

BOUNDARY DISPUTES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON INTER-GROUP RELATIONS IN NIGERIA: THE ANNANG- IGBO EXPERIENCE, 1987-2015

**Israel, UbongAbasi Ebenezer, Ph.D., Udoh, Emem Michael and Okpalaeke, Patrick
Chukwudike**

Department of History and International Studies, University of Uyo, PMB 1017, Akwa Ibom
State, Nigeria.

Email: chukwudikeokpalaeke@gmail.com

Abstract

The study explores the implications of boundary disputes on inter-group relations in Nigeria, using the Annang people (Akwa Ibom) and their Igbo neighbours situated in Abia state as a case study. This study becomes imperative since such disputes have shown to have dire consequences on long standing inter-group relations which goes back to pre-colonial times, as the case of Annang-Igbo is one among the numerous examples scattered across Nigeria. Findings from the study reveal that the boundary conflict between both groups took root in state creation and Boundary Adjustment exercises conducted by the then Federal Military Government which led to the carving out of Akwa Ibom state from Cross Rivers in 1987, and Abia from Imo state in 1991. Both Annang and Igbo have long before the coming of the European lived side-by-side peacefully as they had had a very robust inter-group relations which is presently being threatened by recent boundary disputes between them. However, it is intrusive to note that should these boundary disputes persist unresolved, the implication is that both groups will make no meaningful socio-economic advancement as wherever there is conflict, growth and development is bound never to thrive. Hence, the study concludes thus: policy makers as well as traditional leaders must endeavour to avert further imbroglio through proper investigation, consultations and reconciliation exercises. Historical analysis has been employed as the method for the study.

Keyword: *Annang, Boundary, Conflict, Igbo, Inter-Group Relations and Nigeria.*

Introduction

In a strict sense of the word, boundaries are as old as man himself and therefore not a new phenomenon in the relationship between man, his environment and his fellow human beings. On a broader spectrum, Africa as a whole have continuously been ravaged by land boundary disputes due in part to her colonial and post-colonial history (Oduan 2015:i). From Southern Africa, to North, East, West and Central Africa, there exist numerous protracted conflicts relating to boundaries partitioning of two or more ethnic groups which either have shared cultural values or have lived side-by-side for countless number of years. Hence, the implications of boundary disputes on inter-group relations have in recent times increased across the African continent. Among these disputes, key instances would include, but not limited to: the Ogaden boundary conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia, the Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon, Orange River border line between Namibia and South Africa, KaNgwane between South Africa and Swaziland, to mention but a few. It should be noted that all the aforementioned land-border disputes have their root in the partition exercise conducted by European nations. In Nigeria, there exist a plethora of boundary disputes ravaging so many communities which are struggling over land, boundary, forest reserve, ancestral land among other valuables as in the case of Boje and Nsadop, Njua and Bano-bawop in Cross River State, Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State, Ofa and Erile in Kwara State, Oma and Awe in Plateau State, (Ibeanu 2005:20), Oku Iboku against Ikot Offiong and Inua Akpa land. (Charles 2017).

Against this backdrop, the boundary disputes between the Annang people of Akwa Ibom state, and their Igbo neighbours particularly in Abia state has been one of the numerous protracted boundary disputes in Nigeria which necessitated this academic venture. It is interesting to note that both groups, over many centuries had enjoyed a very robust inter-group relationship irrespective of some slight variances that could be spotted in their cultural exchanges. In spite of these variances, both ethnic groups have for centuries conducted intermarriages, economic activities, exchange in cultural values as well as engaged in non-detrimental conflict.

Therefore, the genesis of this boundary conflict is to be traced to the various boundary adjustments exercises which inadvertently neglected the importance of conducting an on the field assessment of affected regions prior to establishing new boundaries. By implication of this negligence, communities within the radius of the Ikwuano, Ukwa East, Obot Akara, and Ika LGA have remained in a protracted boundary conflict.

As a result of this unending impasse between both ethnic groups, the region has become a major flashpoint for post-colonial border conflict. Over the years, there have been countless incidences which have left property destroyed and countless numbers of lives lost. The aftermath effect of this conflict have caused a major strain on these groups' long standing socio-cultural as well as economic relations which have thrived for centuries. Hence, this study carries out a critical assessment on how post-colonial land dispute have affected the inter-group relations that exists between the Annang ethnic group and their Igbo neighbours.

The study will attempt a trace on the genesis of this boundary dispute, as well as its implications and proffer a possible way forward.

