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A Gift of Nature and the Source of Violent Conflict: Land and Boundary Disputes in the North West Region of Cameroon The Case of BaliKumbat and Bafanji

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A Gift of Nature and the Source of Violent Conflict:
Land and Boundary Disputes in the North West Region of Cameroon
The Case of BaliKumbat and Bafanji

by

Moise O. Arrah

A dissertation presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
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This dissertation was submitted by Moise O. Arrah under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Loves of My Life: My Wife, Sheryll Tumenta Arrah. My children, Camille Arrah, Makayla-Rose Arrah, Maya-Bree Arrah, Madison-Serenity Arrah and to my unborn baby on the way. You all make my life beautiful and I Love you all endlessly.
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Abstract

Balikumbat and Bafanji are the names of two villages in the Northwest Region of Cameroon that have been warring against one another over Bangang, a tract of fertile land. The conflict hinges on perceived differences about who should have access to this fertile land. Both villages claim ownership. This conflict has persisted from colonial times to the present with no tangible resolution. Understanding the place of land within the political, social, and economic fabric of the lives of both villages prior to and after the arrival of the colonial administration is the centerpiece of this research endeavor. This study sheds light on why the conflict persists. The land tenure decree of 1973, which was later promulgated into Cameroon law in 1984, is the most recent attempt at resolving disputes over land. It did not resolve this conflict. A clash of cultures between the indigenous population and the European colonizers may have triggered a legacy of land conflict between these two communities. This study unravels and seeks to explain when the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages transitioned from being two loving neighbors, capable of sharing their use of and kinship to the land, to hostile enemies ready to fight and kill one another at the earliest opportunity. In this study, interviews, observations, journal intakes, field notes, as well as document reviews, are pivotal tools used in justifying the claims highlighted in the research.
Chapter One

Land ownership is a gift of nature endowed with an infinite number of properties for the well-being of humanity. Conversely, it can also be the source of endless strife and conflict. According to Wehrmann (2008), “land conflicts are indeed a widespread phenomenon, and can occur at any time or place.” (p. 1) Intertribal conflicts over land are common in post-colonial African states. Cameroon, which is situated on the gulf of Guinea in the Central Region of Africa, is inundated with examples of land and boundary disputes. The ministry of territorial administration in Cameroon has realized some positive results by delineating administrative units like regions, divisions, and subdivisions. However, the issue of tribal borders within these administrative units still poses many challenges. These challenges are rooted in Cameroon’s triple heritage of indigenous traditional authorities, and two colonial authorities (Germany and Britain, in the case of Southern Cameroon) and the present La Republic du Cameroon, which governs both East and Southern Cameroon. This conflicting political history of Cameroon has left a good number of intertribal boundaries unresolved and poorly demarcated.

The present Land Tenure System of Cameroon, which was enacted in 1973 and promulgated into law in 1986, has made the Ministry of Territorial Administration the sole custodian of land in Cameroon. However, the ministry’s lax attitude toward clearly demarcating tribal borders has plunged the country, especially the North West Region, into a series of intertribal land disputes. Such is the case of two neighboring villages named Balikumbat and Bafanji, who have engaged in war over their interpretations of the boundary of Bangang, a fertile piece of land.
This conflict, which is the focal point in this study, represents a small example of the recurring conflicts that pertain to land and boundary demarcations. The villages of Balikumbat and Bafanji are a microcosm of an issue of epic proportions that exist at the core of Cameroonian conflicts. Studying the various dynamics of this particular conflict and highlighting the definitive role that land has played in fueling the dispute will contribute to the field of conflict resolution by highlighting how deep these kinds of conflicts affect and, in some cases, traumatize civilian populations. This dissertation explores and seeks to explain the fundamental causes of the land conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon by focusing on the case of the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages.

The study is composed of five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the problem, the research objectives, and questions. It establishes a blueprint of the conflict under investigation and the historical shifts that have occurred within it. Chapter 2 reviews relevant concepts, theories, and other studies in relation to land disputes that pertain to the present study. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the study, indicating the design, instruments, and methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 focuses on the presentation of findings from the field study. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

Background of the Study

This study was conceived and propelled by a wide array of variables that have contributed to the conflict between Balikumbat and Bafanji and the factors that continue to sustain it. To begin with, it is important to examine the historical, geographical, and socio-economic backgrounds of Cameroon, which leads naturally into an examination of
the contextual background of the Balikumbat and Bafanji Fondoms (kingdoms). This approach clarifies our understanding of the landscape in which this conflict was conceived and how it has evolved over time.

**Historical Background**

The history of Cameroon involves numerous interventions from European powers, which play a significant role in the country’s diversity. The first contact between Cameroon and the Europeans was in the 15th century. Portuguese traders and missionaries established bases along the coastal land (Fonlon, 1969:29 in Fonkeng, 2007, p. 14). At that time, Cameroon was referred to as “Rio dos Camores” which, in Portuguese, means “river of prawns.” The British later changed this name to “the Cameroons,” but when Germany later annexed Cameroon, the German version of the name (Kamerun) prevailed. When the French took over from the Germans, the French appellation “Cameroun” was adopted (Fonkeng, 2007).

During the scramble for Africa in the second half of the 19th century, Cameroon fell under the colonial rule of Germany from 1884 until the end of World War I, when Germany lost the war in Europe. As a result, the allied powers took control of the German territories by employing the mandate system. This system is derived from the tradition of the Roman Empire “Mandatum.” The principle of the Roman law of Mandatum implied that a mandarius or agent could administer a territory on behalf of the Mandatum or owner (Fonkeng, 2007 p. 16). To this effect, Kamerun, a colony of Germany, was recognized as a possession of the League of Nations. In this way, Cameroon became known as a mandated territory, which was administered by France and Britain on behalf of the League of Nations.
One consequence of this mandatory system was the formation of an Anglo-French condominium. Therefore, in 1918, Cameroon was divided into two sections between the French and British. The partition of the region gave France control over more than two thirds of the territory while Britain only acquired a small section. The League of Nations supervised the administration of Cameroon through the permanent Mandates Commission. However, this League of Nations’ mandate was terminated in 1945 after WW II and replaced by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organization. As a result, Cameroon became a trust territory of the United Nations Organization but it was still under the control of the French and British administrations.

On January 1st 1960, French-speaking Cameroon, known as La Republique du Cameroun, declared its independence from the French-Administered United Nations Trusteeship. In October 1961, English-speaking Cameroon, known as West Cameroon, became independent of the British-Supervised United Nations Trusteeship. This led to the emergence of a Federal Republic of Cameroon. North Cameroon, the northern section of the British mandate, became part of Nigeria at independence. Southern Cameroon, the English Southwestern highlands area chose to follow a separate course and joined the French-speaking regions. A decade later, on May 20, 1972, the Federal Republic was transformed into the United Republic of Cameroon. In 1984, the United Republic of Cameroon became known as the Republic of Cameroon (Fonkeng, 2007).

Any historical survey of Cameroon will reveal that foreign influences have played a big role in its history. These events enhanced the emergence of Cameroon as the first country to have two European or colonial languages. Today, Cameroon has ten administrative regions. Eight of these regions are Francophone: Far North, North,
Adamawa, Centre, Littoral, Western, Eastern, and Southern. Two regions are Anglophone: Northwest and Southwest. Appointed governors, in addition to the Divisional and Sub-divisional officers, administer these regions. Executive powers are conferred on the President of the Republic. Since the bicultural nature of Cameroon is rooted in colonial influence, knowledge of its history provides an explanation of the conflict that lies in the land tenure system of Cameroon.

**Geographical Background**

The Republic of Cameroon is located in Western Central Africa. This country is bounded to the north by the Chad Republic, the west by Nigeria, the east by Central African Republic and to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Congo Brazzaville. Cameroon measures about 475,440 square kilometers in area, of which 6000 kilometers\(^2\) is water. Slightly larger than the state of California in the United States of America, the terrain of Cameroon is primarily composed of coastal and inland plains, mountains, and high plateaux.

The climate of Cameroon is also varied, ranging from hot and semi-arid in the North to tropical along the Atlantic coast. Four natural regions exist in Cameroon. First, the Atlantic coast is dominated by mount Fako that measures over 4000 metres in height. Here, one finds an equatorial climate where heavy rainfall is common. The second region of low plateaux starts from Yaoundé and serves as a transition between the vast equatorial forest and the savannah (Fonkeng, 2007, p. 9). The climate of this zone is dry and relatively fresh because of its altitude. The third region of high plateaux is dominated by the Adamawa with the mountainous region to the south. The fourth region constitutes the Benue Plain and Lake Chad in the North. This is an impoverished savannah, which
progressively transforms to steppe as it approaches Lake Chad. The whole territory stretches from sand beaches and dense forest along the southern coast through mountains, grassy hills, and plateaux to a dry savannah in the North. Cameroon is sometimes called “the hinge of Africa” since it sits between the first and thirtieth latitudes, north of the Equator. Cameroon has a rapidly growing population, as compared to other African countries in the central African sub-region.

The geographical diversity of the country finds its parallel in the ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. It is composed of a heterogeneous population replete with social and political differences from one region to another. By 2010, the population of Cameroon had increased to approximately 20 million people from 130 different ethnic groups. These groups include Highlanders 30%, Equatorial Bantu 19%, Kirdis 10%, Fulanis 10%, Northwest Bantu 8%, and Eastern Negritics 7%. Approximately 13% of the country’s population belongs to other African ethnic groups. Less than 1% of all people in Cameroon are non-African in ethnic origin. Twenty-four indigenous language groups are represented amongst the spoken languages alongside English and French. The religious breakdown is 40% Christian, 20% Muslim, and 40% practice Indigenous African Religions (www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Cameroon 2011).

The pygmies, also known as forest people, inhabit the southern forests. This population does not make up a large political group but practices a distinct culture. Each tribe is organized around its chief whose authority covers the whole village. In the southern region, the personality of the chief generally enhances the importance of his tribe. Agriculture and fishing are the main economic activities of the people in this region. In the northern part of the country, there exists a system of Lamidat or sultanate,
which characterizes the functioning of political authority (Fonkeng, 2007, p. 10). The map in Appendix A portrays the location of Cameroon in Africa and the different countries sharing its boundaries.

**Socio-Economic Background**

The economy of a country refers to the relationship between production, trade, and its supply of money (Hornsby, 2000, p. 369). The economy of a country or region influences the practice of education since it is highly determined by the forces of supply and demand. Of primary concern is the provision of basic school requirements like infrastructure, personnel, and didactic materials. In Cameroon, between 60 to 75 percent of the population works in the agricultural sector. Most farmers practice subsistence agriculture using traditional farming methods. This situation has the effect of low production in individual yields. Consequently, a high rate of unemployment prevails for approximately 30 percent of the population.

**Contextual Background**

The Balikumbat and Bafanji villages are located in the North West Region of Cameroon. Bafanji is a village of the Tikar people, while Balikumbat is a village of the Chamba group (Mbah, 2008). These ethnic groups differ in language, culture, and history. Both villages are headed by a traditional ruler referred to as the Fon. Both, however, are migrant populations who occupied their respective territories because of mass migration into the region in the late 17th century. For government administrative purposes, both Bafanji and Balikumbat fall within the same division called Ngoketunjia, but each retains its own distinctive local authority.
**Brief History and Description of the Bafanji Fon**

Oral tradition explains that Bafanji people (Fieh LungLué-Mangieh) migrated from *Ndobo*, North East of Tikari in the Adamawa plateau down to Ndop in the 16th century with four of its neighborhood groups: viz Bamali (*Peuchop*), Bamunka (Mekoh), Bamukumbit (Mankon) and Bambalang (Mbaw-Yakum). Under the leadership of *Hong Piamikia*, who was regarded as the first fon of the village, the people of the Bafanji finally arrived at *Njanung* quarters and settled there. They named this place “Piamika” after their leader for his charismatic leadership. In a series of wars with other groups such as the *Mbakwa* and the *Tonkung*, the Bafanji people finally conquered the Tonkung and absorbed them into one Fon dom of Bafanji. Other conquered rulers shared powers with ranks of Sub-Fons. [http://fadca.webnode.fr/actualites/](http://fadca.webnode.fr/actualites/)

During the first century of their settlement in their present site, Bafanji endured attacks from the Fulanis in series of raids, common to that era. Due to their fear of extinction, most Bafanji people took refuge in the Bamilke land of Bamoun and Mbounda from 1843-1895. Under the direction of Ardo Sambo of Tibati and the Lieutenant of Madibo Adama of the Adamawa Region from the Sokoto Empire, these raids were efficiently executed by warriors with spears on horseback. After returning from self-imposed exile, the Bafanji people faced steep resistance from some Fulanis and other new neighbours who had begun encroaching onto their communal lands.

During these battles to defend their territorial spheres, the Bafanji people (Fieh LungLué-Mangieh) dug trenches 15 to 20 metres deep and five to seven metres wide that pointed towards their boundaries, especially at entering routes. Using rudimentary tools, such as unsharpened knives and sticks, workers dug these trenches to prevent the
Fulanis’ horses from crossing into their land. Today, these trenches serve as amazing tourist attractions that clearly demonstrate the engineering and creative potential of the first Bafanji settlers. Later, the Bafanji people (Fieh LungLué-Mangieh) adopted non-violent means of settling inter-village boundaries. Territorial conflicts that erupted for more than a decade were finally laid to rest by the Federal Court of Justice (FCJ) Buea in 1971.

Bafanji (Fieh lunglué-Mangie) is one of the 13 villages of the Ngoketunjia Division and one of the five villages that make up the Balikumbat Sub Division of the Northwest region of Cameroon. It is located between 5° and 13°N and 10° and 55°E of latitude and longitude respectively and found at approximately 2289m above sea level. It has as neighbors in the north by Bambalang, Bali-Gashu, and Bamunkumbit in the south, Balikumbat in the south-west and in the east by the Bamboutous division of West region. Bafanji (Fieh lunglué-Mangie) has relatively level land and many swamps around the village. These characteristics produce a very rich ecosystem that covers a surface area of an estimated 115.5km². A hardworking population of approximately 22,000 people inhabit this area. Bafanji (Fieh lunglué-Mangie) is lying peacefully in Ndop plain with land surrounded by water sheds including the Bamindjim dam that replenishes the Song-Loulou Electricity Dam, several springs, rivers, and streams. Bafanji village (Fieh LungLué-Mangieh) serves as a crossroads for agro-businesses, the cultural heritage of Ndop plain, and a museum of different ethnic or tribal origins

http://fadca.webnode.fr/actualites/.

Culture is the identity card of a people. Consequently, a person without a culture does not exist. The Bafanji people have a very rich cultural heritage that is reflected in
their feeding habits, way of dressing, dancing, sitting, talking, and walking. Their norms, values, and morals are seen in their daily lives and occupations. The language of the Bafanji people is called NCHUFIEH that, when translated, means the “words of Fanji.” The Holy Bible has been translated into the Bafanji dialect. A traditional Bafanji meal is created from pounded cocoyam/colocosia that is eaten with yellow soup spiced with special ingredients, as well as tilapia/mud fishes/mushrooms or the skin/meat of bush or domestic animals. This special meal is washed down with good raffia wine (nduog of mulloğ fu) on every sad or happy occasion where people gather. The Bafanji man has established traditions and a cultured way of life that treats elders and authorities with respect. For the Fon, all indigenes greet the Fon with three handclaps while bowing down. No one shakes hands with the Fon. Several other groups of notables and leaders are given due respect to their positions in descending order.

The Bafanji people are best at handicrafts and iron smelting. They carve, weave, and plant items. Physically, these people are very handsome and beautiful with an average height of 1.65m, are very patriotic, and are largely peaceful. They hold no grudges, even against those who consider them enemies, since most are God-fearing with high cultural and moral standards that have been nurtured over years of regulated society. The Bafangi man loves all that is good not only to the eye but to the body and soul. This is evident when examining their rich diet and beautiful women. A typical Bafanji man believes that a man with no pride has no dignity. This makes him a very proud man. The Bafanji man is very hard working and has a passionate hatred for lazy people (http://fadca.webnode.fr/actualites/).
The politico-socio cultural institutions of the Bafanji people (Fieh LungLué-Mangieh) have close relations to those of Tikaris groups such as the Bamouns, Bamiliké, the sudaness of Adamaoua and Chiefdom of Widikum. These institutions were installed by the first settlers of Bafanji in the 16th century and are organised as follows: a) Political Institution, b) Traditional Council, c) Quarter Judges, d) Regulatory Society (Kwehong), e) Noble Society, and d) FADCA. These institutions have sub groups and titleholders that animate the actions and decisions of the institution.

**The Mamgaieh Shrine**

In the legend of *Mamgaieh*, it is believed that this woman was the mother of the first four Fons: Bamali (*Peuchop*), Bamunka (Mekoh), Bamukumbit (Mankon) and Bambalang (Mbaw-Yakum) claim common genealogy. This is linked to a myth that ‘*Mamgaieh*’ was a mother of a set of twins who became Fons of these villages. A mighty rock that lies at peg three southwest of Bafanji, in the Minji Quarter, testifies about this common ancestral genealogy. The shrine is visited annually by traditional elites from one of the above villages for libation. The rock opens an aperture when an indigene from one of these villages comes for such a sacrifice. In essence, the shrine is a center of justice. In the myth, it was said that, if a criminal comes to the shrine because of an allegation and cannot speak the truth, he will receive punishment from the goddess. However, the criminal may be proven innocent by *Mamgaieh*. It is important to note that the Mamgaieh shrine is located in the same place where war between the Bafanji and Balikumbat has occurred. One can infer that, for traditional reasons, the Bafanji people will never let go of this land(http://fadca.webnode.fr/actualites/).
A Brief History and Description of Balikumbat Fondom

According to Galabe (2014), the history of Balikumbat is very similar to the other four existing Bali Fondoms of the Northwest Province of Cameroon. The Balikumbat people are a faction of the Chamba people who migrated from North Eastern Nigeria (Yola) during a wave of migrations in the West African region towards the end of the 17th century. Being highly skilled in the use of bow and arrow, they fought their way towards the West into the present Republic of Cameroon by conquering territories as they marched on. When they reached the grassland region of Cameroon, their natural ruler “disappeared.” Following a total disagreement among the leader’s four male children and one female child over who should succeed their father, each child decided to break free of the group, go their separate way, and take their followers with them. Each faction continued its warring march and conquered the inhabitants of the lands over which they passed until it found a suitable place to settle in the fertile farm lands. This is how the five Bali Fondoms of Cameroon came into being. The Bali Fondoms include Bali-Gangsin (Gavabineba), Balikumbat (Nebkoluba), Bali-Nyonga (Nyongneba), Bali-Gham (Nebgamyidba), and Bali-Gashu (Gansunneba) (Galabe, 2014).

The Balikumbat people occupy their present site after defeating and expelling the Bamunkumbits who lived there previously. The Balikumbat people chose this location for two specific reasons. First, the available farmland was fertile and abundant. Second, a central plateau allowed them to see approaching enemies before they could attack. At this writing, the Fon’s palace is located on this plateau.

Balikumbat is located approximately 15 kms west of Ndop, the capital of Ngoketunjia in the Division of the Northwest Province of Cameroon. It is bounded on the
east by the villages of Bamali and Bambalang, on the west by Bafanji, on the south by Bamumkumbit and on the north by Babanki Tungo, and Awing. The population is approximately 16,000 inhabitants who are predominantly peasant farmers. Balikumbat has the status of a Sub Division, which also includes four other neighbouring villages. It also has Rural Council (Galabe, 2014).

As in the other four Bali Fondoms, the Fon is the paramount head of the Balikumbat traditional administration and custodian of the tradition. He is assisted in the execution of his functions by organs such as the “Ndagans” (Kingmakers) who act as his advisers and the Traditional Council, which is the legislative organ of the village. Quarter heads act as the liaison between the population and the Traditional Council together with the Fon. Sectoral committees like, the Health and Education Committee, exist and are charged with the monitoring and orientation of specific activities under the supervision of the Traditional Council or the Village Development Committee, depending on the specific nature of the activity (Galabe, 2014).

While the Bafanji and Balikumbat settlements are very close, these two villages have noteworthy differences. The Bafanji village speaks an indigenous language called bafanji (locally known as chuufi). The people of Balikumbat speak chamba-leko. Another notable difference is that they migrated from different parts of Cameroon with varying cultural heritages. While differences persist, social mingling, in the form of inter-marriages and common gatherings such as markets, the villages engage in frequent contact. This suggests that the inhabitants of both villages have come to know one another very well (Mbah, 2008).
Understanding the Balikumbat vs Bafanji Conflict in the Context of Intractable Conflict

A deeper understanding of this conflict calls for a discussion of the various characteristics that have been posited by the conflict and understanding these characteristics within the larger field of conflict resolution. Conflict refers to a clash between individuals arising out of a difference in thought processes, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements, and sometimes perceptions. In a more refined way, conflict can be construed as “a social fact in which at least two parties are involved and whose origins are differences either in interests or in the social position of the parties” (Imbusch, 1999). Conflict can result in intense arguments, physical abuse, and a loss of peace and harmony. Any form of conflict holds the potential to alter relationships to the point where friends become foes. Many stages compose a conflict through which the land dispute of this magnitude must have travelled. According to Wehrmann (2008), the stages of conflict are pre-conflict, confrontation, crisis, outcome, and post-conflict.

a. Pre-Conflict: In this phase, the goals of the two parties are incompatible and can be the reason for the conflict in the first place. The conflict is not yet clear to everyone except that some of the conflicting parties may be aware that something is brewing in the horizon, which may culminate in a conflict. Avoiding tactics may already be at work.

b. Confrontation: The conflicting parties are already aware that they are in conflict with one another and are mobilizing all their resources to use against the other. There are already signs of overt fighting. Both parties are growing away from the other.
c. Crisis: This conflict is now out of control. There is heightened tension and no party is ready to back down. Communication mediums have been compromised and are broken. Each party is now making their case against the other and a state of war is unfolding.

d. Outcome: The tension is now beginning to decrease and some transforming has happened. It could be that one party is stronger than the other is, has defeated them or both parties see no reason to continue to be in conflict. Perhaps both parties are poised for negotiation but, whatever the case, the conflict is deescalating albeit not over yet.

e. Post-Conflict: Both parties at this time are making efforts towards the restoration of communication channels. The triggers of conflict have been resolved. If not, there is a chance that the circle will begin again.

A wide variety of conflicts exist, including verbal, religious, emotional, social, personal, organizational, community, and situational, among others. The Balikumbat versus Bafanji conflict is best classified within the framework of an inter-group or ethnic conflict.

**Land Conflict Defined**

The characteristics of land conflicts are numerous. They can be understood as “social facts in which at least two parties are involved, the roots of which are different interests over the property rights to land” (Wehrmann, 2008, p. 9). Additionally, “the right to use land, to manage the land, to generate an income from the land and, to exclude others from the land, to transfer it and the right to compensation for it” are important tenets (Wehrmann, 2008, p. 9). This land definition is inclusive and includes various
triggers that can result in conflict. Land conflict understood in this sense means that, once land is owned, there is no room for others to claim ownership or even purport to have control over the same piece of land.

In the case of Balikumbat and Bafanji dispute, the piece of land in Bangang must belong to one party and not the other. It stands as a typical win-lose situation in conflict resolution terms. This excludes the possibility of a joint occupancy of this land. Since neither party is willing to cede total ownership of this piece of land to the other, conflict is inevitable and has persisted for a long time.

The struggle between villages appears to have the characteristics of an intractable conflict. According to Coleman (2000), “Intractable conflicts, broadly defined, are intense, deadlocked, and resistant to de-escalation or resolution. They tend to persist over time, with alternating periods of greater and lesser intensity. Intractable conflicts come to focus on needs or values that are of fundamental importance to the parties. The conflict pervades all aspects of the parties' lives, and they see no way to end it, short of destroying the other side. Each party's dominant motive is to harm the other. Such conflicts resist common resolution techniques, such as negotiation, mediation, or diplomacy” (p. 428).

Many intractable conflicts focus on identity rather than resource issues that are deeply rooted in the past. Core disputes in intractable conflicts also tend to proliferate, producing a complex web of interlocking complaints that can be very difficult to analyze (Coleman, 2000).

Intractable conflicts often arise in contexts of extreme power imbalance, social injustice, or structural violence where people find it difficult to satisfy their basic human needs. Cultural norms that sanction the use of force make such conflicts more likely to
As conflicts escalate, parties shift from substantive interests, to relationship concerns, to basic needs and values, and ultimately focus on survival. Communication becomes impaired and eventually nonexistent. Parties adopt a win-lose attitude and then a lose-lose attitude where the goal is to inflict as much harm on the other as possible. Various social psychological dynamics contribute to escalation. These include selective perception, over commitment, self-fulfilling prophecy, dehumanization, cognitive rigidity, competitiveness, and miscommunication (Coleman, 2000). According to Burgess and Burgess (2003), many intractable conflicts, especially at the inter-group and international levels, are embedded in a context of long-standing differences and inequalities. They are "rooted in a history of colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, or human rights abuses" (Burgess and Burgess, 2003, p. 9) which cause a large imbalance of power.

Supported by the views of Coleman (2000), and Burgess and Burgess (2003), the Balikumbat/Bafanji conflict is clearly intractable. For a conflict that is deeply rooted from the colonial period of the 1800s to present day, a solution has yet to be found. Ethnocentrism appears to be at fault because of unfair colonial policies in land demarcation. These seemingly haphazard decisions did not take into consideration the perception and conceptualization of the indigenous people. For instance, the disputed land harbors the Mamgaieh shrine, a sacred institution of the Bafangi people. Allowing free access to the Balikumbat people would violate the sanctity of the shine for the Bafangi. Conflict is bound to reoccur until the present Cameroon government learns to respect the land beliefs and traditions of the indigenous people and acts accordingly.
Indigenous Affinity to the Land and Land Demarcation Mechanisms

According to Ng’ombe and Mushinge (2014), indigenous people believe that land is “endowed with a sacred character… conceive[d] as a sort of deity who [is] the fount of fertility and guardian of public morality since it [is] witness to all transactions of man” (p. 223). For customary people, land is indeed the primary resource for all activities (Ng’ombe & Mushinge, 2014). Besides being perceived as the space on which man lives and farms to secure a livelihood, land is also considered to be the center for all human relationships, values, language and ambitions. It is a source of all wealth, power, integrity, and symbolism (Leonard & Longbottom, 2000). Deininger (2003) equally adds that land is also associated with prestige and subsistence, which are considered the primary economic goal by most rural communities.

Land in customary areas is also considered to be the commodity that unites the past, the current and future generations (Ng’ombe & Mushinge, 2014). Chief Olsei of Odogbolu in Western Nigeria affirmed before the West African Land Commission in 1908 that “I conceive that land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living, and countless are still unborn” (Ike, 1984, p. 475). Another Nigerian chief stated, “We came from the ground and we have to go back to the ground and it is altogether out of place for anyone to think of selling the ground. They who are born and they who are yet unbegotten and they who are still in the womb require the means of support.” (Ike, 1984, p. 476).

In Africa, land is a sacred asset with strong ancestral ties. It is inalienable and is to be passed on to the ancestors’ posterity intact. As a result, other than working and harvesting from the land, it is enough for an individual to claim ownership of the land by
simply convincing surrounding others that their ancestors are buried in that piece of land (Ng’ombe & Mushinge, 2014; Carino, 2006). One’s place of origin is considered a place where they have not only physical but also spiritual roots. Tribal communities practice what Chikhwenda (2002) has called trusterty theory, whereby all property is owned by groups but used by individuals.

The perception of land in Africa indicates that cultural beliefs have a significant impact on the way communities manage natural resources. In fact, this is endorsed by Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2008) which, in recognition of the importance of culture and beliefs in rural land management practices, implores all governments to ‘respect ... the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples.’ Similarly, Article 13(1) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention no. 169 (1989) obliges governments ‘to respect the special importance for the cultures and spiritual values of the [indigenous] peoples of their relationship with the lands...in particular the collective aspects of this relationship’ (Ng’ombe & Mushinge, 2014).

Furthermore, the right to property is actually a human and peoples’ right. This is provided for by Article 14 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which states that “The right to property shall be guaranteed.” Schoffelleers (1979) believes that land belongs to the dead, which clearly demonstrates that there is a role played by ancestors in the administration of this valuable resource. It is widely believed that the ancestors cannot allow complete land alienation, especially to outsiders, as this could lead to their descendants being deprived of their rights to enjoy the interests in land (Agbosu, 2000). Most traditional communities therefore believe that actions that violate this
customary code of conduct have the potential to destroy the link between past and future generations (Agbosu, 2000). Additionally, Agbosu (2000) asserts that the inability to comply with these rules can lead to an ancestors’ wrath on the wrongdoers (Ng’ombe & Mushinge, 2014).

From the above indigenous perception of land, it is clear that land does not only have an economic value to Africans. Instead, land is sacred and is replete with ancestral overtones. Land harbors shrines and places of traditional sacrifice that makes it inalienable to the ethnic group that owns it. Customary land demarcation policies need to take these indigenous perceptions of land into consideration. Intertribal borders were never arbitrarily done by pen and paper. Instead, the chiefs of the two different tribes would physically meet on the site of the disputed ground and agree on geographical features like trees, hills, big rocks, shrines, and rivers that would serve as boundary markers. These geographical features then become permanent, immovable, and fully respected by both ethnicities. This is not what happened when the colonial masters were scrambling for land in Africa in 1884. The respected indigenous beliefs about land and their demarcation mechanisms were cast aside.

**The Advent of Colonialism and Poor Land Demarcation Policies**

The Berlin Conference of November 1884 to February 1885, and the events that followed, gave Africa its present borders. It also attempted to integrate Africa into the European concept of nation-states with clearly defined and demarcated borders (Muhammad, 2013). Many arguments tend to qualify or denounce the artificiality and arbitrariness of African borders. Ground realities and testimonies from key actors who witnessed the design and construction of the boundaries conclusively confirm that the
borders are indeed arbitrary and artificial (Muhammad, 2013). The following examples justify the non-respect of indigenous beliefs in boundary demarcations by the colonial masters.

When the Anglo-French Convention on the Nigeria-Niger boundary was signed in 1906, Lord Salisbury, then British Prime Minister, was credited to have remarked:

We [the British and the French] have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man’s foot ever trod. We have been giving away mountains, rivers, and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediments that we never knew exactly where the mountains, rivers, and lakes were. (Anene, 1970, p. 3)

Similarly, in relation to Nigeria’s eastern border with Cameroon, a British Colonial officer recorded the method used in delimiting the borders. He said:

In those days, we just took a blue pencil and a ruler and we put it down at Old Calabar, and drew that blue line to Yola. I recollect thinking when I was sitting, having an audience with the Emir (of Adamawa), surrounded by his tribe, that it was a very good thing that he did not know, that I, with a blue pencil, had drawn a line through his territory (Anene, 1970, p. 3)

Naturally, the result of this common practice all over Africa (including the BaliKumbat and Bafanji of Cameroon) was division of its people, bifurcated political and social systems, and fractured cultural traditions. This careless apportioning eventually led to further dislocations and disorientations, particularly amongst the border populations (Muhammad, 2013).

According to Asiwaju (1984),
Boundaries were drawn across well-established lines of communication, including a sense of community based on tradition, concerning common ancestry, usually very strong kinship ties, shared socio-political institutions and economic resources, common customs and practices, and sometimes acceptance of a common political control. In many instances, [...] the boundary has separated communities of worshippers from age-old sacred groves and shrines. In other instances, well exemplified by the Somalis, the water resources in a predominantly nomadic culture area were located in one state and the pastures were in another.” (Asiwaju, 1984, p. 3)

The borders were fundamentally determined without considering any social, political, or cultural characteristics of the partitioned people. This assertion has been confirmed by Posner (2006) who observed that a clear indication of the arbitrariness of the borders is the fact that 44 per cent of African boundaries follow either meridians or parallels. Another 30 per cent follow other rectilinear or curved lines. Further indication of the disrespect these authorities held for the people they partitioned comes from Asiwaju’s (1984) estimate that the 104 international borders existing in Africa in 1984 and 1985 have dissected 177 culture areas or groups.

**Land as Ownership**

During colonization, Cameroon was divided between Britain and France as part of the League of Nation mandates. The new colonial boundary demarcations, established in the 1930s, introduced new dimensions to land use. Land was commodified. More importantly, land became the subject of ownership. According to Nkwi (2011), the Europeans’ arbitrary lumping of people and the complete ignorance of ethnic
composition caused differences in boundary understanding of most of the African States. In some instances, these boundary misunderstandings have resulted in inter-village or ethnic crises. The Balikumbat contesting their common border with the Bafanji is an excellent example. However, the Balikumbat and Bafanji situation is compounded by the fact that Cameroon had two colonial masters, the Germans and British. This means that two colonial boundaries exist between the Balikumbat and the Bafanji.

In reference to the Balikumbat/Bafanji struggle, Ngwochu (2012) believes that, “the land issue remains a colonial legacy which Africa must resolve to facilitate the region’s socio-economic advancements” (vol 2, No. 12). Colonial land tenure was allocated based on village subservience to a colonial authority whose governing maintained a vice-like grip over land distribution. Peace was enforced through police and military coercion, which was a system that was entirely alien to African people. As Ngwochu (2012) states, “this was what was obtained when the European land tenure, based on individualization, collided with that of Africa, characterized by communality, during and after colonization.” In short, the village or group who were favored by the colonial administration received preferred treatment. This situation prevailed in the Balikumbat and Bafanji settlements.

Although some tension existed between the villages from the 1930s to the 1960s, there were no signs of overt conflict. For the most part, the two villages co-existed in peace and harmony for over 30 years. According to Mbah (2008), the disputed area of Bangang “posed no serious threat to peace until the 1960s when an increase in the value of land and the fertile soil of the land in question introduced a dispute between the two over the interpretation of the exact location of the colonially demarcated boundary”
(p.188). After Cameroon attained independence in the 1960s, rapid changes in the economic and political landscape occurred. Most of the colonial power eroded. This fueled enthusiastic desires of asserting legitimate rights to land reclamation. Balikumbat and Bafanji clashed and confronted one another over the land in Bangang. Both villages claimed ownership and argued that the colonial boundaries were wrong.

The core of the conflict appears to stem from the incompatibilities between the precolonial understandings of land, as held by the indigenous population, and the colonial land policies. In the pre-colonial Balikumbat and Bafanji villages, land was revered as a communal heritage and held in the highest regard. Before the colonial period, the lives and souls of the inhabitants of the land were intrinsically tied to the land. However, as Mbah (2008) contends, “the notion that land could be communal property, jointly exploited by two or more villages in a clan or ethnic group, was alien to the colonizers” (p.103). Prior to the arrival of the colonial masters, joint cultivation of the now contested territory of Njah in Bangang did not pose a conflict. However, since the colonial understanding of land was based on individual ownership, the introduction and implementation of its policies sowed the seeds of intense conflict that continues to this day.

