interview with Mr Ekpechack, engineer,Kumba,
\textsuperscript{61} Assessment Report on the fish towns of the Rio- Del Rey area and the Bakole Tribe , by Drumunde Hay, pp, 14-18
Akwa is another village in the Bakassi peninsular along the Cameroon Nigerian border, it is found in the Kombo Abedimo Sub Division. The majority of the people here are Efiks Nigerians and some Cameroonians like the entire region of Bakassi. Akwa has a maritime climate with average rainfall of 4000mm to 7000mm during the rainy season with average temperatures ranging up to 35 °C.

A larger majority of the people of Akwa are involved in fishing, which last the whole year round with just a little off period. Most of these people sell their catch in the Bamusso main fishing port, where they meet buyers of large scale from Calabar in return, the people are able to get foodstuffs such as rice, yams, salt, cloth, house hold utensils, twine and other fishing equipments. Apart from fishing, many are at the same time involved in agriculture even though, in a minimal scale because their soil is sandy and not very good for the growing of crops. The currency mostly used for trade is the Nigerian currency called naira. However, the Cameroonian government is making inroads with their currency Franc ACF.62

The people of Akwa are privilege to possess some dotted network system, this makes communication better here than many other villages in the region. This is not just what makes the place renown in the entire region but also of the fact that, there is a big hospital what is known as, the General Hospital in Akwa with a resident doctor. This makes it easier for the people who do not have to travel for long distances in order to be examined by a doctor. One can also find the Catholic church in the area since a larger majority of the people are Catholics. Electricity is a big problem here. Most people uses lamps and generators, even drinking water is scarce except for water drawn from wells.

Education in Akwa is better than some of its neighbors. One can find a government technical college and a government primary school, there are at least twenty students enrolled in the technical education in Akwa is better than some of its neighbors. One can find a government technical college and a government primary school, there are at least twenty students enrolled in the technical education in Akwa is better than some of its neighbors. One can find a government technical college and a government primary school, there are at least twenty students enrolled in the technical

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62 Assessment Report on the fish towns of the Rio- Del Rey area and the Bakole Tribe, by Drumunde Hay, pp, 14-18
school while sixty one enrolled for the government primary school for the last academic year. The language of instruction in the schools is English and French.

Mr Martin a construction worker in Kumba, originated from Akwa said” in Akwa we have people from all over, […]the way we dance and even marriage rites is just like the same”thus he meant that, the tradition and custom of the people of Akwa is not very different from the rest of the region because there are people of different background here, the culture is mixed. The secret societies are similar to that of Calabar people and some Cameroonian tribes such as the Ejagham and the Bayangui, the laid down rules for marriages are also very much similar, the people view polygamy here as an advantage of labor force for their fishing industry.63

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63 Interview with Maetin, construction worker, Kumba, 8th February 2012.
CHAPTER FIVE: Views of the people

5.1 Empirical Chapter

This section of my work deals with the presentation of my sources. The intention of this chapter is to examine or analyses the opinions of the Bakassi people concerning the origins of the Bakassi conflict. I will begin this section with a description of the way I conducted my interview, in an effort to paint a picture of the interview process to the reader. I proceed with a presentation of the different communities, its people and their main economic activities and their views about the origin of the conflict. In a little section, I also bring out some differences and similarities in opinions between Cameroonians and Nigerians and the authorities and the peasant. This section ends with a conclusion.

5.1 Presentation of the Sources.

The last quarter of the previous chapter, I made an exposé of the villages where conducted my interviews. As mentioned above, the interviews were based on three groups of people; the peasants that is, free riders at the streets, market places, at fishing ports these people usually include carriers, traders and fishermen taxi drivers just to name a few. The second group known as government officials, they are mostly those who are working for the government that is civil servants. The third group is those concerned in one way or another with the tradition of the people. They are the chiefs and those around them, even leaders of some powerful secret societies are all custodians of tradition, I call them traditional authorities.

My interviews consisted of both short and long in interviews, 25 short interview and 5 long interviews in each village. The sole aim was to identify the views of the Bakassi people concerning the origin of the Bakassi border conflict. In this section, of my work, I will examine the interviews at the different villages; I will also make a comparison between the villages that is, the differences and similarities.
The roads was long and complicated, the people are used to two major tracks entering Bakassi mostly earth roads if I want to avoid the term bad roads. From Kumba motor part to Ekondo titi beach, to Black bush, to Barrack, to Bufaka, and to Ngosso was yet just half way the journey, I proceeded to Tinkoro, Dibondo, Ambirity, Akang, to Ebosy before entering Isangelle. I began my interviews in the village of Isangele. This is simply because it is the most talk about, and most renown village in the area and most known. Everyone talks about it when it comes to the Bakassi disputes and the people here claim to be the original settles of Bakassi, most of them had nursed strange ideas concerning Bakassi border disputes. From Isangele I moved to Akwa, Kombo Abedim, then Bamusso.

In each of these places, I spend at least one and half week. I used local transportation means like the motorcycle mostly, passing through what we usually call the bush roads. In order to move between the villages, and using the canoes where necessary. This means that I spend at least ten days and in some cases plus some additional days in each place while moving up and down in the village.

Due to the level of literacy in the Bakassi region which is very low as compared to the rest of the Cameroon nation, as the government had forsaken this area and only became interested during the border dispute, bringing some primary and secondary schools in to this area recently.

Most of the people here speak some form of Creole English which I am conversant with. This partly affected the way I conducted my research and this is the reason why I mentioned in my work that, I will let the people speak while I write by myself except when I come across those who can write like the teachers and others and who are willing to do so. However, I persuaded many to write, some people actually began writing and out of shame could not continue, in that case I had to do it for them without expressing doubts or asking questions why they were reluctant to do so. Therefore I actually managed to get many people to write.

The issue here is because self completed questionnaire are regarded as much better than other by some scholars by this I simply mean that, when someone is write by himself, he uses more of his
own language and the reader can also see meaning in his choice of words. I printed my interview papers in Buea town and I had more than enough copies this enable me to reject some papers which fell in to water or mud and dust.

I conducted my interviews randomly with no specific order of selecting people, I moved to the different corners where I could meet people, I also stopped people along the street and persuaded them to listen to me, in some cases I went in to houses and entered in to small shops and mimbo houses (a place where women sells palm wine), added to that, I also enquire about important people in that particular area, to methese people included, those who have either stayed in a particular quarter for many years and are known by many others, I was easily directed to street by the indicating the houses or names of such people. For example Mr Effiong water is a small stream behind the house of Mr Efffiong and one can tell a motorcycle taxi to drop him or her on that sport. I quickly interviewed such prominent people whenever I met one or heard about any, I made sure that both men and women who were represented but also tried to maintain a representation of both Cameroonian and Nigerians because Bakassi is inhabited by these two groups of people.

Rendezvous upon rendezvous were made, in another manner i also had to purchase from some of those people who never wanted to attend to me, this in itself was a trick I used because some of them will not want to attend to me if I do not buy any Item from them, this was one of the tricks I used to get people’s attention. And reduced the level of insult or refusal I got from the people.

In some cases, where ever I came across people in a group, I had to listened to the kind of discussion that went on in order to know, if the people here are Nigerians and whether they do not like Cameroonian before I begin any discussion and try not to Identify myself or chose their side, this also helped me garner information in a better way because i played safe.

The process of interview seemed wearisome as I developed different manner of approach to the different categories of people. It was normally easier to talk with the set I considered government
authorities at least an educated class than the group of commoners and traditional authorities, since the educated class spoke well and many could talk straight or say the right thing, such as pointing to a date for example and explaining what happened rather than the other groups whereby, many people will try to link an event to another event as a way of indicating when a particular event occurred.

As concerns the manner in which I posed my questions, it depended on the category of people I came across because I might try to explain a question to an uneducated market woman differently in order for her to understand than a teacher or a social worker, who had acquired some level of education. Even though even amongst the educated class. Not all were expressive. For example, according to you sir, what can you say is the origin of this dispute? to a market woman: madam can you tell me how this fight, or this problem in Bakassi started? And this warranted much explanation about my subject of interest to these set of people.

Another issue was the fact that, during the interviews, I never took side with the interviewees, and I did not tell anyone that what he is saying is not correct, instead I became a keen listener behaving as if the interviewee is saying the best and pressed for more explanations. This also prompted many to jump in to their personal experience during the conflict which I quickly rejected.

In many cases, people who seem to talk much, i allowed them to write behind the papers when their discussion was related to the subject this means that, i was not interested in stories which were not meaningful as many people tried to narrate to me how they managed to survive from hunger or escape from bullet during the intense period of the conflict. I as well put a mark on my papers but a mark which could not be known in order to avoid trouble, my papers actually have many marks, C behind the papers of commoners, and T for traditional authorities, and G, for government, other marks are W for women and M for men therefore, C, C, M would mean Commoner(Traders and fishermen) and the person is a Cameroonianman. This actually helped me to distinguish the papers. I have decided to use a different names for these groups I will call the common people peasants, then Traders and the government people I will call them Workers.
In many instances, most people were afraid to talk, since they were aware of the brutality of the regime and never wanted to get into future problems because of what they will tell me, some were not even confident of the fact that I was a mere student, this is why most of them even rejected the fact that, they were involved or had never been involved in any tribal dispute and did not support any side during the Bakassi affair. While others advised me not to go into dangerous areas or even stop what I was doing, due to the tense atmosphere as many Cameroonians now see the Nigerian tribal factions as enemies. While others asked for money thinking that I am just part of one of those Non Governmental Organizations who should be interested in helping out the poor people of Bakassi.

Due to these problems, I had to compare some responses before accepting them when I realised that they had some iota of bias, to those whom I felt that they wanted to please me, I simply later rejected their opinions. This was the best way I could handle the problem of exaggeration and bias.

The responses or result of the interviews were all very similar in all four villages and slightly different. From the interviews, I understood that, there problem of Bakassi was not just between tribes but also between nationalities that is Cameroonians against Nigerians. I do not want the reader to mix this up, as interview in a community where the majority of the people are illiterate is tricky as I realised people turn to say different things that is change what they said when I asked them different questions.

5.2 Interviews with the people of Bakassi:

In this subsection, I will present the interviews or better still opinions of the Bakassi people in four different places namely; Isangele, Akwa, K. Abedimo and Bamusso. The order in which I take up these villages was not actually very important for me as any of them for me could come first, but I think that I did so just out of the popularity of these communities. Thus I began with the most popular, most talk about, with many hearsay stories Isangele, other reasons are; the transportation and the nature of the roads, as I tried to follow the best possible road link to these places, and lastly

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65 Interview with Aboko Alim, Farmer and primary school teacher, Isangele, 22nd July 2012.
due to the nature of my contacts in the areas. The different themes I will bring out is due to their popularity what I mean is, the most talked about. Thus it is not possible or very important to bring out an unpopular theme with an idea probably voiced by just one interviewee in a village and which have nothing similar to what others voiced out, this will only give me an unending list of themes and ideas.

**Village A: Isangele.**

I began my interviews in Isangelle village, this is the very place where the Africa Phonie group had earlier conducted several interviews and held talks with the inhabitants. Isangele which is in the North western side of Kumba town, Isangele community contains many tribes both from Cameroon and Nigeria. The Balondo, Balong and Bakolle known as the Oroko people, the Bakossi, the Ejagham are all Cameroonian tribal people, while the Efiks and Efuts outnumbered other Nigerian tribes like the Ibibio in the area.

The main economic activities in Isangele are subsistence farming, fishing, rearing of livestock, and petit trading especially the women are engaged in smoking and retailing of fish, and trading crayfish. The quest for trading enabled them to first settle in Utah near Calabar in order to trade with the Europeans.

It is not possible to talk about everyone’s view but to select those that makes more sense, the most popular, and which goes with my background studies and literature.

The people of Isangele are more divided amongst tribal lines, as somepeople maintains the fact that, disputes over resource especially fish by the inhabitant and most especially the different tribes found in the area fuelled the Bakassi conflict and it is the most important factor amongst others such as piracy especially by Nigerian tribes, and the non respect for traditional rites that is, payment of dues by foreigners are the sources of the Bakassi conflict however, others mentioned the discovery of

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66 Good Liffe (District officer) Intelligence Report on the Kumba Division, Cameroon Province, file No 1080B U A 1940, pp,1-7
petroleum by the government of Cameroon as bolster of the conflicts. Below are some of the views about the origins of the dispute by the Isangele people.

A number of people seem to mixed tribalism and nationalities as the source of the conflict. According to the mayor of Isangele Caro Mewanju “the people of Bakassi have always been in peace with the different tribes [...] we are just one people.” As an authority the mayor who is a Cameroonian could only emphasized unity and not divisions amongst the people, since the preservation of peace is part of her duty as a community head. She later contradicted this very point by accusing Nigerian tribes of nursing the Bakassi conflict when she remarked that, “over the years some tribes engaged in piracy, mostly Nigerian tribes [...] and the problem of Bakassi began.” These tribes she insisted are the Ibiobios, the Efiks, and Ifialis. Another important economic reason which triggered the crisis according to Caro is fishing, nonpayment of dues in the form of bags of fish to the Isangele people as traditions insist.

