

Review Article

Colonial Rule and the Shifting Significance of Frontiers in the Nso Fendom, 1906 – 1961

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Abstract: Nso Fendom¹ before the advent of colonial rule had developed a notion of frontiers which were designed to uphold peaceful coexistence not only with her neighbors but also among the polities within the paramountcy. Frontier zones before European colonial influence were important areas of peaceful cohabitation; they were localities where neighboring peoples met for various purposes. But this peaceful cohabitation in frontier zones was brought to an end by the introduction of colonial boundaries. The new disruptive colonial boundaries thus marked the shift in the significance of frontiers in the Nso realm from zones of peaceful coexistence to areas of animosity. This shift was manifested by frontier conflicts between Nso and her neighbors and amongst the neighboring polities in the realm.

Keywords: colonial rule, frontiers, peaceful coexistence, colonial boundaries, frontier conflicts, paramountcy, fendom, Nso realm, frontier zones.

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INTRODUCTION

Nso Paramount Fendom was one of the largest fendom¹ in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon¹. Through voluntary and involuntary trusteeship, Nso Fendom evolved into a composite paramountcy in which unity in diversity was ensured partly by the nature of its frontiers. The Fendom before the era of colonial rule had woven well defined frontiers with her neighbors. This was also true amongst the polities that constituted the paramountcy. These frontiers were designed to enable peaceful coexistence. In other words, boundaries in Nso realm were points where people met and not where they were separated. As convergent zones, frontiers facilitated mutual coexistence in the paramountcy as each polity was allowed to retain her boundaries. This was equally the case between Nso and her neighbors.

There was the shift of the importance of frontiers as zones of peaceful coexistence from 1906 to 1961, when the paramountcy was subjected to colonial domination. This shift was brought about by the destabilizing effects of colonial boundaries. Colonial frontiers were arbitrary and were not fashioned to uphold the values of peaceful solidarity. Under colonial dispensation, frontier zones ceased to play the important role of facilitating inter-ethnic as well as intra-polity solidarity and became zones of ceaseless confrontations.

PRECOLONIAL FRONTIERS

There were essentially three types of boundaries in Nso Paramount Fendom before the era of European colonial influence. These boundaries which were coherently organized included the Fendom's frontiers under the control of the paramount Fon of Nso, polity boundaries under the custody of the various Fendoms that made up the Nso paramountcy and the field boundaries under the custody of the clans or lineage heads. These boundaries were designed to ensure peaceful coexistence between Nso and her neighbors as well as amongst the various fendom² and clans found in the Nso realm².

The boundaries in Nso before the subjugation of the fendom to European colonial influence were defined in terms of neighbors with whom the Nso state shared frontiers. Boundaries were perceived of in terms of a region or a

¹ I am grateful to Prof. V.G.Fanso for his comments on an earlier draft of this article.

² Interview with Wan Ngacho Tatah, 79 years, Village Elder, Kikaikelaki, 20 June 2009.

narrow zone fronting her neighbors. That is, the boundary was where people converged with neighboring people on the land, where they shared the earth and not where they divided it. As such, boundaries were convergent points with diplomatic implications. For examples, the market villages of Lips, Kiyungndzen and Din on the Nso – Bum, Nso – Bamoum frontier enclaves transformed the political divisions between Nso and these states into diplomatic boundaries.³

There was the ritual or religious dimension of land which had some implications for boundaries. The entire Nso territory was the abode of God together with the spirits of the past kings and ancestors who continue to reside in and exercise a protective control over the land.⁴ Based on this religious conception, such land could never be divided into fragments; it was the integral part of the entire religious and ritual framework of the Nso realm. It was this religious implication of land that rendered boundaries sacrosanct in the Nso *Fondom*.⁵ Moreover, ritual sites along the frontiers contributed to enhancing cordial relations between Nso and her neighbors as well as amongst various groups that constituted the Nso state. For instance, the conflicting relations between Nso and Wiya was brought to an end through two rituals which were performed on their frontiers. During the performance of these rituals, the two *fons* took a vow in these words: “no man from our side may pass here to the other side with war in his heart.” Thus when Nso later attacked the Wimboum, they did not attack the Wiya because of these rites. This was an indication that rituals were used to uphold all peaceful transactions across the Nso-Wiya frontiers.⁶