Due to conflicts between the indigenous perceptions of land and the colonial policies and the inability of the present La Republic du Cameroon to define tribal boundaries, the Balikumbat and Bafanji people have engaged in multiple minor confrontations. Worthy of note is the 1995 bloody war that lead to myriad human and property casualties on both sides.
The 1995 Land Dispute

The conflict between Balikumbat and Bafanji transitioned from a latent conflict to one of overt dimensions on June 2, 1995. At this time, multi-party politics took effect in Cameroon. Elections were held but they were marred by fraud and discontent. In the North West Region, lawlessness caused a state of pandemonium. Villages that were eager to show aggression saw this lack of social order as a prime opportunity to exert control. The Fon of Balikumbat ordered an attack on Bafanji to reclaim the fertile land of Bangang that had been allocated to Bafanji through the colonial process. During this wanton aggression, the orders of the Fon were executed to the letter. All the pillars that were erected to demarcate boundaries were removed. The village of Bafanji was locked down by the Balikumbat fighters. Women were raped, men were beaten and killed, and the market square was burned down. Any Bafanji resistance was outweighed by the Balikumbat fighters. In effect, war was declared on Bafanji.

This was the first time the conflict had turned violent. Available statistics reveal that, “eighteen people died from gunshots, spears, cutlasses, poisoned arrows, or through beatings from sticks and clubs; sixteen of them were from Bafanji and two from Balikumbat” (Mukong, 1997, p. 3). This violent confrontation reveals both a deep affinity both villages have for the land and the desire to do whatever it takes to control and access it. The aftermath of the conflict was not without significant consequences to the communities. It is reported that, “roughly 3,000 Bafanji men, women and children fled the village” (Mbah, 2008, p. 230). This chaotic environment, coupled with building and property damage, meant that it would take a long time for peace and normalcy to return.
To date, the root causes of the 1995 conflict have not been addressed. Both villages remain unsure about the actual location of the boundaries. The first disagreements about the boundaries appeared in the 1960s. In response, the colonial administration referred the problem to the West Cameroon court. Its resultant resolution was that pillars would be erected at the boundaries as dictated by the colonial administration. However, war still broke out. In 2000, indications of another conflict over the same territory emerged but authorities quashed the threats. To date, both sides still claim ownership of this contested piece of land:

![Figure 1. Picture of Contested area in Njah around Bangang](image)

Investigating the perception of this land, the history of the dispute, the role of the colonial and present governments, and possible solutions to this reoccurring border crisis warrants close attention and rigorous research.
Problem Statement

The boundary disputes between Balikumbat and Bafanji persist. Despite the 1998 truce, serenity and freedom of movement are not plentiful emotions among these neighbours. Currently, fighting erupts repeatedly with deadly consequences on both sides. My observations have revealed frequent attacks, looting, and the destruction of crops and property, especially during the planting and harvesting seasons. Both tribes still claim ownership of this disputed area. The need to investigate the causes of this persistent conflict and its motivation drives this research.

The Balikumbat and Bafanji conflict rests within the larger problem of Cameroon itself. According to Havnevik (2005), this problem revolves around land ownership in Cameroon, which is a major source of conflict. Land is construed as a vital means of survival and hence the primary reason why people and communities vie to exert control over it. The court systems in Cameroon are deluged with land related conflicts. In fact, the frequency of land disputes is so common in Cameroon that it is featured in the USAID country report. In highlighting this phenomenon, USAID findings conclude that,

Disputes over access to land are relatively common in Cameroon. The main causes of these conflicts are changing land use patterns, increasing land degradation, increasing population densities and a lack of policies and rules for managing land disputes (USAID, 2011, p.11)

Local land and boundary disputes between different ethnic groups have become a national problem. The problem is compounded by colonial policies that appear to have fueled most of the land related conflicts. The fact that these policies have not been
replaced by more friendly guidelines that could mitigate the reoccurrence of these conflicts irritates the problem.

This study examines the history and patterns of recurring land and boundary disputes between the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. This situation is a case of a local level conflict that is part of the larger national problem in Cameroon.

**Research Objectives**

**Main Objective**

This study is investigated whether colonial land tenure and policies set the stage for recurrent land and boundary disputes between the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages.

**Specific Objectives**

- First, this study examined the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance to the indigenes of Balikumbat and Bafanji.
- Second, this study diagnosed the causes, history, and recurrences of the land dispute.
- Third, an inquiry was conducted into the colonial land policy and its contribution to the land dispute in Balikumbat and Bafanji.
- Fourth, this study determined the role of the present La Republic du Cameroon government in the solution of the dispute.
- Fifth, this study provides possible solutions to the conflict by establishing a long lasting truce between the neighbouring tribes.
Research Questions

The overarching research question is, “Did colonial land tenure set the stage for recurrent land and boundary disputes between the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages?” This is followed by a series of others, which help answer the central research question.

- First, what are the constituents of the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance to the indigenes of Balikumbat and Bafanji?
- Second, what are the causes, history, and reoccurrences the land dispute?
- Third, to what extent did colonial land policy contribute to the land dispute in Balikumbat and Bafanji?
- Fourth, what are the possible solutions toward establishing a long lasting truce between the two neighboring tribes?

Justification and significance of the study

This qualitative case study is justified for a number of reasons. It enlightens readers about the role that the colonial administration of Cameroon played in causing and sustaining land disputes in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. A gap in the literature pertaining to this conflict exists because very little reference has been made on the impact of colonial policies to land disputes in this region. This study deepens our understanding of what such conflicts suggest to the post-colonial administration. Findings from this study provide future researchers of land-related conflicts with strategies in relation to how to approach these kinds of conflicts. The study creates recommendations that could advance the quest for a solution to the dispute. While the purpose of this research is not to generalize about land disputes, findings increase our understanding of land disputes in post-colonial territories.
Land and boundary disagreements seem to be an area of incessant disputes. Scholars and policymakers constantly search for skills and ideas to help them resolve ever-increasing disputes in their communities. This research project makes recommendations that could help increase the latitude of approaches available to these stakeholders. Moreover, what makes this research useful to the field of conflict analysis and resolution is the fact that it focuses on the issue of colonial legacy in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. Unfortunately, the Northwest Region of Cameroon is not the only area plagued with problems related to colonial rule and their aftermath. Drawing from the Balikumbat and Bafanji example, one may extrapolate useful ideas for future research. Although the findings of this single case study cannot be generalized and made applicable to all land and boundary disputes, this research helps highlight problems that are particular to small villages dealing with the policies of colonial regimes.

Moreover, the contribution of this study is relevant to the ongoing discourse about literature pertaining to land conflicts. A noticeable gap exists in literature that explains peculiar characteristics of land disputes from the onset of a conflict to its escalation to violence. Every land dispute is unique in its own right. This study of the Balikumbat and Bafanji land dispute lends additional literature to the field of peace building and international conflict resolution. Land ownership appears to be the trigger of these conflicts. Adding clarity to the evolution of land conflicts and their ability to interface with international conflict resolution makes perfect sense. Conclusions from this study create a better understanding of conflict that emanates from perceived land boundary differences and the factors that sustain them.
Definition of Key Concepts

Land Tenure/Ownership

Land tenure derives from the Latin word ‘tenere’ that means ‘to hold’ (Barnes, 1986). Thus, land tenure describes the system of access to and control over land and related resources. It defines the rules and rights which govern the appropriation, cultivation, and use of natural resources on a given space or piece of land. Strictly speaking, it is not the actual land that is owned, but rights and duties over it (Ng’ombe & Mushinge, 2014). Land tenure can be either private or communal. In the case of the disputed land between Balikumbat and Bafanji, the Bangang area is communal land. However, individuals farm on this land by virtue of the belongingness to the ethnic group.

Intractable Conflict

According to Coleman (2000), “Intractable conflicts, broadly defined, are intense, deadlocked, and resistant to de-escalation or resolution. They tend to persist over time, with alternating periods of greater and lesser intensity. Intractable conflicts come to focus on needs or values that are of fundamental importance to the parties. The conflict pervades all aspects of the parties’ lives, and they see no way to end it, short of utterly destroying the other side.” (p.6) Due to the traditional and religious attachments these villages hold to the disputed area, the conflict between the Bafanji and Balikumbat people is intractable, with both villages not willing to surrender to the other.

Colonialism

This term refers to the establishment, exploitation, maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of a colony in one territory by a political power from another region. It is a set
of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony and often between the colonists and the indigenous population. The Berlin Conference of November 1884 to February 1885 and the scramble for Africa by imperial Europe for political, social, religious, and economic domination is a classic example of colonialism. Contextually, Cameroon was home to two colonial masters, the Germans and the British. The presence of two colonial maps demarcating the boundary between Balikumbat and Bafanji have left the two tribes and the present Cameroon government in cognitive dissonance as to any possible solution to this intractable conflict.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the background of the study to create a better understanding of the context of the problem. The objective is to determine whether the colonial land tenure system is responsible for the recurrent land and boundary conflict amongst the Balikumbat and Bafanji people. It raises the following research question, “Did the colonial land tenure set the stage for recurrent land and boundary disputes between the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages?” To answer this question, this chapter divided it into five different components. These questions are:

First, what are the constituents of pre-colonial perception of land and its importance? Second, what are the causes, history, and recurrence of the land dispute?

Third, to what extent did colonial land policy contribute to the land dispute in Balikumbat and Bafanji?

Fourth, are there possible solutions to the intractable conflict that has arisen?
The next chapter reviews relevant literature pertaining to this inquiry. Chapter three presents the methodology used in the study, chapter four discusses the findings and results, while chapter five offers conclusions and recommendations.
Chapter Two

Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter presents the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical framework of this study. It begins with a review of documents that explain the major concepts and research objectives of this study. This is followed by a review of explanatory theories. The chapter concludes with empirical studies of land disputes in other areas of Africa.

Conceptual Framework

Indigenous Conception of Land and its Importance

The vast majority of African people generally believe that land is a gift from God and that it is at the center of human existence. Land occupies a central place in the African worldview. In the African belief system, land establishes the interconnectedness between different tripartite African worlds. These are the Macrocospms, Mesocosms, and Microcosms (Mbiti, 1969).

The Macrocospms refers to the Supreme Being and the divinities or deities who execute his commands. It is the superior hierarchy of the world inhabited by superior beings. These are God the Moulder and Creator of the Universe and divinities such as the Earth, Sea, Sun, Moon, Rain, and Thunder. These beings are the agents that execute the instructions of the Supreme Being. These agents function within the context of land (Mbiti, 1969).

The Mesocosms refers to the ancestors (living dead) who serve as intermediaries between human beings on earth and the superior beings in the Macrocospms. By offering sacrifices and prayers, the mesocosms serves as the intermediary between the
Microcosmos and the Macrocosmos. In times of need and crises, Africans appeal to the Macrocosmos for both spiritual and material sustenance (Mbiti, 1992; Soseh, 2011).

The Microcosmos constitutes human beings and all the creatures around. These creatures range from human beings, land, and minerals. Land, as a microcosmos, links human beings to other worlds. This is possible through spiritual (sacrifices and prayers) and material sustenance. For these reasons, the importance bestowed upon land ranges from spiritual to material needs. From a spiritual point of view, Africans use land and its components to venerate their ancestors and worship God to enhance their well-being. From a material dimension, land provides subsistence in the form of shelter, food, wealth, and power (Mbiti, 1992; Soseh, 2011).

In an area where three-quarters of the population relies on agriculture, either grazing or farming, the importance of land cannot be overemphasized. Since land is considered precious and of high value, the practice of land grabbing is prominent. Without a strict control mechanism for the distribution and demarcation of land, conflict over land is inevitable (Chabel, Engel & Gentili, 2005). The disputed land in Bangang, that lies between the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji, is fertile and used for habitation, cultivation, and to host shrines for traditional ritual sacrifices. Since the land is used in these ways, the tendency to acquire more land and forge boundary lines is tempting. It is within this framework that tradition and culture influence conflict between the people of Balikumbat and those of Bafanji (Mbah, 2008). For those who believe that this land is the abode of their ancestors, they believe that it is better to shed blood than relinquish it. For those who believe it is their sole source of subsistence and livelihood, there is no choice but to fight to retain it.
Though constitutional law has replaced customary laws, many governments have failed to manage local disputes without repressive measures. The absence of traditional forms of dispute resolution and the use of modern weaponry accelerate the transfer of assets from the politically weak to the politically strong (Campbell et al., 2000). Local conflicts escalate into political conflicts and render the weak vulnerable. The customary role of elders as peacekeepers changed in the post-colonial period into sources of party ideology and political manipulation. Because colonization turned land into a commodity, people now fight to win it whereas before, it was held in trust for all including future generations. The arbitrary boundaries then just added to the fighting because now, boundaries became exclusionary based on ownership, even though they were in the wrong places. Political inclinations of tribal leaders, like Fons, now compromise the process of justice (Bryant, 1998). The fact that all of the political institutions of the subdivision are based in Balikumbat, and that the former Fon enjoyed political immunity from the incumbent government, prevented the possibility of effecting just decisions about the conflict (Brochhaus et al., 2003; Brochhaus, 2005). The weakness of the political will in handling the problem of conflict has been laid bare.

Furthermore, the scarcity of and competition over natural resources is a major cause of the land conflict between the Balikumbat and Bafanj people. A major cause of the conflict is attributed to competition over declining resources (Lind, Jeremy & Sturman, 2002). This arises from the natural resource base, population pressure, and environmental degradation (Hartman, 2001; Homer-Dixon, 1999; Peet & Watt, 1996). The massive population movements pushed and pulled other groups in the search for fertile lands. Large areas of once fertile land have become desertified. Available fertile
land is reduced, which intensifies competition over it (Moritz, 2006a, McCabe 2004; Kum, 1983). Fon Galabe III underscores this point when he testifies about the different crops cultivated in the disputed land (Letter of 14th 08/1969).

Additionally, the land tenure system in the country is a critical issue. Land degradation is caused by climate change and human activities such as farming and cutting trees. Resource competition intensifies, which in turn, causes social inequalities. Economic deprivation and environmental degradation escalate as poor inhabitants of degraded ecosystems are forced to compete for diminishing resources (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987; Breusers, 1999; Burnham, 1980). Moreover, the weak political will and lack of prompt government action have frequently exacerbated conflict rather than provide relief and solutions to the land and boundary disputes of the Balikumbat and Bafanji people. In this turbulent atmosphere, disrespect for the rule of law heightens insecurity. People arm themselves for protection against violence and theft of their resources. Inter-communal fighting and social and political breakdowns enhance the destruction of the needs of the opponents. This belligerent attitude creates excessive leeway for illegalities such as looting, lawlessness, and deadly battles (Braukamper, 2000; Sabina, 2006; Arditi, 1997).

Endemic poverty, vast inequality, and a paucity of opportunity are reliable predictors of conflict. According to Benjaminsen & Boubacar (2009), poverty of great magnitude “contributed to the emergence of war by exacerbating underlying social tensions and depriving governments of the means of ending war. Poverty limits opportunities in education, unemployment, and economic advancement.”(p.103). A consistent lack of opportunity intensifies a sense of ignorance among social groups
suffering from discrimination (Barrot, 1992; Barth, 1959; Mitchell, 1981). With scarce opportunities, discrimination takes away any hope of finding employment. Deep resentment develops quickly and destroys the intrinsic feeling among its victims that they have a stake in society. Denial of opportunity and the impoverishment of people is closely linked to societal resistance to state rules and regulations (Bett, 1994; Steve, 2000).

With Balikumbat as the administrative and religious headquarters of this subdivision, the people of Bafanji feel that they are unnecessarily subordinated to violent and wicked neighbours. As a result, they are ready to resist any authoritative action from the people of Balikumbat (Moritz, 2006). The people of Bafanji also believe that both religious and civil authorities are perpetuating their subordination to the people of Balikumbat. For these reasons, the people of Bafanji maintain a suspicious relationship with them (Pelican, 2006). This attitude does not enhance the process of peace between the two parties. Therefore, persistent conflicts on land and boundary disputes are sustained (Peluso, Lee & Watts, 2001).

Another exacerbating factor is a strategy leaders use to gain and consolidate power. Colonial rulers, government officials, and the church have fueled ethnic tension by deliberately favoring some ethnic religious groups at the expense of others. These divide-and-rule strategies created and sustained ethnically defined economic and political inequalities that help fuel continuing cycles of rebellion and repression (Sandole, 1999; Steve, 2000). Having to endure discrimination from national governments causes much resentment in the people of Bafanji. Since the conflicting parties belong to different ethnic and clan groups, ethnicity is an effective form of political mobilization. It is an
imperative embedded in the foundation of the political order. Ethnicity also functions as a controlling factor in the political process. It is intrinsically political since it naturally encourages ruling groups to go to great lengths to emphasize their political affiliation. Ethnicity is also the ruling principle of economic and social differentiation. It divides groups that confront each other while competing for material and social resources (Prutt, Dean & Kim, 2004).

It is a misunderstanding to limit conflict in Africa to tribal warfare. Western analysts attempt to place the burden of violence in sociological factors inherent in Africa. This view ignores the fact that asymmetrical modernization in Africa gave ethnic groups incentives to organize and increase the level of competition that already existed in most countries. Modernization generally causes ethnic competition to degenerate into a new form of social organization that centers on the capitalist means of production (Richards, 2005). Rapid modernism creates competition for limited resources that mobilizes ethnic competition. However, a rational basis exists for ethnic competition. Each ethnic group actually represents politically mobilized coalitions used to attain limited income and capital. The most fundamental resources that groups require are land, the market, power, and jobs (Little, 1987; Kurtz, 2001; Kriesberg, 2007). Competition for these resources can be fierce. With modernization, it is clear that some groups will benefit disproportionately because of the factor of space. Balikumbat and Bafanji are noted for the production of crops such as groundnuts, okra, corn, and beans they ship to major cities in Cameroon. This is a lucrative business for these people. The acquisition of large tracts of land results in a great means of production. In this capitalist spirit, giving up privileges gained from agricultural activities is something no one wants to do.
Competition for land in this context entails conflict between the two ethnic groups (Mitchel, 1983; Hussein, Sumberg & Seddon, 2000).

From colonial times, the local administration was the primary agent of modernization. Groups tended to be organized along ethnic and tribal lines. This meant that groups that were better “spatially located” received a greater share of the benefits of modernization. These groups had incentives to mobilize support and gain political power to ensure that they retained these advantages. Political power with authority over the distribution of many of the benefits of modernity became tied to ethnic mobilization. Furthermore, the distribution of limited resources became a primary focus for politicians, their supporters, and more curious surrounding others (Hurault, 1998).

In sum, competition for political power can exacerbate ethnic tensions. Political leaders in many African countries have attempted to mobilize supporters through appeals to ethnic identity. This has worsened underlying ethnic resentment, which in turn, has led to conflict. In particular, poorly designed or implemented elections, which are seen to represent voter preferences, have aggravated ethnic tensions within the region.

**Cameroon Land Tenure System from Pre-Colonial to Post Colonial Era**

Cameroon is one of the Central African countries whose population of over 20 million people is characterized by great linguistic and ethnic diversity. It gained independence from the joint Anglo-French colonial rule in 1961 and 1960 respectively. Like many African nations, Cameroon evolved rather quickly after independence into a one-party state until 1991 when multiparty democracy was instituted (Fonjong &Markham, 2008). Its social structure is marked by strong loyalties to ethnic heritage and local villages (Gwan, 1982).
Despite numerous formal legal provisions to the contrary, Cameroon remains a male-dominated society where men are privileged by custom. Men continue to dominate legally in land ownership, the inheritance of land and property, access to credit, and the right to grow cash crops. The right to determine who can use family lands, family planning, the right to enter areas where women are excluded by taboo, and the right to take multiple wives are other privileges men enjoy (Guya, 1984; Fonjong, 2001; Endeley & Sikod, 2007; Fonjong & Markham, 2008).

In Cameroon, like elsewhere in West Africa, the land tenure system was shaped by historical, economic, and especially political developments. Hence, the land tenure system has therefore evolved from the pre-colonial to the present period.

**The Pre-Colonial Era**

Before colonization, there were basic tenets embodied in the way of life of indigenous communities in Cameroon that were used to regulate ownership and use of land. These tenets were usually connected to the manner in which land was first acquired by the community. To the natives, land was not viewed in terms of economic value. Just like water, air, and fire, land was not considered an object capable of individual ownership (Henry, 1983; Rayner, 1898; Whiteman’s Report 1921). Instead, it was, and still is, a source of the socio-cultural wellbeing of a people, a deity, and a spiritual link between a people and their god. Land provided the basic needs of sustenance. It was not thought of in terms of its economic value. As an ancestral gift, a trust was created by the present members of these customary communities to protect and pass on the land to the next generation (West African Land Commission 1912: 183). That is why land could not be alienated through sales for fear of depleting the family or village patrimony.
This land, which was acquired through conquest or first settlement, belonged to a community as a village or a family, just like a corporate entity. The traditional authority or family head personified these entities in the sense that he controlled the land for, and on behalf of, the village or family. The land was not in his private name. Any member who needed this land for farming or cultivation requested allocation in perpetuity of an aliquot from the traditional authority. This land then became his for generations to come. The individual, however, had no rights to alienate this land without the consent of the traditional authority or family council (village or family elders), or chief or family head (Rayner, 1898; Mabogunje, 1981). According to the Fon of Kom of Northwest Cameroon, allocation of land in this way was given mainly to men and not to women. Women could only come onto the land through their male matrikins or patrikins. These allocations could not be made to women because they did not have the customary legal capacity to perform customary symbolic ownership rights, which was mainly the pouring of libation.

**The Colonial Era**

Cameroon had two main colonial experiences. These eras were the German colonial rule from 1884 to 1914 and the joint Anglo-French administration from 1918 until independence. It is during this era that individual ownership introduced by the European colonizers of Cameroon (see for example, Viscount Haldane in Amodu Tijani v Secretary of Southern Nigeria) awakened the natives to the commercial value of land.

**The Period of German Rule (1884-1914)**

The German rule in Kamerun was ushered in when Nachtigal ratified the Treaty of Annexation. It was signed by King Akwa on behalf of Kings and chiefs of Douala,
Cameroon and Adolf Woermanon on behalf of German firms. By this treaty, the traditional chiefs agreed to abandon their influence relating to sovereignty, legislation, and administration of the territory and turn it over to the Germans. In return, the Germans were to respect the customary laws of the natives.

The Germans pursued a policy of land appropriation from the natives with little or no consideration for plantation agriculture. Subsequently, the German Imperial Government enacted the German Kronland Act of July 15, 1896. It provided that all lands, which were not effectively occupied by the natives, were herrenloss land (terra nullius). They were assimilated as part of German overseas dominions and the property of the German Imperial Government. They failed to take into account the fact that, even though the natives were not effectively using the land, at no time had the land been abandoned by them (Mabo v. Queensland, 2005). The land in question could be land on fallow, hunting grounds, or allocated for community reserves. At that time, the land that natives could effectively occupy was insignificant when compared to that which was unoccupied. However, all native land was appropriated by the German imperialists except that which was ‘effectively occupied’ by the chiefs, the customary communities, and that which the Germans had been given freehold interests.

German land policy was based solely on their economic interest rather than the general interest of the host communities. For example, at the foot of Mount Cameroon, where the land is very fertile and suitable for plantation agriculture, the natives were carted into reservaatst (reserves) around Protestant and Catholic missions (Njoh, 2000: 246). Von Puttkamer, the governor of the colonial state, decided that the natives would be granted no more than 1.5 hectares for residential purpose (Njoh, 1998: 409). This land
policy was to restrict the amount of farmland available to the natives in a bid to convert them to wage labor. This policy fostered the appropriation of land and shifted the power over it from the local chiefs to German colonizers.

Land concessions were granted to the South Cameroon Company and Northwest German Company, so that by 1896, these two companies controlled one-fifth of the land in Kamerun. Two German companies, Woerman and Jantsen and Thormahlen, owned all of the land in the Bakweri and coastal Mboko (Mbuagbaw, 68). Most were taken from the natives by force, tricks, or insignificant payments (5 marks per hectare). Similarly, the Germans further contravened the annexation treaty by taking over land control from the Fons and traditional chiefs. This act enabled the Germans to redistribute or re-allocate land for agriculture and to convert the indigenes into wage laborers after depriving them of access to their ancestral land. The Germans went further by introducing a land register (Grundbuch) for land registration against a fee. This act guaranteed the title of German companies and individuals who had bought appropriated land at the expense of the natives.

Summarily, the German colonial rule was marked by a complete dismantling of the native collective system of land control and by asserting their supremacy over the country’s lands. With German established supremacy over land, fertile land previously used for food production would be converted into plantation land for the cultivation of cash crops destined for colonial markets. As a result, the number of German plantation farmers in Cameroon rapidly increased from seven in 1891, to 182 in 1913. The total land owned and occupied by the Germans and German companies, uniquely for plantation, rose to 264,000 acres in the coastal region of the South West alone (Njoh, 2002).
The Anglo-French Colonial Era (1914-1961)

With the defeat of the Germans in the First World War, the British and the French formally took over Cameroon after the Anglo-French Declaration of July 10, 1919. Cameroon became a mandate territory of the League of Nations and subsequently as a trust territory of the United Nations in the ratio 1:4 respectively. The British ruled one-fourth of the territory of Cameroon as an integral part of Western Nigeria until its independence in 1961. French Cameroon was ruled as a separate French colony. During the period until 1947, the British and French took over the German plantations (Acworth et al., 2001). Just like the Germans, the French declared all unoccupied lands as ‘terres vacantes et sans maître’ or ‘vacant land without landlord’. This gave them the right to exploit the land and resources without native approval.

The principal land tenure law (Ordinance No. 1 927) stated that all lands, except the estates registered and recognized by the British, were native lands. These lands were under the control and disposition of the Prime Minister who was to hold and administer the land for the natives. In other words, no use of native land was valid without the Prime Minister’s consent. By this ordinance, the indigene’s rights of ownership over ancestral land were converted into customary rights of occupancy as per Article 2. The natives were accorded use and occupation of the land while non-natives, who had acquired it illegally, were given certificates of occupancy. Even though this document was a 99-year lease, where the holder paid rent to the government, it was regarded by mostly colonial economic operators as documents of title (Fonjong et al., 2010).

The German and Anglo-French colonial land policies dispossessed the natives of their rights to ancestral land. These policies contravened both the annexation treaty and
the trusteeship agreement by marginalizing these natives in land matters, particularly women who needed land for food crop cultivation. The post-colonial period did not seem to bring along with it much hope, as it was a continuation of colonial land policy by the new Cameroonian administration.

Both the colonial and post-colonial administration helped to destroy the notion of communal land rights and made land a commercial asset. The new notion of viewing land as an individual or commercial property, in places like Wum, had to wait until 1967 when the Wum Area Development Authority became commercialized. Land registration introduced by the Germans after the 1896 Act was fostered by the British who granted only rights of occupancy (usufruct rights) to the natives. Non-natives were given certificates of occupancy, which gave them security of tenure over the land they possessed.

**The Post-Colonial Era**

At independence, the two Cameroons inherited two separate legal and administrative cultures, one from the French and the other from the British. As federated states of the unified Cameroon, each territory was allowed some autonomy in land administration until 1974, when there was an attempt to harmonize the many land laws through the 1974 Land Ordinances. These ordinances attempted to curb haphazard dealings that underpinned land transactions, promote maximal use of land through a more rational system of allocation, and remove the customary notion of inalienability of land to assure proper land administration, which would lead to growth. The intention was also to ensure a system of land registration by way of legal enactment, which provided security of tenure to customary landowners. This was prompted by the fact that the economic
agenda of this agrarian economy was to convert customary farmers into bourgeois planters with secured tenures. This was one of the principal missions of ‘Operation Green Revolution’ launched in 1973 by President Ahmadou Ahidjo (Fonjong et al., 2010).

Section 1(2) of Ordinance No. 74-1 of July 6, 1974 provides that the state is the guardian of all lands in Cameroon and it may intervene to ensure the rational use of land in the imperative interest of defense or in the economic policies of the nation. To render this provision operational, it nationalized all land irrespective of effective occupation. Private lands with valid registration documents and state lands as per Sections 14 and 15 of Ordinance No. 74-1 of July 6, 1974 were exempt. Natives who had effectively been on the land before August 5, 1974, but without any registered title, were given 10 and 15 years in urban and rural areas respectively, to obtain land certificates. After this period, their lands would efflux into national land according to Section 4 (1) (new) of Ordinance No. 77-1 of January 10, 1977. The same principle applied to holders of miscellaneous deeds and final court judgments according lands to them.

The management of the national land was thus placed under the management of national Land Consultative Boards as per Section 16 of the Ordinance No. 74-1 of July 6, 1974, which is under the control of the local administrative officers of their jurisdiction. The chiefs or traditional rulers who were the customary custodians of such lands were reduced to just members of this board. Decree No. 77/245 of July 15, 1977, categorized these chiefs into first, second and third class chiefs and reduced them to mere adjunct of administration, thereby demystifying the sacred nature of customary royalty. To create better categorization, these chiefs worked with the administration to cart away indigenous lands (Fonjong et al., 2010).
Conclusively, the African Development Bank states “In Cameroon, like in most sub-Saharan African countries, land tenure is characterized by the coexistence of a traditional or “customary” land tenure system which is in a state of transition and a “modern” land tenure system which is written, introduced through colonization to promote individual landownership basically by colonialists. Cameroon was subjected to German, British, and French colonial rule. Accordingly, it has three different land tenure systems introduced by each of these colonial powers” (African Development Bank, November, 2009, p. IV).

From the above quotation, one can infer that the precolonial land tenure systems were purely communal with little or no private ownership of land. The family heads, chiefs, and Fons were traditional custodians of land. This communal dimension to land tenure was changed during the colonial period. Custody over land was arbitrarily taken away from the traditional authorities and handed over to the colonial powers. Instead of communal land ownership, the colonial masters introduced plantations, which were owned by the colonial firms. Gradually, land tenure shifted from communal to private ownership. In the post-colonial era, the present Cameroon government policy on land tenure seem to be a continuation of the private land tenure of the colonial masters. Authority over land is completely taken away from the traditional leaders and the government is its sole custodian.

**Causes of Land and Boundary Disputes**

Conflict makes life a constant process of adapting to basic insecurity and permanent crises for generations caught up in war. Wars displace populations and create homelessness. They prevent people from meeting their basic needs by destroying crops,
land, and the environment. Wars destroy physical and social infrastructure, human
capital, and local economic institutions (Morton, 1969).

The causes of armed conflicts are numerous and interconnected. They range from
individual to group volition to structural inequality and injustice. Some causes are local
while others arise from national transformations dating back to pre-colonial, colonial, and
post-colonial epochs. Although the quality of governance has apparently improved,
continuing economic crises leading to material insecurity have influenced the activities of
many communities in the country (Hagberg, 1998). This situation explains persistent
conflicts and lack of political stability.

The causes might have been trivial but the effects are far reaching. This sub-
section examines the different causes of land and boundary disputes. These causes are
classified under systemic external and internal, and proximate external and internal
causes of conflicts.

**Systemic Causes of Land Conflict**

Systemic causes of conflict refer to the structural conditions that influence the
outbreak of war between two or more parties. These conditions are either external or
internal. For external conditions, one refers to legacies of the colonial masters and
administrative bottlenecks. Internal conditions include geophysical conditions, scarcity of
resources, poverty, socio-economic inequalities, and ethnic divisions.

**External Systemic Causes of Conflict**

Colonial legacies comprise the external systemic causes of the tribal conflicts
between Balikumbat and Bafanji. Colonialism has had tremendous cultural ramifications
in most African states. Scholars like Mbah (2008), Nkwi (2001), Kurtz (2001), and Barth
(1959), portray the interrelatedness between conflicts in Africa and influences from the colonial period. Culture is Africa’s antennae into the unknown future and their reference point into the past. People, who are robbed of their heritage during occupation, enslavement, and political and religious colonization, become disoriented and disempowered. The world cannot ignore the centuries of cultural adulteration of the African people through mental indoctrination against their heritage. With the advent of colonization, Africans have been weakened culturally, economically, and politically. The crisis of leadership is prominent in African society (Mbah, 2008; Nkwi, 2011; Kurtz, 2001; Barth, 1959).

The problem of cultural alienation and distortion cannot be overemphasized. According to Sobseh (2011), the attempt of colonialism to replace indigenous values with western ones produces a cultural dualism. Referring to the tribal conflicts between Balikumbat and Bafanji, one of the most important legacies of the colonial era was the formalization of expansionism. The Germans, who were the first colonial masters of Cameroon, planted boundaries demarcating these two villages. With the defeat of the Germans after the WWI and with the advent of the British, new boundary demarcations were introduced with the planting of pillars disregarding the German border definitions. This fact is confirmed by Fon Galabe III, who acted as plaintiff on court judgment and representative of Balikumbat (Administrative Letter, suit No. FCJ/3/1970).

The discrepancies in colonial legacies in relation to the introduction and definition of boundaries constitute a major source of conflict between the two tribes. While the Balikumbat people claim the boundary line defined by the Germans is the right one, the Bafanji people maintain that the correct boundaries were those defined by the British.
The inability to reconcile these conflicting opinions between the two tribes has been responsible for persistent land conflicts in the Balikumbat area. Each party claims that the definition of boundary lines is contrary to the law when not ruled in their favor (Administrative Letter, suit No. FCJ/3/1970).

Another colonial legacy that sustains the land conflict is the dichotomy between the French and British administration. During the colonial period, Cameroon was placed under the French and the British Mandate of the League of Nations as an aftermath of the WWI. This was later changed to the Trusteeship of the United Nation Organization after the WWII. These transformations still placed Cameroon under the control of Britain and France (Mbah, 2008). As a result, two colonial policies and approaches to administration were effected in Cameroon. The French employed a direct rule in the policy of administration, where traditional rulers had no say in the administration of the state. The British embarked on an indirect rule where local chiefs participated in administrative affairs. These administrative discrepancies were introduced in Cameroon as colonial legacies.

At independence, the British West Cameroon and the French East Cameroon had two different approaches to administration. In spite of that, both were maintained in a federation. With the unfolding of political events in Cameroon, these two parts metamorphosed to a United Republic in 1972. This transformation implied that two parts of a country that were administered differently had to be administered as one country. Here, the prominence of conflicting values of administration serves as an added impetus to the land conflict in question. For English-speaking administrators, to resolve land conflict between the two tribes, traditional authorities have a great role to play.
Conversely, the French bypasses these authorities, pronounce statements, and injunctions without due consultation of the local authorities (Mbah, 2008; Sobseh, 2011). This situation has aggravated the land and boundary conflicts between Balikumbat and Bafanji.

Harmonization of the legal system in Cameroon means giving prominence to the French legal system. With the French approach to administration, problems and conflict between these two tribes remains inevitable. Attempts to solve this problem without referring to the indigenous rulers fails to maintain a lasting peace in the area. Decision-making fails to pertain to the needs of the people as the civil authorities operate from an epic perspective (Interviews with traditional Authorities, 55 and 58 years, August 3, 2015).