The study is divided into six sections. The first shed light on understanding boundary disputes. The second section gives a synopsis on Annang-Igbo inter-group relations in pre-colonial times. The third highlights selected cases of boundary disputes among the groups under discourse. The fourth attempts a critical examination of some of the boundary adjustment commissions and state creations in order to ascertain if they are the root causes of the problem. The fifth examines the implications of boundary disputes on both groups, while the last section concludes the study.

Understanding Boundary Dispute

In order to grasp a better understanding of what boundary conflict is all about, it is only logical that the term boundary should first be adequately defined. What then is boundary? Even though the term as been defined by various scholars in many ways, Mark S. Shipman (n.d:2) describe the term as “Every separation, natural or artificial, which marks the confines or line of division of two contiguous properties.” Shipman (n.d:5) went a step further to add that it could also be refer to as “Limits or marks of enclosures if possession be without title, or the boundaries or limits stated in title deed if possession be under title.” In addition to what Shipman have to say about what boundary could mean, Campbell (1979: n.p) posits in the Black’s Law Dictionary (5th Edn.) that a boundary may be natural, such as rocks, trees and rivers. They can also be artificial, such as iron pins, mere stones, monuments or even fences.

In addition, the term boundary can be conceptualize into two major schools of thoughts. The first being the Classical Concept and the second, Integrationist Concept. Thus, in the classical sense of the word, it is commonly believed and generally accepted that a boundary is a ‘line of divide’, which separates one territory from another (Oludoyi 2017). Strictly, in the case of Nigeria, the term boundary refers to an administrative line, which delineates or demarcates the scope of two or more administrative jurisdictions, in this case, the Nigerian nation and its constituent States and Local Government Areas (LGAs) (Oludoyi 2017).Whereas, using the integrationist perspective to describe the word, boundaries, in the dawn of a fast changing globe in which nations are dismantling their boundaries (globalization), the classical definition of boundary as a ‘line of divide’ is giving way to the concept of boundary as a ‘line of contact between nations, peoples and polities’ (Oludoyi 2017). Thus, it can be rightly deduce that the integrative concept sees boundaries as point of contacts, bridges of cooperation and socio-economic and political exchanges. And it would only pay off for the groups under discourse if they should look at boundaries through the prism of integrationist rather than classical.

In light of the foregone analysis, what then is boundary dispute? In discussing the nature of boundary disputes, Omolade Adejuyigbe espouses the views that in order to grasp what constitutes boundary dispute, there is the need to be able to distinguish between two related but different concepts: the need or demand for a boundary and a boundary dispute proper. As this will aid the understanding of what nature boundary disputes take. Putting it more succinctly, Adejuyigbe (1975) posits thus:

A boundary dispute exists when one of the parties separated by its objects to the boundary being suggested or desired by the other. The suggestion may be aimed at fixing a boundary where none was in existence before or at replacing an existing one which is unsatisfactory to the party making the suggestion. An objection to the suggested boundary could be made because the objecting community feels that the suggestion does not accord its conception of its own territorial rights or, in the case of a previously fixed boundary, it is dissatisfied with the existing or demarcated boundary [58].

Based on what Adejuyigbe (1975) has told us through his remarks, it is only logical to understand that disagreement over demarcation or adjustment on a piece of land is enough reason for boundary dispute to emerge between or among two or more communities. Taking the case of the Annang along Akwa Ibom border line, and their Igbo neighbours in Abia state, sharing boundaries, the crux of the matter is that, while these groups have lived side-by-side for centuries, before the coming of the European, their relations started to take a new turn at the mid-twentieth century when colonial boundary adjustment programmes among other things destroyed whatever was left of their inter-group relations. Substantiating the foregone position, J.C Anene (1970) remarked thus:

In the successive phases of the European partitioning of Africa, the lines demarcating spheres of interest were often haphazard and precipitately arranged. The European agents and diplomats were primarily interested in grabbing as much African territory as possible, and were not unduly concerned about the consequences of disrupting ethnic groups and undermining the indigenous political order...the manner in which these boundaries were made was often a subject for after-dinner jokes among European statesmen [3].

More so, the issues of boundary disputes across the southern region of Nigeria began to gain momentum when government officials and communities began to delimit boundaries owing to their desire to increase economic activities in the frontier areas, particularly in the form of the exploitation of forest resources of which timber, rubber, palm oil, and other cash crops were most important (Adejuyigbe 1975: 59). Even beyond issues bordering on economic activities, another source for boundary disputes were government policies. By this we are referring to delimitation of boundaries by government officials (Adejuyigbe 1975:61-62). Thus, most boundary disputes would not have risen if boundaries delimitation had not occurred.