Apart from Caro, seven others who expressed the same idea. Enonge is a Cameroonian worker at regional delegation of education, he said “there have been many occasion where mostly the Nigerians were caught as thieves or pirates [...] it is a big problem here.” Enonge is direct on the Nigerians at Bakassi, he admitted to the fact that they were the group mostly involved in piracy and other crimes, thus he considers economic reason more important as to what led to the crisis. The fact he landed on Nigerians proved that he also takes side with the nation. He is not very much different from Ekoli, a Nigerian who said “ pipo di tok na about wi sehna wi di cause wahala for here” (this means people are saying that we are the ones at the roots of all problems in this village), by this he also meant that, “wi” or “they” thus he also takes side with the nation.

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67 Interview with Aboko Alim, farmer, and primary school teacher, July 22nd, 2012.
68 Interview with Madam Caro Mewanju, Mayor of Isangele, Isangele, July 25th, 2012.
69 Ibid, Madam Caro made her position clearer when she said “I cannot say that I was not involved because aia am the authority here and our duty is to make sure that there is peace in our locality.” This points to the fact that she could not speak otherwise.
70 Interview with Enonge, Isangele 25th, July 2012, interview with Ekoli, Isangele 25th July 2012, interview with Marock, Isangele, 27th July 2012, “na ejoe pipo di do di bad tins you di see, dem de for sidedown” (the people responsible for all these problems you hear about are the Ijoes, they live down the village), Interview
A Ijawnaka, a Nigerian woman market woman engage in a petit trading commonly known as (buyam sellam). She explained in broken English “them say na we efik people di bring trouble,[…]we no go leave Bakassi for French people for Cameroon.” (they said we, the efik people are those causing trouble in this place, we cannot leave Bakassi to the French of Cameroon). I think this is the best way I can translate what she said. One will understand that, Ijawnaka sees Cameroonians as the French, she blames the Cameroonians of wrongful accusation towards Nigerians and most importantly her tribe Efik. Thus, she identifies with a nation and her tribe. She further explained struggled to explain that, Cameroon is making things difficult for them to survive when she said “them di do all thin make we go, we no go go”, she believed that, even the policies taken by Cameroon government was to scare away Nigerians, and send them away.71

Another view is held by Mr Etim, Aged 56 is a Cameroonian who said “the whole issue of Bakassi problem began since the days of my father’s […] we allow them to settle in many villages in Bakassi, they kill people in the bush.” One will easily understand that he is talking about old age problem in Bakassi, rather than the recent talks about the discovery of petroleum and the fingers were pointing at the Nigerians as well as some particular tribes. However, later he noted that “When custom officers say that people run and enter the bush when they see them is it not mostly the Ibiobiosand all the Biafras.” This indicates that he thinks the conflict is as a result of the increase crime rate perpetrated by foreign tribes in Bakassi. Thus identified more with the tribes rather than the nation state. When he said “all the biafras” by this he could also meant that all the Nigerians because many refers to the Nigerian citizens as a whole as the Biafra and this is a common say in Cameroon. The

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71 Interview with Ms Ijauanaka, market woman, and trader, Isangele, 23rd July 2012.
fact that these people ambush others in the bush and run away from tax officers this of course is a major problem to farming in the area and to the economy as a whole. Etim, however mentions oil as a bolster of the crisis in recent days but not as the original source of the problem.

Another informant had this to say "Yes I supported the Nigerians [...] because this land had been abandoned by Cameroon they only became interested after the discovery of oil.” Mr. Lawrence A Nigerian whose tribe is not clear to me since he claims to be Ijaw and Efik, is a farmer who also owns a small boat in the water, he is involved in fish smoking but also do retail fish in his house not to the various bush markets. I know that, what he said might be because he is Nigerian that is why he totally supports Nigeria. This explains why he thinks the conflict is more about economic gains than any other reason. However, he admitted that there had been old age conflicts in Bakassi related to boundaries over fishing waters and the struggle for power, as some tribes from Calabar, compelled others to respect their traditional gods like the “Ekpe” and the resultant effect for many years now had been witch crafting in the villages, a situation which has led to more divisions and it is very pleasant. This also means that he is among those who identify with the tribes.

Mr Lawrence differs so much with Mr Etta a Cameroonian from the Isangele tribe who said "Yes I supported all Cameroonians because this land is truly theirs". Etta clearly supported the Cameroonians as he thinks the land belongs to Cameroon. He thus identifies more with the nation state Cameroon. He also argues that the nation is more important than tribe regarding who has the right to the land. It is also noteworthy that he argues that one nation can claim ownership to the land. Thus according to Etta some of the groups in Bakassi are Cameroonian and others are not. Etta

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72 Interview with Pa Etim, petit businessman, Isangele, 23rd July 2012. "When they buy fish and Eru (vegetables harvested from the forest) here, they will go through the shortcuts in the bush [...] even at the market most of these people will run immediately they finish selling their produce because they do not want to pay tax”. Mr Etim tried to explain the deeds and manners of the Nigerian tribes, the fact that they do not want to obey the laws in place, the people go through what he called “shortcuts” these are bush roads (hidden roads) in an attempt to escape from tax collectors. Secondly it is required that when traders sell their goods in the market (the market here is an open place like where many come to sell their goods) they have to pay a fee during the opening or closing hours of the market, he explains that some people run away immediately they finish selling their goods.

73 Interview with Mr Lawrence, fisherman, farmer, Isangele, 23rd July 2012.
therefore belongs to a group which upholds and respects the established colonial boundaries. However, later he notes that “plenty Nigerian demdi talk say gendarme demdi worri” most of the Nigerians began complaining about the action of Cameroonian gendarmes. but if you hear that a house had been attacked during the night you will later discover that it was done by Nigerian […] they even said we will go away from Bakassi.” Despite his position as quarter head, he seems to agree that the activities of the new comers of Bakassi mostly Nigerians is what invited the brutality of the Cameroonian gendarmes upon them thus, the origin of the Bakassi conflict.74

Apart from Etta, many other Cameroonians as well as Nigerians in Isangele also pointed to the issue of gendarme brutality of the people of Isangele, while some people even had to mix up their ideas, or had many ideas but they still mentioned the issue of brutality of the gendarmes although, some had to mentioned both the gendarmes and the military ten other people in Isangelle also mentioned this idea of gendarmes and or military brutality. Among the most interesting interviewees, were Arahnsou who said “the wahala wi get heer na di army and gendarme den di worri wi”75( the problem we have here is about the disturbances caused by the military and the gendarmes). According to Arhnnsou, a Nigerian, the bakassi people whether Cameroonians or Nigerians, have one thing in common and that is the problem caused by the gendarmes. This problem he tried to explain, centers on the issue of brutality which the people termed illegal. Farmer.

While Esamba, who is of the same opinion said “dem nodi do dem work demdi beat na pipo”. (they have abandoned their duty and have chosen to be beating the people). Esamba was referring to the Cameroonian gendarmes, and their new job which he said is beating of the population instead of protecting them. Thus Esamba does not identify with the tribe or nation but has a different view of what the Bakassi crisis is.76 He later admitted that, he hears that the gendarmes target mostly the

74 Interview with Mr Etta, Fish transporter, Isangele. 24th July 2012. “all what you hear from these Nigeria people are just lies, they said we will go, they said all type of things, people were saying that they were making plans to kill Cameroonians so that they stay here, they call us came no go in our own country, where have you seen that kind of a situation and if not of the intervention of the gendarmerie”

75 Interview with Arahnsou, farmer, Isangele. 25th July 2012.

76 Interview with Esamba, forest guard, Isangele, 25th July 2012. “i no ci why weh this gendarmes dem bedi beat pipo so na di tin cep bring all this palaver weh u di ci so,[...]so pipo say na say dem no leke niger pipo (i do not
Nigerians because they hate them, even though he does not say why they are hated. This statement indicates in another manner that, Esambe somehow takes side with the nation.

I noticed that some people were not just talking about the quest for economic resources but precisely some believed that the discovery of petroleum is the roots of the conflicts but I realized that even those who mentioned oil, they were talking out of “hear say” news from the quarter and were not even sure, while others confessed that, they attended a meeting organized by some peace groups and they got the news about petroleum even though, they do not even know the village or side where this petroleum is found.

Oil is however emphasized by others the accounts of Onyeke and pastor Unah both of Nigerian origin were important. Pastor Unah an Igbo from Nigeria “In the year 1990 precisely, the Nigerian military came to Isangelale, stealing food, raping women and killing other people...” Nigerians interested really understand why the gendarmes will abandon their jobs and take on to the people, peoples said it its because they do not like Nigerians. Interview with ekabi, Isangale 25th July 2012 “dem say kameroon and Nigeria di fight but na wi di sufer[...]see ha di dengarmes dem di make woman dem di fear for go bush, dem di beat pipo for sharp morning, dem di follow pipo weh di go market.( people say that Cameroon and Nigerian are fighting we are the ones suffering, or affected here, these gendarmes you find here has made us women to be afraid to go to the our farms because, they are on the road early in the morning and they will brutalise, beat you, it has even made things difficult for us to reach the bush markets early in the morning). Eventhough Ekabi was speaking mostly about what the women were going through, it reflected the general complains of the Bakassi people, interview with Enanga 22 July 2012 “di gendarmes and army came because of di niger pipo weh dem di cause problem[...] na so tink” Enaga admits that the gendarmes came puposely because of the problems caused by the Nigerians. This remarks shows that Enanga takes side with the nation. but it should be noted that, Enanga actually refers to the Nigerians in Bakassi. interview with Nwila Ngondo, Isangale, July 24th 2012. “plenti tins de, dis tin palaver gendarmes too na one”(there many issues here, yes and the issue of gendarmes is just one of them), interview with Itoe, Isangale, 22nd July 2012 “u no seh dis place too be need seh peacecam here na why dat dem bring gendarmes but na pipo di talkseh na dem don bring bib big wahala[...] i fit talk too seh dem even cause palaver dem but if dem no bi de wetti for happen”(we also needed some sort of security here in this place, we needed peace, that is why they the gendarmes came, I can also say that they have caused many problems, but let us look at it this way, if they were not here, it would have been worst. Interview with Enara Olochi. Isangale, 26th July 2012 “gendarmes dem de na fo wa bag we igbo pipo” (I think that we are the target us the Igbo people from Nigeria), interview with Arah, Isangale, July 2012 “noh na seh gendarmes dem di persue na di firemen dem and pipo weh dem di buy market becos dem no di pay money for market”(i think that the gendarmes mostly harass the market people and fishermen because they do not want to pay any money to the people at the council). Interview with Amaka emergence, Isangale, 27th, July 2012 “dat one for gendarmes too big wahala for here and other thins too de de”. (the issue about the gendarmes is just one of them there are other problems as well).
in colonizing Bakassi when they saw the minerals in the land”. Thus the pastor belongs to the group which argues that, economic reasons were important when tracing the origins of the crisis. The pastor does even though a Nigerian condemned the activities of Nigerian military men, I believed that his position as pastor had enabled him not to be bias or blame either country. However he later acknowledged that there had been previous problems in Bakassi “but there were other means to settle this”. Thus the previous problems never warranted military clashes, military clashes came as a result of the discovery of oil discoveries. Thus according to the pastor the problem is has been motivated by politicians fighting for power and wealth. 78

It is important to emphasized that, the pastor acknowledges previous problems which he denies a military solution, of course old tribal quarrels or high crime wave and piracy did necessitate military clashes between Cameroon and Nigeria this is the reason why the Cameroonian government send gendarmes to Bakassi which many of the Nigerian tribe or origin regarded as the source of the Bakassi problem, even if these problems aggravated with the discovery of oil as he indicated. Thus the statement that the discovery of oil in Bakassi is the beginning of the problem in this region should be taken with a pinch of salt due to the preexistence of trouble in this region.

Onyeke a Nigerian house wife and from the Oron clan also shared this view that economic motives led to the crisis she mentioned that,” News reached us here that oil had been discovered in Bakassi” I later realized that she got this news from hear say source since she could not say when and from which source and according to her, this is the roots of the crisis. She later noted that there had been past conflicts in the region and in her own village Isangele divisions had existed before the outbreak

78 Interview with Pastor Unah, Isangele,July 25th 2012. : “we know that people usually talk about the problems they are having or had in the past with their neighbours, we know all these things about the fishermen and traders who use to fight and refuses to pay tax, but those are all problems which could not led to military clashes, there were other means to settle these.” In a long discussion with the pastor he began a story about the faith of the people I saw this as not being related to the main question I simply kept that aside.
of the military clashes what she called upper and lower Isangele.\textsuperscript{79} This idea of oil was not very popular in Isangele, although two other people mentioned it passively and were all in doubt.