**Internal Systemic Causes of Conflict**

Internal systemic causes are changes that occur from within the context in which the crisis occurs. The breakdown of values and traditions stands at the root of the conflict between Balikumbat and Bafanji people. The rates of rural-urban migration escalate throughout Africa (Adebayo, 1997; Bassett, 1986, Dafinger, Andreas, Pelican, 2006). In most villages, it was perfectly natural to feed at any table and lodge in any hut. However, in the cities, communal existence no longer holds. One must now pay for lodging and be invited for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. In this state of affairs, young men find out that relations cannot sustain them anymore. They join other migrants and slip gradually into the criminal processes of city life (Interviews with Divisional Officer, Balikumbat, 51 years, August 6, 2015).
One of the most painful consequences of this exodus is depersonalization and deculturalization. The way of life in the village still procured a certain reassurance and a feeling of solidarity. In the city, families face competition from other families. They are ill prepared for this task. The immigrant in the city must abandon his system of values and traditional behavior to meet up with the exigencies of city life (Turner, 1957). The inevitable consequences of these conditions are unemployment, crime, alcoholism, debauchery, and divorce. This leads to diminishing values such as the respect for one’s elders and parental authority. Urban tendencies encroach on the lives of young people including those in the village setting. With degrading traditional practices and scarce opportunities in traditional settings, young people resort to practices such as banditry, looting and loafing. Activities such as drinking at market places and village squares without any sense of purpose become common (Max, 1995).

What prompts the disintegration of traditional values from most African societies? Rampant circulation and smuggling of modern weaponry gives leeway to criminal acts. Traditional values are not still being passed down when displacement causes community breakdown (Bailey, 1969). The absence of a legal system to try crimes outside the military system and the replacement of traditional authority by military authority reduce prospects for local approaches to peace. Additionally, as with the Balikumbat and Bafanji people, declining resources and growing impoverishment strangle traditional values and render them vulnerable (Davidheiser & Luna, 2008).

**Proximate Causes of Conflict**

Proximate causes of conflict refer to political and institutional factors that influence systemic conditions thus giving rise to violent reactions. These causes are also
external and internal. The former refers to economic reforms, dislocations, ideologies, arm flows, and military aid. The latter imply militarization, competition for state power, war making for economic gain, and problems of political liberalization.

**External Proximate Causes**

First, deeply held ideologies have become a source of tension amongst societies. Within the contemporary practice of democracy in Africa, partisan politics have provoked many conflicts rather than maintain peace (Barth, 1959; De Haan, Driel & Kruith, 1990). In the context of Balikumbat and Bafanji land and boundary conflicts, political practices have enhanced provocations, which lead to bloody conflicts in the sub-division. There are disagreements that are more salient over the models of governance and political allegiance to political parties. The former Fon of Balikumbat was a staunch supporter of the political ideas of the Cameroon People’s Democratic Party of incumbent government (Sobseh, 2011). Conversely, the people of Bafanji are staunch supporters of the Social Democratic Front who are the prominent opposition political party in the country. These divergences in political opinions and attitudes give room for provocations and counter provocations during municipal, parliamentary, or presidential electoral periods. With the tense atmosphere that normally characterizes electoral periods in Cameroon, these provocations give rise to armed conflicts and war between the two villages. For instance, the 1997 tribal conflict between the two villages broke out immediately after the proclamation of the results of the elections (Sobseh, 2011). Therefore, the land conflicts between the two villages are often provoked by other factors, which do not necessarily arise from the use of land.
Second, external military support from the incumbent government has contributed to persistent conflicts in this sub-division. The presence of gendarmes in Balikumbat and the ability of these people to lobby them for support in times of conflict make them feel empowered. The people of Bafanji do not feel the same way. To lobby for support, the former traditional ruler of Balikumbat paid allegiance to the political ideologies of the political party (CPDM) of the incumbent government (Sobseh, 2011). In times of conflict, the greater transfer of resources like armed soldiers to the area of conflict worked in favour of the people of Balikumbat. Private arms dealers from the neighbouring tribes have also fueled the persistence of this conflict over land. These weapons are used to attack women in the farms. With the intervention of men, the attack becomes an armed conflict with deadly consequences (Goheen, 1996; Gulliver, 1979).

**Proximate Internal Causes**

Political exclusion through single party support, which is a state dominated authoritarian expression, is an important cause to deepening land crisis between the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji. This “top-down commandism” compromises the process of democracy in the sub-division. The condition produces a concerted aggression of one tribe against the other. This fact is experienced in the manipulation of the electoral processes. A disregard for political opponents is also witnessed. This is seemingly making “ethnocracy” a reality in the sub-division of Balikumbat. Monopolistic control of the State by one or more ethnic group is a major cause of conflict (Breusers et al., 1998; Breusers et al., 2000). This is the situation in the Balikumbat sub-division where Balikumbat hosts all the administrative and religious authorities. This gives the people of this ethnic group a sense of superiority and power over the people of Bafanji.
An interviewee from Bafanji argues that all of the civil and religious administrators who live in Balikumbat ensure that most of the cases are ruled in favour of Balikumbat and to the detriment of the people of Bafanji (Interviews with Church Leaders in Bafanji, August 7, 2014). Both tribes fall under one administrative and religious unit viz, Balikumbat sub-division, and Balikumbat Parish respectively. This gives them a sense of superiority and the possibility of manipulating authorities to their advantage.

Mbah (2008) contends that conflicts in the Northwest Region of Cameroon have resulted from “grave errors of policy and conduct” by regimes in power. Decision-making processes in the administration of the people erroneously offer no room for the participation or expression of the affected communities. Typically, there are no channels for people to express their grievances. The blame for this situation dates back to the end of the colonial period where most states became consumed with corruption and the consolidation of power. Most ethnic groups lost the possibility to participate in the governing affairs of the state. To buttress this argument, Sobseh (2011) argues that in post-colonial Cameroon, most persons from the Northwest Region have become entirely alienated from the State.

The State is seen as in partnership with predatory elites who perpetuate conflict for their private interests. This conception of the State betrays the weaknesses of the incumbent government in handling inter-tribal conflicts because of its support of some elites from a particular tribe. The sub-divisional officer traces one of the causes of the persistent conflict to the absence of the use of local authorities in the resolution. In this interviewee’s view, instructions are imposed from above without taking into
consideration the reality in the field of conflict (Diduk, 1989; Gunder, 1967). This “top-down commandism” in decision making at times compromises the process of justice. With the compromise, one party always feels cheated in the process of resolving the conflict. Thus, persistent conflict between the tribes of Balikumbat and Bafanji remain (See Appendix; Letter of Fon against Court Decision on the matter).

Second, competition for state power creates unequal access, which inevitably leads to persistent conflicts. State power here is used to combat and repress those seeking to displace persons from the area of conflict (Boutrais, 1996). This power is used to capture a great deal of state resources. From this perspective, state power is one of the main causes of conflict (Blench, 1984). This cause comes irrespective of the contexts for which it is fought. State provisions of services to the Balikumbat area makes the Bafanji tribe permanently subordinate to them. The Police post, Gendarmerie, Municipal Council and the Sub-divisional Office are state institutions that are located in Balikumbat. This condition is aggravated by the fact that even private institutions like banks and microfinance groups are all situated in Balikumbat. From a group discussion with five members of the Bafanji catholic mission council, it became obvious that the people of Bafanji are not happy about this permanent situation because the likelihood of conflict between the two societies is always present. This post-colonial trend comes as a heritage of the colonial period. This trend intensifies inequalities between all social groups and regions.

Third, war for economic gain due to “crass profiteerism” causes persistent conflict in this sub-division. Active manipulation of violence by greedy individuals is very prominent. This condition is worsened by individuals who want to be manipulated into
violent activities. Most combatants are “crass profiteers” who are motivated by self-interest (Mbah, 2008; Sobseh, 2011). Asset stripping is a primary feature of this “crass profiteerism” (Kiven, 1997; Quentin, 2005). The participants of this type of conflict are motivated by profit and plunder. They use ethnicity and fear to mobilize and terrorize villagers. The availability of modern weaponry aggravates the situation. As economic rationales of the Balikumbat-Bafanji conflict change, warfare may mutate like a virus.

Outside assistance becomes difficult when this shift is not understood. Since profit making is overriding and corrupt practices are on the rise, most authorities calculate what they gain from prolonged conflict rather than what can be obtained from a long lasting peace. In this context, insecurity and conflict are manipulated for economic and political interests in the following ways. Raiding, official corruption, and charging people to move from one area to another are prominent examples of using conflict for private interests. The use of force to send women away from their farms, destroy some crops, and steal others for private use are other methods of conflict in the area.

A letter from the quarter head of Jogoru in Balikumbat on 11th of May 2011 explains the use of arms, aggression, and threat of lives, theft, and destruction of houses by the people of Bafanji village. Another letter from the Balikumbat traditional council explains the trespass and destruction of Balikumbat people’s crops by the Bafanji people on Monday 1st of May 2013 and testifies about the ulterior motives of this inter-tribal conflict. Ejecting people from productive and fertile lands without providing an alternative to their agricultural activities is no resolution of conflict. Some groups are immune to the costs of violence. These people believe that they benefit from violence rather than losing. This fact is very important to explain. People will exploit the
persistence of this tribal violence to plunder the property of others or settle scores. For example, a stranger who was working in Balikumbat was shot in the guise of tribal violence. However, close examination revealed that he was wooing a Bafanji man’s wife. Therefore, this tribal conflict persists because some unscrupulous individuals exploit it for their private interests.

Fourth, political liberalization is a risky means of management because it gives room for conflict in society. Change of any sort is likely to cause instability. When ethnicity is an important factor in party affiliation, losing an election might mean exclusion from power for an entire ethnic group. Discrimination and repression are sure to follow. The advent of multiparty politics in the 1990s helps to explain the persistence of conflict between these two tribes. A testimony to this fact lies in the political affiliations of the various Fons of these two villages and some of their attempts to manipulate the electoral processes. This is a sensitive issue in the Northwest Region, especially when a leader indulges in fraudulent electoral activities to favour the incumbent government. This has often caused resentment and conflict because of the people’s sense of justice and their political affiliations to one opposition party (Mbah, 2008; Sobseh, 2011). For this reason, political liberalization and multi-party politics lie at the root of land conflict between the two tribes. Every situation of conflict is reminiscent of land conflicts, which soon escalate into war between the two tribes. The root causes of this attitude lie in political corruption, lack of respect for the rule of law, and human rights violations.

The legacy of European colonialism and the devastating impact of the artificial boundaries created by colonial rulers have created the conflict between the people of
Balikumbat and Bafanji. In the 1870s, European powers were bickering among themselves about the spoils of Africa. To prevent further conflict among them, all interested parties convened at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to establish the partitioning of Africa. Some colonial administrators had to rely on the local power structure to manufacture tribal claims to power and hold ceremonies to suit their interests. This “invention of tradition” threw many societies into disarray (Robbins, 2002: p. 302).

Misinformation and intrigue played by traditional rulers during the colonial era continues in the current conflict between the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji. The letter of the Divisional Officer of Ngoketunjia, Ndop dated 11/09/95 explains dubious activities and collusions of the Fon of Balikumbat. This letter comes because of the Fon’s intention to object to the map and documents retracing the boundary between Balikumbat and Bafanji. According to the Fon, the process of justice has been compromised by this activity. The Senior Divisional Officer explained that he is giving false information in order to incite rebellion and perpetuate conflict between the two tribes (Letter, Ref no.E. 31/045/308 OF 11/09/1995, at Ndop).

Lastly, the colonial administration had almost erased cultures and communities with an “education” and “civilizing” program that gave Africans only a minimal skill set that served European colonial interests. According to Bob Geldolf:

To develop a type of nationwide government, (European) colonial administrators effectively set about inventing African traditions for Africa that would make the process more acceptable to the indigenous population. The most far-reaching inventions of tradition in colonial Africa occurred when administrators believed they were respecting age-old African customs whereas (…) what were called
customary law, customary land rights, and customary political structure and so on were in fact all invented by colonial codification. The most pernicious of the traditions, which the colonial period bequeathed to Africa, was the notion of tribalism. Just as every European belonged to a nation, every African must belong to a tribe, a cultural unit with common language, a single system and established customary law (2014, p. 234).

In Zambia, the chief of a little known group once said,

My people were not soli until 1937 when the Bwana DC told us we were. The concept of Zulu as a discreet ethnic group did not emerge until 1870. The colonialists imposed a new political geography on these dangerous sands. (Rosenberg, 2014; in http://www.geographyabout.com/library/weekaa21601/ahtm. accessed August 23, 2015).

This process has been enthusiastically reinforced by the Africans themselves. Tribes have become the objects of passionate African imagination. The British ruled through local hierarchies, a process that unconsciously promoted the most malleable, collaborative or corrupt local chiefs. Where none existed, they simply created one, enabling ambitious individuals and groups to achieve positions of status, dominance, and wealth that might otherwise have been unattainable. This situation led to the creation of tribes and chiefdoms where none existed. As a result, many tribes continuously claim ownership originators in a particular area.

This situation exists between the Balikumbat and Bafanji. The people of Balikumbat claim that Bafanji never existed whereas those of Bafanji claim that they
were the first people to settle in the land. The people of Balikumbat came later and met them in this area. This situation proves how colonialism created tribes and demarcations that never existed in Africa. There is a need to find a lasting solution to this situation otherwise, accusations and counter accusations will only end in bloody conflicts between the two tribes.

Theoretical Framework

The Balikumbat and Bafanji conflict was analyzed within the prism of two conflict resolution theories, Human Needs Theory and Post-Colonial Theory. Theories of conflict resolution have been developed to set a barometer or a measuring rod to help understand conflict. Theories of this nature provide the tools, skill-sets, and/or lenses to assist in developing solutions to ever-occurring conflicts.

Human Needs Theory

This theory states that all human action is driven by some kind of need. According to Burton (1979), the need for identity, freedom, personal fulfillment, recognition, security and safety, participation, love and belongingness and distributive justice are most important to all people. These needs are responsible for upholding a person's dignity. This assumption gives this theory a universal character because people of all races, creeds, and cultures can relate to these fundamental human needs. Therefore, conflict resolution must always consider these needs and all the people vying to satisfy them. Expanding on this thought, Katrin Gillwald suggests that “needs are all the exigencies of human existence and development and are an important driving force thereof.” (Katrin Gillwald in Burton, 1970, p.115) Human behavior can be predicated on
the particular need impacting the person in question. Viewed from this perspective, needs have a universal character and are greatly embedded in the human psyche.

Northrup (1989) contends that certain universal human needs are critical to human existence and, until such needs are addressed, conflict could assume an intractable character. Using the idea that human needs generate happiness among people, Maslow (1970) designed a hierarchy of needs that transcends cultures and, once they are satisfied, can lead to optimal happiness. Accordingly, to Maslow, “in one society, one obtains self-esteem by being a good hunter. In another society, by being a great medicine man or a bold warrior, or a very unemotional person and so on” (Maslow, 1970, p. 22). Maslow's hierarchy is divided into needs that are physiological, safety/security oriented, and focused on love/affection/belonging, esteem and self-actualization. In short, this theory hinges on the notion that, to resolve conflict amicably and permanently, these human needs must be satisfied in the conflict resolution process.

The human needs theory as construed above speaks to a very static character of the theory. However, some researchers also suggest that human needs can be dynamic in nature. Reflecting on this issue, Christopher Mitchell argued that “there is considerable evidence that human needs theorists regard at least the hierarchy of human needs as subject to change over time and according to circumstances.” (Christopher Mitchell in John Burton, 1970, p.164) The understanding here is the notion that human beings have the ability to prioritize their needs by giving preference to other things more pressing to them. While this may not reflect a permanent character in human beings, it however shows that needs can be dynamic in nature in accordance with what circumstances the human being find themselves.
The foregoing discussion also finds expression in the interplay of basic human needs and culture. Culture is dynamic in nature just in the same way as basic human needs are. However, there are aspects of culture that can be perpetuated from generation to generation just as the basic tenets of human needs are static in nature. In the case of the conflict being researched, culture and human needs come face to face with one another. The people of this region are very culturally oriented. Their culture is who they are and as such, the need to preserve it and identify with it takes precedence over many other needs. The need for example to preserve this piece of land as a place for ancestral worship delves very deeply into identity needs. If the place of worship is given away to the adversary, then something about their culture has been affected and so the conflict persists as a way of defending the need to uphold culture. It is in this way that basic human needs and culture intertwine in some instances. As Maslow explains below, people want to be happy and they pursue their needs in accordance with what will enhance the circumstances of their state.

**Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1970)**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is often used to summarize the belief system of humanistic psychology. The basic premise behind this hierarchy is that we are born with certain needs. Without meeting these initial needs, we will not be able to continue our life and move upward on hierarchy. This first level consists of our physiological or basic needs for survival. Without food, water, sleep, and oxygen, nothing else in life matters.

Once these needs are met, we can move to the next level, which consists of our need for safety and security. Here we look seek out safety through other people and strive to find a world that will protect us and keep us free from harm. Without these goals being
met, it is extremely difficult to think about higher-level needs and therefore we cannot continue to grow. When we feel safe and secure in our world, we begin to seek out friendships to feel a sense of belonging. Maslow’s third level, the need for belonging and love, focuses on our desire to be accepted, to fit in, and to feel like we have a place in the world. Having these needs met propels us closer to the top of this pyramid and into the fourth level called esteem needs. At this level we focus our energy on self-respect, respect from others, and feeling that we have made accomplishments in our life. We strive to move upward in careers, to gain knowledge about the world, and to work toward a sense of high self-worth.

Maslow noted the following versions of esteem needs:

- The lower version is the need for the respect of others, the need for status, fame, glory,
- recognition, attention, reputation, appreciation, dignity, and even dominance.
- The higher version involves the need for self-respect, including feelings of confidence, competence, achievement, mastery, independence, and freedom. Note that this is the “higher” form because, unlike the respect of others, once you have self-respect, it is a lot harder to lose.
- The negative version is low self-esteem and inferiority complexes. Maslow shares Adler’s plan that these lie at the root of many, if not most, human psychological problems. (Maslow, 1970).

The final level in the hierarchy is called the need for self-actualization. According to Maslow, many people may be at this level but very few, if anybody, ever masters it. Self-actualization refers to a complete understanding of the self. To be self-actualized means
that the person knows whom they are, where they belong in the greater society, and feels as if they have accomplished everything that they set out to do. It means that they no longer feel shame or guilt, or even hate, but accept the world and see human nature as inherently good.

The Balikumbat and Bafanji conflict is better understood when viewing it through the lenses of human needs theory. Both parties have unmet needs and hence the motivation to war against one another is expected. Past attempts at resolution may not have completely taken into account the varying needs of each village. It is my contention that a more rigorous application of this theory to the study of this conflict will facilitate a better understanding of both parties and, perhaps, assist in breaking the gridlock that has prevented the resolution of this conflict.

In my discussion of this theory, John Burton has featured as an authoritative voice in understanding the underpinnings of the theory. However, in exploring more about the relationship between culture and basic human needs (BHNs), it suffices to note that John Burton’s theory is limited in this regard as he did not discuss more about how culture affects or changes basic human needs. This is highlighted by Abu-Nimer who contends that “when reviewing Burton’s volumes on BHN theory (1990) or the analytical problem-solving manual(1987), it is clear that Burton assumed that the majority of diplomats and politicians belonged to the same cultural heritage or orientation.” (N. Abu Namir in Avruch and Mitchell, p. 175),

**Post-Colonial Theory**

Post-colonial theory is not easy to define or articulate. With several caveats, this body of theory is an amalgamation of several underpinnings that try to make sense of the
colonial legacy. For Gandhi (1998), “post colonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath.” (p. 4). One can understand post-colonial theory as a post-modern intellectual activity, which hinges on unraveling and analyzing some of the cultural footprints of the colonial enterprise. EWB argues that, “We use the term post-colonial to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (p. 2). Viewed from this perspective, one will be right in a hermeneutic of post-colonial theory to involve some of the work depicted in philosophy, literature, feminism, religious studies, film, or political science. All of these disciplines present a culture affected by a phenomenon so radical that its landscape has been significantly altered.

The rationale of this theory is the attempt to learn how to transcend this period with a hope of creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. Accordingly, “the colonial past is not simply a reservoir of ‘raw’ political experiences and practices to be theorized from the detached and enlightened perspective of the present. It is also the scene of intense discursive and conceptual activity, characterized by a profusion of thought and writing about the cultural and political identities of colonized subjects.’ (Gandhi, 1998, p. 5) It is clear that the post-colonial is more than a historical narrative with no bearing on the present or the future.

Because colonialism in Cameroon may have some inherent differences as compared to other places, it is difficult to arrive at an all-inclusive understanding of the theory from one perspective. That is why some scholars are exercising caution by
intimating that, "post-colonialism, we have stressed, is not a homogenous category, whether across all post-colonial societies or even within a single one. Rather, it refers to a typical configuration, which is always in the process of change, never consistent with itself (Mishra and Hodge, 1999, p. 289). The manner in which the theory attempts to deal with past memories and to forge a way for the future will differ from community to community.

Of utmost importance to post-colonial theorists is giving voice to those who have been battered into submission by the colonial regime. However, disagreement abounds among scholars in relation to different characteristics of the various colonialisms as well as the period in history, which occupies the post-colonial narrative. For instance, one school of thought believes that, “post-colonial, in other words, is applicable not to all of the post-colonial period, but only to that period after colonialism when, among other things, a forgetting of its effects has begun to set in.” This understanding and its resultant theory is a good fit with the land and boundary disputes in Balikumbat and Bafanji.

Electing to use the post-colonial theory in its generic form could be a daunting and confusing task because of the various schools of thought embedded in that one theory. To this effect, I have settled on utilizing the strand of post-colonial discourse highlighted by Edward Said called cultural particularism. To this kind of post-colonial understanding, he said,

Along with armed resistance in places as diverse as nineteenth century Algeria, Ireland and Indonesia, there also went considerable efforts in cultural resistance almost everywhere, the assertions of nationalistic identities, and, in the political
realm, the creation of associations and parties whose common goal was self-
determination and national independence (Said 1993, p. xii)

A clash in cultures could have sparked the inability of the colonial regime to attend to
land disputes. Paying close attention to cultural particularism as discussed within the
greater scope of post-colonial theorizing will help uncover some of the deeper issues that
have fueled the Balikumbat and Bafanji conflict to date.

The merit of this theory rests in its attempt to highlight a narrative of survival for
the millions of people who endured the difficulties associated with colonialism. While
creating meaning out of this experience, this theory encourages empowerment and
capability for this population. However, the major pitfall of this theory is that it is too
general, does not attempt to delve into the history of individual communities, and does
nothing to unravel the struggles endured under colonialism. Without an individual
narrative, every community affected by colonialism will find it difficult to put their past
behind them. Instead, they will continue to see themselves as part of a universal
discourse, which pays no attention to their unique condition. This research project
is therefore designed to understand the effects of colonialism and the unique
circumstances in the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages. According to Nandy (1983),

This colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces
within colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the
process, it helps to generalize that concept of the modern West from a
geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now
everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds” (p. xi).
This means that the process of colonialism contained within it a system carefully created to change not only the geographical space of the colonized but also the mindset in a manner that will align with the aspirations of the West. This explains why the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji are caught in a dilemma as to whether to hold on to the traditional heritage of their ancestors or to embrace the changes being enacted by the colonial masters. Furthermore, the end of colonialism does not reverse this process because a human being is more sophisticated. Therefore, post-colonial reflection is about understanding what is now unfolding in the minds of those who have had to deal with the confusion introduced by the colonial enterprise.

One cannot dissociate the foundational principles of this theory from the conflict under investigation. In fact, the theory explains very eloquently and lends unparalleled insight to the key issues found in this conflict. Balikumbat and Bafanji are tied in a deadly clash over a piece of land. Both villages seem to be unable to overcome the burdens imposed on them by the policies of the colonial regimes. While land was construed by these communities as intrinsically tied to their identity and way of life, the colonial masters saw it as a political and economic tool to be employed to their advantage. It is therefore reasonable to state that post-colonial theory has enabled me to see past the mere rhetoric of blaming the colonial masters for all the problems of colonized societies. Moreover, the theory has allowed me to appreciate the struggles of communities that have had to deal with varying interpretations of how they seek access to or ownership of their own land. The theory brings in focus the reality issues experienced by the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji. It challenges me to see their struggles as people in need of solutions to the causes of their seemingly endless conflict. Furthermore, post-
colonial theory highlights the notion that the wrongs that were done to the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji did not end because colonialism ended. Instead, they persist. The need to address these wrongs in a restorative manner is ever so urgent.

This theory is not without its limitation. Because it focuses on many other areas that are of importance to the post-colonial discourse, it only allows a little room to tie in the land problems that are tackled by this research. The theory is therefore concerned with too much while accomplishing less. Additionally, post-colonial theory tends to be more ideological than practical. The critical reflection about the damages of colonialism is not translated into concrete suggestions of what can be done to repair the damage of the colonial past or to reconstruct affected communities.

In short, the above theories provide a clear and concise way through which we can understand and analyze the Balikumbat and Bafanji land dispute. The insight gathered from the foregoing discussion reveals that many factors are at work in the initiation, emergence, and unfolding of this conflict. These communities are constantly in search of basic needs that will safeguard posterity and the wellbeing of its people. Land is at the epicenter of these needs. Furthermore, post-colonial theory helps our understanding of the driving force behind the behaviors depicted by the people of these two communities. The intervention by the colonial regimes did not only alter the peculiar characteristics of this indigenous way of life, but also left a chaotic system in place, which was destined to disenfranchise these communities and set the pace for recurrent conflict. While there are other causes at play in these conflicts, post-colonial theory allows us to understand the role that the colonial regime played in these conflicts. These theories collectively
constitute a body of knowledge that channel our thoughts about this conflict in the right direction.

**Empirical Framework (Studies)**

Considerable work has been done to explore land and boundary conflicts around the world. These efforts have all been intended to uncover underlying reasons for such conflicts and make recommendations for their mitigation. The literature has increased our understanding of land and boundary conflicts, but more exploration and research in the field is warranted. The gap left in existing literature rests in the domain of how European ideas and colonial policies on land tenure triggered land disputes in colonized countries. The literature in this area is lacking, or in some cases, not existent. Therefore, this study set out to highlight the scope of the completed work in this area while discussing the merits and demerits of the research. The review incorporates land and boundary disputes at the international and local levels. This provides a panoramic view of the state of the issue while assisting in the evaluation of how it pertains to the discussion of the Balikumbat and Bafanji Land dispute.

Land and boundary disputes tend to persist for long periods, thus qualifying them for designation as intractable conflicts. Intractable conflicts are construed as “ones that are highly resistant to resolution; they do not respond to traditional or alternative dispute resolution processes” (Burgess, 1997, p. 156). The African continent contains many situations that mirror the conflict under review. Some of these cases include land disputes in Kenya and Zimbabwe, Babanki Tungo and Bambili, and the Bali-Nyonga and Widikum land disputes in Cameroon.
Kenya is a compelling case that provides insight about land and boundary disputes. In 2007, 1,300 people lost their lives and over 600,000 people were displaced because of land disputes. According to Veit (2011), “Kenya has endured a long history of land conflicts, dating back to its colonial period when first the Germans and then the British promulgated policies and practices that alienated people from their customary land and pitted one ethnic group against the other” (p.1). Violence occurred because Kenyans were tired of not seeing tangible land policies develop that were different from the colonial era. As Veit (2011) holds, “Much of the violence was linked to long-standing land disputes” (p. 1). This violence happened after the Presidential elections of 2007 because Kenyans wanted to send a message that these enduring land disputes are a very serious matter, which requires immediate attention.

Land-based conflicts in Kenya date back to the colonial administration. As the British embarked on their policies of development in Kenya, they did not consider indigenous land tenure practices conducive to development. According to Veit (2011), “the British considered the customary tenure arrangements practiced by the majority of Africans to be inconsistent with development and modernization, and colonial policy envisioned the eventual disappearance of traditional systems” (p. 3). The British wanted to replace the indigenous system, which, in turn, sowed the seeds of the present day land conflicts. They began “by declaring all land to be Crown Land (and) the land rights of Africans became highly tenuous. Land was easily alienated from customary systems, usually without compensation” (2011, p. 3). In Kenya, the ethnic groups lost most of their land to the white settlers, which left much resentment in the hearts of the natives. This bitterness has spanned many generations. The Kikuyus, Masais, Kalenjin, and other tribes
were displaced endlessly as a way of distancing them from their lands. The end result was that, "by 1943, the 30,000 white settlers in the Protectorate - less than 0.25% of the total population controlled about a third of the arable land" (p. 3). Such a takeover policy and the undermining of the human needs of the owners of the land led to resentment, alienation, and conflict.

Land disputes in Kenya depict root causes. Over time, the narrative becomes increasingly complicated. Hopes of restoring these communities to their pre-colonial boundaries become more remote. The experience of Kenya with the colonial administration is relevant to the situation of the conflict between Balikumbat and Bafanji because, under the administration of colonial officials, land was treated as an acquirable commodity rather than a communal heritage.

Another case of land disputes worthy of exploration is the Zimbabwe situation. Anderson (1999) notes that "land issues have been a dominant theme in Zimbabwe’s history as the white minority controls the best land." Available literature points to the fact that there has been a long historical grievance related to land and earlier colonial policies that have resulted in conflicts. According to Green, “in 1888, white colonists under the auspices of the British South Africa Company, led by Cecil Rhodes, expropriated the country’s best agricultural lands and began colonial rule (2004).” The land issues in Zimbabwe have been perceived by many as a colonial legacy, which must be corrected by land redistribution and reform. The current president of Zimbabwe has made headlines by seizing land from rich white farmers and giving it to the poor natives. This has not gone without its own criticisms. For instance, Moyo (2013) explains, “land reform was meant to redress historical settler-colonial land disposition and the related racial and
foreign domination, as well as the class-based agrarian inequalities which minority rule promoted (p. 29).” There was mass displacement of the natives to accommodate the white settlers and allow them to open their plantations. The concentration of power was in the hands of the minority who freely used it to amass millions of hectares of land. Land, as an economic tool, only increased the power of those who had access to it in Zimbabwe, which, in turn, led to further disenfranchisement and alienation of those who actually owned the land.

The independence of Zimbabwe was seen by the majority, as an opportunity to regain all that was lost during the colonial era. However, little progress occurred even though land remains at the epicenter of any meaningful discourse in the post-colonial era in Zimbabwe. This problem remains because, in the 1950’s, the black majority in Zimbabwe began to assemble a resistance movement with the purpose of reclaiming their land. “The war for liberation began in 1968 and lasted through 1979. At independence in 1980, around two fifths of the total land area was occupied by the minority white commercial farmers, while the majority black peasants remained in less arable commercial areas (Skalnes, 1995, p. 154).”

The case of Zimbabwe has implications to our understanding of post-colonial land disputes. While the winds of change were blowing across Africa in the 1960s and some of the colonial powers were willingly relinquishing their colonies, Zimbabwe took a while to be liberated. The white colonial masters did not want give up the land. They had occupied most of the rich and fertile parcels of land and developed huge enterprises out of it. Giving up this land was synonymous to relinquishing their power and economic strength.
The similarities between the experience of Zimbabwe and the Balikumbat and Bafanji land dispute are evident. In Zimbabwe, the colonizers were also occupied the land, while in Balikumbat and Bafanji, the attitude towards the inhabitants of the land and the policies warrant more exploration. The common denominator is land and how it is perceived by both the colonial administration and the indigenous population. While land was necessary for commerce and industry for the colonial regime, to the locals, it also represented the familiarity and contentment of home where generations of family grew roots, lived, and worked. This clash in understanding can be perceived as a cause of conflict.

On a local level in Cameroon, land and boundary disputes abound. One effort, ostensibly designed to reduce conflict, is nicely parcelled under the broader theme of land management systems and mostly run by local and state governments in Cameroon. Rather than helping to resolve the problem created by colonialism, it has triggered violent conflicts. Within this new system, indigenous people’s rights to their land are discarded. Their lands are forcibly allocated to other projects. Most of the time, these new projects do not benefit the local people. Accordingly, pastoralists, gatherers, and even hunters are evicted from their land with no compensation because the grand scheme of the government has decided to conserve the land for other uses (Schmidt – Soltau, 2003; Chapin, 2004; IWGIA, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006).

It is not surprising that such an initiative sparks recurrent trends of violence. The land, which is the livelihood for these indigenous people, has been appropriated and tampered with. The natural response to this infringement is for the indigenous people to mount some type of resistance against the government. The case between Bambili and
Babanki Tungo serves as a good example. According to Mbah (2008), “this dispute, which dates back to the colonial era, was relatively latent until the 1990s when violent confrontations commenced between Bambili and Babanki-Tungo” (p. 235). Two violent confrontations have been recorded between these two communities over disputed land and boundaries. In March 25, 1991, a confrontation led to the death of four people and the destruction of property. Another violent confrontation occurred between February and March 1996, resulting in the death of 16 people and the wounding of over 50 more. Again, there was loss of property and displacement of people (Mbah, 2008).

In this conflict, there was a piece of land that both villages could not agree on the boundary because of the action of the colonial administration. Mbah (2008) recounts that, "a colonial appeal court in suit No. 23/53 of July 1956 had given much of the contested land to Babanki Tungo, but Bambili refused to acknowledge it (p.193).” As time unfolded, it was quickly realized that these two villages continued to have mixed feelings and, without a resolution, war would occur. As a result, the British Colonial administration decided to resolve the issue. The administrator at the time was a man named Westmacott (2008). In a bid to resolve this issue, “the boundary demarcated by Westmacott left the highland on the Bambili side, while the valley was shared equally between Bambili and Babanki Tungo” (p.193). This decision was agreed upon and ratified by both parties on July 25, 1973 (Mbah, 2008).

Because of the nature in which land and boundary disputes occurred during colonial times, such agreements aimed at putting an end to land disputes were fleeting and almost powerless. In this conflict, the agreement lasted for a while but tensions began to increase. Cheo (1996) captures this mindset when he argued that, “the Westmacott
Decision was observed and peace reigned between the two villages until 1990 when, as a result of generalized chaos in the Northwest Province, the dispute resurfaced; this time the problem was over interpretation of the boundary” (p.38). The logic behind some of the agreements that were made in resolving these land disputes is questionable. Tracing the root causes of the tension and involving both parties in the decision was not considered or accomplished. Since the indigenes knew what constituted their boundaries before they were distorted by the colonial masters, any solution that did not rehabilitate them only exacerbated the conflict. Therefore, resolving the Bambili-Babanki Tungo conflict resulted in this response,

We are not ready to accept a boundary imposed on us. A boundary fabricated in Yaoundé by so-called experts. We find it extremely objectionable and futile to be party to an exercise that is at best a masquerade, which can only intensify the conflict between our people and cause them to continue to destroy themselves and their property (Ewi, May 4-7, 1995, p. 3).

This stance adopted by the people of Babanki clearly suggests that they were not part of the boundary decision process.

In another area of Cameroon, conflict between Bali-Nyonga and Widikum villages is an example of a local land and boundary conflict that resembles that of Balikumbat and Bafanji. According to Mbah (2008),

After a settlement reached by British Colonial authorities in 1954, relative peace ensued between the two ethnic groups, until the late 1960s when the Widikums began petitioning the government for more land from Balinyonga on grounds of land shortage, and as original landlords of the land inhabited by the latter (p. 199).
The authorities accepted this request from the Widikum people with a cautionary note advising them that no further requests would be honored. In response, the people of Balinyonga vehemently refused to relinquish any land to Widikum (Mbah, 2008). As a result, conflict began to grow. According to Mbah (2008), “from 1997, the dispute has been marked by recurrent hostilities between the two groups” (p. 200).