Further, boundary dispute have been put forward by a source as an event that occur where there are conflicting claims by two or more communities having contiguous territories over the right to ownership of title to an identified piece of land (Oludoyi n.d). At this juncture, it is important to stress that there is no way two far flung communities can be entangled in boundary disputes. Take for instance, a community in Okigwe LGA (Imo state) and another in Ikot Ekpene LGA (Akwa Ibom state) as these two do not share immediate or contiguous borders. The question of boundary dispute it is to be noted must be in relation to ownership

and not mere claim to right of possession or occupation. The foregoing depicts that what is transpiring between the Annang communities sharing border with their Igbo neighbours along Abia-Akwa-Ibom axis is nothing short of boundary dispute which over the years have led to countless loss of lives, collapse of economies as well as even threatening national security. Hence, it is only imperative that an academic exercise of this nature be conducted to put the record straight and possibly channel a way forward for the groups.

Annang-Igbo Inter-Group Relations in Pre-Colonial Times: A Synopsis

The nature of Annang-Igbo relations in pre-colonial time was without doubt multifaceted. These groups have interacted with one another for over a long period of time which cuts across various aspects. The people of Annang, prior to the coming of the European interacted with their Igbo neighbours in numerous way which cut across aspects such as inter-marriages, trade and commerce, cultural festivities, and even in the aspect of warfare and diplomacy. The implication of this was that, Africans all over the continent were never in absolute isolation as against the erroneous view of Eurocentric scholars. Accordingly, Adiakpa (2015), posits strongly that “the people of Igbo have been in very close contact with our Annang people.”

Commenting on the intergroup relations that existed between the Igbo and their Annang neighbour, Afigbo (1987:40) points to the fact that, these group enjoyed a very robust interaction in many aspects of their co-existence. Afigbo espouses that the two groups ensure that in spite of the disputes that emerged, it was not enough to create long-lasting enmity among them. Further, trade and commerce was another factor upon which the intergroup relations thrived in pre-colonial times. The nature and scope of their trade relations was basically hinged upon agriculture which was the bases of their economies (Afigbo 1981:n.p). In addition, trade as a factor of contact between the Annang and Igbo people arose from the fact that different communities under our scope of study were differently endowed with resources. Therefore, compelling some of them to engage in local and long range exchange by the need to transcend their limitations and maximize their comparative advantages (Afigbo 1987:40). Outside agricultural produces, Annang communities were noted for craftsmanship. Most Annang communities exchanged crafted items which they must have manufactured from the use of raffia, such as bags, hats, carpets, among others. And the Annang people were also involved in wood carving which was one of their major traditional occupations that has been passed down from one generation to another by their ancestors (Udoh 1983:21-2).

In another direction, the marriage factor was another decisive instrument in their relations. It was reported that marriage was mostly used as a diplomatic tool in amending their relations mostly after conflictual periods. This marriage was often conducted as a means to an end. While on other occasions, inter-marriages occurred not for diplomatic purposes but for the fact that intending couples might have developed interests. Afigbo (1987) succinctly puts it thus:

...and Ika-na-Annang asserted that since they lived so close, the two ethnic groups inter-married. The Ndoki in particular were said to have been fond of marrying from amongst the Ika-na-Annang, whose women they claimed made excellent wives [98].

Afigbo's position was further consolidated by the statements of Okuku (2015) who asserts thus:

Marriage between the Annang people and their Igbo neighbours, particularly those along the Ariam and Ikot Umoh Essien boundary lines of Obot Akara and Ikwuano is an age-long practices right from our forefathers through whom this practice have been passed down to the present generation. The place of marriage in our relationship with our Igbo neighbours is undeniable as both group have for long been inextricably intertwined as a result of the off springs from these marriages [n.p].

Therefore, giving the foregone analysis, the fact that marriage constituted a major factor in the Annang-Igbo relations has been established. Like have been stated earlier, marriage was both for amending their relationship sequel to any loggerhead, or trade purposes, as well as for the purpose of expanding their frontiers for the purpose of generations yet unborn as is the case in contemporary times.