We have in this section seen that, interviewees provided different views as per the origin of the conflict, many in their opinions, put forth more than one idea, as some came back to acknowledge the fact that the problems in Bakassi began as a tribal issue or palaver, as the people will refer to in their local parlance, or an issue between incoming tribes, new nationalities which at the same time, is linked to the problem between one nationality and the other. We have seen this changing tendency from informants, Oil acted as a catalyst to the conflict, but not as the roots of the problem. I understood this as due to follow up questions as I discussed with the people. I do not want the reader to mix this.

Pamela from Cameroon had a complete different idea even though it centered on the acquisition of resources. She explained that the people are divided in camps and all claiming the land. She said that “pipo fo up de and fo down here nodi comot find[…] seh na dem get di place”\textsuperscript{80} (those up there and those down here are not in good terms, because each of them claim ownership to land, to this place) These people she is talking about she called them “those living up” and “those living down” as she tried to indicate with her hands. She explained that the division is over land and those down are seen as foreigners. Thus she thinks that the problem of Bakassi centers on the search for economic resources most importantly land. She was however alone with this idea.

\textsuperscript{79} Interview with Onyeke, House wife, Fish smoker and retailer, Isanglele, 23\textsuperscript{rd} July 2012.” : Inter-tribal boundary disputes always leads to quarrel amongst the people of this area this happened especially when fishing limits are concerned and not leaving aside agricultural farm land”. Interview with Eboko, Isangele, 22nd July 2012. “me too na so i di hear ha pipo di tok seh dem wan find oil”(this i also heard people saying that, they want to search for oil), Eboko was however talking about hear say news and was was in doubt. Interview with enaka, Isangelle, 23rd July 2012, “me cep no no som pipo di tok kam seh na oil wahala. “ (some people are saying so i do not really know).

\textsuperscript{80} Interview with Pamela, Isangelle, 23th July 2012, “up de “ is a hilly part of the village while “down” is the opposite, it is down the street, houses are separated by a road at the middle, and one section is hilly.
Village B: Akwa.

The dominant nationality in Isangele is Nigerian, mostly from the Efik, Ijaw and Ibiobios they are the principal fishermen and women here. Generally, most people here refer to the Nigerians as Ibiobios or Efiks. There are also Cameroonians in this place such as Balondos, the Bayangs, the Ejaghams , the Bakole, Bamusso and other insignificant tribes. The main economic activities here are fishing, farming, trading in items such as fish and forest items such as Eru, and Eguci, while a larger majority of people at the same time rear animals.

Akwa was problematic. I had more difficulties and fear in this place than any other place in Bakassi as some people in Isangele and K. Abedimo even advised me not to go to Akwa. At many instances i met people in Akwa along the road as well as in their houses anddrinking sports, somepersons categorically refuse to talk , to my surprise some of these people were even elderly people, they simply told me that they knew nothing about what I was talking about and nearly all of them ask me if I was a Cameroonian. I quickly realised that this sort of behaviour is due to two reasons. Firstly, many were afraid, I saw them panicking, since many thought that I am a government kind of person or a disguised military person. I realised that most of the people I met were Nigerians that is, belonging to Nigerian tribe. I could know this from the way they spoke, their accent which is different from that of a Cameroonian even if they are speaking but English thus a non Cameroonian or non Nigerian will not easily identify the different people here because he or she or has never lived among Nigerians or Cameroonians.

Therefore i discovered that there are far more Nigerians in Akwa than Cameroonians. There were many issues I faced which talking about will not really be important, I have decided to first look in to its recent developments, before bringing out some opinions.

Physically, one thing I found new was the Road. Akwa has been linked up recently with the rest of the Nation as many will say through the rehabilitation of a Road even though not tarred. The Mundemba-Isangele-Akwa road which was a mere bush road or track some years ago, had been rehabilitated graded wide open earth road, the Cameroonean Tribune news papers concludes that It was
done by the Military Engineering corps (Genie Militaire)⁸¹, anyone around here will say that movement has increased in the area, because this road links other villages around Akwa such as Ikassa, Mosongiseli, Balondo, and Edibanyanga, this has enabled farm products and fish to reach the markets. Another important strange thing I discovered in this place, were the kind of things written in front of popular places like bars, and small retail shops, the most popular ones were writings on walls and doors of houses “Bakassi Na Nigeria” “Citizen bar” this simply means Bakassi is Nigeria, these are signs which portrayed that most People here claims that Bakassi belongs to Nigeria, this will also tell you that they are Nigerians.

There were different and very similar opinions in Akwa as concerns the origins of the Bakassi border dispute. The most popular opinion in Akwa centred around the harassment of Cameroonian gendarmes and economic motive even though some people noted the fact that, the issue of oil which they heard about has turned things worst.

Mr Akatchika, from the Ibiobio tribe of Nigerian, spoke on the issue of oil. He said” I think say oil no get anything for this palaver na tin weh don de since” (I think that the issue of oil does not have anything to do with this trouble). Akatchika does not believe the talk about the discovery of is the main cause of the dispute and disunity amongst the people presently in Bakassi. He does not really takes side with a people or tribe, but recommends that both Cameroonians and Nigerians should come together and settle their problem” make Cameroon and Nigeria people shitdon settle this wahala”( Cameroon and Nigeria should settle their problem).Thus he stands in the group of those who blame colonialism. And calls for greater unity of Africa ⁸²

Judith a Cameroonian woman from the Bamileke tribe is among those who shared this opinionshe said “the problem start na sehtoo much wahala weh gendarmes di bring fo niger pipo na she dem wan sch dem go’( the problem began due to too much harassment of Nigerians by Cameroonian

⁸¹ www. Cameroon- Tribune.cm/index.php (6 April 2012)
⁸² Interview with Akatchika, village council member, Akwa, 2nd August 2012.”is not the Europeans who told us that we have oil here, then why are we fighting, we need to have a meeting with everyone, the youth and the elders, and Cameroonians as well as Nigerians, we can settle our problem”.
gendarmes, because they wanted them to go away from Bakassi.) Even though she does not blame any tribe but rather the actions of the gendarmes, on the Nigerians. She thus identifies in another way with the Nigerians in Bakassi as she thinks that the conflicts in Bakassi is as a result of Cameroonian gendarmes brutality upon Nigerians. The reason for the gendarmes’ brutality she does not know understands. I realised that her level of education was very low and I could not keep on pressing on. However, she admitted that there had been quarrels in the past such as groups of people against another but most of the time it has been between the Ibiobios, Efiks and Balondos. Thus she sees the problem of Bakassi began as the gendarmes issue even though there had been some old but tribal quarrels.83

This opinion is shared by another an Efik woman from Nigeria Essim Okechu who said “kameroon dem and dem pipo no lek wi[…] we di make market tak dem moni” (The Cameroonian government and their people became jealous of the way Nigerians do their business in Bakassi this began as hatred for us). Okechuthinkthatit was simply the fact that, Nigerians were progressing in Bakassi that had caused a problem, what she meant by business is simply activities such as fishing, trading in the various bush markets and other issues. She thinks that this had called for jealousy and gendarme brutality upon the Nigerians in Bakassi. Thus she considers the problem of Bakassi as purely economic rather than something else. She also belongs to that group which sees the Bakassi conflict as between one nationality against another. 84 This idea is also emphasized by Prince Kofi

83 Interview with Judith, Cleaner, Akwa, 29th July 2012.” Yes there had been some quarrel in the past I want to say that mostly between the Ibiobio and the others like Efik, Balondo, especially in this Akwa”.
84 Interview with Okechu, 29th July 2012.” There use to be quarrel but this concerns mostly fisher men, traders because there use to be fighting and allot of things like robbery of boat and bags of fish. This was not just between tribes it is also most at times between people or between different groups like fisher men against retailers[...] Things are instead getting worst most of the Calabar people are saying that they will go to war with Cameroonian government because they want Bakassi to be independent.” Interview with Addu, Akaw, 3rd August 2012 ”even fish weh wi bi di catch kameroon pipo no wan ” ( we use to even depend on fish but cameroonian do not want us ), interview with Mussa, Akaw, 2nd August 2012, “na di french pipo no wan wi be” (these french speaking people do not want us), interview with Ufeni, Akaw, 5th August 2012 ”wi no seh pipo for kameron no wan wi do anytin dem no lek wi[…]dem seh wi di tek dem farm” (we know that it is all about cameroonian who want us out of here they said we are taking over their farms land), interview okon , Akaw, 29th August 2012 ”di palaver na seh kemeron pipo wan wi give di place fodem dem
Itiat in his book Titled Isong Urua Adiakod: The untold Story of the Bakassi handover who mentioned that, “the presence of the Cameroonian security has hampered the fishing business of Nigerians in Bakassi which has contributed to the scarcity of fish in the markets in Nigeria and had left many unemployed in the Akwa Ibom and Crosss River state of Nigeria”. This indicates that economic reason is imperative for the origin of the conflict in Bakassì and fishing is the most important activity in the area. This idea was also supported mentioned by five others most of whom expressed mix opinions.

another idea not very different from this is held by a Nigerian Man Addu a Hausa Muslim from Northern Nigeria who is involved in fishing in Bakassi and traditional medicines who said” this conflict began because people were trying to secure land for themselves[...] and all fishing waters.”Addu who is a Nigerian did not take side with tribe or nation but regarded the source of the conflict as land issue and the right to own land and fishing grounds but he later notes that, some people especially from the Delta States complained over the years because they were not considered by others as the original occupants of Bakassi what he calls” son of the soil”. He also blames and reject the colonially made boundaries what he sees as the main source of the conflict.

I also realized that, some people identified more with the tribe than the nations and blamed colonialism for separating the same tribes. Mr Manfred’s opinion becomes important among these group when he said “the bodam people were not at peace with almost all other tribes the problems brought in gendarmes in Bakassi”. Manfred is from a Cameroonian and Village elder from the Balong tribe, a sister tribe to Isangele, identifies more with the tribe rather than the nation, he brings back the old story of the Bodam tribe who were in conflict with their neighbours. This is because he thinks that the conflict is simply a continuation of the old tribal quarrel over land and fishing waters. As he pointed out that complains about the non respect for fishing rule, which many had said some fishermen catch even the smaller immature fishes, the kidnapping of people and government...
authorities like the divisional officers, warranted the interventions of Cameroonian gendarmes thus, the beginning of trouble. His opinion on tribes mightad been influenced by his position as Cameroonian but the fact that he does not take side with the activities of Cameroonian gendarmes his opinion is likely pure.

Even though, he mixed the issue of tribes and the quest for economic resources, he later notes that “these are the same problems that shape other African countries”. Thus he agreed that it is the end product of colonialism on the continent.87.

This idea of gendarme brutality raised by Manfred above, was more popular in Akwa than any other community, most of the interviews up to sixteen of them talk about Cameroonian gendarmes in one way or another, this included those who had more than one idea, I realized that, it could be due to the many numbers of Nigerians here thus, a deep hatred for Cameroonian as a whole while some Cameroonians themselves in Akwa talked about the issue of gendarmes, it is a common and normal story for Nigerian people in Akwa to sight the issue of Cameroonian gendarmes brutality. While I earlier mentioned Judith, Essim, Obi and others.

Ebere is another important Nigerian interview who had many ideas, he said that”di gendarmes demd di beat na wa pipo( the gendarmes target mostly us Nigerians. Ebere holds the opinion that the crisis is an affair of division between Cameroonian and Nigerians, that is why it is mostly Nigerians who are the target. He later admitted that they people of Bakassi have heard of many other reasons why the crisis erupted “dem seh we wan tek dis place, wan take oil, wan small time dem seh so and so”(they said we want to claim this land, very soon they change that we want to take but oil very soon they will say this and another moment they will say that). Ebere in trying to explain the whole issue was referring to the different rumors that run through Bakassi. Thus ebere takes side with the nation, and he uses more the terms.88

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87 Interview with Manfred Elias, civil servant and farmer, Akwa,3rd August 2012.”the problems of fishermen is not new[...]and it is between Cameroonians against Nigerians now not between tribes”
88 Interview with Ebere, Akwa, 29th July 2012. ”ci seh na so so wa pipo weh dem di hollam, na seh dem seh na we di bring wahala for Bakassi[...]dem seh we wan tek di place”(it is mostly our people that these gendarmes are targeting
Pa Emaka, a primary school teacher, from Nigerian Igbo tribe said” the problem is not to attack IfiKIbiobio, or igbo people” he claimed that some tribes are constantly leaving in fear because they are the target of Bakassi dispute, these tribes he said are mainly the efiks, Ibiobios and Igbo, according to him, this does not solve the problem of Bakassi. He takes side with the tribe even though he admits the fact that, the problem of Bakassi as he understands, how it came about.” This is promoted by the European” According to him it is a European issue, because they wants to exploit the resources of Bakassi that is why they judge the Bakassi problem in a European court, as he puts it.89

Some people looked at the crisis as being more political than what others thought. They simply saw the hands of statesmen in the crisis. Okia Nigerian name which is also common among Cameroonians. This woman simply from a the Bakundu tribe of Cameroon She had a special view when she said” everyone knows that Gowon Sold Bakassi to Cameroon” she thinks that the Bakassi

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89 Interview with P Emeka, Teacher, Akwa primary school. 2nd August 2012.”I have often told people that, this problem is not even out problem, it is a European problem, so i do not know why our people are hating each other. Our problems have often been that of the whiteman, if you can understand me very well.”
conflicts is as a result of the conduct of most especially Former president Gowon of Nigeria and president Ahidjo from Cameroon. Therefore the issue about tribes and gendarmes brutality is not paramount. She also noted that” This Bakassi was a place for the Calabar people that is why many of them are here but it was later handed to Cameroon by Gowon.” She was the only person in Akwa with such an idea.