This conflict came to a head in the 1950s when Balinyonga and Widikum engaged in violent confrontations about ownership of an extended area of land. They both claimed legitimate ownership of the land and that the colonial administration had been biased in the way it allocated the land. The people of Widikum claimed that, without their consent, the colonial authorities had given some of their land to Balinyonga as a way of brokering a peace deal. In their view, the deal was illegitimate and the land belonged to them. Since the conflict continued for a protracted period and the government tried to resolve it, the people of Balinyonga gave their condition for peace. Thus, “in a letter to the Governor of the province, dated April 25, 1995, Balinyonga requested the authorities to retain its boundary with Widikum village as it existed in 1954, noting that only through such action would there be lasting peace in the area” (p. 200). This is the colonial decision where some land was taken from the people of Widikum and given to Balinyonga to which Widikum expressed dissatisfaction. Although there were two additional decrees, one in 1977 and the other in 1982, that validated the colonial land partition, conflict continued between the two villages because of Widikum's refusal to view these land demarcations as authentic.

This literature establishes the basis of the conflict between Widikum and Balinyonga over land and access to it. It also illustrates instances in which government
authorities make efforts to resolve conflict albeit with little success. However, without multiple accounts of these disputes, this literature is rendered weak. The availability of more literature will help to enrich the narrative and provide various ways of understanding it.

Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted a review of relevant literature to the present study. The chapter was divided into three major sections, the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Empirical frameworks of the study.

In the conceptual framework, the chapter discussed the indigenous conception of land as a sacred gift of nature with economic and spiritual ramifications. The Cameroon land tenure system was then highlighted from the pre-colonial, through the German and Anglo-French colonial periods and finally the post-colonial period within the present Cameroon government. Discourse on land tenure was closely followed with a review of causes of land and boundary disputes. Systemic and proximate causes were highlighted in this endeavor.

In the theoretical framework, two theories were highlighted as being relevant to the present study. Human needs theory and post-colonial theory were chosen for this study. In relation to the human needs theory, conflict can arise as people try to satisfy their personal needs. The basic needs of food and shelter are fundamental to all human beings and these are guaranteed by the possession of land. Hence, with an increase in population, a scarcity of land resources and conflict may arise. The need to safeguard land as a source of self-esteem for ancestral and sacrificial ceremonies equally falls within human needs theory as explained in the chapter. Post-colonial theory expresses
people’s feelings and the hazards caused by the colonial period. It finds its explanation in the fact that the colonial masters did not respect the indigenous conception of land and land tenure systems in their demarcation and allocation of land, which is one of the primary causes of frequent land disputes. The chapter concludes with empirical studies that have been carried out in Cameroon and beyond that are relevant to the present study.
Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Case study analysis is the main vehicle through which this research is conducted. This methodology is characterized as a qualitative method of data collection. This chapter explains the process of data collection via the purposeful convenient sampling technique. A snowball approach was used with key informants until a saturation point was reached. Interviews with different stakeholders were undertaken through open-ended questions of government officials like the Divisional Officer of the sub-division and the Mayor of the Municipal Council. The traditional and religious authorities of both villages were interviewed.

Non-participant observation was used to gain additional knowledge of the land and boundary disputes between Balikumbat and Bafanji. Reviewed documents enhanced the documentation of shifts that occurred during the study. For data administration, the analysis was completed following the systematic process of thematic and content analysis. Validation strategies entailed peer briefing, researcher reflexivity, and the development of rich descriptions.

Research Design

The study of land disputes in the Northwest Region of Cameroon was conducted via the qualitative method and a case study design. Qualitative research refers to, “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p.15). In qualitative analysis, the aim of the researcher is to
learn to understand the various meanings of words, actions, behaviors, attitudes, and symbols of the actors under study in their natural environment (Morrow & Smith, 2000). This inquiry-based methodology allows the researcher to collect data in the field and use it as the basis of analysis. According to Creswell, “the best studies have a strong inquiry procedure” (1998, p. 27). According to Schwandt, “qualitative inquiry aims at understanding what others are doing and saying” (1999, p. 451). Qualitative methodology, as a scientific method of inquiry, is subdivided into various categories or systems of analysis, which are designed to provide the researcher with a plurality of ways of collecting data. In this study, the case study approach was used.

Yin (1997) refers to the case study approach as, “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (1997, Vol. 3, Number 3). According to Creswell, “case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system.” (1998, p. 73). This approach was a good fit in my inquiry of the Bafanji-Balikumbat land and boundary dispute because it gave me the opportunity to investigate the peculiar characteristics of this conflict via personal observations, interviews, and group discussions. In this way, I was able to unveil any complex underlying issues that do not readily have a current answer. This is in line with Yin who explains that the case study approach will lead to the best outcome where the subject of inquiry is about the “hows” and "whys” of a phenomenon (Yin, Supra, p. 13).

As the principle investigator, I was concerned with uncovering the various dynamics of the conflict in both villages by observing, conducting interviews, and
holding group discussions with a variety of available participants. Detailed field notes were taken throughout data collection. Questions posed emanated from a previously prepared interview guide. Instead of using hard and fast questions more characteristic of a quantitative survey instrument, an interview guide includes ideas, gut reactions, feelings, and possibilities about where to look next in the search for rich data. This study investigated a real life situation namely, the conflict between the two villages and the fear that, if lasting solutions are not enacted, further conflict could resurface.

**Area of Study**

Balikumbat and Bafanji are two of the villages that make up Ngoketunjia Division. This division is made up of 13 villages. Most interesting is that the names of all 13 villages begin with the letters ‘Ba’. History holds that it was derived from the times of the Germans who colonized the area and “Ba” denotes ‘people of’. For example, Bamunka means ‘the people of Munka’. Each of the 13 villages has its own unique language, tradition, and traditional authority, so it is classified as a FonDom with its traditional ruler named the Fon (Monji, 2014).

The following villages make up the Ngoketunjia division: Baba I, Babungo, Balinganshin, Babessi, Bamunkumbit, Baligashu, Bamunka, Bamali, Bangolan, Balikumbat, Bamessing, Bambalang, and Bafanji. All the villages that make up the Ngoketunjia division are surrounded by hills with the Ngoketunjia plain elevated. Therefore, the climatic conditions are more moderate here than in other regions in Cameroon (Monji, 2014).
The division is further divided into 3 subdivisions, the Ndop central, Babessi, and Balikumbat subdivisions. Each government authority is present with representative delegations. Each of the subdivisions has a municipal council (Monji, 2014).

Balikumbat is located about 15 kms west of Ndop, capital of the Ngoketunjia Division of the Northwest Province of Cameroon. It is bounded on the East by the villages of Bamali and Bambalang, on the West by Bafanji, on the South by Bamumkumbit and on the North by BabankiTungo and Awing. The population is about 16,000 inhabitants who are predominantly peasant farmers. There is also a small population of Bororo herdsmen occupying the hills where they tend their cattle. The population is mostly young with the female population outnumbering the male.

Balikumbat has the status of a Sub-Division, which also includes four other neighboring villages. It also has Rural Council (Monji, 2014).

Bafanji (Fiehlunglue-Mangie) is one of the 13 villages of the Ngoketunjia Division and one of the five villages made up of the Balikumbat Sub Division of the Northwest Region of Cameroon. It is located between 5° and 13°N and 10° and 55°E of latitude and longitude respectively and found at about 2289m above sea level. It is bounded in the north by Bambalang, Bali-Gashu, and Bamunkumbit in the south, Balikumbat in the South-West and in the East by the Bamboutous division of the West Region. Bafanji (Fiehlunglue-Mangie) is made up of relatively level land and many swamps around the village. It has a very rich ecosystem covering a surface area of an estimated 115.5km² with a hardworking estimated population of 22,000 inhabitants.

Bafanji (Fiehlunglue-Mangie) is lying peacefully in Ndop plain with land surrounded by watersheds comprising the Bamindjim dam that replenishes the Song-Loulou Electricity
Dam, several springs, rivers, and streams. Bafanji village (FiehLungLué-Mangieh) is a crossroad for agro-businesses, cultural heritage of Ndop plain, and a museum of different ethnic or tribal origins (Monji, 2014).

Sources of Information

Sources of information for this study consist of experienced experts, traditional rulers, government officials, and religious authorities of both Balikumbat and Bafanji villages. Target interviewees supply firsthand information about the causes, consequences, and the way forward of the land dispute. Experienced experts were men, women, and youth from both villages who were eyewitnesses of the land dispute between the two villages. Traditional rulers were quarter heads, sub-chiefs, chiefs, and Fons of both villages who possessed a firm knowledge of the laws and customs of the people and who had a firm knowledge of the land dispute. The religious authorities were composed of priests, pastors, catechists, members of a mission, and pastoral councils of both villages. The government officials included the Divisional Officer, the Mayor, and other government workers of these two offices.

Sample Population

Based on the target population, this study consisted of four major protocols that satisfied the purpose of obtaining firsthand information concerning the causes, course, consequences, and possible solutions to the land dispute. These protocols included:

- Traditional rulers of both villages
- Experienced experts of both villages
- Church authorities of both villages
- Government officials
Based on the above, 16 traditional authorities were sampled for the study, eight from Bafanji and eight from Balikumbat. Sixteen experienced experts were equally sampled for the study, eight from each village. Eight religious authorities were sampled, four from each village. Lastly, eight government officials were sampled for the study. The total sample size was 48. This sample size is justified by the inductive and qualitative nature of the study, with the use of interviews as primary technique of data collection.

Table 4.1 clearly illustrates the sample size of the study.

Table 1

Sample Size of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>PROTOCOLS</th>
<th>BAFANJI VILLAGES</th>
<th>BALIKUMBAT VILLAGE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Traditional Rulers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experienced Experts</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Religious Authorities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Government Officials</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sampling Technique and Method of Data Collection

Preliminary Tasks

Prior to engaging in field studies in Cameroon, it was prudent to conduct a more in-depth review of land and boundary disputes to provide better insight about this kind of conflict. The tentative plan was travel to Cameroon in July or August 2015 to begin data collection in earnest.
Before making the trip to Cameroon, I consulted with a Catholic priest who was working in the conflict area in 1995. Since he was trusted by both villages, this priest acted as my gatekeeper, confidant, and informant. Through his introductions, access to key participants and historians was made easier. This enabled me to record first-hand accounts of what happened. It was anticipated that data collection would take approximately six weeks. However, data collection continued in earnest until the point of saturation where collected data became repetitive and no new themes were forthcoming.

**Data Collection**

Soon after data collection began, it became obvious that individual interviews would serve better than group discussions since order was nearly impossible to maintain in a group setting. In short, everyone wanted to state their opinions simultaneously which led to loud shouting matches over differing views. To avoid initiating conflict, group discussions were suspended in favour of interviews. Data collection then proceeded with a purposeful convenience sampling technique. A snowball approach was used with key informants until a saturation point was reached. According to Creswell, “case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection and involving multiple sources of information (observations, interviews, audio/visual material, documents, reports) and a case description and case-based themes” (2007, p. 73). An interview guide was carefully formulated to help in exploring the most fruitful methods of data collection. Key data collection tools were interviews, document reviews, and a reflective journal of field notes. After permissions were granted, tape recorders were used to increase the accuracy of and to store data.
A gatekeeper was utilized to gain access to the most important participants after a determination was made that they were the correct candidates for the research. In other words, the recruited participants spoke to the core issues surrounding the research endeavor. To determine that the participants met scrupulous standards of resourceful informants, the following criteria were used to identify our match:

1. Participant is an adult who has first-hand experience with the conflict
2. Participant is currently or has been involved in one way or another with developing a narrative of what caused this land and boundary dispute
3. Participant has lived in one of the disputing villages for at least the past 20 years
4. Participant was a member of the government when the conflict happened
5. Participant is the Fon or an authority in one of the villages.

A participant who met one or more of these criteria was a viable candidate to be approached by a gatekeeper and recruited to participate in the interviews.

Interviews

Interviews constituted a very critical component of my data collection process. Different stakeholders were identified and interviewed in accordance with their awareness of the crux of the matter in this conflict. Open-ended interviews were conducted with government officials such as the Divisional Officer and Mayor for the subdivision. As the government representative in the region, this officer provided detailed information about the evolution of this conflict. All available religious leaders who were ministering in these two villages were approached for open-ended interviews. Since the church is an integral part of the lives of the people in this region, it helped enormously in
gaining access to key actors. Traditional rulers of both villages were invited to participate via open-ended interviews and/or group discussions. Their own perspectives pertaining to this conflict were valuable since they were very powerful among their constituents. Currently, they are considered the de facto custodians of the traditions of the village. As the authoritative historians of the village, these rulers should know everything that has gone before them. Moreover, the traditional ruler who receives the appellation of the Fon is charged with the duties of safeguarding the well-being of his people. Both Balikumbat and Bafanji have their Fons and, through a gatekeeper, I interviewed both of them. This is important because of the magnanimous role that these rulers play in the villages. Fons are not elected through a democratic process. This inherited office is retained for a long time. Because of the longevity of their tenure, they have unparalleled knowledge of the land and boundary dispute.

Participants from both villages who had direct experience, were involved or have knowledge of the events of the conflicts were verbally approached for open-ended interviews. These interviews occurred in a relaxed and familiar space within their natural setting.

All interview participants received a consent form advising them that they may withdraw from the study at any point. They were also constantly reminded of the need to take breaks if needed so that there was no appearance of coercion to attain information. In the course of the interview, I utilized audio recorders to capture the opinions and vocal nuances of the participants. I also took field notes, which highlighted some of the critical shifts and movements during each interview. During the interview process, I used a learner-centered approach suggestive of the fact that I was there to gain knowledge from
the participants. Creswell exhorts the researcher to assume a position as one, “wanting to listen to the participants we are studying and shaping the questions after we “explore” and we refrain from assuming the role of the expert researcher with the “best” questions” (2007, p. 43). In this way, the voices of the participants reverberated throughout the course of the study.

The interview protocol was designed in a comprehensive fashion. It was a form of about four or five pages in length, with approximately 17 open-ended questions and ample space between the questions to write responses to the interviewee’s comments (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). Four interview protocols were developed. The first protocol consisted of 17 open-ended questions for the government officials. It asked questions about the role of government in resolving these conflicts their position concerning the causes of the conflict. The second interview protocol of 11 open-ended questions was prepared for the Church authorities. Questions ranged from their role in the resolution of the conflict to their perspectives on what they feel fuels the reoccurrence of these land and boundary disputes. The third interview protocol of approximately 17 open-ended questions was prepared for the traditional rulers of both villages. Questions ranged from the indigenous conception of land to their involvement in the land and boundary disputes and their historical narrative of the evolution and course of this conflict. Perspectives on the causes of conflict, their perceptions of the colonial policies on land tenure, steps being taken to resolve conflict, and why it remains were discussed. The fourth interview protocol of 13 open-ended questions was prepared for participants drawn from both villages who had experience in this conflict. Questions ranged from their feelings and
perceptions about the conflict, the colonial regime in general, and current land tenure laws.

In these protocols, sensitivity to cultural norms and respect for local traditions were honored at all times. Confidentiality was repeatedly assured. The forms also included demographic information about the time, date, and place of the interview, who was interviewed, the position of the person interviewed, and a brief description of the research project. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked the participant and again assured them of their confidentiality.

**Non-Participant Observation**

The technique of non-participant observation was used to gain additional knowledge of the land and boundary disputes between Balikumbat and Bafanji. It took a lot of time to first observe the area under dispute. My intention was to consider the borderlines that were claimed by the villages, the main economic and traditional activity carried out in the disputed area, the amount of property casualties that were suffered by both villages in the disputed area, and which village occupied the disputed area more than the other. In total, non-participant observation took approximately three weeks.

My second aspect of observation included the social interaction amongst the two villages. I was particularly concerned with free movements and the level of friendliness between the Balikumbat and Bafanji people during major traditional, religious, civil, economic, and social gatherings. Events such as death celebrations, market days, political rallies, and religious feast days that required the presence of both villages formed crucial aspects of observation.
**Documents Review**

An extensive document review was conducted as part of this research project. A visit to the Northwest Region archives was undertaken to gain access to documents that pertain to this conflict. The Buea archives were consulted since it was the seat of the West Cameroon court, which passed judgment on the boundaries of the contested territory during the colonial administration. Permission was granted to copy pertinent documents after which all originals were returned to their storage space. Important documents were equally provided by the Divisional Officer. Documents that were especially relevant to the boundary dispute were sampled for close perusal while others were simply browsed.

**Reflective Journal**

Throughout data collection, keeping a reflective journal was of paramount importance. These journals gave me the opportunity to document my own feelings and different shifts that occurred during the study. This is in congruence to the mindset of Morrow and Smith (2000) who contended that using a reflective journal adds rigor to qualitative inquiry as the researcher is able to record his or her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research endeavor. As an additional data collection exercise, these field notes were entered on a consistent basis as I encountered various data collection instruments. Although keeping a reflective journal was challenging, its ability to add veracity to data collection was valuable.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of data was done following the systematic process of thematic and content analysis (Weber, 1990; Ellen & Renner, 2003, Nana, 2012) and narrative analysis
(Propp, 1968). The first stage involved deciding on the level of analysis for both interview and document review data. At this level, single words, clauses and sets of words or phrases were coded. I decided on how many different concepts to code. This involved developing pre-defined or interactive sets of concepts categories. I had a code list earlier developed based on the major indicators of the study. The primary documents of textual data were coded for existence and for frequency of concepts by coding for every single positive or negative word or phrase that appeared. Relevant categories not included in the initial code list were added during the in vivo coding process. Introducing this coding flexibility allowed for new, important material to be incorporated into the coding process that could have significant bearings on results.

During coding, it was assumed that any idea that emerged at least once from the data was relevant. The ideas are therefore considered more important than frequency. However, the frequency also reflects how many times a concept emerges and is a major indicator of emphasis. I coded ideas relating to a concept in comments discriminatively for neutral, positive, or a negative sense.

After taking the generalization of concepts into consideration, I created translation rules that allowed the streamlining and organisation of the coding process. This occurred so that what was being coded, was what was intended to be coded. This stage enabled me to determine the meaning of words and what they stood for so as to know where to code each statement.

Validation Strategies

Like any elaborate research design in the social sciences, there were challenges in validating the data and conclusions. In this study, strategies that were proven to add
value to a study and ensure credibility and rigor were utilized (Creswell and Miller, 2000). These strategies included triangulation, peer debriefing, researcher reflexivity, and developing rich descriptions.

**Triangulation**

The concept of triangulation is best understood as a phenomenon through which many sources are used in pursuit of the validity of data. The gist of this tool is the quest for certitude and an enhancement of confidence in research findings. According to Web et al., “once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretations is greatly reduced. The most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes” (1966, p. 3). This notion was relevant to this study because I depended on a myriad of sources to draw consensus on the certitude of information that I acquired. Data from interviews and document searches were triangulated.

**Stake’s Critique Checklist**

To increase the solidity of my work, Stake’s critique checklist of twenty criteria items, which must be crosschecked to ensure quality research, was utilized (Stake, 1995, p. 131). The checklist is as follows:

1. Is the report easy to read?
2. Does it fit together, each sentence contributing to the whole?
3. Does the researcher have a conceptual structure (for example, themes, or issues?)
4. Are its issues developed in a serious and scholarly way?
5. Is the case adequately defined?
6. Is there a sense of story in the presentation?
7. Is the reader provided with some vicarious experience?
8. Have quotations been used effectively?
9. Are headings, figures, artifacts, appendixes, and indexes used effectively?
10. Was it edited well, then again, with a last minute polish?
11. Has the writer made sound assertions, neither over-nor under-interpreting?
12. Has adequate attention been paid to various contexts?
13. Were sufficient raw data presented?
14. Were the data resources well-chosen and in sufficient number?
15. Do observations and interpretations appear to have been triangulated?
16. Are the role and point of view of the researcher nicely apparent?
17. Is the nature of intended audience apparent?
18. Is empathy shown for all sides?
19. Are personal intentions examined?
20. Does it appear that individuals were put at risk?

Compliance with this checklist resulted in a verifiably strong research project.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics in qualitative research are important. This study of land and boundary disputes adhered to stringent ethical standards as set for by the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) as well as Nova South Eastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB). To recruit my participants, I informed them of the reason for the research and asked them if they would like to volunteer. I did not pay any gatekeeper or informant money for information. This is in line with Miller et al., (2008)
who contended that “accessing potential participants not only requires providing information about the research, but also that individuals are in a position to exercise choice around whether or not to give their consent to participate” (pp. 54-55).

No participant in this study was coerced into answering questions with which they were uncomfortable. All participants had the opportunity to make an informed consent as to whether they wanted to participate. To make it more appropriate, I subscribed to the contentions of Miller et al., who claimed that “consent should be ongoing and renegotiated between researcher and researched throughout the research process” (2008, p. 51). This allowed the participants the flexibility to decide when enough was enough. All participants were advised and reassured that their identities would remain confidential to eliminate any fear of retribution should the research findings be published.

Summarily, this chapter examined the research methodology. Following the research design, it explained that the qualitative method of data collection is the instrument of the research. This was followed by the description of the area of research, sample population, and sample technique. This chapter explained that data collection proceeded by means of purposeful convenient sampling technique. A snowball approach was used with key informants until a saturation point was attained. Interviews of different stakeholders passed through open-ended questions of government officials like the Divisional Officer of the sub-division and the Mayor of the municipal Council. Traditional and religious authorities of both villages were interviewed. Expert participants were interviewed based on their experience on the conflict.

To complement interview information, this chapter explained that a non-participant observation approach was exploited to gain additional knowledge of the land
and boundary disputes between Balikumbat and Bafanji. The review of documents was meant to ensure the documentation of shifts that occurred during the study. For data administration, the analysis followed the systematic process of thematic and content analysis. This chapter described the validation strategies of the instrument through peer briefing, researcher reflexivity, and the development of rich descriptions. A critique checklist verified all the examined components.
Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents findings from interviews with traditional authorities, religious leaders, experienced experts, and government officials of both villages. An analysis of all documents has also been undertaken. We shall begin our analysis by considering a sample chart of the study. From the sample flow chart, findings will be presented following the five objectives of the study. These findings can be articulated in the following points in relation to the research objectives. The first objective will examine the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance. The second objective will present the causes, history, and recurrence of the land dispute. The third objective will present findings on the colonial land policy and its role in the land dispute. The fourth objective will center on the role of the present government in the solution of the dispute. Lastly, solutions to the current dispute will be presented as the fifth objective.

Table 2

Sample Population Flow for each Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>PROTOCOLS</th>
<th>BALIKUMBAT VILLAGE</th>
<th>BAFANJI VILLAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Traditional Authorities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Religious Authorities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Experienced Experts</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*table continues*
Accordingly, four protocols were chosen for each interview. The sample flow chart above indicates that the two villages were given equal opportunities as far as the target and accessible populations of traditional authorities, religious authorities and experienced experts were concerned. The sample of government officials did not depend on the village of origin since government officials were seen as workers of the Divisional Office and Municipal council, which embodies both villages. From the percentages, it can be concluded that the return rate was positive enough to permit qualitative analysis.

Table 3

Sample Flow Chart of the Whole Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL TARGET</th>
<th>TOTAL ACCESSIBLE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>70.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accordingly, the total target of the study was 48 and 34 people were actually accessible for interviews. This leaves a positive return rate of 70.83%, which is convenient enough for qualitative analysis.

Data analysis of interviews is presented in relation to the specific objectives of the study.
Research Objective One

The Pre-colonial Indigenous Perception of Land and its Importance

This objective was analyzed based on the interview responses of the traditional authorities of both villages. This analysis is completed for each village after which a comparison of the findings of both villages is made illuminate major differences and similarities.

Data Analysis of Balikumbat Respondents

Findings are based on interview responses of the six traditional authorities. The following table summarizes the findings from the Balikumbat respondents:

Table 4

Findings to research objective 1 – Balikumbat Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Source of Life Sustenance</td>
<td>Food cultivation and shelter</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Sacrifices</strong></td>
<td>Land provides shrines for traditional sacrifices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Land is equally very important when it comes to traditional sacrifices like the said land which is under dispute between Bali and Bafanji. It is a place where sacrifices are offered.” “Traditionally, land is used to offer sacrifices to the gods. There are traditional shrines and any village will always want to protect these places from foreign invaders.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pride</strong></td>
<td>The dignity of the person who possesses land</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Land used to be a source of pride to the person who possesses land.” “Land is the pride of those who possess much of it.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monetary value</strong></td>
<td>Land is a source of wealth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Land was like money. You could sell to those who do not have to make money.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land</strong></td>
<td>Land was</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We acquired land through means of subsistence: that is food cultivation and shelter.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition</td>
<td>acquired through inheritance</td>
<td>inheritance. Parents handed land over to their children. We cultivate from the place that our great grandparents cultivated.” “Land was only acquired through inheritance from parents in the past. It was never bought or sold, but in recent times it can now be bought.” “We acquired land through ancestral heritage”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfishness</td>
<td>leads to non-acquisition of land</td>
<td>“Through selfishness some people could not acquire land.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlessness</td>
<td>Non-possession of land makes one a beggar</td>
<td>“Some families are rich and others are poor. When you do not have land you are like a beggar.” “When you do not have land you are like a beggar.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-possession of land makes one a stranger</td>
<td>“A man without land is like a stranger in his own home town.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retribution</td>
<td>Dead penalty for unethical</td>
<td>“If you take land that does not belong to you, it could be punishable by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to findings from Balikumbat respondents, source of life sustenance, traditional sacrifices, pride, monetary value, land acquisition, landlessness, and retribution were highlighted as important codes on the indigenous perception of land and its importance. Nevertheless, more emphasis was laid on land as a source of sustenance for food cultivation and shelter with a grounding score of 6/6 of the respondents.

**Data Analysis of Bafanji Respondents**

The findings are based on the interview responses of the six traditional authorities. The following table summarizes the findings from the Bafanji respondents:

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>possession of land</td>
<td>death in accordance with the customs of the people.” “Yes. If you take land that does not belong to you, it could be punishable by death or illness.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strange deceases as punishment for unethical possession of land</td>
<td>“The gods of the land can strike you with some strange decease or even death.” “Yes. If you take land that does not belong to you, it could be punishable by death or illness.”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Life Sustenance</td>
<td>Food cultivation and shelter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "Land is used for several reasons like cultivation, building, shelter, burial, and offering of sacrifices. You can even see the half houses which we constructed and they have destroyed."

"The present land Njah, which is under dispute, is a place where we offer sacrifices and there are a lot of our people that have been buried there. We

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial Ground</th>
<th>Land provides a place where people are buried</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| "Land is used for several reasons like cultivation, building, shelter, burial, and offering of sacrifices. You can even see the half houses which we constructed and they have destroyed."

"The present land Njah, which is under dispute, is a place where we offer sacrifices and there are a lot of our people that have been buried there. We
cannot just allow it to go.” “Land is used for several reasons like cultivation, building, shelter, burial and offering of sacrifices. The land under dispute is where some five villages go to offer sacrifices.” “The only place where can bury people is on land.”

“Land is used for several reasons like cultivation, building, shelter, burial, and offering of sacrifices. You can even see the half houses which we constructed and they have destroyed.” “The present land Njah, which is under dispute, is a place where we offer sacrifices and there are a lot of our people that have been buried there. We cannot just allow it to go.” “There is a place of worship that all the five villages go and do their sacrifices. How can the Bali claim that all land should be abandoned
“Land is used for several reasons like cultivation, building, shelter, burial, and offering of sacrifices. The land under dispute is where some five villages go to offer sacrifices.”

“The most important value of land that is leading to conflict is the traditional use of land for sacrifices and settlement issues.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Acquisition</th>
<th>Land was acquired through inheritance</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>“We acquired land through inheritance.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landlessness</td>
<td>Non-acquisition of land leads to lack of respect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“If you do not possess land then you not to be respected in the society. Some of our people possess land only in the disputed area.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retribution</td>
<td>Dead penalty for unethical possession of land</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Death can be the result of anyone who claims land that does not belong to him or her.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With respect to findings from the Bafanji respondents, source of life sustenance, burial ground, traditional sacrifices, land acquisition, landlessness and retribution, were indicated as important codes on the indigenous perception of land and its importance. It must be noted that the people attached more value to traditional sacrifices and burial grounds as the main importance of land for them with a grounding score of 6/6 for both codes.

Comparison the Balikumbat and Bafanji Findings on the Indigenous Conception of Land and its Importance

According to the findings, there were multiple and striking similarities on the how each village perceives land and its importance. The same codes were highlighted though with different emphasis by both villages. It was only the code of ‘burial ground’ that was peculiar to the Bafanji respondents.

Nonetheless, we must note the striking disparity in emphasis. While the Balikumbat were more concerned with the use of land for sustenance (cultivation and shelter), the Bafanji were more concerned with the use of land for traditional sacrifices and that appears to account for one reason why each village would like to cling to the disputed land.

Research Objective Two

The Causes, History and Reoccurrence the Land Dispute

This objective was analyzed based on the interview responses of the traditional authorities, religious authorities, and experienced participants of both villages. Analysis shall be done for each village after which a comparison of the findings of both villages shall be made to illuminate major differences and similarities.
Government officials were considered to be impartial and neutral. Their views are analyzed separately but comparisons are made between them and the village authorities.

Data Analysis of Balikumbat Respondents

The findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities, two religious authorities, and six experienced participants. Fourteen respondents are included in this objective. The following table illuminates the key issues:

Table 6

*Findings to research objective 2 – Balikumbat Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Killing of Balikumbat son of the soil in Bafanji Land</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>“Around June 1995, in the afternoon. One Bafanji rice farmer man had a friend in Bali. He carried this man from Bali to go look at his farm. On coming back, he was killed in cool blood. He was killed in Bafanji. This was the immediate cause of the land dispute over the Njah area.” “The Bali had had a market in that place for a long time. But during a certain war at the 1930s under the leadership of S.T Muna, West Cameroon”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
administration, the Bali people were driven away and part of the land was given to Bafanj, with new borders.” “The immediate cause of the war was the killing of Bali man by the Bafanjians in cool blood.” “In 1995, a Bali Kumbat man was killed by the Bafanj in their area, so we had no other option than to go to war to defend ourselves. The war was bloody on both sides.”

| Displacement | The destruction of the Balikumbat market at the disputed area | “Around 1978/79 Bali had a market at this area. The army came and scattered people, and burnt the whole market. The Fon was carried to prison. This was the remote cause of the war.” “I will like to state that around in 1979, the Bali had a market in the said disputed area, but we were brutally removed from this market by the Gendarmes who were in support of the Bafanj. Our buildings were destroyed and |
we were stopped from farming in the area.” “Around 1978/79. The gendarmes and the Bafanji drove us away from the market and my store was destroyed.” “There were three of us who build houses in that area. Our houses and the market were brutally burnt. I am an eyewitness because I was actively involved in the fighting. But later I escaped for my dear life.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disunity</th>
<th>Lack of cordial relationship between the villagers</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Injunction</td>
<td>Non-respect of the injunction on disputed area by Bafanji people</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Since the beginning of the dispute, we are not in cordial relationship with the Bafanji people.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The government made the place an injuncted area. We of the Bali do not use the place, but the people of Bafanji use the place. There is even a GBHS Bafanji that has been built in an injuncted area.” “Furthermore, the government made the place an injuncted area.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We of the Bali do not use the place, but the people of Bafanji use the place.” “Furthermore, the government made the place an injuncted area. We of the Bali do not use the place, but the people of Bafanji use the place. There is even a GBHS Bafanji that has been built in an injuncted area.” “Presently, there is a government injunction in the area. That is why I cannot farm there but the Bafanji have violated this injunction and they keep on farming there. The government has done nothing to them. They have even build a school in the injunction area.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casualties</th>
<th>Loss of life and property</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>“There has been loss of life and property in the said disputed area, in 1995 and 1998 wars.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant Attacks</td>
<td>Attacks from the Bafanji people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Our women have witnessed constant attacks especially during the farming and harvesting...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“There have been constant attacks from the Bafanji people.” “This was closely followed by the 1998 war. This was because some of us who remained and stayed in the disputed area were attacked in the night by the Bafanji people. This then lead to another war.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borderline</th>
<th>Removal of boundary pillars by Bafanji people</th>
<th>“Pillars demarcating the borders have been removed and until they are planted, there is bound to be conflict.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inconsistency in boundaries between the colonial powers, as well as former West Cameroon</td>
<td>“The two villages cannot agree as to the real boundaries of the place. The Bali seems to claim a border line drawn by the Germans while the Bafanji stand on the borders drawn by the British.” “It is based on the fact that the former west Cameroon government under S. T. Muna arbitrarily drew a border line that was not in accordance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respect of the colonial boundaries</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“It keeps on coming because the boundaries of the colonial masters are being disrespected.” “The borderline is not clear. There is bound to be conflict. The boundary has not been put.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting Season</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“We have had serious wars in 1995 and 1998. These always come around the planting season and each village begins to claim ownership of the land.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Government Policy</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>“The laxity of the government in solving the problem. Our border is after the previously destroyed market but we have been pushed in with the former boundary. That of the Germans.” “It is based on the fact that they only came and showed us another boundary that we did not even know that it existed. The actual boundary is where the school is found. Before the market.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scramble for land during the planting season</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Settlers</td>
<td>The problem of which village first settled in the whole locality</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to these findings, murder, displacement, non-respect of government injunction, poor boundary pillars and poor government policies were among the major reasons that accounted for the causes, history, and reoccurrence of the border dispute. Poor government policy was mentioned by all 14 respondents (their comments have been reserved for the analysis of objective four). The removal, inconsistency, and non-respect of the borderline formed a major source of conflict according to the Balikumbat respondents.
Data Analysis of Bafanji Respondents

Findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities, two religious authorities, and six experienced participants. Fourteen respondents are included in this objective. The following table presents key issues:

Table 7

Findings to research objective 2 – Bafanji Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borderline</td>
<td>Removal of boundary pillars by the Bali people</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“In 1939 the border was drawn by the British colonial master, but around 1992 the Bali people came and removed the pillars. That is how this whole conflict started.” “The remote cause of the conflict was the removal of pillars by the Bali people. The government intervened and asked each village to contribute 400,000 frs each for the replacement of pillars. The Bali people did not give so the Bafanji people gave all the 800,000 frs. That was in 1992.” “Around 1992 the Bali people came and removed...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Government Policy</td>
<td>Inability of government to sanction defaulters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespect of colonial boundaries</td>
<td>“We really want to know why the gov’t herself should put on pillars and some people or a village decides to remove, yet no sanctions have been levied on these people. Or was the gov’t who instructed them to come and remove the pillars”? “It is the gov’t trying to delay and justice delayed is justice denied. Because the DO, SDO and Governor know very well that pillars were planted and these pillars were off rooted and they know those who off rooted the pillars.” “Each time we complain, government will tell us to identify the individuals and summon them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It keeps on coming because the boundaries of the colonial masters are not being respected.”</td>
<td>1939. That is how this whole conflict started.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>Inability of government to establish a new border</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We have begged on the gov’t to replace the pillars but till now nothing has been done.” “The government has taken no action as far as this is concerned.” “Weak government policy is actually the reason why this land problem is still going.” “It keeps on coming because the government has deliberately refused to demarcate a clean and clear boundary. The real issue is the boundary and it needs to be demarcated.” “If government does not clearly define the borders, then the problem will never end.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Threats on government officials by the Bali people</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|         | “One of the greatest problems is that when a new DO comes, the Bali people will threaten him. He lives in Bali and when he says anything contrary to the bali, they
will threaten his life. Weak government policy is actually the reason why this land problem is still going.”