Furthermore, both ethnic groups had in time past expressed their pre-colonial relations via the art of warfare. The motive of these wars were not to annihilate one another, but to resolve their misunderstanding through other channels as war itself is a form of diplomacy upon the application of certain coercive measures. Put differently, conflict by its very nature is a critical ingredient for human societal progress. However, when not properly ordered, can become destructive. For instance, the Igbo, according to Basden (1983) in his book entitled *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* remarked that:

War was an integral part of the Ibo life-style and form a basis of their inter-group relation with their neighbours... it was "a rare thing for towns to remain at peace for a very long, and when quietness did happen to prevail for a time, the spell was broken on the slightest pretext and hostilities began again forthwith. During the dry season, fighting was a sort of pastime, either between different quarters of the same town or between neighboring towns [202].

Basden's remarks as given above goes to show that the intent behind pre-colonial warring communities is not necessarily to neither destruct nor annihilate their contending oppositions, but to resolve their misunderstanding in the battle field. The most interesting part is that warfare were also conducted in the most suitable period so as not to create famine across the land after the war must have come to an end. This is in contradiction to what is obtain in most African societies of today. As in contemporary times, certain groups engaged in conflict do

so, either to annihilate their opponents or cause devastating consequences even after the war must have come to an end.

In addition, language factor was also a very strong indices when considering the dynamics of inter-group relations between the Annang people and their Igbo neighbours (Afigbo 1983: 31). However it must be pointed out that when analyzing this factor of contact between the groups under discourse, attention must be paid only to those group of Igbo communities sharing immediate boundaries with the Annang people as they were so close than other group of Igbo who are far from the immediate reach of the Annang people.

Put differently, an Igbo community situated in faraway Nsukka, Okigwe, Owerri, Orlu, or even Onitsha cannot be said to have interacted with the Annang people in terms of language. As distance posed a barrier to this possibility. However, it were the Igbo communities such as the Ariam, Ngwa, among the other, sharing immediate boundaries with the Annang people that must have related in term of language. As language interaction, the Igbo and their Annang neighbours must have found themselves speaking in each other's language in pre-colonial times as it is without surprise the case in contemporary times (Adiaka 2015). Pointedly, the Paramount Ruler of Obot Akara LGA showed a high level of understanding the Igbo language as he indicated that his name "Uwa" means earth or world in both the Annang and Igbo languages, further strengthening the position that both groups interrelated in the aspect of language during pre-colonial, colonial and even up to post-colonial times.

Also supportive of the position that language was indeed a medium of interaction for both the Annang and their Igbo neighbours from pre-colonial to post-colonial, David Northrup, while critically conducting a research he entitled , *Igbo and Igbo Myth: Culture and Ethnicity in the Atlantic World, 1600-1850*, espouses the views that it has been established by many scholars who through the employment of ethno linguistic study surmised that the Igbo and their neighbours, of which the Annang people is a part of have shown to relate through language. Northrup (2003) puts it succinctly thus:

...in the eighteenth century, the Anang lived along an unstable frontier with the Ngwa Igbo, whose traditions are quite explicit about their penetration and incorporation with the Anang peoples. The Anang and Ngwa Igbo laid along important trade routes from Arochukwu to Bonny. Thus, an Ngwa Igbo might well speak Moko and look like a Moko. Similarly, there would be nothing odd about an Anang (Moko) who could speak Igbo as a second language. [691]

Given the above background, the fact that African existed in isolation have been further debunked through the robust relations both groups under our discourse had in pre-colonial era. The Annang people along with their Igbo neighbour had a very cordial intercourse that have spanned countless number of year and that was multifaceted. Thus, it must be noted that, in spite of the cordiality and thoughtfulness, war was not totally devoid of their interactions.

Selected Cases of Boundary Disputes: A Brief Sketch

Strictly, most of the boundary disputes existing between the Annang and their Igbo neighbours earlier took roots in the various old provincial and divisional boundaries backed by the statutes of government (Essien 2005:7). That is to say that across the various boundaries demarcating Abia and Akwa Ibom states, majority of the communities, right from colonial, to post-colonial era, have been entangled in disputes over boundary disagreements owing to numerous government policies and boundary demarcations and adjustments exercises. However, it is intrusive to note that these boundary disputes are only an outgrowth of a framework for inter-state boundaries which was aimed at bringing about quality governance, maintenance of law and order, and the utmost desire to bring government closer to the people in most practical terms. Take for instance, Essien (2005) puts this more succinctly thus:

...Thirty six states now exist out of four regions in place immediately after independence. Eight states now exist out of the former Eastern Region. Of these, it would appear that in these parts, the boundary with emotions rooted deepest in distrust was between the former South Eastern State and East Central State; and then it became Cross River/ Imo, then Akwa Ibom and Abia states...[7-8]