She thus indicated that political reasons more than any other reason is responsible for the border conflict. However, she also notes that “Ibiobio and Efik fishermen used human parts for sacrifice in the water in order to catch more”. This is ridiculous, and it also indicates the competition in the fishing sector which often provoked disputes. Okia, just like many others said more than one issue concerning the origins of the crisis as she also tried to narrate the history of Bakassi taken side with her nation Cameroon. 90

In Akwa a number of people also blamed colonialism Mr. Edward an a well known secondary school teacher in Akwa had this to said “When southern Cameroons was one with Nigeria there was no boundary problem [...] after 1916 the boundary of Cameroon was drawn by Britain and France” thus he assumed that the problem of Bakassi is rooted in colonialism before this period, the people of Bakassi had somehow manage to live together. This implies that in the past there had been some troubles which he did not take time to explain, But he later admits that, “now it is a government thing” 91 the problem had transcended in to a government thing not between the people as it originated “this new thing is the fight to control petroleum resources.” 92

90 Ibid, 3rd, August 2012.” Even before Nigeria and Cameroon were colonised I know that this Bakassibelong to calabar people and you know that they are Nigerians , but things changed because after the Nigerian civil war Yakobo Gowon gave Bakassi to Cameroon if you go to the streets and ask people everybody knows that Gowon sold Bakassi to Cameroon[...] these efiks and ibiobio people are very bad ooh, they do sacrifice at night in the water to the mamiwater inorder to catch more, that is why sometimes children just disappear here in Akwa”

91 Interview with Mr Edward, secondary school teacher, Akwa, 6th August 2012.”Mr Edward argues that, the people of Bakassi have similarities in their cultural activities, they even serve one traditional god the Ekpe, thus they could live together but the roots of their problem is colonial which separated boundaries all over Africa.

92 Interview with Mr Edward, 6th August 2012.”
Obi shella Bate aNigerian woman also blamed colonialism, she had a totally contrary idea to that of Okia. She out rightly said “Cameroonian military pipono wan wi catch fish, no wan we behere[...] wetti wi do dem” (Cameroonian military people do not want us to do fishing what have we done to them). She believe that the problem conflict in Bakassi began as and it is merely between them military and the people of Bakassi. To she argued that it is more about the Nigerian people who are for unclear reason hated. She also noted that “na white mandem make everything fix all boundary no bi we causam” (this simply means that it is the Europeans who made all the boundaries we are not the cause). She thus identifies with those upholding the colonially made boundaries. 93 This also means that she do consider the origins of this border conflict as the consequence of colonialism. Apart of pa Emeka, Edwa two others also mentioned the idea of colonialism passively, they were Ugoh and pa Emeka

From the above interviews, one will easily understand that, most of the inhabitants in Akwa has some kind of a different opinion about the Bakassi border dispute, some of them will rather blame the Cameroonian government and somehow its people for trying to destabilize the peace Bakassi, most of them also hold the opinion that somehow, Cameroonian are jealous about their prosperity this is the opinion of most of the semi illiterate and the semi illiterate people. Many of them refused to take the risk to identify their names, and from the signs in Bakassi from the drinking sports and other places, most of them believe that Cameroonian wants to send them away some examples of these people are; Essim Okechu said “the problem started because Cameroonian government and their people became jealous of the way Nigerian do their business” 94 while the headmistress said “I think

93 Interview with Obi Shella bate, Trader, Akwa, 8th August 2012. “When the military came here i thought that they have come to help us stop palvers but they are the ones who instead causes trouble here “, interview with Ugoh, 5th Agust 2012. “wa pipo no fit tink for dem head seh na oyubo make di boundary” (our people can not understand that these boundaries were made by europeans), interview with pa Emeka, Akaw, 2nd August 2012, “this was made by Europeans. “

94 Interview with Essim Okechu, market woman, Akwa, 29th July 2012.
that Cameroon government has designed a strategy to send away Nigerians and their children”. This is a stereotype that runs in the streets of Akwa.

**Village C: Kombo Abedimo**

K. Abedimo became well known in Bakassi during the entire crisis period, this could be due to the fact that, its one time divisional officer was killed on June 9th 2008, while its Mayor Aboko Patrick and its new divisional offer Ayuk Edward were kidnapped and later released by pirates even though other voices accused some Bakassi natives and the Nigerian military at Bakassi. The place had also witnessed some rehabilitation of its earth roads, and the construction of some new houses by both the government and the military.

Petit trading is fast growing in Kombo Abedimo as I could see many shops and drinking places along the streets.” Buyam sellam” that is a form of petit trading, is the word used in the area, it simply refers to the activities of those involved in the bush markets and cross country buying and selling.

fishing and agriculture are the main activities of K. Abedimo most people alternate between these two activities and a majority are farmers and fishermen at the same time even if they do not involve in large scale fishing. “palaver”(trouble) division and accusations increasing between Cameroonians and Nigerians in K. Abedimo when its mayor Aboko Patrick with its divisional officer were kidnapped. Thus the mayor and many others have regarded the Bakassi problem more as a tribal issue and at the same time taken side with the nation or blaming people of a particular nation, that nation is Nigeria.

A number of people in K. Abedimo indicated that the conflict in Bakassi is more about economic gains. This group linked the roots of the conflicts to the ever increasing social and economic effects in Bakassi.

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95 Interview with Abanda, Akwa, 7th July 2012. “most of the people the gendarmes are after, are the Nigerians, especially this problem of tax[...] we know that this boundary problem is not the fault of any one, I think that the Cameroonian government has designed a strategy to send away Nigerians and their children”
Mr Aboko Patrick the mayor of K. Abedimo, shared this idea when he said “many biafran military people and civilians came here during the Nigerian civil war [...] they are either involve in fishing, farming and trade.”

The mayor explained that the issue which provoked an influx of Nigerian tribes in to Bakassi was the 1966 Biafran war of secession. These people settled in Bakassi and even began claiming the right of ownership. He further admits that “most of them were also involved in piracy and other criminal activities” which greatly affected the people of Bakassi and that is why the gendarmes came here. Aboko wants to emphasize that, the increasing criminal activities of the tribes that brought led to the brutality of the Cameroonian gendarmes as many complained. He thinks that, the activities of the incoming tribes and the struggle for settlements leg to the border dispute.

Odudua is another Cameroonian worker at the council he expressed the same idea with the Aboko, he said that “we know that there are different people here [...] but is mostly Nigerians who are involved in crimes” she explained that many other nationalities in this area are from Chad, Gabon, Mali but they are serious in their businesses, they do fishing too, but they are not heard. Thus takes side with the nation Cameroon and strongly believes that economic reasons have triggered the problem of Bakassi. In another statement she made it clearer when she said “na y idem seh wi no lek dem.” (It is for this reasons why Nigerians said we Cameroonians do not like them), she meant that, for the sample reason that they Cameroonians had continuously condemned these crimes. This

96 Interview with Aboko K Abedimo, 10th August 2012. “The people do not understand our history that is why some of these problems happen, how can some people especially the Efiks be claiming lands here, now they said they will fight the government can they do that?”, interview with Odudu, K Abedimo, 10th August 2012.

97 Interview with Odudua, K Abedimo, 10th August 2012, “because seh dem seh wei di tok seh nadem di do all bad tins dem fo here [...] make dem too no tok seh gendarmes do dis” (simply because mostly of these crimes are committed by Nigerians and we condemn it, they have accused us of hate, but they should not also complain about the gendarmes), interview with Justine, 12th August 2012, “na ecos of over tiffordi ibio bio dem weh gomna come here na so wi tek get problem fo here “, (it is due to the many crimes that we had government intervention in this place these crimes are committed by the ibiobios, and so that is how we began to have problems in this place), interview with Ebam, K Abedimo, 12th August 2012, “we no wan dem Igbo nedem start dis tin”(we do not want Igbos here they started this crisis in Bakassi) in trying to explain the reasons why he accused the Igbo,” Ebam said, “dem di tif pipo fish”(they are the ones who steal fish form others), interview with Atemfac, K Abedimo, 19th August 2012, “this problem began [...] government wanted to reduce piracy so many gendarmes were send here”, interview with , interview with Omuanyi, 18th August 2012, “pirate dem be too much here, dem catch mayor den gomna komkom wahla donbi”(this crisis began because of too many problems of piracy, they even caught the mayor before the government intervened).
idea of hatred for one nationality and accusations against Nigerians or Nigerian tribes was also mentioned by five others.

Chinere a fish trader from the Nigerian Efik tribe, also expressed this idea even though, not in support of Aboko, she said “all problem for water them say na we because we”(they accuse us for all problems in the water). She meant that, they are being accused for all the problems related to fishing. And this had caused them a great loss ,she took an example bypointing to her own conditions, “ see me now ma pikin them no fit go school because this ma market no di waka[…]ma market no di waka” (now my children can no longer go to school my business is not doing well). Thus, she meant that this is the same way in which most of her people have been affected due to this dispute, they leave in fear, their businesses” market” is dwindling , etc. Thus she is among those who takes side with the tribe and she believed that, the Bakassi crisis is an issue of some people probably the Cameroonian against certain tribes. 

Another informant Pa Beneza from Cameroon and from a powerful Bali tribe had this to say”when we were still one with Nigeria “when we were still one with Nigeriamany Igbos and Ibiobios entered Mamfe and were prospering business, but there were hated by the Cameroonians because of their dominant attitude of forcing people to buy their goods and committing crimes[...] this is the same thing that happened in Bakassi. This he thinks that the conduct of these new comers all Nigerian tribes were hated by the Cameroonians this means that disparity had long existed between Cameroonians and Nigerians in this region. Amongst the things they do is the stealing of bags of fish and catching indiscriminate catch.He suggested that “the government wants to make it clear that people should know their limits”. He thinks that, it is due to the activities of mostly the Nigerian tribes which brought in the two governments to regulate their borders.

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98 Interview with Chinere, market woman, trader, K Abedimo, 10th August 2012.” The Cameroonian people think that we are taking their things, their money, away to Nigeria, because we do fishing, they have made things difficult for us, they hate us efik people so much”

99 Interview with Pa beneza, farmer (retired civil servant) 12th August 2012.” Mamfe is a Town in the South west region of Cameroon which was important during the German colonial period. Its closeness to Nigeria allowed many Nigerians Igbos, Ibiobios and Efik to settle and carry on with trading activities in the town, today, it is nearly a forgotten corner in Cameroon due to inaccessibility in to the area.
Ndipa, a Nigerian woman selling jewellery and at the same time buying smoking and retailing offish, had this to say: “no man no like thin weh this gendarmes people di do even Cameroonian and Nigerian people dem go tell you make you sit for wata, [...] them di take bribe” (this simply means that everyone both Cameroonian and Nigerian do not appreciate the behavior of the gendarmes). She notes that both nationalities in Bakassi disagrees with the attitudes of the Cameroonian gendarmes, who provide very negative punishments upon them such as asking people to seat on water, on the ground and they collect bribes.

She thinks that it is the work of the gendarmes which somehow called for the interventions of Nigeria and the redressing of the boundary hence the roots of the conflict. Thus she also notes that, “all man no say na because of fish weh wi start get problem for here [...] them talk say government don see petrol for here Nigerian people wan takam” (everyone knows that it is because of fish that we began having problems here in Bakassi and they said that, the government have discovered petroleum and Nigerians want to take it) this does not make much sense however she thinksthat the reason for the border conflict is purely economic as she sees fish and now petroleum mainly from “hear say” source as the main reason for the boundary problem. She also blames colonialism (the white man) for the entire problem. The ideas of Ndip was also mentioned by eight others even

100 Interview with Ndip, trader, shop owner, K Abedimo, 13th August 2012, interview with Efú, K Abedimo 18th, August 2012, “na gendarmes dem kom causam” (the crisis here was began with the gendarmes, they caused it). Efú in trying to explain the crisis, said i twas started by the gendarmes who came to preserve peace. Interview with anonymous “den army and gendarmes de kom enter here di kill pipo.” (then the military and the gendarmes also came here and began killing innocent people), interview Chukuma, K Abedimo, 18th August 2012, “ci for here pipo no fit chopagin for seker gendarmes dem.” (in this place people can no more cat food just because of the gendarmes) the interview actually meant that, the people had been constantly insecure due to the presence of the gendarmes and it also motivated the crisis. Interview Chima, K Abedimo, 13th August 2012 “na seh na palaver land, [...] and gendarmes dem too”(the crisis erupted due to the fight over land, by both nationalities the gendarmes are also causing problems), interview with Opam, k. Abedimo, “wi bi just de gendarmes dem kom di worri” (we were at peace before the gendarmes came here), interview with Franka, K. Abedimo, 12th August 2012 “tindem come catch fire too when dem start meet pipo for road beat dem.” (di tin start seh na oil [...] tis kam bad when dem start kom beat pipo for road), interview with Ndem, K Abedimo, 14th August 2012, “plenti for di village dontok to seh na di mberedem don cause di palaver” (many in this village have also
though, most of them mixed ideas pointing fingers at the gendarmes and at Cameroonian at the same time they had more than one idea and they were more scattered, and incoherent.