“The immediate cause of the war was in 1995, when the Bali people came and burnt all the places and even threatened to reach the palace area.” “We have had serious wars in 1995 and 1998. There was destruction of houses, plants, property, animals and even uncountable of life. This always begins with the beating of women in farms and then it escalates to war. Especially in 1995, we were well beating and lost a lot of life, when I think of it, I feel as to cry.”

“In 1998 the Bali people came again and burnt places. Even my own house has been destroyed twice. Now I am sure that if I die, I will be buried in the bush because
of I have no permanent residence.” “We have had serious wars in 1995 and 1998. There was destruction of houses, plants, property, animals and even uncountable of life.” “I remember in those olden days the 1995. There was fire booming all over the place, which took down close to 495 houses. There were prominent magnificent houses that took decades to be constructed. Lives were lost and many hospitalized with bullets in them.” “The Bali came successively in 1978 and 1979 and destroyed the property of the bafanji people. So many people died.”

| Provocation | Willful acts by the Bali that can lead to retaliation | 7 | “When the Bafanji women work in the place the Bali will come and harvest and even take away their wholes. The DO has been there for more than three times, but no |
solution. May be when you people will talk like researchers, the gov’t may give a listening and bring a solution.” “The Bafanji has never crossed the boundary to destroy in Bali but I do not understand why the Bali will burn our places right to the palace area. We have never burnt any house in Bali even those that are around the border.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise of Power</th>
<th>Invasion of Bafanji land by the Fon Doh of Bali</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “Around 1978/79. It should be noted that when the then former west Cameroon gov’t planted pillars in the presence of the former Fon of Bali, there was no problem. It was only when this last Fon (Fon Doh) took over that disputes started. In his father’s reign people lived together with no problems. We use to attain cry dies and other meetings together.” “The Fon of Bali wanted to make Bafanji to be under him, so that he

|
can rule the whole of this area. He came to capture people through boundary issue. The removal of pillars and the attack on the bafanji people was the immediate cause of the wars.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constant Attacks</th>
<th>Attacks from the Bali people</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The dispute continuous because each time we cultivate, the Bali people will come and destroy. At times they do the harvesting.” “We have been attacked on several occasions and our farming tools seized.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planting Season</th>
<th>Scramble for land during the planting season</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“So this is an ongoing conflict and it usually comes up during the planting and harvesting seasons.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Settlers</th>
<th>The problem of which village first settled in the whole locality</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It should be worthy of note that the Bali people only settled in this land after the Bafanji. The place where they even have their palace was formerly the place of Bamukumbit. They tricked the Bamukumbit and took over the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
place. That is why the Bali cannot even cut and eat trees in their palace because they do not own the place.’”

According to these findings, the borderline, poor government policy, threats, casualties, provocation, exercise of power, constant attacks, planting season, and primary settlers were identified as reasons for the causes, history, and reoccurrence of the dispute. Nevertheless, the poor borderline demarcation, poor government policy, and casualties were most prominent according to the respondents.

**Comparison the Balikumbat and Bafanji on the Causes, History and Reoccurrence of the Land Dispute**

Accordingly, the borderline and poor government policies were identified by both villages as the major sources of conflict. Nevertheless, while the Balikumbat considered murder as the immediate cause of war, the Bafanji laid claim to the removal of the boundary pillars by the Balikumbat. We can equally note that, unlike the Balikumbat, the Bafanji were very sensitive about the amount of casualties suffered. Both villages claimed constant attacks from the other and both equally claimed to have been the first to settle in the land, although this factor was not the primary cause of conflict. The issue of government injunction was problematic to the Balikumbat, while the Bafanji did not see this as major problem. Other issues like provocation, threats on government officials, and the exercise of power by the Bali Fon were peculiar to the Bafanji respondents. Government injunction, displacement, disunity, and murder were key issues raised only
by the Balikumbat. Conclusively, both villages agreed to the fact these conflicts often arise during the farming season.

**Data Analysis of Government Officials**

These findings are based on the interview responses of six government officials. The following table presents key issues:

Table 8

*Findings to research objective 2 – Government Officials Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicting dates and decisions in available documents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“It is a long history with so many conflicting dates and documents. You will see in some of the documents yourself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The problem of dynamic population and static land</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“The issue is that land does not expand but the population grows every day. Land is static but the population is dynamic. With population explosion, there is bound to be pressure on land.” “There is equally the issue of the growing population. It is because the population is growing that...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Borderline** | Poor demarcation of inter-village boundaries | **6** | “There is continuous scramble for land.”

| | “Administrative units are clearly calved out but within the subdivision we have a headache that these boundaries are not clearly defined.” “I have maps as the one you can see, but these are just imaginary. The government have not come up with clear maps should the boundaries amongst the villages within a unit.” “It keeps on coming because there is no clear cut boundary between the two villages.” | |  

| | Multiple colonial and post-colonial maps | **4** | “They trace the history of their various villages to colonial times. They both have different colonial maps.” “The remote cause is the fact there is no clear boundary between these two villages. There are a series of maps. Colonial maps, postcolonial maps. The
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Tenure System</th>
<th>Poor interpretation of land tenure system</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>“There is equally the issue of poor interpretation of the land tenure system. A land certificate can only be issued for customary/individual ownership of land if it goes back to pre-1974 ordinance regulating land tenure in Cameroon. Any other claim to land can only be given by government based on grant.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Conflict between civil and traditional authorities on land custody</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“The government has been a failure in this respect. Furthermore, there is even a conflict between the government and the traditional authorities on who actually is the real custodian of land.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Deception          | Traditional authorities                   | 1 | “The traditional authorities have misled the civil authorities. They
mislead the civil authorities are members of the land commission and when they give wrong information, there is bound to be conflict. They are the only people who know the history of the land and when their information is wrong we are bound to have wrong decisions.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casualties</th>
<th>Loss of life and property</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>“The casualties were both human and property. I have a document which I will give you to exploit because the claim of the Bafanji people was going up to an amount of two billion frs.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Government</td>
<td>Incompletion of task</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Commissions were set but they did not finish their work because they started to trace the boundaries but ended somewhere without completing their mission.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Conflicts amongst government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The problem is even aggravated by poor administrative policies whereby Divisional Officers take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>officials</td>
<td>delight in one way or the other for some private reasons, in counteracting decisions that were already taken by their predecessors. Hence, there are bound to multiple government decisions on the same piece of land.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laxity in decision taking</td>
<td>“There are always conflicts but how timely they are managed is the problem. During the last conflict it even took close to three days before the forces of law and order could arrive at the scene, when there were already a lot of casualties.” “The government has been so slow in decision taking. If they are incompetent, then they should resign their duties. Why should this matter still continue since 1979?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Conflict as to who is “The government said that individuals should be held</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impartiality</td>
<td>responsible. The individual or the whole village</td>
<td>responsible while the bafanjí claimed that it was the community of Bali that destroyed. Thus the problem of who to pay.” “There have been wars in 1995 and 1998. These conflicts usually begin during the farming season. The disputes will normally start at the individual level and then will escalate to the village level.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government officials must remain impartial</td>
<td>“I am the Divisional Officer. All I can tell you is that my role is impartial.” “Yes. First as counselor, I am caught up in the middle. I am from Bali Kumbat but I cannot take sides because of my political position. Bafanjí is part of our municipality. Furthermore, my wife is even from Bafanjí. So the dispute highly affects me as political figure and family person.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the government officials, conflicting documentation, population growth, the borderline, the land tenure system, deception, casualties, poor government policy, responsibility, impartiality, transportation, and government injunction constituted their major concerns in relation to the conflict. It should be noted that issues like borderline, poor government policy were of top priority to the government officials. Comparatively, these two issues equally dominated minds of the traditional, religious authorities and experienced participants. Nonetheless, the government officials raised other issues like population growth, the land tenure system, deception, and conflict between civil and traditional authorities that were not mentioned by the other respondents.

**Research Objective Three**

**Colonial Land Policy and its Role in the Land Dispute**

This objective was analyzed based on the interview responses of the traditional authorities and experienced participants of both villages. Analysis shall be conducted for
each village after which a comparison of the findings of both villages shall be made to identify major differences and similarities.

Government officials were considered impartial and neutral. Their views are analyzed separately but comparisons are made between them and the village authorities.

**Data Analysis of Balikumbat Respondents**

These findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities and six experienced participants. Twelve respondents are included in this objective. The following table presents key issues:

**Table 9**

*Findings to research objective 3 – Balikumbat Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Pills</td>
<td>Use of pillars to demarcate boundaries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“The colonial masters were of help. They demarcated the boundaries with pillars and we did not have problems.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Geographical Features | Neglect of geographical features in boundary demarcation | 3         | “During the colonial period there was no geographical feature for borders. What were built were the pillars.” “I know that most boundaries are often demarcated by a geographical feature. I do not understand why
in our own case only movable pillars were used. This has caused a lot of problems.”

“Some of these pillars have been removed and put in water. We can still see them there because they are too heavy to be removed.”

“We did not have problems since the coming of the Germans and British because they did well, but this posed a future problem after they left because of inconsistency in their administration.” “The only thing I can say here is that there were two colonial masters, (Germany and Britain). Unfortunately, we equally have two colonial maps of the area. Each map leads to the favour and disfavor of one village.”

“We have the Germans and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonial Maps</th>
<th>colonial boundaries</th>
<th>British colonial masters who brought out the boundary. In their reign we have no problems but after them, there is a problem, may be because there are two colonial maps and the government is unable to decide which one is correct.” “The only thing I can say here is that there were two colonial masters, (Germany and Britain). Unfortunately, we equally have two colonial maps of the area. Each map leads to the favour and disfavor of one village.” “But we cannot deny the fact that they created two colonial maps, which today poses a serious conflict between two villages.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Colonial Rule | Firm and strong colonial administration. | “I believe they had a strong colonial rule and did well, that is why we did not have problems
During their reign.” “They were firm with their administration and that is why we did not have problems. But we cannot deny the fact that they created two colonial maps, which today poses is serious conflict between two villages.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Beliefs and Customs</th>
<th>Neglect of indigenous beliefs and customs in boundary demarcation</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“They had their positive and negative points. Positively, the tried to calve out boundaries amongst the villages and made sure it was respected. Negatively, most of these borders did not respect our tradition. They separated families and even traditional sacrificial shrines like the Njah disputed area.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative Handover</th>
<th>Poor handover of power from one administration to another</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We a victim of so many foreign conflicting powers. First, the Germans poorly handed things to the British who in turn poorly...”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
handed over to West Cameroon.

Now the present La Republique is behaving as if they are another colonial master to us. So the colonial masters have part of the blame.”

According to these findings, most of the respondents were happy with the firm colonial administrations, which demarcated between the two villages and maintained peace and order until their departure. Nevertheless, a number of significant limitations were highlighted in relation to the colonial period. These included the fact that pillars rather than geographical features were used as borderlines. The respondents highlighted the mutability of these pillars. The presence of two inconsistent colonial administrations and multiple conflicting colonial maps were equally highlighted. Moreover, the fact that colonial masters did not respect the indigenous beliefs and customs of the people and the issue of poor administrative handover constituted some of the factors that marred the role of the colonial regimes in handling land issues.

Data Analysis of Bafanji Respondents

These findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities and six experienced participants. Twelve respondents are included in this objective. The following table presents key issues:
Table 10

Findings to research objective 3 – Bafanji Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Settlers</td>
<td>Bafanji does not share a colonial boundary with Balikumbat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Before the putting of the boundary the Bali were not even there. Our boundary was with Bamukumbit. The Bali only came in and started to cause problems.” “At the time of the colonial rule there were no Bali people in this area. They only came in during the post-colonial period.” “I think if we follow strictly the history of this area then our border line is even with the Bamukumbet people and not even with the Bali Kumbat.” “We first arrived here before the Bali and by history we are not even supposed to have a border dispute with them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutability of Pillars</td>
<td>Pillars can be changed or removed</td>
<td>“It was the British colonial master that demarcated the boundary in 1939. There were no problems until these pillars were removed.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Colonial Masters</td>
<td>Inconsistency in the administrative policies of Germany and Britain as colonial masters.</td>
<td>“I will like to state here that having two colonial masters created a lot of difficulties which were left unresolved. They were able to calm down land disputes at their time but as soon as they left these problems started to resurface. The problem of land is not only limited to Bali and Bafanji. In Bui division we have similar problems.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Colonial Maps</td>
<td>Inconsistency in colonial boundaries</td>
<td>“The problem between the Bali and Bafanji is a difficult one, because there is the German border line which favours the Bali and the British border line which favours the Bafanji.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Rule</td>
<td>Firm and strong colonial administration.</td>
<td>&quot;We first arrived here before the Bali and by history we are not even supposed to have a border dispute with them. They are the aggressors; the colonial masters are not to blame.&quot; “If we were still under the colonial government we should have had no problems.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Beliefs and Customs</td>
<td>Neglect of indigenous beliefs and customs in boundary demarcation</td>
<td>“What I wish to state here is that these colonial masters did not take into consideration the indigenous beliefs and customs, else they would not have set boundaries on sensitive areas like the Njah where close to five villages use as land for traditional sacrifices.” “It is true they may have made mistakes in demarcating villages and even separating families that were supposed to be united.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Administrative Handover

| Poor handover of power from one administration to another | 1 | “But the greatest problem is that there was no effective hand from the Germans to the British and then to west Cameroon government and now the republic of Cameroon.” |

According to these findings, the Bafanji respondents made a serious claim that they did not have a colonial boundary with the Balikumbat village. Instead, they share a boundary with the Bamukumit people. The respondents were, however, happy with the firm colonial administrations, which demarcated between the two villages and maintained peace and order until their departure. Nevertheless, a number of significant limitations were highlighted in relation to the colonial period. These included the presence of two inconsistent colonial administrations and multiple conflicting colonial maps. Furthermore, the fact that the colonial masters did not respect the indigenous beliefs and customs of the people and the issue of poor administrative handover constituted some of the negative factors to the role of the colonial regimes in handling land issues.

Comparison the Balikumbat and Bafanji on the Colonial Land Policy and its role in the Land Dispute

With different grounding scores and emphasis, the two village respondents were quite similar in their evaluation of the colonial land policy. They both appreciated the firm colonial rule that had kept them from any disputes in the colonial era. Nevertheless, they frowned at the inconsistencies in colonial administrations, multiple colonial maps, the non-respect of indigenous values, and poor administrative handover. There were
contrasting views. While the Balikumbat highlighted neglect in the use of geographical pillars, this issue was completely ignored by the Bafanji. Instead, the Bafanji were firm in claiming that they did not even share any colonial boundary with the Balikumbat.

**Data Analysis of Government Officials**

These findings are based on the interview responses of six government officials.

The following table presents key issues:

Table 11

*Findings to research objective 3 – Government Officials Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Colonial Maps</td>
<td>Inconsistency in colonial boundaries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“There are so many maps. In fact, it is a whole litany of problems. You can have time to exploit the documents yourself, but the documents are confidential. You cannot take them out of this office.” “There have been two colonial masters with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Beliefs and Customs</td>
<td>Neglect of indigenous beliefs and customs in boundary demarcation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“My blame goes more to the government for failing to respect the colonial boundary and bringing a solution to this conflict. Nevertheless, the colonial masters are to blame for arbitral division of families.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutability of Pillars</td>
<td>Pillars can be changed or removed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“During the colonial period there was a boundary. But people went round...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The government officials were keen to mention the limitations of the colonial rule. Multiple colonial maps, neglect of indigenous values, mutability of pillars, and the neglect of geographical features in demarcating boundaries were identified. These codes were similar to those already highlighted by the respondents of both villages.

**Research Objective Four:**

**Role of the Present Government in the Solution of the Dispute**

This objective was analyzed based on the interview responses of the traditional authorities and experienced participants of both villages. Analysis was completed for each village after which a comparison of the findings of both villages was made to identify major differences and similarities.

Government officials were considered impartial and neutral. Their views are analyzed separately but comparisons are made between them and the village authorities.

**Data Analysis of Balikumbat Respondents**

The findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities and six experienced participants. Twelve respondents are included in this objective. The following table presents key issues:
Table 12

*Findings to research objective 4 – Balikumbat Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Government is indecisive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“The present government is not doing well because they cannot take a decision, as to whether they want to maintain the boundary of the colonial masters or to define a new one. It is the ministry of territorial administration to define the border and everybody will have to respect. They can even divide us at the middle since everyone is claiming ownership.” “The present government is not doing well; there is no clear cut boundary. No decision has been taken, despite the fact that we have written so many letters calling on the government to solve this problem. I don’t understand how the government cannot demarcate...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Government inability to identify and sanction culprits</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;There is an injunction on the land, but the Bafanji people work there without any punishment. But when we go there they say we have brought war.&quot; &quot;The government has put an injunction on the land yet it allows the Bafanji to continue to use the land.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laxity</th>
<th>Untimely intervention of government</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The present government is hesitant to define the boundaries since 1979. Thus, the problem has not been solved. This makes people to suffer. Some families used to rely on that land.&quot; &quot;This...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No positive comments were received by the present government on this land issue. The respondents all mentioned the indecisiveness of government in decision-making, their failure to rain sanctions on defaulters, their carelessness in timely intervention, and their misconception of an injunction as a permanent solution to the boundary problem.

Data Analysis of Bafanji Respondents

These findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities and six experienced participants. Twelve respondents are included in this objective. The following table presents key issues:
Table 13

*Findings to research objective 4 – Bafanji Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“The Government has taken no action. We have written letters upon letters to no avail. We live in fear. Wholes and crops are stolen and the Bali quarter head claim that he is not responsible for this theft.” “There has been no concrete action, despite the constant requests and pleas. This has made the Bafanji to live in constant fear because the Bali come with bags of stones and seize holes from the Bafanji women when they are working. We farm at times and they come and harvest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Lack of government decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Government inability to identify and</td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is an injunction on the land, but the Bafanji people work there without any punishment. But</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laxity</td>
<td>sanction culprits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untimely intervention of government</td>
<td>when we go there they say we have brought war.” “The government has put an injunction on the land yet it allows the Bafanji to continue to use the land.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government injunction</th>
<th>Injunction is not a solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Cameroon government is not taken quick action to solve this problem.” “Cameroon government is not taken quick action to solve this problem and I am terribly disappointed in them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“This government is nonsense. We are suffering and dying and all they can do is give an injunction on the land. Where do they want us to cultivate? How do they expect us to live? If I do not go to farm, my family will die of starvation. The government should show us another place to farm and live. Our population is fast growing.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bafanji respondents frowned at government attempts to solve the problem. The government’s lack of a concrete decision-making, their inability to sanction defaulters, their laxity in timely interventions, and the fact that an injunction is not a solution to land disputes emerged strongly from the disappointed respondents.

**Comparison of the Balikumbat and Bafanji on the Role of Present Government on the Dispute**

The respondents of both villages unanimously condemned government action with the same areas of concern, like poor decision-making, their inability to sanction culprits, and general laxity. The government injunction was not considered a solution by both villages. However, the emphases were slightly different. While the Balikumbat were milled in their condemnation (e.g. indecisive), the Bafanji were very emphatic (complete lack of decision). While the Balikumbat considered the government injunction a temporary solution, the Bafanji did not believe it was a solution at all.

**Data Analysis of Government Officials**

These findings are based on the interview responses of six government officials. The following table presents key issues:

**Table 14**

*Findings to research objective 4 – Government Officials Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Tenure System</td>
<td>Well Defined Land Tenure System</td>
<td>“The present land tenure system states that a land certificate can only be issued for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistency</td>
<td>Government officials take inconsistent decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Bottlenecks</td>
<td>Poor communication and circulation of information.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
level of SDO, Governor and minister. If government decisions are followed by action, then this problem can be solved.

“...have been very slow and lax in the solution of the problem.” “I am deeply unsatisfied. The two communities have written letters to the government pleading for a border demarcation but nothing has been done.” “Of recent in 2011, the Lord Mayor led a powerful delegation to the Ministry of Territorial administration to plead on border demarcation. Promises were made but none have been fulfilled.” “There are always conflicts but how timely they are managed is the problem. During the last conflict it even took close
to three days before the forces of law and order could arrive at the scene, when there were already a lot of casualties.” “The government has been so slow in decision taking. If they are incompetent, then they should resign their duties. Why should this matter still continue since 1979?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict in Authority</th>
<th>Conflict between the civil and traditional authorities over land custody</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The government has been a failure in this respect. Furthermore, there is even a conflict between the government and the traditional authorities on who actually is the real custodian of land.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of a well-defined land tenure system, the local government officials of the subdivision and municipality were dissatisfied with government action towards a solution to the land dispute. This same dissatisfaction was expressed by the respondents of both villages.
Research Objective Five:

Solutions to the Current Dispute

This objective was analyzed based on the interview responses of the traditional authorities, religious authorities, and experienced participants of both villages. Analysis was undertaken for each village after which a comparison of both villages was made to identify major differences and similarities.

Government officials were considered impartial and neutral. Their views are analyzed separately but comparisons are made between them and the village authorities.

Data Analysis of Balikumbat Respondents

The findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities, two religious authorities, and six experienced participants. Fourteen respondents are included in this objective. The following table presents key issues:

Table 15

Findings to research objective 5 – Balikumbat Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Dialogue between traditional</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“The two Fons and their traditional councils should meet and discuss”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authorities</td>
<td></td>
<td>“There should be dialogue between the two villages”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Dialogue between civil authorities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“The Governor should invite all stakeholders for a talk.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The DO and SDO should call”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of Borderline</td>
<td>Demarcation of Borderline</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitization</td>
<td>Education of people on current state of affairs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Stop the provocation of others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Decision by both</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

traditional and civil authorities

the two Fons and talk to them.”

“The ministry of territorial administration should draw up the border.” “Government should take a simple decision and replant the pillars at the borders and call on all to obey. If they do this, then we shall obey even if it is to our disadvantage.”

“The government should bring a final boundary in this area.”

“The Fons should sensitize the people on the discussions and the decisions taken so that no one should disrespect them.”

“We should stop provocation of neighbours at the borders. Everything should pass through the land commission.” “People should stop provoking each other at the border.”

“Since the government has
Making government and traditional authorities declared that she is the sole owner of land, the government should take a decision with the help of the local traditional authorities so that both villages should respect the borders."

Role of the church and religious authorities The priests spoke with the women of Bafanji and Bali and preached unity for the two villages to meet for church activities. “The priests all the way has preached peace.” “I had the opportunity to go to Bafanji and preach myself. At first I was not received well, but when I explained that I came under the parish, the people were willing to listen to me.” “The church has been preaching for peace but it does not have the right to take a decision. The church can only convince the people and tell them the bad side
While hoping for a possible solution, the Balikumbat respondents highlighted dialogue, the construction of a borderline, sensitization, tolerance, decision-making, the Church, unity, respect, and research findings as major ways by which a solution can be brokered between the two villages.

### Data Analysis of Bafanji Respondents

These findings are based on the interview responses of six traditional authorities, two religious authorities, and six experienced participants. Fourteen respondents are included in this objective. The following table presents key issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Communication of Research findings to the civil, traditional authorities</th>
<th>“The researchers like you can form a big solution to the problem. Since, nobody had come to ask us anything. Now that you people have come. We believe that the truth shall resurface.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Respect of eventual government decision</td>
<td>“Since government is claims they are the owners of land. The solution lies in them. Ours is to respect them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>Unity between the two villages</td>
<td>“We need to come together with the Bafanji people as one.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 16

**Findings to research objective 5 – Bafanji Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The government claim that only individual culprits should be punished cannot work. I think that when the quarter head is captured and tortured, he will reveal the people behind the constant attacks.” “The government should be able to punish all those who keep on removing pillars. The government should not just be quite.” “Individuals should be identified and punished. These should be produced by the quarter head.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Punishment of defaulters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Communication through the press</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“As researchers, I think you people should go to the CRTV and talk. The government is too lax and people are dying. If you people talk at the CRTV I think...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of Borderline</td>
<td>Demarcation of boundary</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>“I think there is no other solution to this matter than that government should replant the pillars to define the boundary. I do not understand what is so difficult in doing this.” “The government should replant the pillars to show the boundary.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Dialogue between government officials</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“There should be collaboration amongst the government officials so as to reach a solution. Government action should be quick and fast.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Quarter heads should be responsible for acts of attacks committed by their people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“The quarter heads of Bali should claim responsibility of the destruction and constant farm raids from its people. They should be able to identify these people and bring them up for punishment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church</td>
<td>Role of the church and religious authorities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“There is justice and peace. The priests have been preaching against violence and have reminded the people that we are one parish and we should live together.” “When the priest says this, the Bali man will accept in church but will go out and then begin to act differently. “The church has been preaching for peace but it does not have the right to take a decision. The church can only convince the people and tell them the bad side of war. The church has done her best to help bring peace.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Government action should be fast and just</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Simple. The government should act fast, justly and wisely”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These respondents believed and hoped for a possible solution. They highlighted strategies including sanctions, research, borderline construction, collaboration, the church, justice, and responsibility as major ways by which a solution can be realized.
Comparison of the Balikumbat and Bafanji on Solutions to the Current Dispute

The first striking similarity is that both villages were amenable to a peaceful solution to the border dispute. The construction of a borderline, collaboration, dialogue, and the findings of research were highlighted as possible tools to peace. Nevertheless, while the Balikumbat called for immediate unity, the Bafanji were more emphatic on the aspect of sanctions and justice.

Data Analysis of Government Officials

These findings are based on the interview responses of six government officials. The following table presents key issues:

Table 17

Findings to research objective 5 – Government Officials Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
<th>Grounding</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Commission</td>
<td>Commission should complete task on demarcation of boundary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“The national commission should act fast on their assignment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is already a national commission working on the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A small DO like me cannot go and undercut this commission. We can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>only wait for that commission to complete the job it started.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of Borderline</td>
<td>Implantation of pillars</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “The major suggestion is that the government should take it as a matter of emergency and plant the pillars even if it means one village giving up the whole of that area.”
| “The land belongs to the state and so the state should act promptly.” |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendliness</th>
<th>Traditional authorities of both villages should be more friendly</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The Fons of the tribes should be friendlier and even have their coordination meetings so that they can meet and discuss to evade conflict.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forgiveness</th>
<th>Focus on solutions rather than causes</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We should not focus on the causes but rather seek for solutions. We want a situation where there is free movement within the municipality.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitization</th>
<th>Constant meetings to educate people on current affairs</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “Sensitization in meetings and villages by the Mayor and D.O”
| “Meetings with traditional councils” “We have doing a lot of |
Individual Responsibility

| Dispute at individual rather than village level | 2 | “Dispute on land should be handled at family level and not at the level of the village.” |

The government officials highlighted the national commission, the construction of a borderline, friendliness, forgiveness, sensitization, and individual responsibility as possible solutions to the dispute. Apart from the comment about the national commission, most of the other strategies mentioned by the government officials were equally highlighted by the village respondents.

**Researcher Observations**

Observations were carried out as an important part of this research effort. The researcher spent approximately three hours on each of the market days which occurred on every Thursday of November, 2015. During these observation sessions, the overall objective was to determine if the land conflict still played a role in the social interactions among the people of both villages. Confirming the identities of the people from both villages was assisted by a gatekeeper. Detailed field notes were recorded.

In the course of the observations, some fascinating notations were made. The market square has traditionally been a meeting place for buyers and sellers of both villages. On a typical market day, people from both villages will convene in the market square to buy, sell, or simply make new acquaintances. My observations revealed that, among the younger population, interactions of a free-spirited and positive nature prevailed. Young people from Bafanji and Balikumbat mingled with ease as they played,
socialized, gossiped and bought and sold goods without any noticeable animosity. In fact, as I observed and listened, I could hear some young people from both villages planning to meet more often and to play sports together. Additionally, I noticed that motorbike riders, who provide an important means of transportation, were transporting people indiscriminately. It appears that, for younger people at least, while they may be fully aware of the land dispute, they do not allow it to affect their mutual social interactions.

Conversely, my observations clearly revealed that the older population, from about 40 years of age and up, did not share the same kind of social interaction. Rather than mingle among people of both villages, older villagers tended to only associate with others from their own village. This appeared to be a clear indication that the land dispute had etched a persistent scar on the older people of both villages. More detailed observations revealed that, even in small social gatherings, where the older people met to relax and drink their palm wine, there was no mixture. The Bafanji people stayed in their own areas as did the Balikumbat people. While past conflicts may not have been the most prominent issue on the minds of elders from both villages, nothing had been forgotten. It seemed that conflict over the land dispute was on their minds enough to prevent inter-village social interaction of any kind. To further buttress this divide, it was startling to observe one elderly person from Balikumbat trying to initiate a conversation with another man from Bafanji. Even though the conversation did not develop, the attempt was quickly greeted with scorn as some elderly people from Balikumbat aggressively asked him why he felt the need to speak with that person.

From these observational sessions, it appears conclusive that, although open conflict is not manifestly unfolding on the battlefield, there are still social implications to
the land dispute. The younger generation seems to give hope to a burning desire to put this conflict permanently behind them. However, the older generation of both villages remains adamant that their own view of the land dispute is the correct one, so much so, that even a simple conversation between two elders (one from each village) is aggressively frowned upon. In fact, similar examples of this occasional socially enforced non-interaction appeared to occur within a dark cloud of suspicion. It appeared that, at the smallest provocation along the disputed area, full-blown conflict would again erupt.

**Document Review**

This researcher carried out a review of some documents at the office of the Senior Divisional Officer. I was informed by the desk officer that some of the documents were destroyed during a war and the surviving documents were mostly of letters and petitions from both villages. As I reviewed these letters, I noticed that most of the information consisted of court summonses and formal complaints to the authorities. In one letter, the chief of Bafanji complained that he felt marginalized by the authorities as decisions that were made by the colonial authorities were not being respected by the current officials. In another letter, the chief of Bafanji threatened to take action if the people of Balikumbat did not desist from farming around the disputed area. Yet in another letter, the chief of Bafanji exercised his authority by insisting that his village will fight to the end to defend their heritage and to take possession of their ancestral land.

In these documents, very little usable data was discovered in the letters and petitions from the Balikumbat people. They mostly consisted of reported attacks that were initiated against Bafanji by the Balikumbat people.
The reviewed documents tended to indicate that, throughout these land conflicts, the Balikumbat people have maintained a superior position and, in some instances, even failed to adhere to the injunctions laid out by the authorities. In contrast, the Bafanji people have been very resilient and determined to keep fighting for this piece of land, which they are convinced belongs to them.

Chapter Summary of Presentation of Findings

This general summary of the findings is articulated with the following points in relation to the research objectives.

Objective One: The pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance

Both villages were similar in their perception of land and its importance. While the Bafanji placed more emphasis on the traditional value of land that provides shrines for sacrifices, the Balikumbat were more concerned with land as a source of life sustenance via cultivation and shelter.

Objective Two: The Causes, History and Reoccurrence the Land Dispute

There are striking differences concerning remote and immediate causes and the historical development of the war. Nonetheless, all respondents agreed that the lack of a clear borderline, in conjunction with the laxity of the present Cameroonian government to provide one, is the predominant reason for the reoccurring border dispute.

Objective Three: Colonial land policy and its role in the land dispute

The respondents acknowledge the firm rule of the colonial masters in demarcating boundaries and maintaining peace during their era. However, respondents from both villages highlighted major flaws during the colonial reign that orchestrated this land dispute.
Objective Four: Role of present government in the solution of the dispute

All respondents were dissatisfied with the lack of satisfactory government action towards the solution of the dispute. Only the presence of the land tenure system was mentioned as a positive point.

Objective Five: Solutions to the current dispute

Despite the small differences in the strategies for a solution to the conflict, all respondents stood for a peaceful solution. The vast majority of respondents placed their hopes on the government to construct a final borderline between the two villages.

In Sum, this chapter presented the findings of this research and how these findings reflect the information gathered in the field. It gives the reader an idea of the various factors that influenced the conclusions that have been arrived at by the researcher. The next chapter focuses on a discussion of the findings and their ramifications for the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution.
Chapter Five

Discussion of Results, Implications and Recommendations

The boundary conflict between the two neighbouring villages of Balikumbat and Bafanji has had long lasting ramifications. These difficulties have adversely affected the socio-economic, cultural, and political lives of the people of both villages. This chapter focuses on the discussion of the results, implications, and recommendations that have emerged from this study. This discussion will include the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance, the causes, history, and recurrences of the land dispute, the colonial land policy, and its role in the land dispute, the role of government policy towards the solution of the dispute, and solutions to the current dispute.

Reasonable interpretations and implications of the conflict are presented. A critical examination probes the efforts extended by the administrative, traditional, and religious bodies and non-profit organizations to resolve the conflict and reasons for its recurrence. These implications are examined under the socio-economic and political rubrics and followed by possible recommendations arising from the study.

Discussion of Results

This subsection will discuss the results in relation to the five objectives and research questions set in the study. These results include, first, the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance, second, the causes, history, and recurrence of the land dispute, third, the colonial land policy and its role in the land dispute, fourth, the role of the present government in the solution of the dispute, and last, solutions to the current dispute.
The Importance of Pre-Colonial Indigenous Perception of Land

An understanding of the indigenous perception of land in Africa, but more specifically in the Balikumbat and Bafanji Fondsoms, is imperative for a proper analysis and critique of the boundary land conflict between the two tribes. The results of this study will be discussed based on interview responses of the traditional authorities of both villages. A comparison of the perceptions of both villages clarifies the objectives that enable people to fight and die for a piece of land.

First, the importance of land for the people of Balikumbat cannot be overemphasized. From interview responses of traditional authorities, land is perceived as a source of life and sustenance. This value is prominent because land is used for the cultivation of crops, settlement, and the construction of shelter. The value given to land explains why the people of Balikumbat cannot renounce the contested land of Njah around Bangang. To emphasize the importance of land, one of the traditional authorities explained: Land is very important for us Africans because it is from land that we can have food and shelter. Land could be used to tap palm wine to sustain a living. Land provided material to construct houses like grass…it is important for us in three practical ways…cultivation of crops, it is used for construction, as a means of subsistence, that is food, cultivation and shelter.

This perception of land is corroborated by arguments advanced by (Sobseh, 2011) that explain the causes of land conflict in the North West Region. In his view, disputes over land are related to farming, which is the most common usage of the contested land. Farming is critically related to land disputes because farming and sowing claim certain pieces of land (2011, p. 140). With the value of using land to cultivate crops, farming
seasons are apparently periods of sporadic eruption of violence in the Balikumbat subdivision. A traditional authority in Bafanji confirms this fact when she observes that land conflicts arise principally during the periods of cultivation in view of the planting season (Interview with Traditional Authority, Bafanji, Age 48, 5th of November, 2015).