There exist till date various instances of boundary disputes among numerous communities spread across some LGAs on both sides. Pointedly, in Ika LGA, communities such as Ika Ikot Udo Ika, Urua Inyang, Ikot Inwang, Effen Okoro, Immaaman, Ikot Ekong, Ikot Akpan Anwa, Ikot Ikara and Ikot Uko are at a loggerhead with their closest Igbo communities such as Abiaka, in Ibeme, Azumini and Iwukem both in Ukwa East LGA of Abia state (*Daily Trust Newspaper* February 2017). In addition, there are also cases of protracted boundary disputes between communities in Obot Akara and Ikwuano LGAs. Some of the affected communities around this region include Usaka Annang, Usak Oku, among others. In sum, seven LGAs from both sides have been embroiled in boundary disputes for many year now, and these are: Ika/Ukwa East, Obot Akara/Obioma Ngwa, Essien Udim/Obioma Ngwa and Etim Ekpo/Ukwa East, and lastly, Ikwuano/Obot Akara (Ojumadu 2004). The mentioned LGAs are constantly involved in skirmishes over boundaries which have led to the loss of lives and valuables. This scenario between both groups is not a new trend but like have been stated earlier, started many years ago. For instance, in a report on land dispute arbitration panel between the Okop and Ikot Ineme people of Akwa Ibom state, a testifier made mention of how the trouble between Okop people and their Ikot Ineme neighbours actually started after both aforementioned communities had earlier formed an alliance in their fight against the Ngwa people (Report on Okop/Ikot Ineme 1995). However, before the first direct confrontation with the Ngwa, the Asasa Stream had always been the separating line between the Ngwa people and Okop as well as the community of Ikot Ineme; and there was no conflict then. It should be noted that the Asasa stream situated in present day Obot Akara LGA, prior to the Ngwa-Ikot Ineme dispute has always been the separating line between Ikot Ineme and Okop communities. Regrettably, these disputes have lingered for so long that it

has left cracks in their inter-group relations. Almost all communities along the boundary demarcating Abia state from Akwa Ibom state have at one time or the other involved in very serious clash that had brought about dire consequences for all concern, even going further to threatening whatever peace that had existed among them in time past.

Government Policies, Boundary Adjustment Commissions and States Creation: Reason for Present Day Boundary Disputes?

Categorically, it has been noted that all boundaries created on the bases on political or economic aims are artificial since they are not natural but were created by man. Hence, the accidents of history, the vagaries of geography and the exigencies of economics have all given impetus in determining even European boundaries which often more than not becomes a flash point for future disputes (Anene 1970:2). Prior to the establishment of Boundary Adjustment Commissions and subsequently, various states creation, the various peopling that made up what is today known as Nigeria had their own traditional form of boundaries marked by various items. Pre-colonial communities across Nigeria noted their territorial integrities by agreeing on certain landmarks such as trees of very distinct nature, particularly the *Iroko* and Mahogany, a lasting feature example, ant-hills, or other natural landmarks such as rivers, valleys, mountains, among others (Bonchuk 2010:123). Moreover, it is to be noted that while traditional boundaries had the potential for conflict, it cooperative features were far more prominent as these boundaries were not regarded as sacrosanct. Rather, these boundaries further enabled geographical definition of kin-ship group and remarkably gave a boost to human organization and promoted inter-group harmony in pre-colonial times (Bonchuk 2010:123).

During colonial rule, the British colonial government imposed imaginary boundaries alien to the traditional notion of boundaries among the people. The consequence of this was that it separated related ethnic groups in all aspects of their very existence. M.O. Bonchuk (2010) puts it thus:

...the boundaries have separated related ethnic groups...the boundaries were meant to separate these groups for purposes of administrative and jurisdictional competence. However, neither the colonial nor post-colonial boundaries have functioned as they were expected to. These divided groups continue to interact and yearn for closer relationship across boundaries [124].

In another dimension, Adejuyigbe (1975), while discussing on the issues surrounding boundary disputes in western Nigeria, highlights colonial government policy as a root cause of boundary tussle in colonial times which have regrettably lingered up till present day Nigeria. Though he attributed boundaries dispute during colonial era to disagreement over resource(s) control. For Adejuyigbe (1975), such conflict arises when colonial agents decided to pay royalty over certain natural resources situated in a frontier to one group and ignoring the other group which also shares same frontier as well. Hence, Adejuyigbe (1975) espouses thus:

After colonial administration had been established, British citizens started to take interest in the extraction of timber and wild rubber from the forests. Such forest produce was more abundant in areas not under agriculture and these were usually in the frontiers between the communities...before exploitation started it was necessary to get clearance from the landowners, that is one of the communities separated by the frontier and which was believed to exercise jurisdiction over the area...one effect of the situation was that any community which was first approached first felt it within its power to give the concession and hence collect timber royalties from the timber merchant. Knowledge of royalty agreements and payments usually made the other community challenge the rights of the grantor over the affected area. The second community would claim that it owned part of the territory or all of it and should therefore collect part or all the timber royalty from the area [59-60].