Some informants stressed more on the issue of petroleum even though after a long talk one will note that, these people mostly have their information from ”Hear say” sources or talks around the quarters and could not really explain when the oil issue was discovered.

Mr Ayim From Nigeria Boki Tribe it is the government of Cameroon and Nigeria who are mainly involve and they are fighting because of petroleum[…] there is still much trouble here nothing has changed every day you will hear a different story how someone was killed” He thinks that the sole reason for the border issue is the petroleum as he puts it, but he does not actually knows how, thus he said “we just hear that, it is because they discover petroleum here I don’t know when some people said it was discovered by Americans” This means that, his source is from “hear say”. However, he later he notes that, the problem of Cameroonian gendarmes brutality and the demand of tax from mostly Nigerian citizens is mainly because Nigerians are hated.101

Ebob a Cameroonian who works for a boat owner, her job is just to sell, she shared the same opinion with Ayim. In her own words “detin start na she dem ci oil kameroon and niger wan takam” (the problem started when they said that they have seen petroleum and both countries want to own it.) this is better. Thus she suggested that it was because of petroleum that both countries began
fighting. The problem according to her began when the military people began fighting. This means that, she thinks the conflict is more about economic gains rather than any other motive. She also admitted that, she does not know when this petroleum issue was discovered neither does she knows where in Bakassi. However, she also mentioned that “there is always problems in Bakassi during the fishing season”. She blames the Cameroonian government for abandoning them, she also blames colonialism. The fact that she affirms that there had been and there is always problems in Bakassi during the fishing season I find it interesting because this is more similar to many other opinions. The oil she tried to explain is more or less vague to her she, as she is instead trying to explain what made both camps of military people to start fighting that is as I understood open gun fire. But the Bakassi conflict did not originate just from an open gun fire as well as most other conflicts, the motivating factor is what i am interested about.

Another group in K.Abedimo regarded the conflicts as originated from some kind of traditional and tribal squabble for power; they are not many voices in this group. The most funny informant of this group was Pa Antony Effiong from Efik tribe who said” when we have ekpe they do not want to stay in their houses” he struggled to explain different issues such as the non respects for the traditional gods “ekpe” and other deities in the village which has led to problems, over the years, people who do not belong to that society have to be indoors when this “ekpe” is out at night. He thus consider that the conflicts is more about the struggle to preserve traditions of one people against another. He later admitted that they Efiks will not pay taxes because Bakassi is the land of their forefathers. Thus he thinks the non respects for efiks people and the Nigerians in general is what had prompted them defined and defend their boundary since the 1960s. Therefore, he also identifies with the tribe.

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102 Interview with Ebod, boat man, K. Abedimo, 19th August 2012. “I no know me wusai the petrolu them di talk deMasah Ngwane them tell we say na even white man them make this boundary weh we di fight for de so, “(I do not even know where the petroleum is found, Mr Ngwane told us that it is the white man(Europeans) who made these boundary that we are fighting for)

103 Interview with P Anthony Effiong, civil servant, Spiritualist, K. Abedimo, 15th August 2012.
Pa Effiong was supported by just one person in this community this person is Ngumadim another Efik person who said “pikin dem weh no comot fo here di join join ekpe[...]di ti start she contry pipo no de one mop”\(^{104}\)(our problem began because the different nationalities do not agree, even children who are not originally born in this village now join the “ekpe society” this is not correct).

Christiana from Cameroon brought up the idea of taxes, which ws also expressed by p Effiong, she said that “we know seh di palever start na seh, gendarmes dem di follow dipipo dem weh no di pay tax” (we know that this problem of Bakassi began due to that fact that the gendarmes began running behind those who do not pay their taxes). When I asked those who do not pay their taxes and which kind of taxes she said”wen udi catch fish or di sell for market u di gi som moni.”\(^{105}\)(when you are fishing or selling in the market you have to pay some money ). But the fact that she brought out the issue of fish and taxes it shous that she thinks that economic reasons had necessitated the crisis.Another informant Orock expressed this same idea.

Tobias from Nigeria had a completely different idea from others he said “di tin start [...] cameroon boys dem comot di fight igboand elija dem” (the problem began whenmostly youg men mostly Cameroonians grouped themselves and went to attack the Elijas and the Igbos)\(^{106}\) Tobias consideres the crisis in Bakassi as something between two groups Cameroonians and Nigerians eventhough he cited but Nigerian tribes, he also made me to understand thatnames such as Igbos and Elijas

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\(^{104}\) Interview with Ngumadem, K Abedimimo, 13\(^{th}\) august 2012, “so since we dis palver start contry pipo nover be one again, som seh we gogo , wi di wait ci” ( since this issue began i think that the people here are very divided, they even said that we will be sent away.”

\(^{105}\) Interview with Christiana k. Abedimo, 15\(^{th}\) August 2012, Christaina believed that economic reason had led to the Bakassi crisis, as she pointed out the issue of taxes even though she also indicated some issue about the gendarmes, because as she explained, the gendarmes are those behind the recalcitrant ones who run away from taxes. Interview with Orock, 13\(^{th}\) August 2012.”i tink sehelija pipodem di run gendarmes dem di run market man” ( I think that these people we call Elijas even run away from the market master) the market man or market master is someone in charge of collecting money from traders in the market this is a form of tax for the council.

\(^{106}\) Interview with Tobias, k Abedimo, 15\(^{th}\) August 2012, “na fight fo di boys deem cusam[...]dem seh dis pipo must leave” (This issue began due to fighting between groups in this place, some said that, others must leave this place), interview with Anonymous, K Abedimo, 15\(^{th}\) August 2012, “the pipo weh start di figt palver dem seh dem wan drive elija dem fo village, [...] dem kill Cameroonians womandem for wata”(the reason for this crisis began as fighting between Cameroonians young men against the Elijas, they said that, a Cameroonian lady was killed in the waters). He later explained that the reasons for these killings was for the performance of rituals link to fishing.
somehow represent the Nigerians. Someone could be talking about the Igbos in which he actually referred to the Nigerians as a whole thus, Tobias is nation, he sees the issue of Bakassi as emanating from local quarrels resulting to fight groups. He was actually supported by Enangu, and an anonymous interviewee who expressed a similar idea.

With this question, I also received dissimilarities as concerns the responses. First let me go back to one of my important informant Mr Esono . According to him, the Bakassi problem is not that which any one is suppose to point fingers to someone , or to a country or tribe, because both countries involved should knows that ,there main issue here is that of colonialism, and so he considers that both countries are just fighting for personal interest , for him, it is about the riches of Bakassi, not just to protect the people or stop what so ever as the government claims, but for Mr Esono, this problem could still be quietely solved if not of the fact that other things happened like gendarmes brutality of Nigerians which was a cry out in Bakassi. 107

Village D Bamusso

Bamusso is a place which is fast growing with many stores and drinking places. This locality in the Bakassi sub region has also benefited from some developments as I witnessed. Some new houses constructed by the government even though, not many benefited, the earth roads had been reshaped and some foot path enlarged. At least, the government is flattering its people, all these in the name of the ruling party. This means that, they will in turn channel their votes at the parliamentary and presidential elections in the future.

However, it is not the story of the ruling party’s work in Bamusso thatI really want to talk about, because the interviews in this place were also very nice , it was similar in responses and many at times nearly the same kind of story told by especially the people at the street corner.

107 Interview with Esono, Teacher, K. Abedimo, 17th August 2012.
The main economic activities here are farming and fishing. Subsistence farming is practiced by almost every household with some excess which is usually taken to the market this means basic food stuff such as cassava cocoyam plantains is cheap. Most households keep animals, like goats and pigs.

Fishing is the main activity in Bamusso, it is practiced almost by all, it is also done in large scale and those who own canoes and small engine boats are respected in the community. Is an important fish port, during the crisis fishing barns or furnaces owned by women were destroyed and many bad become frustrated as man rely solely on fishing for their survival.

Bamusso is sometimes referred to as Bakole Bamusso, they can also knownas the Bakole people the people speak Bakole. It is inhabited by the Bakole people, the second largest tribe here is the Efik then, the Ibibios and Ijaws, while there are some people from Chad and Mali.

It was also wearisome conducting interviews in Bamusso, a place where many have not been to school. Sometimes I get very difficult answers to questionnaires by many who cannot really explain what they mean and I had to explain over and over again sometimes, but all I have to do is just try to explain better rather than helping to them to say something which I expect since that will not lead me to benefit andenjoyed their opinion because some were simply, and not what I expected. I will begin with some of the most simply and funny answers to the questionnaires.

At the heart of Bamusso, I decided to talk to Rachel a student, while answering her own questionnaire, and simply responded: No, meaning that she supported no one, and secondly told me that people supported either Cameroonians or Nigerians just by worth of mouth not even tribes.

The first group of people in Bamusso believed that the Bakassi conflict is the quest for economic resources most importantly fishing and to a greater extend both fishing and petroleum. This group also explained presence of the numerous tribes in Bakassi as a result of tribal links.

Amongs these voices is mayor Sangi who said “most of them had settled here in Cameroon especially the fishing tribes, the Ibibio’s.” in an extended explanation, he said “The oron people, many of them came here to do fishing they share a similar tradition with the Bakassi people[...]we do
The mayor thinks that the roots of the crisis stem from
the quest of economic resources but he blames the government lack of border security as a great
contributor to this, the mayor wants to prove that, even if the Nigerian tribes present have similar
cultural traits with the Cameroonian tribes at Bakassi, the illegal crossing or border has also
increased criminal activities in Bakassi which warranted the intervention of the much talk about
Cameroonian gendarmes, he later divulge “the main reason which brought up this crisis was crime
waves of all kinds”. Sangi who is a Cameroonian and Mayor may have taken this position in order
to counter the popular argument that Nigerians are being sent away because they are hated and to
back the actions of the Cameroonian gendarmes, as he explained that the Nigerian military were
misguided that their people were being sent away, he however lays blame on colonialism solely for
the boundary dispute.

Sangi mentioned a number of things ranges from the increase in crime rate due to uncontrolled
borders and why the people blame the Cameroonian gendarmes that is to say, the gendarme issue,
and similarities in traditional practices. Another Cameroon interviewee Mami oroko, expressed this
same idea, she said that, “wi no wan dem , na dem demdi brok haas carry tins fo nite 110”[…](we do
not want Nigerians in this village because they are involved in the houses robbery at night, in fact they
will broke in to a house and get away with things this was how many difficulties problems began in
this community). According to her, crime wave committed mostly by the Nigerian community is
what created a problem at Bakassi, this has somehow rendered some people helpless thus, she
considers economic motives.

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108 Interview with Sangi, Mayor, Bamusso, 26th August 2012. “the oron people many of them came here to do
fishing[...] the book haram Islamic group is entring are entring in to Cameroon from the far north, no one is doing
anything to stop them, they are running to the north because of their religious ties all of them are muslims”

109 Ibid.

110 Interview with Mami oroko, Bamusso, 26th “di tin be start becus of tip pipo,”(these problems began due to crime
waves committed mostly by some particular people)
Eyong is an important name among the Bayang people, of Cameroon and Nigeria, in his own opinion Eyong was not so different from Sangi, he said “people just use the forest routes and get here […] and they commit crimes” 111 he was referring to the Nigerians who use mostly what is known as “bush road” (footpath and other types of earth roads linking Nigeria and Cameroon). According to it is difficult actually to point accusing fingers to some tribes or clan, he made this clear when he said “so man no fit kno who be who” (one cannot easily identify the people as belonging to this or that tribe). the idea of SangiMami oroko, and Eyong was also mentioned by three others.