According to Sobseh (2011), times of harvest may account for increased risks of land conflict in the Northwest Region, which underscores the value of land for the cultivation of crops. The socio-economic value of land is also asserted by (Mbah, 2008) and (Dze-Ngwa, 2014). While explaining the most prominent social and economic activities of land in the Northwest Region, Mbah states, “The contested piece of land between the Balikumbat and the Bafanji posed no problem and threats until the increase of the value of land and the fertile soils of the land in question” (2008, p. 188). Dze-Ngwa celebrates the different socio-economic practices associated with the value of land when he explains the dynamics of the Mbororo and Aghem people of Wum, still in the Northwest Region of Cameroon.

These positions attest to the use of the human needs theory, where land is considered a basic need for the satisfaction of other needs. Admitting the place of land in the cultivation of crops, Nkwi believes that land is also used for settlement and other religious activities like offering sacrifices to the Ancestors (Nkwi, 2011). The religious value of land is also elaborated by one of the traditional rulers of Balikumbat by saying,

Land is equally very important when it comes to traditional sacrifices like the said land, which is under dispute between Bali and Bafanji. It is a place where sacrifices are offered. Traditionally, land is used to offer sacrifices to the gods. There are traditional shrines and any village will always want to protect these
places from foreign invaders (Interview with traditional authority in Balikumbat, Age 50; August 4, 2015).

The religious importance of land is not only asserted by the people of Balikumbat. The traditional authorities of Bafanj also testify to this value in the following words,

Land is used for several reasons like cultivation, building, shelter, burial, and offering of sacrifices. You can even see the half houses, which we constructed and they have destroyed. The present land Njah, which is under dispute, is a place where we offer sacrifices and there are a lot of our people that have been buried there. We cannot just allow it to go. There is a place of worship that all five villages go and do their sacrifices. How can the Bali claim that all land should be abandoned and given to them? Land is used for several reasons like cultivation, building, shelter, burial, and offering of sacrifices. The land under dispute is where some five villages go to offer sacrifices. The most important value of land that is leading to conflict is the traditional use of land for sacrifices and settlement issues (Interview with traditional authority in Balikumbat, Age 52, 26/July 2015).

According to this traditional authority of Bafanj, the religious significance of land is very strong. The strength of this value testifies why the people of Bafanj cannot give up the fight. In spite of the casualties incurred by these people, they feel that their lives are inseparable from this piece of land. It is the burial grounds of their ancestors. It will also serve as their own resting place.

It is interesting to note that five villages congregate in this area for religious practices. To this effect, it is impossible for the people of Bafanj to let this land go because it carries the lives of five different groups of people. To portray the difficulty of
this Balikumbat and Bafanji land conflict because of the religious significance of that piece of land, it is important for us to refer to what Mbah observes about the religious concepts of landownership in the Northwest Region.

Religious concepts of land ownership used in formulating a traditional concept of boundary between communities have also resulted in ethno-tribal conflict over land in the region. Land in traditional Bamenda societies, as in most African societies, was littered with shrines and other sacred places where gods and ancestors are worshipped. Graves, wells, waterfalls, forests, hills, and monuments could not be separated from a group. Land was a spiritual resting place of traditional gods for peace to reign, by communities who shared the frontier. Traditional African societies referred to land, as the earth was sacred because it had a spiritual value and was home to ancestors. These religious concepts of land ownership have introduced conflicts between groups for the purpose of recovering land that is believed to have ancestral graves, monuments, and places of sacrifice and worship. This is an issue of life or death to some groups in the region who blame bad happenings to curses from ancestors who feel abandoned or neglected (2008, p. 72).

The religious perception of land and its value render the conflict persistent and recurrent. This is because the party that has any religious affiliation to land, like the case of the Bafanji people in this case study, can never give up. For them, this land is their blood and it is a matter of do or die. They are ready to die for the land in which their ancestors have been buried.
Apart from the religious significance of land, some traditional authorities believe that land is a source of pride to the possessor. The possessor of land sees it as wealth because it has a potential monetary value.

Land used to be a source of pride to the person who possesses land. Land is the pride of those who possess much of it. Land was like money. You could sell to those who do not have to make money. Some families are rich and others are poor. When you do not have land, you are like a beggar. A man without land is like a stranger in his own hometown (Interview with traditional authorities, Ages, 48, 52, in Balikumbat, August 3, 2015).

The different values of land are highlighted in the above citation. These include the fact that land is a source of pride and identity. It is a reflection of a person’s wealth. The monetary value of land makes reminiscence of the modern aberration of land ownership.

Initially, in the customary land tenure, land ownership was by inheritance. The modern land tenure gives latitude to buy and sell land. This latitude explains part of the problem associated with land conflict in the North West Region. Fon Solomon Anye Angwafor III frowns on the new land tenure system, which permits the buying and selling of land. He argues that elites buy vast tracts of land to the detriment of poor villagers thus creating scarcity (BOTFON Human Rights Watch, 2007, p. 36). This explanation gives insight into the value of land and the reasons for which persons have to fight and die for land in the same country. The introduction of the new land tenure is a source of the problem. It must be remembered that the new land tenure comes with the administration left by the colonial masters. This refers to the fact that the land tenure is
colonial and post-colonial, and has colonial roots. In this case, negligence of the traditional ownership by inheritance and belonging to a particular community is one of the major causes of land conflict in the North West Region. It is precisely the case of Balikumbat-Bafanji.

Beside the valuable perception of land, traditional authorities also presented land as a sacred possession that carries retribution. Following their argument, unethical possession of land can result in death and illnesses.

If you take land that does not belong to you, it could be punishable by death in accordance with the customs of the people. Yes. If you take land that does not belong to you, it could be punishable by death or illness. The gods of the land can strike you with some strange disease or even death. Yes. If you take land that does not belong to you, it could be punishable by death or illness (Interview with traditional authorities from Balikumbat, 48, 52, August 3, 2015).

Highlighting the above citation, the traditional approach to conflict resolution is prominent. Priests can only offer sacrifices in the land where they are sure it is the resting place of their ancestors. The problem of land grabbing can be resolved from this perspective. With the African belief in retribution, honesty, rather than deception, could be attained in the course of resorting to African modes of peace building and conflict resolution to the Balikumbat and Bafanji boundary dispute.

Comparing results from the findings of Balikumbat and Bafanji, there were multiple and striking similarities on the how each village perceives land and its importance. Themes like source of life sustenance, traditional sacrifices, pride, monetary value, land acquisition, landlessness, and retribution were highlighted as important codes
on the indigenous perception of land. What is peculiar to the people of Bafanji is their emphasis on the use of land for burial. However, the conception of land as the land of their ancestors indirectly refers to the use of land for burial. Nonetheless, the striking disparity in emphasis must be noted. While the Balikumbat were more concerned with the use of land for sustenance (cultivation and shelter), the Bafanji were more concerned with the use of land for traditional sacrifices and a burial ground. This disparity definitely accounts for why each village would like to cling to the disputed land that is a source of the border dispute between these two neighbouring villages.

**Causes, History and Recurrence of the Land Dispute**

The causes of the land dispute carry a certain historicity that warrants examination of the internal/external and immediate/distant causes. The results appear following explanations provided by traditional authorities, religious authorities and experienced participants of both villages. Prominent among the causes of the conflict, is murder, which is considered the immediate cause of the boundary land violence that erupted in 1995. Sources from Balikumbat maintain that the murder of one of their indigenes provoked the war.

Around June 1995, in the afternoon. One Bafanji rice farmer man had a friend in Bali. He carried this man from Bali to go look at his farm. On coming back, he was killed in cool blood. He was killed in Bafanji. This was the immediate cause of the land dispute over the Njah area. The Bali had had a market in that place for a long time, but during a certain war at the 1960s under the leadership of S.T Muna, West Cameroon administration, the Bali people were driven away and part of the land was given to Bafanji, with new borders. The immediate cause of the
war was the killing of Bali man by the Bafanjians in cool blood. In 1995, a Bali Kumbat man was killed by the Bafanji in their area, so we had no other option than to go to war to defend ourselves. The war was bloody on both sides (Interview with traditional Authority, Age 52, Balikumbat August 3, 2015).

In the view of this traditional authority, the immediate cause of this war was the killing of one of the inhabitants of Balikumbat. This view about the cause of the war in 1995 contradicts that of other sources. According to the traditional authorities of Bafanji, the removal of pillars from the boundary line by the people of Balikumbat is the primary cause of the war.

In 1939, the border was drawn by the British colonial master, but around 1992, the Bali people came and removed the pillars. That is how this whole conflict started. The remote cause of the conflict was the removal of pillars by the Bali people. The government intervened and asked each village to contribute 400,000FrCs CFA each for the replacement of pillars. The Bali people did not give so the Bafanji people gave all the 800,000 Frs CFA. That was in 1992. Around 1992, the Bali people came and removed the pillars put by the British in 1939. That is how this whole conflict started (Interview with the Traditional Authorities, Bafanji Ages, 46, 48, August 6, 2015).

According to Bafanji traditional authorities, the cause of war was the removal of the pillars planted by the British colonial masters. From this contradictory stance, the removal of the pillars could have caused resentment in the people of Bafanji. While the killing of the indigene from Balikumbat served as the immediate cause of the war, it may
have been predicated by the resentment the people of Bafanji had against the people of Balikumbat.

Another cause of war, as explained by the sources from Balikumbat, was the destruction of the market of the people of Balikumbat in the contested land at Njah. Around 1978/79, Bali had a market at this area. The army came, scattered people, and burnt the whole market. The Fon was carried to prison. This was the remote cause of the war. I will like to state that around in 1979, the Bali had a market in the said disputed area, but we were brutally removed from this market by the Gendarmes who were in support of the Bafanji. Our buildings were destroyed and we were stopped form farming in the area. Around 1978/79, the gendarmes and the Bafanji drove us away from the market and my store was destroyed. Three of us built houses in that area. Our houses and the market were brutally burnt. I am an eyewitness because I was actively involved in the fighting but later I escaped for my dear life (Interview with businessman from Balikumbat, 62 years, August 8, 2015).

The cause identified here refers to the casualties incurred by the people of Balikumbat during the conflict. The frequency of the conflict and casualties entail the persistence of war. While the people of Balikumbat trace the root causes of the conflict in the malicious activities of the people of Bafanji, those of Bafanji trace the causes in the malicious activities of the people of Balikumbat. There are accusations and counter accusations.

According to the findings, it can be deduced that murder, displacement, non-respect of government injunction, poor boundary pillars, and poor government policy
were amongst the major reasons that accounted for the causes, history, and recurrence of the border disputes. The removal, inconsistency, and non-respect of the borderline formed a major source of conflict according to the Balikumbat respondents. For the people of Bafanji, borderline problems, poor government policy, threats, casualties, provocation, exercise of power, constant attacks, planting season, and primary settlers were identified as reasons for the causes, history, and recurrence of the dispute.

Nevertheless, the poor borderline demarcation, poor government policy, and casualties were top on the list according to the respondents.

Comparing responses of persons from the two areas, the borderline and poor government policies were identified by both villages as the major sources of conflict. Nevertheless, while the Balikumbat considered the murder as the immediate cause of the war, the Bafanji laid claim to the removal of the boundary pillars by the Balikumbat. It can be equally noted that the Bafanji were very sensitive to the amount of casualties suffered, unlike the Balikumbat. Both villages claimed constant attacks from the neighbouring village and each village equally claimed to have been the first to settle in the land, although this was not the primary cause of conflict. The issue of government injunction was problematic to the Balikumbat while the Bafanji did not see this as major problem. Other issues like provocation, threats on government officials, and exercise of power by the Bali Fon were peculiar to the Bafanji responses. Government injunction, displacement, disunity, and murder were key issues raised only by the Balikumbat. Conclusively, both villages agreed to the fact these conflicts often arise during the farming season.
With some of the discrepancies of the causes of the conflict, government officials believe that conflicting documentation is a very sensitive cause and recurrence of this particular conflict.

They trace the history of their various villages to colonial times. They both have different colonial maps. The remote cause is the fact there is no clear boundary between these two villages. There are a series of maps. Colonial maps and post-colonial maps. The problem now is which one is the correct map. Each village has its own map that it believes is the correct map (Interview with D.O Balikumbat Sub-Division Mayor of Balikumbat Municipal Council, Ages 51, 48 respectively August 6, 2015 and September 5, 2015).

Aside from the identification of population explosion, poor interpretation of the land tenure system, and the absence of a clear borderline as causes of the conflict, this government official was very precise in locating the place of deception. He reiterates that, The traditional authorities have misled the civil authorities. They are members of the land commission and when they give wrong information, there is bound to be conflict. They are the only people who know the history of the land and when their information is wrong, we are bound to have wrong decisions. Moreover, casualties incurred due to poor government policy in demarcating villages. This is considered a prominent cause of the conflict. Administrative units are clearly calved out but within the sub division, we have a headache that these boundaries are not clearly defined. I have maps as the one you can see, but these are just imaginary. The government have not come up with clear maps should the
boundaries amongst the villages within a unit. It keeps on coming because there is no clear-cut boundary between the two villages.

In addition, impartiality, transportation, and government injunction constitute major concerns in relation to the conflict. It should be noted that issues like borderlines and poor government policy were of top priority to the government officials. Comparatively, these two issues equally dominated the minds of the traditional, religious authorities and experienced participants. Nonetheless, the government officials raised other issues like population growth, land tenure system, deception, and conflict between civil and traditional authorities that were not mentioned by the other respondents.

**The Role of Colonial Land Policy in the Land Dispute**

The colonial land policy has had a serious impact on land disputes in Africa. The case of Balikumbat and Bafanji people is no different. The results of this study are discussed based on the interview responses of the traditional authorities and experienced participants of both villages. Information was drawn from the responses of each village after which a comparison of the findings of both villages was made to illuminate the major differences and similarities.

The first major problem was the demarcation of the border with the use of pillars, which are mutable. The demarcation of boundaries according to African customs and tradition is manifested by the use of natural or geographical features like mountains, rivers, trees, and streams. These features are used because it is often difficult for persons to tamper with them over a short period without being caught. However, with the advent of the colonial masters, pillars were used. In the case of Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary land dispute, the use of these pillars is a weakness since they are easily uprooted. This has
occurred several times to obstruct the process of peace. In the words one traditional authority:

During the colonial period, there was no geographical feature for borders. What were built were the pillars. I know that most boundaries are often demarcated by a geographical feature. I do not understand why in our own case only movable pillars were used. This has caused many problems. Some of these pillars have been removed and put in water. We can still see them there because they are too heavy to be removed (Interview with traditional authority, Balikumbat Age 54, 4th August 2015).

In the opinion of this respondent, the planting of pillars to solve the problem has created more problems since these pillars are easily manipulated. In this case, alternative ways of handling the matter without depending on the demarcation with pillars are required. This problem is aggravated by the fact that two colonial administrations planted pillars in different positions.

We have the Germans and British colonial masters who brought out the boundary. In their reign, we have no problems but after them, there is a problem, maybe because there are two colonial maps and the government is unable to decide which one is correct. The only thing I can say here is that there were two colonial masters (Germany and Britain). Unfortunately, we equally have two colonial maps of the area. Each map leads to the favour and disfavor of one village. However, we cannot deny the fact that they created two colonial maps, which today poses a serious conflict between two villages (Interview with Government Officials, Mayor, and D’O in Balikumbat, August 7, 2015).
The problem created by the conflicting colonial maps is corroborated by (Sobseh, 2011) when he argues that one of the causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Northwest Region is the indiscriminate balkanization of territory irrespective of the people’s customs and traditions. To buttress this argument, the D’O observed that,

We are a victim of so many foreign conflicting powers. First, the Germans poorly handed things to the British who in turn poorly handed over to West Cameroon. Now the present La Republique is behaving as if they are another colonial master to us. The colonial masters have part of the blame (Interview with D’O in Balikumbat August 7, 2015).

The findings from Balikumbat testify that firm colonial administration demarcated the two villages and maintained peace and order until their departure. Nevertheless, a number of significant limitations were highlighted in relation to the colonial period. These included the fact that pillars, rather than geographical features, were used as borderlines. The responses highlighted the mutability of these pillars. The presence of two inconsistent colonial administrations and multiple conflicting colonial maps were equally highlighted (Mbah, 2008). Furthermore, the fact that colonial masters did not respect the indigenous beliefs and customs of the people and the issue of poor administrative handover constituted some of the problems that marred the role of the colonial regimes in handling land issues.

An interesting revelation is offered by one of the traditional authorities of Bafanji that has not yet been officially documented. It holds that,

Before the putting of the boundary, the Bali were not even there. Our boundary was with Bamukumbit. The Bali only came in and started to cause problems. At
the time of the colonial rule, there were no Bali people in this area. They only came in during the post-colonial period. I think if we follow strictly the history of this area, then our borderline is even with the Bamukumbit people and not even with the Balikumbat. We first arrived here before the Bali and by history we are not even supposed to have a border dispute with them (Interview with traditional authority, 48years, Bafanji, August 6, 2015).

This contention clearly contradicts the scenario where colonial masters planted pillars to demarcate the boundaries between Balikumbat and Bafanji. If the people of Balikumbat were not present during the colonial period, it will be absurd for the colonial masters to plant pillars to define the boundary between Bafanji and Balikumbat. If the people of Balikumbat were present during the colonial period, then the colonial masters needed to define the boundary. Since the colonial masters did define the boundary, the people of Balikumbat must have been present during the colonial period. This modus tollens argument nullifies the reliability of the information above without necessarily passing judgment.

In another development, the colonial masters are said to be to blame for neglecting indigenous customs and traditions in the establishment of boundaries among villages.

What I wish to state here is that these colonial masters did not take into consideration the indigenous beliefs and customs, else they would not have set boundaries on sensitive areas like the Njah where close to five villages use as land for traditional sacrifices. It is true they may have made mistakes in demarcating
villages and even separating families that were supposed to be united (Interview with traditional authority, 48 years, Bafanji, August 9, 2015).

However, in spite of the fact that the colonial masters created some of these problems, they were able to handle some of the conflicts that arose during their reign and to settle them amicably.

I will like to state here that having two colonial masters created many difficulties, which were left unresolved. They were able to calm down land disputes at their time but as soon as they left these problems started to resurface. The problem of land is not only limited to Bali and Bafanji. In Bui division, we have similar problems (Interview with traditional authority, 48 years, Bafanji, August 9, 2015).

According to this response, it was only with the departure of the colonial masters that these land conflicts started resurfacing. In fact, the problem between Balikumbat and Bafanji only comes up in 1969, during the post-colonial era. Though part of the problem can be traced to colonial times, it is seemingly acceptable that they were able to manage the crisis. In all probability, they set standards that were convenient for the colonial administration rather than the post-colonial administration.

Summarily, the findings of Bafanji made a serious claim that the Bafanji tribe did not even have a colonial boundary with the Balikumbat village. Instead, they share a boundary with the Bamukubit people. These responses attest to the fact that the people were content with the firm colonial administration, which demarcated the borders between the two villages and maintained peace and order until their departure.

Nevertheless, a number of significant limitations were highlighted in relation to the colonial period. These included the presence of two inconsistent colonial administrations
and multiple conflicting colonial maps. Furthermore, the fact that the colonial masters did not respect the indigenous beliefs and customs of the people and the issue of poor administrative handover constituted some of the negative issues of the colonial regimes in handling land issues.

Comparing the Balikumbat and Bafanji responses to the colonial role on land dispute, a number of differences and emphases appeared. With different grounding scores and emphasis, the two village responses were almost similar in their evaluation of the colonial land policy. They both appreciated the firm colonial rule that had kept them from any disputes within the colonial era. Nevertheless, they frown on the inconsistencies in colonial administrations, multiple colonial maps, non-respect of indigenous values, and poor administrative handover (Mbah, 2008). However, there were contrasting views. While the Balikumbat highlighted the neglect of the use of geographical pillars, this issue was completely absent in the minds of the Bafanji. Instead, the Bafanji were firm in claiming that they did not even share any colonial boundary with the Balikumbat.

Considering the position of the Government Officials on this matter, I must say that they were keen in bringing out the limitations of the colonial rule. The identified multiple colonial maps, the neglect of indigenous values, the mutability of pillars, and the neglect of geographical features in demarcating boundaries.

There are so many maps. In fact, it is a whole litany of problems. You can have time to exploit the documents yourself, but the documents are confidential. You cannot take them out of this office. There have been two colonial masters with different colonial maps. Each village clings to the map that is in their favour. My blame goes more to the government for failing to respect the colonial boundary
and bringing a solution to this conflict. Nevertheless, the colonial masters are to blame for arbitral division of families. The colonial masters should have used geographical features to demarcate the boundary as was done in other places (Interview with D’O in Balikumbat August 7, 2015).

In spite of the limitation to the colonial rule in relation to the Balikumbat-Bafanji land dispute, some government officials think that a weak political will towards this matter shares the blame (Mbah, 2008). It is the place of the incumbent government to undertake a study and determine the right boundary between the two villages. One wonders why so much time has taken to resolve this particular conflict by stating clear-cut definition of boundaries.

**Government Solution to the Dispute**

From the responses given as possible government solutions to the problem, some major themes were prominent. These include the indecisiveness of government in decision-making, failure to rain sanctions on defaulters, laxity in timely intervention, and the misconception of an injunction as a permanent solution to the boundary problem. The results are discussed based on the interview responses of the traditional authorities and experienced participants of both villages. At the end, findings of both villages will be compared to determine the close parallels and sharp distinctions.

According to the speakers from Balikumbat, the present government portrays a weak political will as far as this boundary conflict is concerned:

The present government is not doing well because they cannot take a decision, as to whether they want to maintain the boundary of the colonial masters or to define a new one. It is the ministry of territorial administration to define the border and
everybody will have to respect. They can even divide us at the middle since everyone is claiming ownership. The present government is not doing well; there is no clear-cut boundary. No decision has been taken, despite the fact that we have written so many letters calling on the government to solve this problem. I do not understand how the government cannot demarcate a simple boundary for more than 30 years now. The present land policy is not definite. There is need for justice. The government has not done well. They have failed to produce a borderline. The present Bafanji GBHS is in our soil. Our farms have been taken by the Bafanji people. The present government is hesitant to define the boundaries since 1979. Thus, the problem has not been solved. This makes people suffer. Some families used to rely on that land. This government is well noted for her laxity in handling this matter. I do not understand why they cannot put a simple boundary between two villages (Interview with traditional authorities, Age 52, Balikumbat August 10, 2015).

Following this response from Balikumbat, the incumbent government has failed to solve the problem. Dissatisfaction in the process of handling the matter is evident. The people think that the delay has been too much. John Fru Ndi, a strong opposition leader in the country from the Northwest Region, thinks that the conflicts persist because of the hesitation of the incumbent government to make a firm decision (Sobseh, 2011). At the same time, they give the impression that any government decision on the matter will be respected. This is very misleading because the previous decisions made were disrespected with the uprooting of the pillars. What is the guarantee that the present decision made by the government will be respected?
The reason for the disrespect of government decisions lie in the fact that there is no enforcement of law. The rule of law seems to discriminate as far as this conflict is concerned. There are individuals and groups of persons who trespass the law and go unpunished.

There is an injunction on the land, but the Bafanji people work there without any punishment. But when we go there, they say we have brought war. The government has put an injunction on the land yet it allows the Bafanji to continue to use the land” (Interview with traditional Authorities in Balikumbat August 3, 2015). The people of Balikumbat simply express their frustration in the face of the problem. From what they say, they feel deprived of their land because of ineffective government action. In this case, there is a likelihood of a sporadic eruption of conflict in an attempt to retrieve the land. “The injunction move should just be a temporary thing and not permanent. I have been deprived of my farming land for long and this is causing poverty in my family. This government is thrash” (Interview with traditional Authorities in Bafanji August 6, 2015).

The attitude held by the present government on this land issue is not commendable. The responses given by the people of Balikumbat are indicative of the indecisiveness of the government in their decision-making, failure to rain sanctions on defaulters, laxity in timely intervention, and misconception of an injunction as a permanent solution to the boundary problem. In addition, the speakers from Bafanji show great contempt towards the negligence of the government about the matter in question. These participants feel cheated because the contested land is the only farmland they have to sustain their livelihood. The prolonged government injunction, without concrete action, is thought of as nonsensical. A logical extension of this sentiment may explain
why these participants clandestinely cultivate the land to the disdain and discontent of the people of Balikumbat. In the view of these participants,

The government has taken no action. We have written letters upon letters to no avail. We live in fear. Hoes and crops are stolen and the Bali quarter head claim that he is not responsible for this theft. There has been no concrete action, despite the constant requests and pleas. This has made the Bafanji to live in constant fear because the Bali come with bags of stones and seize hoes from the Bafanji women when they are working. We farm at times and they come and harvest. Cameroon government is not taken quick action to solve this problem and I am terribly disappointed in them. This government is nonsense. We are suffering and dying and all they can do is give an injunction on the land. Where do they want us to cultivate? How do they expect us to live? If I do not go to farm, my family will die of starvation. The government should show us another place to farm and live.

Our population is fast growing (Interview with traditional Authorities in Bafanji, Age 48 and 46 August 7, 2015).

The Bafanji responses frowned at government’s attempt to solve the problem. The government’s lack of a concrete decision, inability to sanction defaulters, laxity in timely intervention, and the fact that an injunction is not a solution to land disputes intensely emerged from the disappointed participants of this study.

Comparing the Balikumbat and Bafanji responses on the role of the present government on the dispute, it is conclusive that both parties unanimously condemn the government’s position. Areas of concern include poor decision-making, their inability to sanction culprits, and laxity. The government injunction was not considered as a solution
by both villages. Nevertheless, the emphases were slightly different. While the Balikumbat were mild in their condemnations (like government indecisiveness), the Bafanji were very emphatic (complete lack of decision). In addition, while the Balikumbat considered the government injunction as a temporary, but not permanent solution, the Bafanji simply saw it as the government’s nonchalant attitude to the conflict.

Frequent changes in government personnel and overall administration are believed to be a legitimate reason for the lack of a solution to the problem, thereby prolonging the conflict between the two villages.

The problem is even aggravated by poor administrative policies whereby Divisional Officers take delight in one way or the other for some private reasons, in counteracting decisions that were already taken by their predecessors. Hence, they are bound to multiple government decisions on the same piece of land (Interview with D’O in Balikumbat August 7, 2015).

One of the principal reasons for persistent conflict is poor administration. This comes because of the changes that are made in the government. It is rather unfortunate that there are as many decisions on the same piece of land as there are divisional officers changing position in this sub-division. This explanation about why the administration has not made a definitive resolution to this conflict is faulty. Perhaps some administrators change their decisions because of pressure they receive from the elites who perpetuate this land conflicts. As alleged by one of the traditional authorities in Bafanji, some officials are bought over to falsify decisions on the matter (Interview with traditional Authorities in Bafanji, 6th August 2014). Another problem lies in government bottlenecks and a lack of communication in the administrative hierarchy. “Government decision is
very slow. I am just a small DO sitting here and I can only tell you what is happening around me. I do not know what is happening at the level of SDO, Governor and minister. If government decisions are followed with action, then this problem can be solved”

(Interviews with D’O, Balikumbat Subdivision, February 5, 2015).

The DO reiterates the complaint expressed by the conflicting villages about the nonchalant attitude of the incumbent government administration in handling the conflict. He asserts that,

The government equally has been very slow and laxed in the solution of the problem. I am deeply unsatisfied. The two communities have written letters to the government pleading for a border demarcation but nothing has been done. Of recent in 2011, the Lord Mayor led a powerful delegation to the Ministry of Territorial administration to plead on border demarcation. Promises were made but none has been fulfilled. There are always conflicts but how timely they are managed is the problem. During the last conflict, it even took close to three days before the forces of law and order could arrive at the scene, when there were already many casualties. The government has been so slow in decision taking. If they are incompetent, then they should resign their duties. Why should this matter continue since 1979? The government has been a failure in this respect.

Furthermore, there is even a conflict between the government and the traditional authorities on who actually is the real custodian of land (Interviews with D’O, Balikumbat Subdivision January 5, 2016).

With the exception of a well-defined land tenure system, the local government officials of the subdivision and municipality were dissatisfied with government action
towards a solution of the land dispute. This same dissatisfaction was expressed by the responses from the participants consulted in Balikumbat and Bafanji villages. Therefore, there is a unanimous observation about government’s inability to resolve the problem.

**Solutions to the Current Dispute**

The results on the solution to the current dispute are discussed based on the interview responses of the traditional and religious authorities, and experienced participants of both villages. The solutions proposed are presented side by side before final comparison of the opinions of the two villages.

The people of Balikumbat think that the use of dialogue is imperative. In their collective view, “The two Fons and their traditional councils should meet and discuss”, “There should be dialogue between the two villages”, “The Governor should invite all stake holders for a talk,” and “The DO and SDO should call the two Fons and talk to them.” Whether this option exists at the level of traditional authorities or government officials and traditional rulers, dialogue is seen as a better process towards the resolution of this conflict. This aspect comes up very convincingly with the approach used by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Roman Catholic Church. According to this commission, it is important to bring the conflicting parties to a forum to vent their grievances and feelings without necessarily blaming any of the parties.

Another solution to the problem may be the establishment of a clear definition of a boundary line that is presently absent. Whether or not a clear definition of the boundary will bring a lasting solution to this conflict is unknown.

The ministry of territorial administration should draw up the border. Government should make a simple decision, and replant the pillars at the borders and call on
all to obey. If they do this, then we shall obey even if it is to our disadvantage. The government should bring a final boundary in this area. The Fons should sensitize the people on the discussions and the decisions taken so that no one should disrespect them. We should stop provocation of neighbours at the borders. Everything should pass through the land commission. People should stop provoking each other at the border (Interview with traditional Authorities in Balikumbat August 3, 2015).

The respondents in this proposal think that the definition of the borderline should be accompanied by input from the people it most concerns. This input must be the responsibility of the Fons. While the people are encouraged to contribute their opinions about the decisions, the Fons should insist that their people desist from provoking other parties at the borderline. These needless provocations are one of the causes of this persistent conflict since they encourage belligerent tendencies. These hostile actions manifest themselves in attacks on indigenes on their farms and in their houses.

Besides, preaching messages of peace should be encouraged through the church and other social activities. One of the religious authorities gave the example where he used the church as a means of preaching peace to women of the belligerent tribes.

The priests spoke with the women of Bafanji and Bali and preached unity for the two villages to meet for church activities. The priests all the way have preached peace. I had the opportunity to go to Bafanji and preach myself. At first, I was not received well, but when I explained that I came under the parish, the people were willing to listen to me. The church has been preaching for peace but it does not have the right to make a decision. The church can only convince the people and
tell them the bad side of war. The church has done her best to help bring peace
(Interview with religious authorities, ages 40 and 56 Balikumbat Parish, August 4, 2015).

Apart from preaching the message of peace, which is a conduit toward sensitization, research activities should be encouraged. Through research, it is possible to diagnose the root causes of the matter. Knowledge of the cause is already part of the solution. One of the limitations of administrative means of solving problems is the inability to diagnose the real causes. The government continues giving injunctions to both parties without determining if the injunctions are leading to lasting peace. In the supportive words of one participant, “Researchers like you can form a big solution to the problem, since nobody had come to ask us anything. Now that you people have come, we believe that the truth shall resurface” (Interview with traditional Authorities in Balikumbat August 4, 2015).

For the people of Bafanji, simple research does not produce a solution to the problem. When these people demand dissemination of the results of the research, its sole purpose is to provoke government action towards solving this problem. In the collective view of the Bafanji, “As researchers, you people should go to the CRTV and talk. The government is too laxed and people are dying. If you people talk at the CRTV, the government will listen to our cry” (Interview with traditional Authorities in Bafanji 6 August 2015). The people of Bafanji believe that publicity of this problem is necessary to provoke government action.

In addition to publicity, the people of Bafanji demand that legal action should be taken against culprits who bypass government action. One of the problems contributing
to the severity of this conflict has been the aspect of complacency. There are some unscrupulous individuals, like the former Fon of Balikumbat and some elites, who used to perpetuate this conflict for their own private interests. No concrete legal actions were taken against these persons because of their political affiliations (Sobseh, 2011). At that time, the people of Bafanji argued that directly punishing individuals who provoked conflict would probably help the situation:

The government claim that only individual culprits should be punished cannot work. I think that when the quarter head is captured and tortured, he will reveal the people behind the constant attacks. The government should be able to punish all those who keep on removing pillars. The government should not just be quiet. Individuals should be identified and punished. These should be produced by the quarter head (Interview with traditional Authorities in Bafanji August 6, 2015).

While it is important to punish those who bypass government laws, the people of Bafanji think that those of Balikumbat should acknowledge all the property destroyed. In addition, a quick government action is necessary for the establishment of a lasting peace. The type of quick action most needed is the replanting of the pillars.

I think there is no other solution to this matter than that government should replant the pillars to define the boundary. I do not understand what is so difficult in doing this. The government should replant the pillars to show the boundary. The quarter heads of Bali should claim responsibility of the destruction and constant farm raids from its people. They should be able to identify these people and bring them up for punishment. There should be collaboration amongst the
government officials to reach a solution. Government action should be quick and fast” (Interview with traditional Authorities in Bafanji, August 6, 2015).

However, the recommendation for the replanting of pillars remains problematic. The people of Bafanji think that planting the pillars for the third time will solve the problem. The question of where the pillars should be planted has not changed since each village claims the boundary line according to the historicity that works in its favour. The boundary standard of the German administration is accepted by Balikumbat while that of the British administration is accepted by Bafanji. These discrepancies must be resolved before the pillars are planted. What is also interesting in this opinion is the need for collaboration amongst government officials. From the people working in the sub-divisional office to the Ministry of territorial administration, a follow-up should be undertaken to determine that a lasting solution was established.

While hoping for a possible solution, the Balikumbat responses were highlighted by dialogue about the construction of a borderline, sensitization, tolerance, decision making, the Church, unity, respect, and research findings as major ways by which a solution could be established between the two villages. The Bafanji believed and hoped for a possible solution by highlighting strategies such as sanctions, research, construction of a borderline, collaboration, responsibility, and the Church as major ways by which a solution could be realized.

Comparing the Balikumbat-Bafanji responses on the solutions to the current dispute, the first striking similarity is that both villages wanted a peaceful resolution. The construction of a borderline, collaboration, dialogue, and the findings of research were
highlighted as possible tools to peace. Nevertheless, while the Balikumbat called for immediate unity, the Bafanji were more insistent on the aspect of sanctions and justice.

On this particular question, government officials observed that:

The national commission should act fast on their assignment. There is already a national commission working on the issue. A small DO like me cannot go and undercut this commission. We can only wait for that commission to complete the job it started. The major suggestion is that the government should take it as a matter of emergency and plant the pillars even if it means one village giving up the whole of that area. The land belongs to the state and so the state should act promptly (Interview with D’O of Balikumbat Sub-division, Age 50, January 5, 2016).