Thus, from these perceptive, both Bonchuk (2010) and Adejuyigbe (1975) are of the views that one major cause of boundary disputes among the various peopling of present day Nigeria was the policies of the defunct colonial administration. Through their works, both authors illustrated how colonial administration sparked off boundary disputes which have lingered up till day. Although, it is to be noted that exactly 1917, a request was put forth to the colonial government of Lord Frederick Lugard by some people from Ilorin and Kabba Province for a boundary adjustment which will enable them to rejoin their kith and kin in the western portion of Nigeria which they were separated from during the 1914 Amalgamation. Both commissions set up by Lugard in 1917, and the one set up by Macpherson, gave a verdict of no adjustment. And the Willink set up to look into the Cross River, Ogoja and Rivers agitation only recommended adjustment based on a plebiscite (Bonchuk 2010:126).

Further, after Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule, the country barely six years into her independence found herself grappling with so much internal issues ranging from loyalty, ethnic politics, riots, coup and mutiny, among others which eventually culminated into a Civil War lasting from 1967 to 1970. Prior to the Civil war, the then military government of Gen. Yakubu Gowon was to break the formidable geo-ethnic fronts presented by the regions.³³ Although, a source claimed that Gowon broke the regions into twelve to further destabilize the southeast under Ojukwu's control prior to the Civil War to ensure that those regions which had earlier agitated for their separate states (which led to the establishment of the Willink Commission in 1957) disassociated themselves from Ojukwu's rebellious act (Kalu n.d). Hence, once states were created, ethnic groups began to glamour for their own states so as to be able to promote their individual identity and participate actively in the acquisition and appropriation of the nation's resources (Bonchuk 2010:125). Henceforward, the creation process began with Gen. Yakubu Gowon who around 1967-1976 transformed the Northern, Western, Eastern and Mid-Western Regions into twelve states. And by 1976, Murtala/Obasanjo increased them to nineteenth; Gen. Ibrahim Babangida by 1991 topped the number of states in Nigeria to thirty, whereas, it was Gen. Sani Abacha who climaxed it with addition six bringing the total number of states to thirty six (Eminue *et al* 2017). What these numerous states creation brought was separation of ethnic groups into two,

leaving one in another state, and the other half in a different state altogether. This had led to increased agitations by various groups which long to be reunited with their kith and kin. In view of this, Bonchuk (2010) remarked thus:

Ethnic groups that were not large enough to constitute a state of their own invariably found themselves on the “wrong side” of the boundary “dominated” by groups with larger population in their own states. Some of these groups also found out that they have been split and dumped in two different states...some of the boundaries were replicated on the map without adequate care being taken to ensure that the position on the map was precisely reflected on the ground before such states were created [125].

What the quotation holds is exactly the case with the Annang and their Igbo neighbours. In which, during the various boundary adjustment and states creations, the various constituted Commissions and Panel (such as Akilu, Nasir, Irikefe, Oduwaiye, Ali, among others) failed to conduct a thorough on the filed assessment before given its final reports. Hence, communities which had earlier lived as one single unit, found themselves separated from their kith and kin. And in areas where there exist mineral resources, the issues become more intense.

Notably, the boundary disputes that have continued to strain the Annang-Igbo inter-group relations could be traced to the state creation of 1967 when Gen. Yakubu Gowon created Cross River from the former Eastern Region. However, its name was changed to Cross River State in the 1976 state creation exercise by the then Gen. Murtala / Obasanjo regime from South Eastern State (Nwabueze 1982:222). And the present Akwa Ibom State was excised from it in the state creation exercise of 1987 by the then regime of Gen. Ibrahim Babaginda. The creation of Akwa Ibom, and the subsequent creation of Abia state led to many communities along the borderline to be split into various factions with one half into Akwa Ibom and the other in Abia state.