On the same vein, chief Anki of Bamusso said “we are not fighting each other, we are brothers[,]” “Even if the Bakassi people had problems concerning fishing waters, it is normal it has been a normal thing here which has always been solve by the local authority.” The chief did not take side with any tribe he considers the old tribal quest for land and fishing unimportant. That is why he argued that Bakassi problems could always be resolved by the people themselves. This means that the problem in Bakassi is being fuelled by the government and not the people. He later admitted that “before the colonial masters came to Cameroon many Oron people from Akwa Ibom state, came to Bakassi.” thus he wants to prove that the issue of boundary is the handwork of the colonialism. 112

A Nigerian Efik Fisherman by name Nso, and others believed that the crisis is more about hate against Nigerians and the quest for economic resource at the same time, thus Nso mentioned that “we do not have any other job, fishing is our job, Cameroon government says we should leave and go back to Nigeria[,]” “this is the place where are parents were buried” Nso opined that the dispute is based upon hatred for Nigerians and the quest for fish, he also sees Bakassi as their ancestral land where their fathers were buried this means that, they had lived in Bakassi for a long time, later he

111 Interview with Eyong, Bamusso, 24th August 2012, “is eh fo where, u no fit kno seh who be who […] pipi di enter here all corner “ (i am telling you, here you cannot really know the people, people come to this place from all corners they enter here coming through the bush). Thus for Eyong, this increase of new comers unidentified which had caused an economic problem in the region. Interview with Saffact, Bamusso, 24th August 2012, “wi be de here wi no be get troble befo di palaver “ (we actually had no serious problem here before this issue of Bakassi). interview with Obi, Bamusso, 29th August 2012, “na becos seh na niger dem di catch pipi fo water tek their tings dem na yi wi seh na dem bring di wahala” (we are saying that this problem is as a result of piracy, it is mostly the Nigerian who are in it, that how problems started here.

112 Interview with Chief Anki, Bamusso, 27th August 2012.
admits that” they said they have seen petrol here so we should go they want to remove it”his statement is funny but he actually mean that there is also some news about petroleum being found in Bakassi and it is one of the reasons why Cameroonians want them to go. This means that at a another level he views the conflict as between nationalities. 113

This same idea is shared by Pondo a Nigerian woman even though from a mixed tribes when she mentioned that, “Cameroonians do not like our people and they want us to go away […] they do not want us to do fishing anymore” Thus, she thinks that it is out of hatred for Nigerians that the Cameroonian government wants to colonized Bakassi she, this means that, she also views the conflict as something between one nationality against the other. This idea of Nso and Pondo was common in Bamusso, as six others mentioned the same idea mostly among Nigerians.

Obi Nigerian man grew up in Cameroon and is now retired from one of the big state corporation known as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) also mentioned this idea when he said “na so so palaver for fish demdi fight fo here”(the main issue here is fighting caused by fishing activities).Thus he considers economic reason to be at the help of the crisis. He also explained that, the trouble caused by fish” as he puts it had caused some their enter “banders”114 of smoked fish been stolen by their enemies. Thus he considers economic resources the reason for the crisis in Bakassi

Another anonymous interviewee from Cameroon, also mentioned the fish issue, when he said “me I tink seh di tin na di trouble fo fish causam” (for me, I think that this whole problem was caused by the problems in the local fishing industry). He also explained it all in a very short phrase when he said “if no bi di palaver lek gendarmes fo comot here fo wusai.”115 (had it been not of the fighting

113 Interview with Nso, Fisherman, Bamusso, 27TH August 2012.
114 Interview with Obi, Bamusso, 25th August 2012, the bander local made kitchen with an upper section which is the bander itself , it is used for the smoking of fish, it exits in most villages or poor community. interview with
115Interview with Anonymous, Bamusso, 26th August 2012, time weh dembegin tis palaver ei hot no be dat time weh di pipi dem came fo here” (when these problems increased that is when these people gendarmes came here). Intervie with Elvis, Bamusso, “uci naw na seh na Cameroonian or Nigerian de palver don turn”(the problems of fishing here has divided Cameroonian and Nigerians).
and stealing caused by the fishermen and women the gendarmes would not have been here) he puts it in a more stylish manner which some with no comprehension of the language cannot really understand, in a better translation it could also mean (if not of this trouble caused by fishing, you could have not seen these gendarmes). Thus also meant that, the problems caused by fish which is part of the general crime led to the problems of the gendarmes. (see others in footnotes)

Vanessa Echi, a woman of Nigerian decent by name depict that she is from the Efik tribe, even though she is involved in an evening school she also does the buying and smoking of fish. She went out of the same ideas of the struggle to combat crime waves when she mentioned that, “the Nigerian military people came to Bakassi around 1956 and committed crimes, we wrote to the federal government and they did nothing we wrote to Cameroon government and they came and began beating people.” According to her, the conflict materialized as a result of the actions of Cameroon and Nigeria military men were invited in to Bakassi for a different purpose. She considers that the problems of Bakassi began with the military and gendarmes upon the people. Thus she put blames on both countries concerned. However, she sees the conflicts as something between the Bakassi people against the Cameroon and Nigerian government. This idea was also raised by five others in Bamusso.

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116 Interview with Nancy, Bamusso, 29th August 2012 “some people seh wata na dem own”(some people claim that they own the rivers), interview with Amaka, 29th August 2012 ” dem seh wi go go na wi di catch all pini tin fo wata” (they said we catch everything even smll fishes , that we must go), interview with Mussah, Bamusso, 24th August 2012 “I think that this problem of piracy and staeling of fish is the beginning of our problems here”

117 Interview with Vanessa, Student and fish retailer, Bamusso, 27th August 2012.”I mean that we do not like the army from Nigeria even from Cameroon because they just come here and instead cause us problems, they even take people things by force, we never invited them , we do not want them, they said they are here to bring peace, but they themselves are fighting all the time[...] if there is a big problem in Bakassi today all i know is these military peoplewho caused it.”, interview with Joe, Bamusso, 30th August 2012.” na dis palaver genmdarem come make tin dem very bad.”( the problems here bbecame worse due to the arrival of the gendarmes), interview with Ngwa, Bamusso, 30th August 2012 ” army and gendarmes dem di beat beat pipo.”( the military and the gendarmes are beating the people.” , interview with Okechuku Bamusso, 28th August 2012 ”wi hear seh na cameroon pipo bring gendarmes, fo seka seh dem wan drive wi” (we heard that cameroonians brought in gendarmes because they want to send us away). Interview with constance, Bamusso, 26th August 2012 ” di palaver gendarmes di worri all wi no be tin for some pipo, de palaver weh bring dem here cep man no no no” (the gendarme issue affected all, i do not even know why they came here), interview with Sunday, Bamusso ,24th August 2012. “the gendarmes do not want to see us.”
Another interviewee, Stephen from Cameroon who said he had been in Bamusso all his life, but he had a strange story as to what he understood by the crisis, he explained an issue of witchcraft, and how he was beaten by people he could not see, and according to him these people he suspects are all fishermen, and probably from the Efik tribe. He said that “na soso di matter start dem come beat me fo witch[…] dem di fight for take this place” (it is due to this problem, when it started they attacked me and beat me up in witchcraft, they want to take this place) thus he thinks that, certain tribes from Nigerian are scrambling for land in Bakassi in order to have a permanent home, he suspects fishermen. The reason why he was beaten up, he was able to explain in a short phrase as he began “dem seh I tok 118seh[…]na dem” (they said I said that). They said he accused some people of being involved in land grabbing and supported others. Thus Stephen takes sides with the nation generally and considers land grabbing as a cause of the crisis. He was the only person with this idea.

Emekanaya, is also from Nigerian parents but considers himself a Cameroonian, he explained the crisis in simple terms, he said “dem seh wi be cam no go” (they said we do not belong here), a similar translation could be (they said we are not part of this community and we have to go), thus the interviewee believed that they are being discriminated upon in the entire Bakassi, simply because they are considered as outsiders. Thus he indirectly takes side with his nation and people. He also considers the crisis the quest for resources and land is the most important here.

In summary, my interviews targeted a particular area in Cameroon Bakassi. I chased four different communities which are; I sangele, Akwa, K. Abedimo and Bamusso. In Isangel. The aim of my interviews of course which is the main aim of my research, was to find out from the people, their opinions on the Cameroon-Nigerian Bakassi crisis. Thus, I asked questions to the people, which are all related to my aim of my research, without intruding in to what does not concern me, or the private life of the interviewees. The people are more divided, as i realised that they talk about upper and lower Isangele, this is all about who is the rightful owner of Isangele. This explains why some...

118 Interview with Stephen, Bamusso, 25th August 2012, ”dem tok seh” which could simply mean (they said) is often associated with gossips, the sources of such gossips are most at times can not be traced. It is often used in order to avoid name calling.
informants like Etta and Lawrence identify more with the nation rather than the tribes. \textsuperscript{119} Akwascem to have more Nigerians than any of these places, more voices were pro nations and economic in nature. Even the writings on the walls of some houses such as “Bakassi na Nigeria” speak for themselves. It is therefore no surprise when informants such as Okechu said that” this began as hatred for us”. \textsuperscript{120} Thus, most of them hold the opinions that Cameroonian are jealous of their progress. The idea of high crime rate and piracy runs in all four villages as well as in Kombo Abedimo and Bamusso, alongside the problem of fishing which is the same in every corner of Bakassi These are the issues which invited the Cameroonian gendarmes in Bakassi. \textsuperscript{121} The responses in all localities seem alike, as the problem of crime wave, is general and affects all these communities. Also, the problems’ arising due to the fishing is a daily issue, and continuous. And other issues related to this, such as discrimination, and complain about gendarmes’ brutality, will continue to exist so long as people, of different cultural background, and even different nationalities live together in Bakassi.

5.3 Ethnic, social and economic issues in their responses.

Before penning down something about the differences in opinions, I will like to emphasize that i realized some differences and similarities between the nationalities and the different classes found in Bakassi and not really within the villages themselves, this is because in a rural area like such, “news”, “hearsay” moves faster and since the majority of the people do not read newspaper or own television many do not even watch news. They turn to say what they heard from someone. However, I will there exist some differences and similarities between village A and B, as well as village C and D.

The differences and similarities between Village A Isangelle and village B, Akwa, are instantly recognizable. I think that, in village A, there are less voices on the issue of gendarmes brutality than village B Akwa, were there are sixteen people who mentioned the issue of gendarmes. In village A,

\textsuperscript{119} Interview with Etta, Fish transporter, Isangelle, 24\textsuperscript{th} July 2012.
\textsuperscript{120} Interview with Okechu, market woman, Akwa, 29\textsuperscript{th} July 2012.
\textsuperscript{121} Interview with Sangi, Mayor, Bamusso 26\textsuperscript{th} August 2012. “many of them came here to do fishing”
only eight people did mention it. I think that the reason could be that, village B, has more people of Nigerian decent, even though I did do a population count in village B, but just walking along the streets the majority of those I met were Nigerian, given the fact that another interviewees also mentioned that there were more Nigerians in village B, I think that, many of them had to complained against the action of the Cameroonian gendarmes.

From another perspectives, from mere observation, with writings in fronts of drinking places such as “Bakassi na Nigeria,” (Bakassi is Nigeria) “citizen bar” implies that, there are more Nigerians in the place and that, the people of Akwa considers the problem of Bakassi as the problem of land, a crisis between Cameroonian and Nigerians. For example, Ebere a Nigerian in Akwa said “di gendarmes dem di beat na wa pipo” (the gendarmes were beating but our people). This helped me to understand that there is division regarding the target of the gendarmes, some groups believed that they are the target of the gendarmes.

An important dissimilarity between village A, and B, is the fact that, in village A, the people seems to be divided in two camps, those up the street and those down the street one camp is mostly made up of Nigerians, they do not agree over the issue of land this is why Pamela the Cameroonian woman said “pipo fo un de and pipo fo down no di comot find” (this simply means the two groups , those do not agree over the issue of land ownership. But In Akwa, this seems not to be the case.

Village A, just like village B, the similar burning issues such as gendarmes’ brutality, land grabbing, hatred for a particular nationality or tribe and even complains over piracy remains remain the same. For example, Caro in village A, said “over the years mostly Nigerian tribes were involved in piracy”, while “the wahala wi get here na di army and gendarmes pipo” (the major problem we had here was that of the gendarmes and military). Equally in village B, Obadie said “we don tok di palaver

122 Interview with Ebere, Akwa, 29th August 2012 “the word “wa” simple means us , there are other words which are used which still have the same connotation.
123 Interview with Pamela, Isangelle, 23rd July 2012, “up de” simply refers to those living at the upper section of village A, while “down de” refers to those down the streets at the tail end of the village.
gendarmes tire” (we spoke about the issue of gendarmes we got tired). While Manfred a civil servant with the government explained that, most of the Nigerians tribes were also involved in kidnapping.

Village C and D there are very little to point out about differences between village C and D. In village D an interviewee blamed the crisis on witchcraft when he said “dem come beat me for witch” (they attacked me and beat up in witchcraft), Stephen further explained that the reason why he was beating up was as a result of some problems he contributed in jugging which means he was attacked because he said something. The issue of witchcraft is absent in village C.