The boundary was very permeable in order to allow peaceful absorption of outside groups when the situation arose.⁷ An allowance was made for frontier population to legitimately spill over, overlap, or even to remove themselves from their own into their neighbors’ territory without causing frontier conflicts. The spilt over population already settled was neither molested nor forced back to their original territory even when political relations between groups deteriorated⁸. This was the case of groups like Ntem, Ntumbo and Nsob that took refuge in Nso territory because their homeland was vulnerable to fulbe raids. That is, they fled to Nso for protection against Fulbe raids. In Nso, they maintained their ethnic identities while accepting the suzerainty of the paramount *Fon* of Nso.⁹

The second category of boundaries was the internal boundaries which were of two types namely, those of *Fondoms* that made up the Nso realm and those of fields in each *fondom*. The Nso state held together in one territory polities that had accepted her citizenship through voluntary and involuntary trusteeship. Their overlord authority was in Kimbo, the capital of the Nso state. These polities retained their linguistic and cultural differences. While patterned to retain the identity of the various polities that made up the Nso state, the boundaries were permeable enough to enable Nso citizens to communion with each other¹⁰.

Each of the polities performed annual rites at its frontiers. The *Fon* of Nso proper, for example, usually made an annual procession tour along the frontiers of Nso proper in which sacrifices were performed at ritual sites on the border. This procession started in Mbonso and continued to the Northeast round Nso proper, then back to Mbonso where it ended. During this procession tour along the borders, the *fon* renewed his mutual rights and duties with frontier landlords in whose fields the ritual sites were located. It was equally an occasion for the *fon* to communion with his population on the border zone¹¹. In this light, activities along the frontiers transformed them into vital factors of cohesion in Nso *Fondom*. The rites performed by the *Fons* of Nkar and Ndzeen on their frontiers further indicated the pertinent role of boundaries as a factor of peaceful coexistence in Nso *Fondom*. The *Fons* of Nkar and Ndzeen converged at Quenjang to perform their boundary ritual, during which they sat at each other’s throne at their common boundary to indicate their solidarity. The *Fon* of Nkar equally converged with the *Fon* of Ngoran at Lake Ber where each stood on his own side of

³ V.G.Fanso, “Traditional and Colonial Boundaries: Concepts, Conflicts and Inter-Ethnic Relations,” p.13.

⁴ E. M.Chilver, “Thaumaturgy in Contemporary Traditional Religion: The Case of Nso in Mid-Century,” in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XX(3), 1990, P.242.; This was in line with the conclusion of Mbiti who holds that religion was embedded in every aspects of African life. See J.S.Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Oxford, Heinemann, 1990.

⁵ Fanso, “Traditional and Colonial Boundaries”p.11.

⁶ M.D.W.Jeffreys, *The Wiya Tribe*, Johannesburg, Witwaterstand University Press, 1963,p.26.

⁷ The permeability of boundaries was a product of the religious conceptions in Nso *fondom*. They believed in a formless God who usually took the form of a stranger to visit and test people who were hostile to aliens. See A.B.Bartelt for the details on the religious view of the Nso world, “Healers and Witches in Oku: An Occult System of Knowledge in North West Cameroon,” Ph.D Thesis in Philosophy, University of Southern California, 2006.

⁸ Fanso, “Traditional and Colonial Boundaries,”p.6.

⁹ Jeffreys, *The Wiya Tribe*, pp.27-36.

¹⁰ Interview with Fon Mfordap II, 82 years, Fon of Kiluun, Kiluun, 29th May 2016.