Owing to the multiple boundary conflicts scattered across Nigeria, the then Murtala/Obasanjo regime constituted the Justice Nasir Boundary Adjustment commission in 1976 to look into how the issues, among other things could be resolved. In order to work out a solution, the Mamman Nasir commission, based on the recommendations made by Justice Irefeke's panel on the creation of states set up earlier in 1975, traced the origin of boundary dispute to the 1914 amalgamation exercise. However, the Nasir Commission have on many grounds been accused of being the root cause of what both ethnic groups under discourse are going through till date. Many have termed the Nasir Commission as the handmaiden used by Olusegun Obasanjo to further punish, deprived, humiliate and also marginalize the Igbo whom were still in the process of recovering from the Nigerian Civil War. Succinctly, while reacting to the boundary dispute between Ukwu East (in Abia) and Oyi Igbo (in Rivers state) Don Ubani (2017) avers thus:

For no other reason than economic punishment, deprivation, humiliation and marginalization, the Obasanjo Military Government set up the Justice Mamman Nasir Boundary Commission. General Obasanjo's targets were the Igbo areas prolific with hydro-carbon and Mamman Nasir boundary Commission, ironically, ignorantly and, of-course, unjustifiably used the Imo River as boundary between the present Abia State and Rivers State. It has to be stated that both sides of the Imo River, that is Ukwa-west in Abia State and Oyigbo in Rivers State contain many oil-wells. But more oil wells are in Oyigbo area. Let it be said here that the commercial town of Obigbo, which was renamed Oyigbo after the Nasir boundary adjustment, is an Asa town. During the colonial era, Obigbo town and komkom Village, which are now in Rivers State, were integral parts of Asa county council, with headquarters at Obehie-Asa. After the Nigerian/Biafran War, Oyigbo and Komkom were in Ukwa Division, with the headquarters still at Obehie-Asa. They were in Ukwa Division until 1976 when Mamman Nasir did his abracadabara [magic]. The same fate befell Ndoki communities of Afam and Egberu [n.p].

Although, the quotation above portrays what actually transpired between the people of Ukwa-West and Oyigbo, it can imaginarily be substituted in the case of the various local government areas under our purview. Recounting the words of Okuku, Paramount Ruler of Obot Akara LGA, he was of the view that what bedevils the Annang people of Usaka Annang, and their closest Igbo neighbours, Usaka Oku and Ariam was as a result of boundary demarcation carelessly carried out by the Justice Mamman Nasir Commission which ended up splitting brother communities into two or more units. Whereas one is presently in Abia state (formerly Imo), and the other in Akwa Ibom state (Adiaka 2015). In addition to the views above, a community leader attributed the various communal clashes to the "biased federal government boundary adjustment of 1985," which, he explained, unjustly ceded some Imo communities to Cross Rivers. Since then and upon creation of Akwa Ibom state in 1987, and Abia state in 1991, Abia border communities had been under attack by their neighbours (Baffour 2015). In 2014, when the then Governor of Abia state, Theodore Orji was addressing journalist on the skirmishes that have continued to plague the border communities of Abia and Akwa Ibom states, the Governor lamented that the Mamman Nasir Boundary Commission created a whole lot of problem for the people of Abia and their Akwa Ibom neighbours (Okoli 2014).

Thus, from the foregone analysis, we have seen that what is presently going on between the Annang and their Igbo neighbours in terms of Boundary disputes took roots in colonial policies, as well as boundary adjustments and states creations which have been conducted haphazardly as a result of lack of adequate investigations to ascertain the crux of the matters before giving verdicts. Thus, if this boundary dispute must be brought to an end, government as well as other stakeholders must take a historical voyage to understand what conflict resolution mechanisms must be employed to resolving this intermittent skirmishes that have continuously strained the Annang-Igbo inter-group relations.

Some Implications of Boundary Disputes for Both Groups.

It is common knowledge that every actions or inactions come with many consequences, either for good or bad. In likewise manner, the boundary disputes that have engulfed the Annang people and their Igbo neighbour over time isin itself not without grave implications for both groups as it should be noted that growth and development are hardly recorded wherever there is conflict. What then are these implications? Before going further to discuss these implication, it must be pointed out that the implications of the various boundary disputes on the Igbo people and their Annang neighbours cuts across every aspects that had prior to colonial and post-colonial times, formed the basis of their inter-group relations as had been illustrated above.

First, the boundary dispute between both groups has greatly affected negatively their trade and commerce life. In pre-colonial times, both groups, as historical studies and oral traditions have shown, interacted so much in economic terms as no group is self-sufficient, hence the need to trade with the other group for vital basics needed for continuous survival. However, the nature and scope of the groups' involvement with one another in the aspect of trade and commerce have to a large extent reduced owing to these protracted conflicts that have characterized their relations in post-colonial time. This is regrettably so, since it has become common for movement at some point within the various territories of both groups under discourse to be a source of worry (Udo 2015).