Also, I realized that more people regarded the crisis through problems that developed in the fishing sector. Rather than through the prism of the gendarmes brutality. Eight people talked about fishing when the while five people talked about the issue of gendarmes. I realized that the reason could be that more people in village D are involved in fishing since village D since, village D is a major fish center where buyers come from all corners and from Nigeria to buy fish. For example Nso of Nigerian decent said “we do not have any other job.” This means that many of the people in village D depend on fishing. I know that, many are involved in farming as well but farming is like a tradition because everyone has a farm as is the tradition in the rural area, this is seen as normal but not everyone is involved in fishing.

The same problems of gendarmes brutality exist in both villages, in village D, while Okechu said “cam bring gendarmes fo seka she dem wan drive wi” (it’s the Cameroonians who brought the gendarmes because they want us to leave this place), while Ndip in village C said “all man no lek ti n weh di gendarmes dem di do” (no one likes and support what these gendarmes)

In both villages the people also viewed economic reasons as a source of the conflict. In village C, Aboko mentioned this when he talked about piracy and crimes in general. He said “most of those involved in piracy and other crimes were Nigerians” likewise in village D, Sangi explained that, “the

124 Interview with Nso, Bamusso, 27th August 2012, “we do not have any other job[...]back to Nigeria”
125 Interview with Ndip, K Abedimo, 13th August 2012, “all man” ndip was referring to both Cameroonians and Nigerians. It simply means everyone.
reason which brought the gendarmes were crime of all kind.” This also expands to the other complains in the fishing sector, and others.

After discussions, I realised that many Cameroonians seem to regard the origin of the conflict as a result of the migration and settlement of new tribes mostly Nigerians in to Bakassi and the increase crime wave brought by these new comers so to speak.

A good example is the Mayor Aboko of K Abedimo who mentioned that, “most of them were involved in piracy and other criminal activities “126 the Cameroonians considered this to have negative consequences on the socio-economic activities of Bakassi hence, this might had been the reason for the call for the Cameroonian gendarmes.

Even though the mayor of Isangele Madam Caro seem to provide an impression that the different tribe in Bakassi had been in peace , but she acknowledges the fact that, tribes such as Ibiobions Ifialis and Efifs had been involved in piracy over the years. This also rings a bell that the authorities view the origin of this conflict through a different lance127. Even Cameroonian citizens seem to agree with their authorities like mayor and chiefs thus Mr Etim had this to say “When custom officers say that people run and enter the bush when they see them is it not mostly the Ibibio’s and all the Biafras.” This means that, the Cameroonians both the peasant and authorities seem to hold on the same idea that criminal activities committed by the Nigerians and it is what nursed the hatred against them thus, the origin of the conflict.128

On the other hand, the Nigerians seems to regard the conflict the result of hatred for a particular group or nationality and the quest for economic resources, fishing being the most important. Papa Akum an Efik tribe man from Nigeria said, “Cameroon no want say make we be here, how we go chop,[...] how we go dig our papa them for ground go with them” He spoke in a broken English

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126 Interview with Aboko, Mayor, Kumbo Abedimo, 10th August 2012.”all these groups of gangs , of arm robbery, and kidnappers, these are the same groups which exist over there in Nigeria[...] the government is doing everything to help”
127 Interview with Caro, Mayor of Isangele, Isangele, 25th July 2012.
128 Ibid,
not really English. He simply meant that, Cameroonian government and their people intend to make life unbearable, they can no longer have food” chop” (from fishing), and they cannot go away because, it will entail carrying their forefathers from the graves. Pa Akum takes side with the nation Nigeria, and blames Cameroon for their misery.129

When Essim Okechuku, a Nigerian Efik woman, had to voice it out that” Cameroonian government and their people became jealous of the way Nigerian do their business [...] this began as hatred for us “The business as she explained is the various activities most important fishing and “buyam sellam” (buying and retailing in the different bush markets). Thus most of the Nigerians think that, the quest fish, the increase in the number of fishermen between the different nationalities or groups had provoked the border conflict and hatred for Nigerians in Bakassi.130

Even Cameroonian citizens seem to agree with their authorities like mayor and chiefs thus Mr Etim had this to say “When custom officers say that people run and enter the bush when they see them is it not mostly the Ibiobios and all the Biafras.” This means that, the Cameroonians both the peasant and authorities seem to hold on the same idea that criminal activities committed by the Nigerians and it is what nursed the hatred against them. Thus the origin of the conflict131.

This same idea becomes clearer, clear when a Nso of Bemusso said” we do not have any other job, fishing is our job”. 132 this means that the people of Bakassicommunity exclusively depend on fishing thus it is the most important economic activity here , this also explains in another way the reasons for the continuous quarrelsThus the peasant class sees the conflict as a result of the quest for economic resource the most important of which is fish.

129 Interview with Pa Akum, farmer and fisherman, Akwa, 28th July 2012. “ Cameroonians do not want us to stay here, things have become difficult, to even do fishing now is a problem, how are we going to have food, some people said that we should pack and go to Cross river, hw are we going to do with our parents. How are we going to dig them out from their graves and take them along”
130 Interview with Essim Okechuku, market woman, Akwa, 29th July 2012.
132 Interview with Nso, Fisherman, Bamusso, 7th August 2012.
The differences between Cameroonians and Nigerians as regard the border conflict is also enshrined in the spirit of nationalism. The two major nationalities in Bakassi are Cameroonians and Nigerians with insignificant numbers of other nationalities such as Chadians, Malians and those from Equatorial Guinea. I also realised that there is a specific idea, views running in the minds of Cameroonians likewise with the Nigerians.

This view has been bought by many. Mr Etta a Cameroon Isangele indigene endorsed this view when he said “Yes I supported all Cameroonians because this land is truly theirs”. Etta undoubtedly supported the Cameroonians as he believes the land belongs to Cameroon. He thus identifies with the nation state Cameroon. He thus considers the nation to be more important than tribe regarding who has the right to the land.

Also, Mr Lawrence of Isangelle projected a contrary view "Yes I supported the Nigerians [...] because this land had been abandoned by Cameroon they only became interested after the discovery of oil.” Mr. Lawrence A Nigerian whose tribe is not clear to me since he claims to be Ijaw and Efik. Lawrence thinks that Bakassi belongs to Nigeria hence tribes or factions of nature are not entitle to the land.

On the other side of the coin, both nationalities seem to agree that the origin of the conflict is not due to the target of a particular tribe or nationality, this is because the people of Bakassi as a whole are going through or went through the same conditions like harassment by the Cameroonian gendarmes and all are involved in fishing.133

Caro a Cameroonian woman and trader said “everyone here was under fear and harassment from Cameroonian police even Cameroonians” this indicates that, the brutality of the gendarmes which many had said it is the origin of the conflicts, never targeted just a single nationality, but the Bakassians as a whole.134

133 Interview with Mr Lawrence, Fisherman and farmer, Isangele, 23rd July, 2012.  
134 Interview with Caro, Mayor Isangele, 14th August 2012.
Also, Ndip a Nigerian said “Cameroon gendarmes in Bakassi began killing many Nigerians, and this was hated by and Nigerians.” This indicates that, the problem in Bakassi was not one sided, both Cameroonians and Nigerians suffered military brutality for a long time and bakassi people as a whole hated that.\textsuperscript{135}

At a second level, I realised that there were some differences in opinions between the authorities and the peasant as a whole. The authorities are them local authorities like the chiefs, mayors and the government authorities like the Divisional officers had different version concerning the origin of the conflict as oppose to the peasant which is made up of the traders, fishermen cleaners, fish smokers and the list is long.

The authorities continued to portrayed this notion that the people of Bakassi had always been in peace, in another way the tribes and nationalities, had had insignificant problems over the years.

An example worth mentioni ng, is the mayor of Isangele Caro Mewanju who mentioned that\textsuperscript{136} “the people of Bakassi have always been in peace with the different tribes [...] we are just one people.” she seem to project the idea that both tribes, both nationality had had little problems or rather, problems over the years, but during my interviews I realised that just writings at the walls of certain buildings, captioned “Bakassi na Nigeria” (Bakassi is Nigeria) , “Bakassi na Cameroon” (Bakassi is Cameroon) and “citizens bar” and the people themselves, do not seem to totally agree with this idea of peace. Hence, this statement indicates that quarrels over land and fishing waters such as, that between the trouble Bodam tribe against their neighbours, that is economic reasons cannot be solely responsible for the origin of the crisis, nationalistic feelings, the quest to own land and others also contributed significantly to the origin of the conflict.

This view is contrary to a popular one held by the peasant, a good example is the view of an Efik woman from Nigeria EssimOkechu who said “The Cameroonian government and their people

\textsuperscript{135} Interview with Ndip, K. Abedimo, 13\textsuperscript{th} August 2012.
\textsuperscript{136} Interview with Caro Mewanju, Mayor Isangele, 25July, 2012.
became jealous of the way Nigerians do their business in Bakassi [...] this began as hatred for us”. This tells anyone that there had never been peace amongst the people.\textsuperscript{137}

Also, the chief Ankie of bamusso is also in support of this idea when he said “we are not fighting each other we are brothers, [...] “Even if the Bakassi people had problems concerning fishing waters, it is normal it has been a normal thing here which has always been resolve by the local authority” this means that, the different problems of Bakassi which concern mostly the fishing area, had witnessed little problems in the past which were managed by the authorities, but this view had not been totally accepted because it is this very problems which provoked a crisis. Thus, Mr Manfred from Cameroon also had an opposite view as compared to that of Caro, he said “the problems of fishermen is not new [...] complains about the non respect for fishing rule, which many had said some fishermen catch even the smaller immature fishes”. This also tells us that the entire Bakassi had been in trouble due to the presence of its resources especially fish. Hence, economic reasons had greatly fuelled the crisis.\textsuperscript{138}

There are some few similarities between the authorities and the peasant. When Pa Orokoto of Isangele, seem to agree with chief Ankie of bamusso, when he said, “there had not been serious fighting here as the government is talking over the national television every “while Chief Ankie promoted the notion that the Bakassi tribes are brothers “we are brothers we are not fighting”. This actually means that, the government on the other hand can also be held accountable for the border conflict.\textsuperscript{139}

Moreover, another anonymous interview lamented that “the real problem here had been the gendarmes “. This indicates that both interviewees are not in support of national or tribal accusations that rumoured in Bakassi. This therefore means that the government directly or indirectly can also be held responsible for the origin of the conflict. This opinion about gendarme brutality as the roots of the crisis was cherished by some authorities. Thus Mr Esso of A. Abedimo

\textsuperscript{137} Interview with Okechu, Akwa, market woman, 29\textsuperscript{th} July 2012.
\textsuperscript{138} Interview with Manfred, civil servant, Akwa, 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2012.
\textsuperscript{139} Interview with chief Ankie of Bamusso 27\textsuperscript{th} August 2012.
who said” there had been an outcry here concerning the problems of the gendarmes” and Divisional
officer Ayuk who also mentioned that” it is the alarming crime rate caused by Nigerians which had
planted hatred in the minds of Cameroonians against them [...] the beginning of the crisis”. This
signifies that, economic reasons such as the quest for fish and land cannot solely be accountable for
the origins of the crisis, other reasons such as the coming of the brutality of the Cameroonian
gendarmes, high crime wave also partly contributed for the origins of the conflict.  

I conducted my interviews in four different communities in Bakassi namely Isangele, Akwa, K.
Abedimo and Bamusso. Within these localities there are commonalities. The main economic
activities here are; fishing, subsistence and livestock farming the aim of farming is for personal in
this area is for personal consumption while the usual remains are taken to the market, smoking and
retailing of fish within and different bush markets and across the border with Nigeria is also
considered a lucrative venture here, as it also includes forest. The majority of the people living in this
area are of Nigerian origin, an interviewee Mr Essono Edward said that” I think that even ninety
percent of the people living here are Nigerians”. 

My interviews which is apolitical, did not favor any particular group, tribe or nationality, it targeted
three groups of people; the traditional authorities, government authorities and the peasant, at the
same time it also targeted both Cameroonians and Nigerians, with the sole aim of collecting the
different opinions of the people in order to unearth the perceptions of the people concerning the
Cameroon-Nigerian Bakassi border conflict.

As seen above, the groups concerned had similar responses, and yet some similarities. I think that,
some of these differences existed due to the educational level of the informants, as many in this area
are not literate therefore, they could say something that does not actually make sense, or related their
personal problem to questions. As seen above, the informants expresses different views, related to
Ethnicity, tribes, Identity nationality and class. There were differences between the authorities and

140 Interview with Ayuk Edward, K Abedimo, 10th August 2012.
141 Interview with Mr Essono Edward, Teacher K Abedimo, 17th August 2012.
the peasants as well as between Cameroonians and Nigerians informants. The larger view which runs across these places are clear, the activities of the new comers, (tribes from Nigeria before and after the Nigerian civil war, provoked hatred and problems between the original settlers and the new comers. The socio- and economic activities of Bakassi was affected, insecurity, and piracy became the order of the day.