According to a DO of the Balikumbat Sub-division,

The Fons of the tribes should be friendlier and even have coordination meetings to discuss ways to evade conflict. Rather than focusing on causes, seeking solutions should be the aim. We want a situation where there is free movement within the municipality. Sensitization in meetings and villages by the Mayor and D.O is important. There is a need for meetings with traditional councils. There is so much work to be done as far as sensitization on the ills of war in the division is concerned. Dispute on land should be handled at family level and not at the level of the village (Interview with D’O of Balikumbat Sub-division, Age 50, January 5, 2016).

The government officials believed that the national commission, construction of borderline, friendliness, forgiveness, sensitization, and individual responsibility as
possible solutions to the dispute. Apart from those solutions mentioned in the national commission, most of the other strategies mentioned by the government officials were equally highlighted by the village respondents.

To sum up, in the first point, the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance, both villages were similar in their perception of land and its importance. While the Bafanji laid more emphasis on the traditional value of land as providing shrines for sacrifices, the Balikumbat were more concerned with land as a source of life sustenance in relation to cultivation and shelter. For the causes, history and recurrence of the land dispute, there are striking differences in relation to remote causes, immediate causes, and the historical development of the war. Nonetheless, all respondents agreed on the fact that the lack of a clear borderline and the laxity of the present Cameroonian government to provide one is the reason why this border dispute keeps recurring. The colonial land policy and its role in the land dispute describe how there was a firm rule of the colonial masters in demarcating boundaries and maintaining peace during their era. However, they highlighted major flaws during the colonial reign that orchestrated this land dispute. Following the role of present government in the solution of the dispute, all respondents were dissatisfied with government action towards the solution of the dispute. Only the presence of the land tenures system was indicated as a positive point.

Considering solutions to the current dispute, despite the little difference in the strategies for a solution to the conflict, all respondents stood for a peaceful solution to the conflict. All placed their hopes on the government to construct a final borderline between the two villages.
The Implications of Balikumbat-Bafanji Boundary Land Conflict

The interpretation of the consequences and the revelations that accompany the conflict provide some insights in the understanding of the problem at stake. In this case, these implications are presented after following the socio-economic and political rubrics.

Social Implications of Balikumbat-Bafanji Boundary Conflict

In this subsection, interpretations of the social consequences of the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary land conflicts are presented. These include the increase in the death toll, given the violent confrontations, the destruction of property like houses and crops culminating in lack of shelter and hunger problems, the increased crime wave, and the insecure atmosphere that still exists between the people from both villages. The pictures below illustrate these points even more eloquently.
Figure 2. Pictures of damage caused by conflict

The above pictures depict the far-reaching social implications to both communities caused by this conflict. First, the conflict resulted to the disenfranchisement of both communities with ramifications so deep that future generations are significantly impacted. Both villages suffered from a considerable number of deaths during wars and other conflicting periods. The causes of each war might have been very trivial, but the effects are extensive. Considering the number of people who lost their lives, it is important to note that violent confrontations between the people of Balikumbat and those of Bafanji started in the 1960s (Mbah, 2008, p. 229). However, it was the first bloody confrontation that registered the highest number of major casualties and destruction of property ever witnessed in the Northwest region (Mbah, 2008, p.230). During this conflict, “eighteen people died from gunshots, spears, cutlasses, poisoned arrows, or through beatings from sticks and clubs; sixteen of them were from Bafanji and two from Balikumbat” (Interview with Charles Diyamba, Governor’s Office Bamenda, October 31, 1997 in Mbah, 2008, p. 229). Among those who lost their lives are,
Oscar Puncho, Bafanji Farmer burnt to death on June 4, Isaac Tepha, Gideon Ndeh and Anthony Tielue shot to death; and an eighteen-year-old Bafanji boy, who was killed and his genitals removed. The others died in hospital while receiving treatment from their wounds. Forty people on both sides were severely wounded. They received treatment at the Bamenda provincial Hospital, the Banso Baptist Hospital, and the Adlucem Hospital in Mbouda (Mukong, in Mbah 2008, p. 229).

This Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary conflict caused extensive loss of life and casualties. This fact illustrates the negative consequences encountered during conflicts and wars. The destructive nature of warfare cannot be over-emphasized. The precise conflict here is fight of a piece of land where both parties, the people of Balikumbat and those of Bafanji, claim ownership. The scarcity of land, the need to farm enough crops to sustain the growing population, and artificial definitions of boundaries created during the colonial era aggravate the situation.

Apart from these causes, some of the actions that accompany confrontations, which seemingly have nothing to do with the conflict, are puzzling. For instance, removing the genitals of the eighteen-year-old Bafanji boy after shooting him to death is illogical. This action illuminates the critical view that wars and conflicts are used as means to other ends. Kiven (1997) corroborates this fact when he argues that some individuals incite and perpetuate rebellion in order to benefit from the situation. One might want to question the rationale of this degrading and depersonalizing action of war. This situation provokes one to conclude that, if a lasting solution to this problem is not developed, the likelihood of other similar behaviors is a probability. Since the use of
deadly arms is commonplace in tribal boundary warfare in the Northwest region, gruesome acts of violence should be expected.

Second, a large volume of property such as houses, cattle, crops, farms, and other fixed assets were damaged. This destruction rendered men, women and children homeless and, in some cases, without families. Some people were attacked and maimed so seriously that they will remain inactive for the rest of their lives. Mbah (2008) states that looting and destruction of property was rampant in this war, especially when the Balikumbat warriors made it a point to either loot or destroy all valuable property belonging to the Bafanji people. Later, the Bafanji market was burned down. This market is precariously situated on the contested land. Social facilities like the Bafanji Health Centre, the Cooperative Society building, the government primary school, a coffee factory owned by Ali Nekenbeng, and the Bafanji settlement at Njuanang were looted and destroyed. Reliable sources say that by the time violence ceased, 453 Bafanji houses had been destroyed. In the Post Newspaper no.0062 of April 20, 1998, the headline reads, “Balikumbat warriors wipe out Bafanji.” Following that press release, Chris Mbunwe in Bafanji stated,

A beloved village that was flowing with milk and honey has been deprived of everything a human being would need to survive on earth. The villagers have escaped their land in Bafanji to neighbouring areas. Some as far as West Province and others to Bamenda, because they are homeless. There is nothing left of this village. No schools functioning. After two successive onslaughts of organized destruction by the Balikumbats, over 300 hundred houses were burnt and pulled down. Coffee farms and banana plantations were also extensively damaged,
though casualties were registered by both villages at war. The protracted land
dispute has damaged the Bafanjis. They have usually been the oppressed.


It is interesting to note that the services of these destroyed institutions like schools,
hospitals, and plantations hardly benefit some persons to the relative neglect of others.
These social institutions are lasting investments of the state and private individuals to
ensure the well-being of all people in the sub-division. It is difficult to understand the
need to destroy these facilities, which provide the basic needs of the people in the context
of a land conflict. However, conflicting warriors do not think of social welfare. This
justifies the negative repercussions of inter-ethnic conflicts irrespective of the causes. The
society loses. The same persons destroying social facilities are the same beneficiaries of
these institutions. Therefore, all efforts have to be put in place to ensure a long lasting
solution and peace building in the Balikumbat sub-division.

Third, the destruction of social facilities and private property is aligned with
criminal activities during periods of conflict. There are individuals who take advantage of
the belligerent atmosphere to loot property and settle scores. Most combatants are crass
profiteers motivated by self-interest. Asset stripping is the primary objective of some
unscrupulous individuals who engage in this tribal conflict. Motivated by profit and
plunder, these persons take advantage of situations of conflict to mobilize and terrorize
villagers. A letter of complaint filed against some of these persons provides insight into
this aspect of the conflict:

On this 23rd day of April 2011, we wish to complain to you that this morning a
group of people from Bafanji led by these above mentioned persons, launched
two attacks, they attacked Boba Leon and Ndifor Derrick Sangu at Nyangi Joguru. Balikumbat got them well beaten using rods and chains, seized their hoes and seed groundnuts. On their way back to the inner part of Bafanji around Kumbo Joguru quarter Balikumbat, they fired and wounded Nyali Alexandra Ayuba. These two men were rushed to the hospital, Boba Leon was treated in the Balikumbat hospital, and Nyali Alexandra was sent to the Ndop District Hospital.

We are therefore appealing that justice should take its course on the vandals who want to destroy peace reigning in this sub-division (A Letter of complaint from the Quarter Head Joguru, Balikumbat Village to The Divisional Officer Balikumbat sub-division, Ngoketunjia, April 23, 2011).

The availability of modern weaponry, including guns, cutlasses, and spears, aggravate the situation. The inability to check this situation allows conflict to increase. As the economic rationale of war changes, additional social problems become a reality. Since war can be profitable for some businesses, entrepreneurs may calculate what they gain from prolonged conflict rather than what can be obtained from prolonged peace. The use of weapons, threat of lives, theft, and the destruction of houses by the people of Bafanji village reveal major aspects of the conflict. Some people benefit from the cost of violence. They have developed immunity to violent practices. For instance, during a time of conflict, a person who was suspected of committing adultery was murdered. The murderer used the time of conflict to settle a score with this individual.

Fourth, when the conflict crystallized into warfare in the 1990s, the overall destruction caused approximately 3,000 people of Bafanji to flee to Bamenda, Ngalim, and the West Province. During this forced migration, 50 children were reported missing.
The health, shelter, and food supply of these migrants was severely threatened. According to Mbah (2008), “A health department finding concluded that, out of the 3,000 Bafanji refugees, 582 of them contracted malaria and/or typhoid, 162 suffered from dysentery and/or diarrhea, 196 from various skin diseases, and an undisclosed number had bullets stuck in their bodies but lacked funds to undergo surgery” (Mbah 2008, p. 231).

By 1996, more than 1,000 people from Bafanji were still living as refugees either in or around the village, with more than twenty people living in a single room. These people lacked food, healthcare facilities, and portable drinking water. The negative implications of the conflict resulted in the fact that many people were rendered homeless. A pandemic arose among the refugees. The state of war turned into a state of grief, confusion, theft, destruction, malice, and suffering. It is not a pleasant experience for either group because one party is either destroying or being destroyed. In this context, conflict resolution must emerge on diplomatic and cordial terms to address the problems and minimize these devastating consequences (Nkwi, 2011, p. 118).

Fifth, the lack of security has a major social implication in this boundary conflict. The war between the two villages has caused much material damage and the loss of life. The crisis of June 2, 1995 caused tension and insecurity to develop throughout Bafanji, Balikumbat, and the surrounding areas. The farming season was interrupted as an atmosphere of uncertainty enveloped the contested land. Farmers could no longer cultivate new farms or harvest crops. As a result, hunger and starvation shrouded both villages, although the people of Bafanji appeared to suffer this social problem more (Interview with Joshua Kwasi, Bamenda, October 27, 1997 in Mbah, 2008).
This atmosphere of insecurity was heightened by the blockade of roads by Balikumbat armed-men along the Balikumbat-Bafanji highway. On Monday July 10, 1995, the Bafanji market day, these armed-men harassed traders on their way to the market (Ewi, 1995). Most of the harassed traders were from the neighbouring regions and had nothing to do with the conflict. These were simply traders going to Bafanji market to sell their goods. In this scenario, conflict between the two villages prevented a smooth communication network (Mbah, 2008).

October 22, 1995 was another Bafanji market day. Roadblocks were intensified and traders were prevented from attending the market. It seemed to have been a calculated strategy of the Balikumbat to disrupt the economic activities in Bafanji. This approach was successful because the economic life of Bafanji was suspended when traders could no longer come to the market to sell their goods. From this perspective, the security repercussions of the conflict had a telling influence on the economic life of the people in Bafanji. The economic costs of the criminal acts of disrupting economic activities is beyond measure.

In spite of the calm atmosphere that reigned by the end of 1996, the inhabitants still lived in fear. From then until the present time, there are continuous threats of another Balikumbat invasion. A tense climate exists between both parties. On Monday July 10, 1996, the Balikumbat erected a fence near the Bafanji settlement at Njuanang, and then threatened to blowup the bridge linking Bafanji to the contested territory of Bangang. Movement along the Balikumbat-Bafanji access road was completely interrupted. This led to a longer, more expensive route when travelling to and from the two villages within the same subdivision. For instance, anyone travelling from Bafanji to the divisional
capital at Ndop had to board a vehicle through the west region, then to Bamenda before proceeding to Ndop, instead of using the usual shorter road through Balikumbat.

The economic implication of this interruption cost approximately 5000 FRS Cfa for the people of Bafanji instead of the usual 700 FRS Cfa. Some daring travelers who decided to go to Ndop through Balikumbat were thoroughly rousted by armed Balikumbat men in order to ascertain that they were not Bafanji subjects. Mbah (2008) described the case of a Cameroon Post reporter named Charly Ndi Chia, who was permitted to proceed through the checkpoint to Ndop on foot only after it was established that he was not a Bafanji subject.

This problem of insecurity also influenced education. Most parents from Bafanji withdrew their children from the lone Government Secondary School in the sub-division since it was based in Balikumbat. The parents were unsure of the safety of their children. The new road passing through Bambalang to Ndop was created thanks to the atmosphere of insecurity that loomed around the area.

Moreover, it is regrettable that this atmosphere of insecurity hampered peace initiatives aimed at resolving conflict. On October 14, 1995, a six-man technical team that was organized by the Cameroon government to examine the dispute and redemarcate a boundary between the two contestants was attacked while at work. The team quickly dispersed as they were chased and shot at by armed Balikumbat men who later confiscated the tractor and their work equipment (Abanda, 1995 in Mbah, 2008). This action from the people of Balikumbat has been responsible for the snail pace in establishing peace in the sub-division.
In sum, this subsection set out to interpret the consequences of the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary land conflict. The increased death toll, violent confrontations, and destruction of property created problems such as lack of shelter, hunger, an increased crime wave, and the insecure atmosphere that still exists today. These negative factors expose the negative consequences of war.

**Economic Implications of the Conflict**

The violent inter-tribal conflicts between the people of Balikumbat and those of Bafanji had major economic implications to the people of the sub-division, division, region, and the nation as a whole. The destruction of crops was a serious blow to the economy of the people. This was witnessed by resultant high prices in foodstuffs. The financial cost that was incurred in the litigation of the aftermath of war also affected the economy of the people. The payment of fines and a lawsuit in the High Court constituted a financial expenditure that had a negative impact on the national economy. Agricultural activities were interrupted because farms became insecure and unsafe environments. Blocking the transportation network created problems in the exportation and importation of goods for trade in this sub-division.

With the looting and destruction of houses and property, this conflict registered enormous economic implications to the people of Balikumbat subdivision, to the Northwest region, and to the nation as a whole. First, the assessment of the destruction of crops and property by the commission set up by the Governor of the North West Region was 720.000.000 FRS CFA. The destruction of crops and animals was estimated at 205.000.000 FRS CFA. These estimates do not include the cost of damaged crops and
property incurred in the clashes between the Bafanji and Balikumbat in February, April, and June 1996 and July 1997.

For instance, on February 24, 1996, Balikumbat subjects chased off Bafanji farmers at Bangang and destroyed their crops. In April 1996, Bafanji houses that were being reconstructed at Bangang were again destroyed together with some crops. A few homes were looted and cattle were slaughtered discriminately. In June 1996, the houses of the Sarili Tandia and Zechariah Soh that were under reconstruction were destroyed. In July 1997, the windows and doors of some newly reconstructed houses in Bangang were destroyed in nightly raids. All zinc was carried away. This continual destruction deterred Bafanji subjects from reconstructing their damaged houses in Bangang.

Second, financial costs were also incurred in the litigation that emerged in the aftermath of the violence. The first of many lawsuits was filed at the Bamenda High Court by Peter Ngufor, a Bafanji executive, against chief Doh Gah Gwayin of Balikumbat and five others. In the suit, Ngufor claimed 550,000,000 FRS CFA from the defendants for the unjustified invasion of the Bafanji village, trespassing onto the plaintiff’s land, and the wanton destruction and looting of the plaintiff’s houses and other properties. With the eight case adjournments, the cost of maintaining this case was high. Although judgment was eventually delivered in 1997, the legal accommodation and transportation costs incurred by the both the plaintiffs and defendants had skyrocketed. In court, the defendants were ordered to pay Ngufor 111 million FRS CFA as compensation for damages. The defendants appealed this judgment to the Supreme Court since it became evident that they were not be able to pay the fine.
Third, another financial implication lies in the lawsuit filed at Bamenda High Court. In this case, the chief of Bafanji sued the Gendarmes of Ngoketunjia claiming 150,000,000 FRS CFA in damages. He accused the Gendarmes of entering the palace to harass and torture some occupants without a warrant. In a parallel development, about 300 Bafanjis also threatened court action against the chief of Balikumbat for the destruction that occurred on June 2, 1996 (Mbah, 2008, p. 233). Prosecuting many cases of this nature result in considerable financial expenditure for both the community as well as the state. These violent clashes between the two villages began in the 1960s soon after the land in the boundary between Balikumbat and Bafanji was surveyed and inspected. The cost was supposed to be borne by both villages, each contributing a total of 138,000 FRS. The Buea federal court of Justice heard the action in 1970. Balikumbat lost its claims. They were asked to pay a fine of 50,000 FRS CFA.

Fourth, one of the major economic implications of this conflict was that it interrupted agricultural activities. This sub-division is principally characterized by agricultural activities. The people of Balikumbat and those of Bafanji rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Therefore, land is of ultimate economic importance to these people. Land is of capital importance because it provides for the basic needs of the population. With the halt in agricultural activities, production of vegetables and other farm products that are sold to traders coming from the cities like Bamenda and Bafoussam was halted. The contested land has fertile soil, which is very instrumental for agriculture. With the absence of agricultural activities in this area, scarcity of some farms products like vegetables was experienced in both the sub-division and the region. This scarcity caused high prices and definite economic hardship for the farmers.
Fifth, the blocking of roads and the destruction of bridges linking the two villages prevented the smooth transportation of goods for trade. With the difficulties of having access to the city and to other villages, both parties suffered from scarcity and hardship. The absence of cordiality between the conflicting parties prevented the possibility of trade. The people from Bafanji did not visit the Balikumbat market, although some Balikumbat people visit the Bafanji market. With the tense atmosphere between these two villages, tourism is also greatly affected. The economic implication is that the conflict compromises prospects of rendering this site a touristic area. This can improve on the economy of the sub-division, division, region, and nation as a whole. Where there is no security, tourism is not possible. People only want to visit places where their security is ensured (Nkwi, 2011).

Briefly, the violent inter-tribal conflict between the people of Balikumbat and those of Bafanji had major economic implications to the people of the sub-division, division, region, and the nation as a whole. The destruction of crops was a serious blow to the economy of the people. This was witnessed by high prices in foodstuffs. The financial costs that were incurred in the litigation of the aftermath of war also affected the economy of the people. The payment of fines, the lawsuit in the High Court constituted financial expenditure that carried a negative impact on national economy. Agricultural activities were interrupted because farms became insecure grounds. Lastly, the blocking destruction of the transportation network created problems in the exportation and importation of goods for trade in this sub-division. These factors detail how conflict destroyed a country’s economy.
Political Implications of the Conflict

The political implications of the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary land conflict portray outstanding revelations that help understand the question at stake. This conflict reveals some serious ills that came along with colonialism and continue to exist in post-colonial Africa. This exists because the conflict in question is rooted in the activities of the colonial era. Apart from that, it can also be argued that the post-colonial administration shares the blame for being incapable of handling the conflict. With these dialectical views, it can be argued that the incumbent administration is a continuation of the colonial administration.

Principally, the main research question hinges on the political cause of the conflict. This part of the research is sensitive because the socio-economic implications are rooted in political implications. Questioning whether the advent of colonialism is responsible for most inter-tribal conflicts in this region is important. By extension, this makes the Balikumbat-Bafanji land conflict a crucial political issue. One of the major criticisms of colonialism in Africa is the indiscriminate balkanization of African territory, irrespective of the roots and practices of the indigenous people. Have the political authorities been able to resolve the conflict? What is the reason for the recurrence of this conflict?

The boundary conflict reveals one of the major ills that came along with colonialism in Africa. This problem is traced back to the conditions of this land in pre-colonial Cameroon, colonial Cameroon, and post-colonial Cameroon. Prior to the advent of the colonial masters, resident people were settlers in this area. They enjoyed the state of peace probably because there was no population explosion and nature could still
satisfy the needs of the people. When the Germans colonized Cameroon in 1884, they managed the territory and demarcated it according to their means of administration. To establish boundaries and borderlines, they planted pillars, which would define different villages and solve problems of tribal conflict over land, especially in the Northwest region. This is what happened in the Balikumbat and Bafanji boundary situation.

However, after Germany was defeated in WWI, a turning point occurred in the history of the lives of the people in Cameroon. Cameroon ceased being a German territory. Instead, it was placed under the rule of Britain and France as a mandated territory of the League of Nations. With Britain and France in charge, the British took control of the English speaking part of Cameroon, like the Northwest region, where Balikumbat and Bafanji constitute a sub-division. With the British administration of indirect rule, the local chiefs were used to govern the people. With the advent of inter-tribal conflicts over land, the British defined the tribes based on the information obtained from the chiefs and their own judgments. This is precisely what happened to the boundary between Balikumbat and Bafanji. The British administration introduced new boundaries that defied those that the Germans had established between the two tribes. These different boundary markings may have been established because of the British cultivating conflicting information from different chiefs.

The result was two boundary definitions between the two tribes, one German and the other British. The Cameroon administration was left with the problem of resolving the obvious conflict that immediately arose and has perpetuated from these two boundaries. While Balikumbat claims that the German administration defined the boundary correctly,
the Bafanji do not agree. In their view, the British definition is correct. This controversy has been responsible for the persistent and recurrent conflicts in the contested land.

The pictures below represent the pillar demarcation mechanism used by both the colonial and current administration. This stands in opposition to the natural marks used by the customary system. The problem is that these pillars are removable. In contrast, the natural features of the landscape, that were known and accepted as legitimate by the indigenous people prior to the coming of the colonial masters, are stationary. With the pillar system, any party that decided to be belligerent simply removed the pillars and disputed the boundary. This resulted in instant conflict, whereas boundary disagreements were rare when the natural boundary system was used.

*Figure 3. Picture of a removable pillar of colonial origin*
Figure 4. Picture where a pillar has been removed, thereby sparking conflict.

Figure 5. Picture of geographical boundary demarcation prior to colonization.
The post-colonial administration has the task of solving this problem. The failure of the government authorities to handle this matter has been responsible for the frequent clashes in the contested land. Knowledge of the principal cause of the problem is part of
its solution. Therefore, tracing the roots of the problem to colonial indiscriminate definitions of the boundaries, irrespective of the indigenous practices, is a way forward. The argument here is that natural signs like rivers and trees constitute boundary definitions in indigenous beliefs and practices. By ignoring natural marks of defining boundaries and introducing artificial means, like easily moved pillars, is a major weakness. Trees and rivers that demarcate boundaries between villages in Africa are never tampered with. There are particular beliefs and customs that surround these natural features. Therefore, it may be imperative to reconsider the traditional means of defining boundaries to resolve the deadly conflicts that abound, especially the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary dispute.

This boundary dispute exposes the weaknesses of the incumbent government in their problem solving ability. According to Mbah (2008), measures taken by administrative officers to resolve disputes are implemented “piece meal” and “not based on facts, but on the bargaining power of the belligerents.” (p. 91) This is an unjustified and unfair approach towards problem solving. Additionally, it has been suggested that, within the incumbent government in Cameroon, sympathizers of the ruling party are most often favored in the resolution of a problem. This happens to be relevant to the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary dispute. The former Fon of Balikumbat, Fon Doh, enjoyed full support from the incumbent government in managing the conflict. He performed many malicious actions against the people of Bafanji and went unpunished because of his allegiance to the incumbent government. Naturally embittered, the people of Bafanji has persistently fought to restore their dignity and integrity. With the accession of Fon Doh Gah Gwanyin
to the Balikumbat throne, the crisis about the boundary dispute resurfaced. According to Mbah (2008),

In 1995, taking advantage of the political disorder that reigned in the Northwest Province at the time, the chief, and the people of Balikumbat decided to ignore all previous decisions concerning the dispute; they unearthed pillars that had been planted in 1969. The Northwest Provincial administration took no legal action against the open defiance of the law. Instead, the Land Consultative Board set up a commission, headed by the D.O for Ngoketunjia Division, to replant the pillars. The commission received no cooperation from Balikumbat and its subjects immediately unearthed the newly planted pillars. Twice Balikumbat had nonchalantly defied state law and no action was taken against them. Because the government had failed to becalm Balikumbat, they took yet another bold step, this time occupying the contested territory of Bangang. This marked the beginning of Balikumbat- Bafanji disturbances of 1995, which ensued in severe atrocities and casualties (1996, p. 2. in Mbah 2008, pp. 190-191).

As a result, the people of Balikumbat adopted a dishonorable attitude towards compromising the peace building process in the boundary conflict. With the political upheavals in the country during the 1990s, the people of Balikumbat exploited the situation to transgress the rulings concerning this boundary dispute. The daring attitude of unearthng the planted pillars is indicative of rebellion and lack of respect for the rule of law. At the same time, the inability of the authorities to sanction such defiance, which is twice repeated, betrays the fact that the incumbent government and the authorities in place are seemingly accomplices to the abuses. There is no justification for
permitting the people of Balikumbat to operate above legal norms. Since they constitute one of the belligerent parties, they must respect the state laws and injunction. Refusal to respect the planted pillars indicates their refusal to cooperate towards peace building in the sub-division. In this case, the people of Balikumbat are responsible for the 1995 disturbances in the sub-division. This situation arose because of the inability of the state to handle the matter appropriately. The incumbent administration is a product of the colonial rule. It fails to solve the problem because of the historicity of the matter and the negligence of the history and roots of those concerned.

Mbah (2008) identifies the difficulty in resolving the problem because there is no successive follow up and administrators are changed in the division and the sub-division. Even when a judicious decision is taken by one administrator, his successor may scrap it away. Moreover, many a post-colonial administrative officer posted to the region is French speaking. These uniformed officers lack the knowledge and mastery of the history of the numerous disputes, and make no serious attempt to acquaint themselves with these. This explains why they easily resort to punitive methods of conflict management (pp. 187-188).

The frequent appointments and changing of the administrators in the regions, divisions, and sub-divisions have also been responsible for the inability of the state to handle the conflict. The fact that there is a communication barrier between some of the administrators and the indigenous people accounts for some of the misunderstanding, deception, and wrong judgments. It is well known that communication plays a key role in conflict management. If the arbitrator cannot communicate appropriately with the belligerent parties, their terms of operation may be guilty of gross ambiguity, and
subsequently, wrong judgments. Negligence of the history and the roots of the people in the course of resolving the matter fuels wrong judgments. It must be noted that both conflicting parties were migrants, though each claim ownership of the contested territory. The basis of the argument of the two parties is that it gave land to the other party to settle. The question is whether the chronological priority of settlement in an area determines one’s ownership of the land. What is stipulated in the land tenure system? Failure to answer these questions and return to the roots of these people only perpetuates the conflict.

Furthermore, Mbah (2008) blames the failure of the government to resolve this boundary dispute on the absence of a critical and unbiased approach to the problem: The government has failed in its efforts to settle the dispute; as of 1997, peace had not returned to the area. Meanwhile the political connections of the chief of Balikumbat have continued to annoy Bafanji subjects, who as of 1997, refused to cooperate with government in its efforts to seek concord between the parties. Bafanji has refused to attend peace talks convened in Balikumbat, the sub-divisional headquarters. Yet again, any attempt to talk peace may not yield fruits if the views of the chief of Balikumbat are not taken into consideration. Mutual reconciliation and resolution of this conflict can only be attained if government, acting with good faith, reexamines the conflict from its merits, and not from a political standpoint. Government has the means to manage the conflict and maintain peace. It can utilize its executive, judicial, and legislative power to enforce its will on the opposing parties, forcing them to respect decisions. It can use the economic weapon of compensation to coerce one of the parties to
withdraw from the dispute. Abrogating official decisions by one or both parties can only lead to renewed hostilities (...), which is a bad precedent to set because villages with similar disputes are watching keenly for what course of action is pursued (pp. 192-193).

The failure of the government strongly suggests that a weak political will surrounds the efforts towards solving the dispute. This weak political will is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the chief of Balikumbat refuses to cooperate with the government to make peace, yet he is not sanctioned or forced to face the rule of law because of his political affiliations. Since the people of Bafanji are aware of the political immunity enjoyed by the chief of Balikumbat, it is impossible for them to compromise their rights in favour of the people of Balikumbat. In addition, the fact that the political headquarters of this sub-division is in Balikumbat informally grants political authority to the people of this area over those of Bafanji. Since the chief of Balikumbat and many of his subjects are sympathizers of the ruling CPDM party, government support is supplied, even in issues where they are wrong. With this easy access to the administration, their voice reigns loudly over their Bafanji counterparts.

It should be noted that, because of the conflict, the people of Bafanji sympathize with the most popular opposition party. This renders them vulnerable in the presence of the incumbent government. With conflicting political opinions, conflict among these people is inevitable, especially when elections draw near. This is because people take refuge in political differences to settle scores on the issue of the boundary conflict.

To sum up, it must be understood that the political implications of this conflict produce outstanding revelations that are important for the justification or rejection of the
main research question. The conflict reveals that colonialism originated the serious ills that continue to exist in post-colonial Africa. This is precisely because the conflict in question is rooted in the activities of the colonial era. Apart from that, it can also be argued that the post-colonial administration must share the blame for being incapable of handling the conflict. With these dialectical views, the incumbent administration is a continuation of the colonial administration. Therefore, the administration put in place by the colonial rule fails to administer appropriately. Despite the fact that not all the blame can be shouldered by the colonial masters, the political implications provide some insight into understanding the main research question.

**Recommendations from the Study**

To resolve the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary line dispute, efforts towards participation and consensus building must be put in place. Meaningful participation is essential for solutions to be sustainable. People must be taught the skills they need to participate in decisions and design solutions that affect their lives. Where there are gaps preventing cooperation between government, civil society, and the private sector, platforms for constructive dialogue at the individual, local community and national levels must be built. Three important participation processes exist to ensure peace building in the communities. These include cooperative advocacy, cooperative planning, and consensus facilitation. From these three components, the following recommendations have been made for the Balikumbat and Bafanji boundary conflict.

**Community-based Approaches to Transitional Justice in Balikumbat Subdivision**

From these participation processes, the first prominent strategy is the community-based approach to transitional justice in Balikumbat Subdivision. This strategy supports
local reconciliation processes through community-based approaches that explore the intersections between informal, traditional, and formal justice mechanisms. Projects are established that help the natives resolve grievances during the challenging transitional period. Grievances in this boundary line conflict range from abuses of power by some chiefs, passing partial judgments by some government officials, criminal acts by some military men under the regime, and the politicization of the conflict. Through local reconciliation mechanisms, these projects may ensure that the grievances of both parties, Balikumbat-Bafanji people, local tribal and religious leaders, women, and youth are heard and redressed. To succeed, the government and NGOs must the means for supportive relationships with the peace and justice commission of the Roman Catholic Church of the archdiocese of Bamenda. This commission empowers some projects that handle reconciliation and resolution grievances in a culturally appropriate and sustainable way.

Another perspective to be used in this context is mentoring a cadre of inspiring local community facilitators skilled in mediation and reconciliation skills. They should be trained to conduct facilitations, community outreach campaigns, and conflict sensitive development planning. These community facilitators will be adept at encouraging broad civic participation, while attracting a traditionally marginalized population like women and youths to participate in the governance of the affairs of the state. To reach out to individual communities to convey transitional principles of justice, the facilitators and female leaders will raise general public awareness of the national transitional justice process in Cameroon. They will promote dialogue amongst the belligerent tribes and build public confidence in transitional justice authority.
Make Young People the Medium of Peacemaking

The second strategy is to make young people the vehicle of peacemaking in tribal conflicts. Young men and women in Balikumbat and Bafanji must realize their potential as conflict mediators, advocates, and community leaders and an indispensable factor of the peace building process. The justification of this approach is that young people constitute two-thirds of the population in the area. These young people could be used to determine whether the Balikumbat sub-division spirals deeper into conflict or achieves lasting peace. In the previous tribal conflicts, administrative and modern methods were used in settling disputes. These methods have failed while wasting a lot of money. The failure is marked by the recurrence of conflicts and the refusal of one party to abide by the rulings of the administration. Methods used by the administrators have only increased the risks of tribal conflict and crime involvement for the youths, who often bear the burden of violence while facing pressure to join extremist groups.

In this context, a pilot initiative to help youths build peace is imperative. Youth peer-to-peer conflicts train young people to resolve and prevent conflict while ultimately preparing them to advocate for their causes and influence district councils and tribal leadership. It is important to encourage the youths to fully realize the impact of conflict on their communities and develop critical leadership skills. This is realized when youths are mentored to become tribal peace ambassadors. These peace ambassadors share the outcomes of their facilitated discussions with communities in neighbouring districts. They gather additional perspectives to share with government leaders as a link between communities and the administration.
This particular initiative will also empower young women through the development of a women-led-youth council that fosters non-violent approaches to build peace between the two tribes. This offers an opportunity for young women to contribute to peace building as well as recast their role in the society. The involvement of women and youth in the peace building processes is a salutary step towards a sustainable conflict resolution strategy.

**Organize a Task Force to Enforce the Rule of Law**

The third approach to be employed in resolving the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary land conflict is the organization of a task force to enforce the rule of law. This aspect will serve to protect the people and their property from constant raids, looting, and damage. The people from the aggressing villages should be incarcerated from the moment they are caught attacking their neighbours. Prompt legal action must follow looters who act under the refuge of inter-tribal conflict. The reason for this strategy is that some unscrupulous chiefs and elites instigate conflict to exact personal gain.

According to official statistics, Cameroon’s population of approximately 20,000,000 people encompasses 350 ethnic groups. Sporadic eruption of inter-ethnic violence is common in this country, but anthropologist Mbah cautions that there is more to ethnic conflict than simple tribal disputes. In his view, “The elites of Cameroon instigate or worsen inter-ethnic divisions for personal gain” (2006). In a later development, he insists, “the public powers clearly draw advantage for the disorder provoked by the elites to the extent that ethnic manipulation has become a business for most politicians and senior government officials.”
Additionally, the rule of law must be supported to prevent chiefs from instigating rebellion against other tribes. “A few neighbouring villages, spurred on by their Fon/chief, spent two days burning houses and stealing animals and goods from an entire village. The villagers had little to no warning and fled to their Fon’s palace with only their clothes on their backs. Their stored foods are gone, their animals are gone, and their children now have no money for school.” This is a typical example of what the former Fon of Balikumbat did to the people of Bafanji with impunity. These actions continued without reasonable sanctions.

This explains the repetition of these actions because there is no deterrence. The Fon of Balikumbat was not sanctioned because of his political affiliations with the incumbent government. By supporting the CPDM political party, legal immunity was informally granted. In a democratic society where the rule of law binds all citizens, no one should be above the law. However, it appears conclusive that sympathizers of the CPDM political party are granted this informal immunity. To strengthen a political system that is too weak to support the rule of law, a task force should be organized in every region of the country to enforce laws on perpetrators of inter-ethnic conflicts. This will not only undermine the possibility of conflicts between the Balikumbat and Bafanji, but it will limit the eruption of sporadic violence in the region and the nation as a whole.