When tension is high, someone from one side could be slaughtered on the other side, on the assumption that the victim is an enemy. In most cases, the victim of such act might not even be aware that he has crossed into the "enemies" zone because of how inter-woven the Annang and their Igbo neighbours had long lived side-by-side. For example, Annang groups within Ika LGA, which have boundary with Ndoki-Azumini, often more than not cross Igboland before getting to another part of the same Ika LGA and vice versa or going to trade in local markets(Udoh 2015). But with the onslaught between both groups as a result of the various boundary skirmishes, this movement has been cautiously reduced for fear of losing their lives. The implication being that trade across local markets in both communities has been terminated.

More so, another implication is that marriage, an age-long practice between both groups have greatly reduced. As, presumably, no son or daughter from either side of the groups would want to marriage from a region termed "enemy" by his or her own people. This development is in sharp contrast to what Afigbo told us concerning inter-group marriage among these groups when he remarked that both groups were found of marrying amongst themselves. Particularly, the Ndoki men whom were fond of taking wives from the Ika-na-Annang whose ladies they said made excellent wives (Afigbo 1987:98). This regrettable situation is not just peculiar to the Annang-Igbo case, but cuts across virtually every area across the length and breadth of Post-colonial Nigeria where there is presently, some sort of boundary disputes.

Further, these boundary skirmishes across their territories have brought about pain and anguish to both groups as countless number of lives and property worth millions of naira had been lost. Also, it has left both groups going after the jugular of each other at every slightest

provocations without recourse to proper investigation. This has totally destroyed what peace and harmony existed among them in pre-colonial times.

Moreover, from what have been seen, the boundary disputes among the Annang and their Igbo neighbours have some resultant effects of violent communal conflicts among the youths across the various communities affected. As a result of this, there have been hunger and starvation since most people are scared of going to farms close to the boundary for fear of being attacked. Again, the disputes among these groups have brought about loss of moral and cultural values. It would be noted that in pre-colonial times, these groups had shared so many traditional practices in common such as the *Ekpe* society. Evidences show that the Igbo people of Nkpor, Abam, Ohafia, (Ekpuk 2015: 54) among others have interacted with the Annang people through this medium; during festivals both groups also interacted. Unfortunately, the boundary dispute between them have discouraged further interactions in those dimensions.

Politically, boundary disputes have been greatly exploited by numerous politicians from both ends to the detriment of both groups. This is much more obvious during period of elections as most aspirants vying for either LGAs Chairmanship or Councillorship position promises the affected communities to attract the state and federal government attention towards their plights, only for them to abandon all such promises the moment they are elected into office further worsening the plight of the people within the regions where these boundary disputes have lingered (Adiaka 2015). Another dimension is that grassroots development hardly gets to these areas as policy decision makers at the LGAs level would always assume that since the region(s) is under contention, it would be a waste of resources to take any massive project to such areas. Thus, having stated this much, it is right to assert that boundary disputes among the Annang and their Igbo neighbours have brought certain unfavourable consequences on their inter-group relations.

Conclusion

The study has critically explore the implications of boundary dispute on inter-group relations in post-colonial Nigeria using the example of the Annang people and their Igbo neighbours. As a matter of fact, the study took a historical voyage in order to bring to bear the dynamic of the groups' interrelationship in pre-colonial era to show that they had lived side-by-side in peace and harmony prior to the coming of the British colonial rule. And factors that aided their smooth relations included marriage, trade and commerce, warfare and diplomacy, among others. But with the coming of colonial rule, and the quest of the Europeans to maximize their economic goals, policies that would later put these groups into conflictual state became even more pronounce as the search for natural resources and the desire to claim territories where these resources lies became a critical issue of contention.

The crux of the matter would be seen in the numerous boundary adjustment exercises conducted from 1967 which led to the splitting of regions into states and in the process creating divisions among the peopling. It is important to note that this issue is not only peculiar to these groups (Annang and Igbo) as many other groups across Nigeria are also confronted with similar challenges.

However, it is the position of this research that there is need to conduct a reassessment of those boundary adjustment exercises carried out in time past so that normalcy would be restored back to the different regions where this issues of boundary disputes have lingered, as this study have portray the truism that indeed, boundary disputes come with great many implications not just for the groups involved, but for the entire Nigeria state.

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the problem as due consultations and on-the-site assessment were not carried out to handle the matters once and for all.

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