Secondly, the introduction of the Cameroonian gendarmes also became problematic and counter accusations were made this led to nationality concerns, the problem of hatred for one nationality also became the enshrined in the history of Bakassi. Another idea is that of the discovery of petroleum, even though those who expressed this view, as hear say news, but I understood that, petroleum issues acted as a catalyst to the conflict. These are the main views expresses by the people, these views as could be seen are related to issues of nationality, tribe. and ethnicity.(see above)

The Bakassi border dispute like other border disputes in Africa, reveal some issues of ethnicity nationality. Thus by analysing how the people perceive the border dispute, when one looks in to issues such as who they say they supported, who they think gained,who they blamed and other issues, one will be able to gain insights in to issues such as nationality, ethnicity, eventhough, this may also reveal the relations between the people of this locality.

For example when consider the issue of nationality, many informants identified directly or indirectly where they come from, that is their country by laying blame on others they thought had limited rights and are not Bakassians. Even though in many cases, the people mixed the issue of ethnicity itself with nationality, which could not really be distinguished. At this level it If we look at cases like Ijawnaka a Nigerian market woman said that”we no leave Bakassi for French pipo for Cameroon”(we will not go away from Bakassi and abandoned it for Cameroonians). Thus she blame Cameroonians for the Nigerian predicaments. 142

142 Interview with Ijawnaka, Isangele, 23rd July 2012.
In another situation, a young fisherman Abdu hammed from Nigeria said”Cameroon pipo no want we do anything for here na dem start tam”(Cameroonian do no want us to do anything in this place they are the ones who started this whole issue), that is the best way I could translate what he said, in other words, most of them Nigerians with the increase in gendarmes brutality began to view the issue of Bakassi as Cameroonian “palaver” (trouble).143

The Cameroonians in this area had nursed these same ideas against Nigerians, and many had adopted nationalistic stance, this explains why, even some of the authorities, pointed fingers not only to some famous Nigerian tribes in Bakassi but also generalize the problem to Nigerians as a whole. When I consider the ideas of Mayor Aboko, and pa Ettah I also find such remarks. When Mr Aboko recounted that,”most of them(Nigerians) were involved in piracy and criminal activities” he was also referring to the Nigerian community at large, he also made it clear that they Nigerians rushed madly to Bakassi during the Nigerian civil war, this meant that, these people are considered new comers and cannot claim ownership of land.

Likewise, these statements also proved that, the relationship between the two nationalities proved difficult. Ettah is another Cameroonians who made a horrific statement when he said” if you hear that a house has been attack at night, during the day you will later find out that, it was done by Nigerians” thus different connotations has been brandished upon the Nigerians as a whole and they are being blamed for the Bakassi crisis.

In the same vien, I think that the issue of name calling which has developed in this area rapidly also justifies the issue of nationality ethnicity and above all the straineous relationship between these people. Names like Birafra for all Nigerians has become common, in this place, and Efiks and Ibio bios who are often called referred to as Nigerians, this I know it is because they form the majority population amongst the Nigerian community.

143 Interview with Addu Hammed, Akaw, 28th July 2012.
Therefore, while studying the people’s opinions about the Bakassi crisis, anyone will come across these issues of nationality and ethnicity.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions and Recommendations.

6.1 Conclusions

The Cameroon-Nigerian border conflict often styled the Bakassi conflict became rife in the 1990s due to the occurrence of numerous clashes between the Cameroon and Nigerian military. This strained relations between both nations. The drive for my study is to garner, the opinion of the Bakassi people concerning the Bakassi border conflict.

The questions raised in this study were:
(A) How do the various groups (farmers, traders, traditional authorities, administrative/government authorities) perceive the origins of the crisis?
(B) who has benefitted from the crisis according to the various groups?
(C). what importance does ethnicity, (tribe), nation have for the various groups in the explanations of the crisis.

In order to pursue my work and provide answers for above questions, I adopted a case study research design, with the use of questionnaire interviews as my research method. I used semi structured interviews which were more open ended questions. I conducted interviews in four different localities namely: Isangele, K. Abedimo, Akaw, and Bamusso.I chosed these places because they are known and somehow accessible. The main economic activities in these places is fishing and farming, with dotted communications means and little government development and presence.

I also divided the people in to three groups; the farmers and traders, which is a group, made up of people of different categories, and are mostly at the lower class of the society. The traditional authorities, which is consist of the chiefs and their assistance at all small levels, and lastly the government authorities which is made up of government representatives and this group broadens down civil servants, of different categories. The reason for the division is to understand how the
different groups perceive the crisis today, and how they differ. The group of people interviewed could either Cameroonian or Nigerians. As these are the two main categories of people national in this locality. Thus this item was also important criterion.

Even though the Bakassi border dispute is a popular topic, little is known about how the people in the region perceived it. Different researchers had written on the subject of Bakassi border conflicts and of conflict in general targeting different issues related to the Bakassi conflict. And the subject of the people’s opinions has been left out. For example; Ngomba rose, in, the challenges of conflict Resolution in Africa; the case of Cameroon-Nigerian border conflict. Traced the Bakassi problem right back to colonial and post colonial period and relate the causes to the general causes of conflicts in the continent. Konings and Mohamed and Nkumbe, analyzed the historical and economic motives which produced conflicts in the Niger Delta region including Bakassi. While Mbah and kwi also examined land boundary conflicts in the grassland of Cameroon and viewed ethnic considerations as a major factor that often leads to boundary conflicts.

These researchers as well as many others tackled different issues concerning the Bakassi crisis; however the issue of the people’s opinion had been neglected. In my work, I have made gone further to examine the opinions of the people about the crisis. I compared the views of the different groups, and of the different nationalities which are mainly Nigerians and Cameroonians in this region. Hence, my thesis will fill the gap, and contribute to research with a new perspective in the field of border conflicts. Furthermore, it will also help gain some insight in to issues such as nationality and ethnicity.

In my work I , used the theories of ethnic conflicts, and I dwelled more on the writings of Donald Horowits, (1985). The author tries to explain conflicts as well as ethnic conflicts as an outcome of traditional antagonism or opposition which often resists modernization. This also help to explain the resolution of ethnic allegiance among the elite group in the modern nations. This theory also tries to provide some explanation how colonialism facilitated ethnic conflicts in Africa that is through the
forceful amalgamation of tribes with different cultures for the first time, this led to the distortion of tribal boundaries. It resulted to the struggle for power and the struggle over land. This equally saw the mixture and distortions of tribes along the Cameroon-Nigerian boundary, this explains why, Nigerian tribes such as the Ibiobios and the Efiks, tribes mostly along the borders who had been in trading with some Cameroonian increased in population. I guess, this also led to a cultural hoax which later exploded.

The background of my work consisted of a synopses of Bakassi which identified its people and the socio-cultural settings. This swampy resource rich low line terrain which is found in the Ndian division of Cameroon, It has a long border of about 1600km, with her neighbour Nigeria is found at its eastern end of the gulf of Gueinea.

According to Konings, this region was part of the ancient kingdom of Calabar, and a protectorate of England. and on 1884, it was ceded to Germany in 18184. Due to the annexation of Cameroon by Germany in 1884, Bakassi became part of the Rio del Rey Berzirk division, as the twenty six German district. It also became an important tradion region during the 17th to the 19th century. The neighbouring areas around Bakassi are; Isangelli, Ballundos and Archibong town in its north, that is on the Cameroon side, Calabar and its people are in the north east, Akpa Yafe is the boundary between Cameroon and the Calabar region of Nigeria. the southern part is found in the bight of Biafra and the open sea. The Cross River of Nigeria is on its west, while its eastern side lies the then Kumba division and the Meme region of Cameroon. Today, this region has a population of about 200,000 people, from different tribes such as the Efiks, Ibiobios, Bakole, Balondo Bayangui and others.

The main economic activity in this area remains fishing, men women and children are involved for longer period of the year while subsistent farming is also practiced mostly for home consumption. Internal circulation is mostly done by taxi, motorcycle, and canoe, the dusty roads speaks about the
little government presence, at least some schools and health units represent the fingers of the government.

The population of this area has necessitated a mixed culture between some trines in Cameroon and Nigeria, since majorities of the people are of Nigerian origin. Despite this blend, it could not prevent conflict between the two nations.

I vividly explained some of the reasons for the conflicts. Historically, I have attributed African border problems to the creation of artificial boundaries by the colonialism. Cameroon saw different colonial masters during that period beginning with Germany and then Britain and France. Politico-strategically, this area is vital because, it is found at the gulf of guinea, an access point between West and Central Africa and the Calabar port of Nigeria. Cultural factor also played a role because the majority of the people here are Nigerians especially the Efik Oron stock.\(^{144}\) The motive of the federal government to protect its citizens was there vital. Economically, both nations stood to reap the gains, especially as the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography declared in 1975 that, the area was rich in oil and fishery resources. therefore the quest for economic resources also did spurred the crisis.

Empirically, as I earlier mentioned before, I carried out my interviews in for different different places; Isangelle, Akwa, K Abedimo, and Bamusso. These interviews were apolitical in nature, it targeted nationalities, Nigerian and Cameroonianians and all groups. These groups concerned had similar as well as differences in their responses. These differences according to my understand occurred due to numerous reasons such as, the fact that the people are of different nationalities and of different groups or works of life, as well as some who may be politically attached to the government in one way or another and so on.

Another important issue I realized in this kind of society where people know each other and so news spread travel fast just like gossips, and the traditional life style of people clustering in a drinking spot, and narrate stories, whether this news is correct or incorrect, this makes many to have the same opinion on particular issues and just some little differences exist.

All in all, one cannot say that these issues which ignited the crisis had been tackled by the various government and total peace restored, as the interviews portrays that the issue of division among the nationalities, problems from fishing, till exist, the issue of “us and they” as I will put it, simply when look at the comments with PaNso of Bamusso, who said, “wetti them wan we do, them wan say we no chop, we no get other tin fo do, na the tin dis weh we di do”(this means that what do they want us to do, they do not want us to be able to provide food for our families or what? We do not have any other job in this place, this is our lives depend on “fishing” this is what we do). The analysis could be longer, but in this statement we see that, he categorically divides the people in to us and them, us meaning our people them meaning their people, it could mean Cameroonians, while to others it could refers to Nigerians. The interviews proved that, These divisions continued to exist between the people and it exist in all works of life in this locality even fishing and farming, this some people considered as discrimination, at another level others could see it as tribalism, when it occurs in the same locality with different tribes. I do not want to give it a name to it. We know that Africa’s problems which are unending, which often produces tribal and civil wars, commence from colonialism, and tribalism, to the fight for resources.

In their responses as seen above, most government authorities opined that, the issue of crime wave had ignited the Bakassi border conflict, while at farmers and traders did registered different views ranging from, discrimination, brutality of the gendarmes and even jealousy. The traditional authorities were not very different as they included the issue of foreign tribes and their appalling activities in Bakassi.

145 Interview with Nso, fisherman, Bamusso, 27th August 2012.
The differences in responses could be justified based on the fact that, indigenes of Bakassi came from different nationalities, and different tribes. It is important to recall that, this area is made up of both Nigerians and Cameroonians, and the Efik and Ibiobio tribal people of Nigeria are the majority in this locality. The thesis has thus shown that, the people of Bakassi has different views as concerns the border dispute, while many Cameroonians blamed the crisis upon the Nigerian criminality in the region, while the Nigerians on their path blamed the Cameroonians and put forward reasons such as gendarme brutality, the Bakassi people in general blamed the Cameroonian gendarmes for the crisis. out of the one hundred and twenty interviewees, sixty were Nigerians and sixty were Cameroonians, the number of those who blamed the crisis on the gendarmes brutality are up to forty one both Cameroonians and Nigerians, this does not cancelled the fact that many had more than one opinion. The thesis has also shown that nationality and ethnicity are embedded in the Bakassi border dispute

V.G Fanso in his article brings out the process of the struggle for identity by southern Cameroons after the partition of Kamerun by Britain and France. This struggle for identity according to Fanso, began soon after the partition, which began as the fight to presever the present statuesque of the former colonial master Germany against the partition itself proposed by the new colonial powers Britain and France. This struggle took a different face when Southern Cameroons was administered as an integral part of Nigeria. This struggle involved the recognition of a separate territory as oppose to an invisible southern Cameroons under Nigeria.146

The struggle of identifying is equal to the task of maintain a separate territory under its people, and promoting its own cultural values. This has been the case of British Southern Cameroons. In another sense, it also involves preserving its existing socio-political and cultural values from destruction. The struggle for identity of Southern Cameroons is abit similar to the issues of identity in the case of Bakassi. I realized that some of the interviewees raised complaints against a foreign nation or different tribes which they deem does not belong or fit it , and co-exist with the already

146Fanso, 2009, pp141-1450.
existing people of Bakassi. This explains why the use of wi and dem (us and they) was popular us referring to the people and dem referring to the new comers.

6.2 Recommendations
In my opinion, a broader research study, would enable if one to understand the people’s ideas on Bakassi today, completely. A broader study should be carried out for the whole region of Bakassi. This of course will be time consuming and financially difficult. But it will portray the opinions of all the Bakassi people.
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Interviews

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