**Building Capacity of Women in Managing Inter-tribal Conflicts**

The fourth approach that may limit and possibly eliminate inter-ethnic conflict between the people of Balikumbat and those of Bafanji is through building the capacity of women in managing inter-tribal conflicts. Empowering women leaders in conflict zones is a reasonable initiative towards building peace. According to the Peace-Maker
Society, women are 74% victims of violence. In this context, this society holds that these women have a stronger institutional base than men have and would readily influence sustainable peace efforts. This idea is to be realized by means of sensitization at the grassroots level to encourage women to use traditional approaches to solve land disputes. The women should be trained on how to lobby administrative and traditional authorities in conflict areas so that a conciliatory and lasting solution is sought. The purpose of this type of training is to instill a culture of peace in an environment of hatred and rancor.

The importance of women in the establishment of peace cannot be over-emphasized. In the Northwest region, women have demonstrated their disdain for violence and the importance of peace in society. Their demonstrations are aimed at punishing those who flout the moral law as well as those who insult womanhood. This strategy exists as a strong element of land conflict resolution and peace building. Patriarchy and chauvinism have denied women access to formal forums for peace negotiations. According to Sobseh (2011),

During the early 1990s, when political incivility was rife and the Biya Government was bent on having the heads of the key political opponents, such as John Fru Ndi and his crew, the “Takembeng” women aggregate played a major role as peace providers. By using their nudity, a sign of curse in African tradition, to chase away pro-government forces that had been provided licenses to kill. They marched on the streets of Bamenda, brandishing the nkeng (peace plant) with them as a sign of peace (p. 349).

The demonstration explained above presented women as “brokers” of peace. This particular attitude is demonstrated in other conflicts where women requested peace at all
costs. Consider the Fumbuen women protests in Babanki against the Fon and Fulani graziers. At their sit-down strike at the office of the District Officer, they exercised patience and tolerance until their request was granted. The ultimate pledge women make for peace in times of conflict is the risk they take to inter-marry with ex-enemy ethnic groups. The women therefore mortgage their security in the process and sacrifice their psychological integrity for the sake of peace. This is a strong diplomatic strategy towards peace building in the Balikumbat-Bafanji boundary land conflict. One of the interviewees from Balikumbat, who works in the municipal council, confirmed that his spouse was from Bafanji. Naturally, he does not see the possibility of him raiding or attacking his own in-laws. This aspect underlines the place of marriage in the process of assuring peace.

The role of women in the case of this land conflict between Balikumbat and Bafanji must be regarded as a pivotal tool to resolving the conflict. During the field research, I realized that one of the Quarter Heads (a leading community role) is occupied by a woman which is not common in this culture. This woman in question has spearheaded peace efforts to resolve this conflict. If there are many of such women in both villages, the chances of resolving this conflict will be heightened. Upon proper training, integration into peace efforts and mobilization of different women wings and associations, women will certainly be armed to produce positive results towards a permanent resolution of this conflict.

**Promote Peace and Governance Program through Civil Societies**

This concept entails supporting civil society leaders, journalists, and local government leaders with training and resources to contribute to an empowered citizenry
to promote a peace and governance program. Civil societies have the potential of
developing and strengthening constituencies for peace during and after land conflicts.
Most of the armed land conflicts in the Northwest region of Cameroon are justified by
claiming that they represent the popular course. Civil society actors can challenge this by
asserting that public opinion rejects a military approach to the problem at stake. It is
through the civil societies that the sensitization and education of the people on alternative
ways of resolving conflict can be accomplished. Some effective ways of creating a new
atmosphere are the peace media, art projects, concerts, and other creative methods of
reaching out to the wider public (Sobseh, 2011).

In addition, a civil society could be accomplished via a mass protestor by
demonstrations during conflicts to stand as a voice in favour of peace. This can be
achieved by reducing violence and organizing zones of peace in the Northwest region. It
is difficult for people to build peace when they feel threatened or when they are under
attack. Those who wish to disrupt the peace process tend to escalate violence among
civilians. Conventional state security forces play a vital role in the peace process.
However, in the case of Balikumbat-Bafanji conflict, they seem to be part of the land
problem.

To address such land problems, peace monitors must be created to act as
witnesses and mediators (Lederach, 1997). In South Africa, the National Peace Accord
provided the structure for people to become involved in violence prevention. In this case,
thousands of peace committees were formed to mediate land disputes, monitor
demonstrations, and supervise other activities that could possibly become violent
(Sobseh, 2011).
In the case of the Balikumbat-Bafanji conflict, the Northwest region has created “pragmatic peace” at the local level to handle land conflicts. Peacemaking is far from making a political agreement between the conflicting parties. Instead, it is important to make peace with one’s neighbours. Therefore, when national-level peace actions are stalled or non-existent, local communities can act to address issues that bring forth land conflicts and escalate violence. In the Northwest region, civil society groupings like Lukmef Cameroon and the Peace and Justice Commission of the Roman Catholic Church have used dialogue to resolve ethnic conflicts and build sustainable peace (LUKMEF, 2008).

The Civil society groups in the Bamenda Grassfield have also worked diligently to prevent land conflicts through the consolidation of peace to prevent the reoccurrence of war. Peace building is a process that is infinite and imperfect. Land conflicts cannot simply be transformed by agreements. They need a continuous commitment to address the problems through political avenues. Public ownership of the process is crucial. When the public and organized civil society have been excluded from the process of peacemaking and addressing their real needs, expecting them to work towards its implementation is questionable. In this case, civil society needs to resume structural prevention-encouraging governance, by sensitizing and educating the people, reconstruction and development, mediating social land conflicts, promoting human rights, and continue other efforts towards the process of peace building (Reychler, 1999).

Recognize the Place of Religious Bodies in Conflict Prevention and Resolution

Soliciting assistance from religious bodies in land and conflict prevention can be instrumental in the context of the Balikumbat-Bafanji conflict. Both tribes fall within the
ecclesiastical province of the archdiocese of Bamenda and exist in the same parish with the main mission in Balikumbat. The two tribes are particularly managed within the same parish and subsequently within the same diocese. This means that the boundary conflict causes division in the parish. The Gospel message decries division in the church and this makes it imperative for the church to be an actor in the conflict resolution strategies.

The land conflict approaches that have been used to manage the inter-ethnic land conflicts in the Northwest region include avoidance, informal problem solving, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, litigation, and force. While churches may occasionally use some of these methods, avoidance and adjudication tend to be the most prominent. If the conflicting parties cannot achieve a collaborative solution and are committed to supporting the decision once it is made, it is quite possible that an adjudicatory approach will be efficient (Interview with Solomon Che Warah in Sobseh, 2011). Adjudication allows the church to control the conflict resolution process. It gives certainty to decisions and a precedent for future cases. The limitation of adjudication is that there is likely to be emotional and financial costs imposed by the system and reconciliation may be difficult when the judgment favours one of the conflicting parties.

From the interviews conducted with church leaders and conflict resolution professionals, a ten-point strategy emerged. This strategy can be effective inland conflict resolution, including the Balikumbat-Bafanji case. These strategies include consensus on the basics, developing positive attitudes toward land conflict, seeing land conflict as normal, educating to manage land differences, emphasizing process as well as substance, intervening early, institutionalizing land conflict management systems, developing congregational resources, using outside resources, and keeping in touch with the spiritual.
Moreover, one cannot overlook the contributions of religious institutions and faith-based organizations in peace building and land conflict resolution in post-colonial Cameroon. In fact, Christians and the churches live by the dictates of God’s word in which justice and mercy prevail. Values of integrity, peace, justice, and the veracity of creation are essential to their beliefs. These values present Christianity as well as the church as peacemakers and agents of reconciliation. This reconciliation has no limitation (World Council of Churches, 1997). The need to create an effective system for land conflict management requires developing congregational resources, using outside resources, and remaining in touch with the spiritual.

In addition to conflict management systems, the church can educate Christians on issues of land conflicts. A typical example is the case of the former Moderator of the PCC, Reverend Henry Awasum. He condemned several land conflicts that have left several persons wounded and many homeless in the Northwest region. Describing them as satanic, Awasum stated,

The land disputes reflected the absence of fraternity among brothers and sisters of the Province (Region). The war he regretted had created an indelible mark of agony and shame in the Province and wondered why Christians could easily abandon the will of God to take up arms against each other. He lamented the failure of the Christians to be the light of the world as instructed in the Holy Scriptures and appealed to those directly involved in the land disputes that have degenerated into wars to dedicate themselves to God through peace and reconciliation (Sunde, 1995, p. 2.)
This message of the Moderator, as presented in the Herald newspaper, portrays the place of the church in appealing to the consciences of the people to maintain an atmosphere of peace. The church plays a major role in bringing peace, especially in the defense of the poor and the marginalized. The Justice and Peace Commission of the Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Bamenda strives to maintain an atmosphere of peace and to bring justice and reconciliation to crisis stricken areas of the Northwest region of Cameroon. This region is notorious for the recurrence of inter-village and inter-tribal conflicts.

The place of the church in enhancing peace cannot be underestimated. The church has to work in lock step with the State. In this case, the State must recognize the help they can get from the church in the course of bringing peace in land conflict situations. To be successful in this case, one finds the approach of the justice and peace commission plausible. This approach provides a forum for the protagonists to meet and vent their feelings. This requires the provision of a neutral territory for this conflict resolution exercise. According to the Justice and Peace commission,

One of the first things we do in peace building or conflict resolution is to create space where the protagonists in the conflict can meet and vent their feelings. Such a space, preferably on neutral territory, enables them to talk first before any action is taken to resolve the problem. For example, if the administration steps in with its forces of law and order and decides that they are going to demarcate the boundary between two villages in conflict, without first creating space for them to talk and let out their anger, they will merely be postponing the conflict, which will eventually flare up again. I believe the administration is aware of this and that is
why they usually stay in the background as much as possible, leaving the way clear for us to calm down the tempers, create space for people to talk before taking any action. They keep their forces in the background and this eliminates the fear people may have to vent out their feelings freely. We thank God that we were able to create space for the Bali Nyonga and the Bawok people as well as the Oku and Mbessa people to express their feelings openly. Later, they were able to shake hands with each other. We hope the same approach is taken in the case of the Balikumbat-Bamalang issue but we have to be aware that each case is different and should be addressed on its own merit. We must constantly keep in mind that peace building is not an achievement but rather a culture, which takes into consideration the fact that community relations change according to the circumstances.

What is noticeable in the approach of this church commission is the place of dialogue between the belligerent parties in conflict resolution. The resolution of conflict by frightening the masses with the forces of law and order is a technical error that merely postpones people’s expression of their grievances. Each conflict has its uniqueness. The stakeholders in the course of making peace have to diagnose the unique characteristics of the conflict to determine the appropriate process to follow. This recommendation suggests the inappropriateness of ready-made rules and principles in conflict resolution. Flexibility is a commendable characteristic in the course of conflict resolution. The stipulated general rules should serve as guides and signposts rather than fixed rules of implementation in the course of conflict resolution.
In addition, alternative means of resolving conflict definitely reduce the burden placed on judges given the numerous inter-tribal conflicts in the Northwest region. According to the spokesperson for the Justice and Peace Commission,

One thing is certain, though. If we have alternative conflict resolution mechanisms in place, the workload of the judges will be considerably reduced. There are cases that come to court where out-of-court and amicable solutions would do. If more structures, like the Justice and Peace Commission, existed, they would easily intervene and resolve such conflicts before they go to court. Our aim is to achieve reconciliation at every level; help people to live in peace with themselves and with their neighbours.

The State and the church have the same objective of maintain lasting peace to the region. It is therefore imperative for them to work in synergy, especially in the case of Balikumbat-Bafanji. The State solicits the intervention of the church quite easily. The spokesperson for the Justice and Peace commission recalls a concrete example,

You are right that the State is the principal police of law and order. However, the Church is, in a way, a partner with the State in ensuring that peace, justice and reconciliation reign in our land. With that said, let me hasten to add that it was the State that came to us to help resolve the said conflicts. In the case of the Bali Nyonga and Bawok land dispute, the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) of Mezam Division at the time, who was a Catholic and had been a member of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Nkongsamba, requested permission from the Church authority for the Justice and Peace Commission of our Archdiocese to work hand in hand with the administration to resolve the recurring
conflict between the two villages. That is how our Commission, with the permission of the Local Ordinary, came to work with the public authority to resolve that conflict.

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Bamenda works to defend the weak, the poor, and the marginalized because these people are not usually aware of their rights and tend to resign themselves to their fate. The principal task of this commission, however, is not limited to this class of people alone. Since everything is not about material and physical strength, transforming the mindset of people to treat others with dignity is an equally important function. No individual is more human than any another one is simply because he or she is stronger or richer. This is one of the sensitive issues in the Balikumbat-Bafanji conflict. The people of Bafanji feel an inferiority complex imposed by the people of Balikumbat. During interviews, one of them asserted that probably this atmosphere of inferiority stems from the fact that the sub-divisonal headquarters, the municipal council, the secondary school, the financial institutions, and the main parish church are all situated in Balikumbat. Within the confines of the church, the people of Bafanji say they are working towards getting their own church autonomy by becoming a full-fledged parish. Whether this approach is the appropriate solution to the problem at stake is questionable. However, it does reinforce the place the church holds in helping these people understand that they have to live together in peace according to the good tidings of the Gospel.

**Encourage Social Dialogue among leaders of Belligerent Tribes**

Social dialogue for Fons in Land Conflict Resolution is a strategy towards peace building. Communication is one of the best practices for the prevention and resolution of
conflict relating to the belligerent parties. Fons in the Northwest region have very much participated in the prevention and resolution of land conflicts. They have cooperated with the Land Consultative Board, which is the main government agency in charge of preventing and resolving land conflicts. Even though the roles played by the Fons are quite impressive in some circumstances, they have been found guilty of provoking other land conflicts in the region. The Balikumbat- Bafanji conflict has been resurfacing several times because of poor implementation of resolutions inherited from the past. The Fon of Bafanji Yenwo Ngwefuni and Peter Njontor Ngufor led a fifteen-man delegation to the Prime Minister, Simon Achidi Achu, following the invasion of Bafanji by the Balikumbat people. Responding to an interview with the Herald newspaper, Ngufor castigated the regime for politicizing traditional institutions. He said “A Fon who led his village to commit havoc in a neighbouring village is now said to be the chairman of the Fon’s conference” (Interview with Peter Njontor, 51 years, businessman, Bamenda, June 14, 2009 in Sobseh, 2011, p. 258).

With the nonchalant attitude of the incumbent government to handle the matter, the Fon of Balikumbat was sued to court by the people of Bafanji for perpetrating the invasion. In this condition, the Fons have to intervene and entertain dialogue among themselves. The Fon in the Northwest symbolizes unity in his community and represents the link between the present and ancestors of the past. The land symbolizes the “spirit of the people” and a ritual link between the people and their ancestors. On June 17, 1995, the Fons signed a peace treaty to put an end to inter-ethnic and land conflicts in the Northwest region. This was a commendable step towards peace building in the region. The Northwest governor at the time, Bell Luc Rene, urged the Fons and the
notables to affix their signatures and thumbprints on a document meant to restore peace. According to the Herald newspaper, the content of the document was understood by the majority of the signatories.

This pact was seen as an optimistic step towards revamping land laws and setting the pace for internal peace throughout the country, as far as land disputes were concerned. When it was requested that “a curse involving point” be included in the land conflict resolution, to tie the Fons down to the signed document, the Fons of Mankon and Bali turned down the suggestion. This showed the limitation of the document. Most Fons signed the pact without any conviction of what they were doing. In African traditional beliefs, curses and oaths characterize veritable peace agreements and pacts. The process of peace entails the pouring of libation to appease the gods. As chief priest of the land, the Fon is expected to pour a ritual libation at least once a year to invoke the ancestors and the gods of the land to protect the land and bestow numerous blessings. At the same time, each land-owning notable or lineage head is expected to pour libation on his land if dispute arises. He prays for the “earth to pass judgment” (Sobseh, 2011, p.354).

Occasionally, this practice has to do with drinking the Fon’s wine containing a speck of earth from the disputed area. This approach is more credible to the people than the modern approach of signing signatures. In reality, this African approach falls within the understanding of the pedagogy of intimidation and fear, because the people believe that one cannot deceive the gods and go unpunished. In this context, honest dealings come to play because of the fear of wrath of the gods in the pouring of libation. This is one of the problems of modern methods of land conflict resolution in Africa. This method
neglects the indigenous approaches to solving problems and employs those that the people do not consider as serious.

In this case, our recommendation is the involvement of the Fons in solving the land conflict of Balikumbat and Bafanji through the traditional way. Sobseh (2011) argues that relying on the nyuy nsai (god of the earth) to pass judgment is the strength of ritual sanctions pertaining to land. Even in the absence of conflicts, notables are still expected to pour libations to the ancestors and the gods of the land just before the planting and harvesting season. These acts portray ownership of the land, and no notable, under customary law will ever pour libation on another’s land. This is because a lineage cannot falsely claim another’s lineage land with impunity. Any act of trespass will definitely bring about the wrath of the gods and cause the “earth to pass judgment” (Sobseh, 2011, p. 355). This is a possible check of unscrupulous land accumulation by fraud. Therefore, the performance of a ritual function on the land is a plausible means of conflict resolution in the African context. Definitely, this approach is relevant to the Balikumbat and Bafanji land conflict.

Revisit the Traditional Land Tenure and Management Systems

A reconsideration of the traditional tenure and management systems in the acquisition of land is imperative. The legislation of private property rights over the land under Cameroon’s modern law has accelerated the erosion of the traditional tenure and the traditional means of ownership and meaning of land. In fact, in Africa, no one except the Fon of a tribe actually owns the land. The Fons are the free custodians of ancestral lands. With the introduction of the modern land tenure and management systems, the Fons have become frustrated with ownership of land. To forge their way through, they
have embarked on inter-ethnic land conflicts and the abusive sales of ancestral lands. This commercialization of land brought about by the modern land tenure system has resulted in the expression of anger and mob action over the powerless citizens.

According to Fon Solomon Anye Angwafor III, it is problematic that modern law allows anyone to buy land anywhere. He argues that elites buy vast tracts of land with title deeds to farm and rear animals to the detriment of poor villagers, thus creating a scarcity. He concludes that elites are responsible for land conflicts in the Northwest region. The case of the Balikumbat and Bafanji is not different. Scarcity of land has been caused by the private ownership in the land tenure system. This trend has provoked some people to search for other fertile grounds to cultivate their crops. In response, the Fon recommends that,

All land boundaries in the Province be demarcated and pillars implanted. If this is done, it will not only solve the crisis (…) but it will resolve all land disputes in the Northwest Province. I want to make it categorically clear that the conflict rocking the Northwest Province weighs much more on the elites than on the Fons. I am appealing that the Northwest elites should go back to their villages or land and study the custom and tradition of their area. Where they become repugnant to natural justice, they can even modify the tradition to suit the test of time (The BOTFON Human Rights Watch, 2007, p. 36).

To the judgment of the Fon, the elites have to stop encouraging land conflicts through the abuses of the modern means of acquiring land. Poor villagers are therefore disadvantaged by the actions of the elites. However, the Fon insists that boundary lines be defined and pillars planted to prevent conflicts. The limitation of this proposal lies in the
fact that this pillar approach has been tried with the Balikumbat and Bafanji tribes. The people of Balikumbat often defy state laws by uprooting the pillars several times and throwing them into the river. This refers to the fact that planting pillars is not sufficient to solve the problem. In the same light, John B. Ndeh suggests that the State should “map out territorial boundaries of every division, sub-division, village, and quarter in all the ten regions of the country” (The BOTFON Human Rights Watch, 2007, p.8). He recognizes the fact that this strategy is not sufficient to bring peace. This explains the clause he adds when he contends that the state has to take responsibility to compel the Fons to be law abiding. It is imperative for the administration to act swiftly in case of any violence. The recurrence and perpetuation of violence have been because of the nonchalant attitude of the state towards these problems.

As a possible solution to the present problem, Barrister Anthony Amah Amaaze notes that land conflicts have been sustained by decrees and ordinances signed by the administration. He argues that the government has completely upset the traditional land tenure in the North West Region. Prior to the 1974 land ordinances, the customary systems settled land disputes in the region. He contends that since 1974, the state has not been able to resolve any land dispute by using the modern land tenure system. The error of the modern land law has been the transfer of the jurisdiction from the customary courts to local administration. In this case, the administration simply places injunctions to pacify disputing parties, while awaiting transfer. No efforts are made to listen to the conflicting parties so that their grievances are settled. Unfortunately, these injunctions are not respected. To salvage the present situation, Barrister Anthony Amah Amaaze believes that the state should repeal land ordinances and set up land tribunals headed by judges. In
this way, evidence can be studied in a legal manner, documented, admitted, and have final judgment passed (Sobseh, 2011).

To complement the recommendation of the Barrister Anthony Amah Amaaze, it is interesting to note that the modern land tenure system, which is a major part of the problem of land conflicts management, has its roots in the colonial administration. This reveals the errors of the colonial and post-colonial administrations in the management of land conflicts (Sobseh, 2011). To propose a plausible strategy, it will be important to revisit the customary laws of the land tenure system. This is to appropriately interpret and correct the land problems in the spirit of the African acquisition and understanding of land ownership.

**A Legal Advocacy of Non-Violence in Conflict**

The Balikumbat-Bafanji land conflict has resurfaced several times because of the poor implementation of resolutions inherited from the past and the violation of the laws binding the land tenure system in Cameroon. The conflicts occurred in 1969, 1995, 1997, and 1998. Attempts to resolve these disputes have been tried by the ministry of territorial administration. These efforts have failed because the parties concerned have not been able to abide by the decisions of the court. Before 1995, there was a dispute between the two tribes in 1969. That same year, a land consultation committee was put in place by the government of the former West Cameroon to resolve the matter. It demarcated the disputed area in favour of Bafanji and thus planted pillars indicating that legal proceedings had occurred. The Balikumbat, under the reign of Fon Galabe II, challenged the decision and sued Bafanji to the Buea Federal Court of Justice. In 1971, the Judiciary ruled in favour of Bafanji. Balikumbat declared, “We have been deprived of our land
because Muna, who is Prime Minister, influenced the Courts because of a grudge that we supported the Bali Nyonga against Widikums” (Kum, 1995, pp. 1-3 in Sobseh, 2011, p. 257).

With this resentment, the Balikumbat expressed their dissatisfaction by attacking the people of Bafanji on June 3, 1995. Replying to the Herald newspaper, the Fon of Bafanji declared,

The Balikumbat who attacked us first know better. But what is clear is the fact that I cannot attribute the immediate cause of the conflict to any land dispute because the land problem had been settled by a court decision in 1969. Since then, we have lived in peace with Balikumbat people (...). When they came to attack my people, the Balikumbat wore black uniforms, meaning that they are prepared for war (Herald, 1995, p. 3 in Sobseh 2011, p. 257).

Following this confrontation between the two tribes, another commission was set up which planted pillars for the second time. These pillars were subsequently removed by the people of Balikumbat. The Herald newspaper reported that these people vowed, “...to never cede an inch of their land to anyone.”

In this light, it is therefore imperative to create legal pronouncements and advocate for non-violent means of resolving conflicts in this part of the country. To succeed in this advocacy, the political and traditional authorities have to be major stakeholders. This approach has to begin from the Fon’s meetings at the regional level. After one of these meetings, the spokesperson of the Fons of the Northwest region, Barrister Nico Ntumfor Haile, claimed that, “The meeting was not a forum for anyone to apportion blame for any of the conflicts” (Pefok, The Post, 2007, p.110). According to
Barrister Nico Ntumfor Haile, inter-tribal conflicts in the Northwest region are not only sensitive, but they are very complicated. There is more to the conflict than the fight over land. In his view, Northwest elites perpetrate conflicts for selfish political, material, and financial interests. The barrister concludes by saying that “peace is for the strong and violence is for the weak” (BOTFON Human Rights Watch, 2007, p. 12).

In the opinion of the spokesperson of the Northwest Fons, the legal advocacy for non-violent resolution of conflicts is possible. Through meetings among the Fons and the signing of agreements, this strategy to peace building could be attained. It is important to commend the initiative of the eleven out of thirteen Fons of Ndop Cultural Development Association (NDECA) to meet to sign a non-aggression pact. Their objective was to terminate sporadic inter-ethnic conflicts in the division. The September 9, 1995 meeting that culminated in the signing of this pact was part of the recommendations made by the General Assembly of NDECA on August 26, 1995. These efforts towards the maintenance of peace should be encouraged through the meetings of traditional rulers and other means of sensitizing the population. A critical example of the message of peace is one offered by Barrister Nico Ntumfor Haile to the Post newspaper,

I learnt with consternation and indignation of the unfortunate happening between brotherly villages (…) in which some considerable damage has been done. While regretting this enormous loss, I wish to appeal for calm, reason, responsibility, love, peace, dialogue, and reconciliation between people of two villages. I have always said and maintain that since history, violence has never solved any single problem anywhere in the world. Whatever might have provoked the situation, I am on my knees suing for peace between the people. My prayer is that God
almighty should bring comfort to the displaced people and peace should reign.


This message serves as a campaign speech for those who advocate non-violence to the problem of land conflict. The advocacy for peaceful means in conflict resolution needs to spell out the penalties awaiting unscrupulous elites and retired big men who boast of their unlimited powers and provoke violence between tribes for their personal interests. The education of youths on the peaceful means of conflict resolution could proceed from the youth associations and sporting activities like the Motor Bike Riders Associations and Young Christian workers. In fact, this approach shows promise and could minimize the sporadic eruption of violent confrontations in the Balikumbat sub-division.

Chapter Summary

This chapter set out to present a discussions of the results. First, the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance was presented and discussed. Second, the causes, history, and recurrence of the land dispute detailed. The colonial land policy and its role in the land dispute was the third result that was illuminated. Fourth, the role of government policy towards the solution of the dispute was presented and discussed. Lastly, solutions to the current dispute were considered. Despite small differences in the strategies for a solution to the conflict, all respondents stood for a peaceful solution and placed their hopes on the government to construct a final borderline between the two villages.

After the discussion of the results, the interpretation and the implications of the conflict followed. These implications were examined under socio-economic and political
rubrics. From these implications, insights and revelations on issues that were associated with the land conflict and why this land conflict is peculiar to others were drawn. From this image, it was imperative to delve into possible recommendations for the mitigation of future land and boundary conflicts between Balikumbat and Bafanji. While not exhaustive, these recommendations reflected on this specific conflict and its recurrent nature.

**Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate whether the colonial land tenure system and policies have been the root causes of the recurrent land and boundary conflicts of Balikumbat and Bafanji people in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. The argument is that the advent of colonial masters to Africa set the stage for violent and intractable conflicts. The indiscriminate definitions of boundaries without considering indigenous customs and beliefs lies at the root of the problem. The present land tenure system, which is a product of colonial administration, fails to consider indigenous customs and beliefs, which is another root cause of the intractable conflict in the Northwest region.

To realize the objective of this study, this work has been presented in five chapters. In chapter one, the background of the study was presented to ease the understanding of the context of the study. With the objective of determining whether the colonial land tenure system is responsible for the recurrent land and boundary conflict amongst the Balikumbat and the Bafanji, this work raises this research question: “Did the colonial land tenure system set the stage for recurrent land and boundary disputes between the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages?” To answer this research question, the main research question was organized into five different component questions. First,
what are the constituents of pre-colonial perception of land and its importance? Second, what are the causes, history, and recurrence of the land dispute? Third, to what extent did colonial land policy contribute to the land dispute in Balikumbat and Bafanji? Fourth, how successful is the present La Republique Cameroon government in establishing a solution to the conflict? Fifth, are there possible solutions to the intractable conflict that has arisen between the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji? In response, chapter two presents a review of relevant literature to this study in three major frameworks: Conceptual, Theoretical, and Empirical.

The Conceptual framework discussed the indigenous conception of land as a sacred gift of nature with economic and spiritual ramifications. The Cameroon land tenure system was then highlighted from the pre-colonial, through the German and Anglo-French colonial periods and finally the post-colonial period within the present Cameroon government. Discourse on land tenure was closely followed by a review of causes of land and boundary disputes. Systemic and proximate causes were highlighted.

In the Theoretical framework, two theories were highlighted as being relevant to the present study. Human needs theory and post-colonial theory were chosen for the study. In relation to human needs theory, conflict can arise as people try to satisfy their personal needs. The basic need of food and shelter are fundamental to all human beings and these are guaranteed by the possession of land. Hence, with an increase in population and a scarcity of land resources, conflict may arise. The need to safeguard land as a source of self-esteem for ancestral and sacrificial ceremonies equally falls within human needs theory. Post-colonial theory expresses people’s feelings and the hazards caused by the colonial period. It finds its explanation in the fact that the colonial masters did not
respect the indigenous conception of land and land tenure systems in the demarcation and allocation of land. These are primary causes of frequent land disputes. The chapter concludes with empirical studies, relevant to this work, that have been completed in Cameroon and beyond.

Research methodology is presented in chapter three. The qualitative method of data collection was chosen for the research design. Having described the area of research, sample population, and sample technique, our preliminary task of data collection was determined. Data collection proceeded by means of a purposeful convenient sampling technique. A snowball approach was used with key informants until a saturation point was reached. Interviews of different stakeholders proceeded with open-ended questions of government officials like the Divisional Officer of the Sub-Division and Mayor of the Municipal Council. Traditional and religious authorities of both villages were extensively interviewed. Expert participants who experienced incidents of conflict were sought out, secured, and interviewed.

In addition, non-participant observation was used to gain additional knowledge of the land and boundary disputes between Balikumbat and Bafanji. Documents were reviewed and recorded in a reflective journal to document shifts that occurred during the research project. For data administration, the analysis was done following the systematic process of thematic and content analysis. The validation strategies of the instrument entailed peer briefing, researcher reflexivity, and the development of rich descriptions. A critique checklist was set aside to verify all the components that were examined.

After analyzing the data, chapter four proceeded with a presentation of findings. Following the five objectives of the study, these findings can be articulated in relation to
the research objectives. The first objective examined the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance. Here, both villages were similar in their perception of land and its importance. While the Bafanji laid more emphasis on the traditional value of land as providing shrines for sacrifices, the Balikumbat were more concerned with land as a source of life sustenance, in relation to cultivation and shelter. The second objective presented the causes, history, and recurrence of the land dispute. There are striking differences in remote causes, immediate causes, and the historical development of the war. Nonetheless, all respondents agreed that the lack of a clear borderline and the laxity of the present Cameroonian government to provide one is the reason why this border dispute keeps reoccurring. The third objective presented findings on the colonial land policy and its role in the land dispute. The respondents acknowledged that there was a firm rule of the colonial masters in demarcating boundaries and maintaining peace during their era. However, they highlighted major flaws during the colonial reign that orchestrated this land dispute. The fourth objective centered on the role of the present government in the solution of the dispute. The findings proved that all respondents were dissatisfied with government action towards the solution of the dispute. Only the presence of the land tenure system was indicated as a positive point. In the fifth objective, solutions to the current dispute presented little difference in the strategies for a solution to the conflict. All respondents stood for a peaceful solution to the conflict and placed their hopes on the government to construct a final borderline between the two villages.

A discussion of the results was presented in chapter five. The first point highlighted the pre-colonial indigenous perception of land and its importance. The second point centered on the causes, history, and recurrence of the land dispute. The third point,
focused on the colonial land policy and its role in the land dispute. The fourth point examined the role of government policy toward the solution of the dispute. The fifth point considered solutions to the current dispute. Despite small differences in strategies for a solution to the conflict, all respondents stood for a peaceful solution and placed their hopes on the government to construct a final borderline between the two villages.

Following the discussion of the results, an interpretation, and the implications of the conflict was detailed. These implications were examined under socio-economic and political rubrics. From these implications, insights and revelations on the land conflict were discussed. From the image given about this conflict and conflict in general, it became imperative to delve into possible recommendations for the mitigation of future land and boundary conflicts between Balikumbat and Bafanji.

From the findings and the advanced arguments, it is probable that the colonial land tenure system stands at the ultimate root of the intractable conflict between the people of Balikumbat and Bafanji. One explanation to this thesis lies in the fact that the colonial land tenure system made indiscriminate boundary demarcations without consulting the customs and beliefs of the people. The multiplicity of colonial masters in Cameroon and the fact that the British came after the Germans and made decisions and definitions of boundaries without considering the historicity of the matter constitute another part of the problem. However, the colonial masters are not solely to blame for the intractable conflict of the Balikumbat and Bafanji tribes. Tracing the root of the causes and recurrence of the conflicts in the findings and discussions of the results, socio-economic and political motives contributed to the cause and persistence of the conflict.
Limitations of the Study

Various levels of limitation applied to this study. Time factor was a major limitation. Because of the structure of the PhD study, data collection provides a snapshot in time. Though data was collected by different types of instruments, both participants and this researcher were limited by time constraints. Collecting data at regular intervals would have made the study more profound. The stakeholders were not always available to give information. Some were extremely busy people and others failed to grant opportunities for interviews. However, this researcher is grateful to those who were very receptive like the government officials of Balikumbat Sub-Division, and the traditional and religious authorities of Balikumbat and Bafanji.

The study was contextual. Only a limited number of respondents were consulted in the Balikumbat and Bafanji ethnic groups, which led to more interpretation and induction about the colonial role on conflicts in the Northwest Region. Induction, in itself, is based on probability and not certainty. The researcher therefore generalizes from particular examples. Universal claims cannot be made in all aspects of this study due to its limited scope.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings and results of the present study, the following suggestions are advanced for further research.

- This study was designed as case study research. In another dimension, a comparative study could be carried out on land disputes within the Northwest Region of Cameroon, since inter-tribal land disputes are a common phenomenon in this region.
In another study, the customary strategies of land conflict resolution and the modern ways of solving land disputes could be evaluated to see which one is more efficient.

Conflicting land tenure policies appear to be one of the major reasons for border disputes. Further study could determine the changing patterns of land tenure from the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial period.

Changes in land custody from traditional authorities to the state as the only custodian of land may be studied as a future possibility.

General Conclusion

From the aforementioned, I can conclude that this dissertation has met its objectives as set forth above. The contribution that can be extrapolated from this research exercise is the notion that land and boundary disputes exist everywhere and are omnipresent in the Cameroon context. But the case of the BaliKumbat and Bafanji Land Dispute adds another variable to this understanding. It highlights the fact that Colonial Land Tenure System, which is individualistic in nature did not align with an indigenous understanding of land ownership, which is communalistic in nature. This clash in understanding of land has resulted to the land and boundary dispute in these communities.

Although Colonial Land Tenure is not the only factor that sustains the conflict in being, this research reveals that it played a major role in the conflict. Lastly, while land and boundary issues continue to plague the Cameroonian society and elsewhere, this research shows that every land and boundary dispute has a unique character and must be researched individually.
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