¹¹ L.J.Banadzem, “Le Royaume Nso’: De L’Installation a Kimbo Jusqu’a Ngga Bifon I, Fonctionnement Politique et Aspects Ideologiques 1780-1947”, These de Doctorat de Troisieme Cycle en Histoire, Universite de Paris I, pantheon Sorbonne, 1986, pp. 195-196.

the lake to perform the ritual.¹² Such frontier rituals promoted harmony amongst the polities that made up the Nso paramountcy. It was for this reason that we come to the conclusion that boundaries were a factor of solidarity in Nso before the advent of colonial rule.

Furthermore, boundaries before the beginning of colonial influence permitted the various polities in the *fondom* to maintain their identities as adherence to the paramountcy did not imply uniformity.¹³ Each *fondom* in the realm had her sacred days which were respected only within the limits of its frontiers. Economic, political and social life in the *fondom* could not in this way be paralyzed because of the respect of sacred days. The implication of this was that the principle of unity in diversity was allowed to prevail within the boundaries of the paramountcy. Thus before it was subjugated to colonial rule in 1906, the Nso state stretched far from its core, taking into account the linguistic, social and political differences that existed within its boundaries. The overlord ruler in Kimbo, the capital of the realm, exercised his authority through mutual respect and collaboration with the *fons* of polities that constituted the Nso dominion.¹⁴ Relations based on mutual respect and collaboration in Nso *fondom* could not have been cultivated in the absence of well-defined frontiers. It was in this way that boundaries were a source of harmony in the Nso paramountcy. The experience of the Nso state was in contrast to that of the Benin state, in its heyday, according to Fanso, “stretched far beyond its solid core, taking little account of the linguistic and cultural divides.”¹⁵

The last category of boundaries in Nso *fondom* before the start of colonial domination were field boundaries under the custody of landlords, who were generally lineage or clan heads. These boundaries were found within the domains of polities that made up the Nso state. These were frontiers in term of land usage, made up of specific lines indicating limits of lineage or clan hunting and farming areas. Within these boundaries, land was essentially communal with absolute inalienability. Land in each field constituted the corporate property of the clan or lineage as the case might be and as such, served the important economic, social and political purposes of group solidarity.¹⁶ Well defined field boundaries helped to indicate the limits of clans or lineage land thereby enabling their peaceful cohabitation. In this way, field boundaries were a factor of harmony in Nso *Fondom* before the advent of colonial domination.

Above all, frontiers in precolonial Nso paramountcy were vital tools in the promotion of military and social security. There was a network of spies who lived near the boundaries, each occupied with observing and sending warnings to the nearest *Tamanjong* of any military threat to the *fondom*. The threat was immediately reported to Kimbo; for deliberation by the central government. It was after this deliberation that the military mechanism of the realm was activated to expel the threat. It was through the activities of spies along the frontiers of the Nso territory that threats of raiders as well as invasions were kept at bay.¹⁷ This was what partly rendered the realm attractive to fugitive clans and groups that were in need of a safe haven. This was the case of fugitive groups like Ntem, Ntumbo, and Nsob that wanted to evade Fulbe aggression on their territory. Others like Nkar endorsed the overlordship of the paramount *Fon* of Nso as their effort to defend their territory was futile. Effective defense of Nso borders thus rendered the territory acceptable to fugitive groups that were in quest of security. It was for this reason that frontiers in Nso before colonial conquest were a factor of integration.

In the domain of social security, frontiers were used to control the spread of contagious diseases in the *fondom*. Lineage heads were empowered to confine travelers within their boundaries when there was an outbreak of a contagious disease in their community. Thanks to the control of the spread of contagious diseases along the frontiers, the population was protected. The protection of the population from contagious diseases partly led to sedentary life in Nso territory as people did not have to migrate in order to avoid infectious diseases.¹⁸ Lastly, frontiers in Nso dominion before the beginning of colonial influence were organized to permit the development of a coherent ownership and access to land. Boundaries were based on eccentric relations. Lineage or clan boundaries were within the frontiers of communities that made up the Nso realm. While those of these polities were within the frontiers of Nso territory. The inviolability of these

¹² Interview with Laurence Yarayan, 96 years, Family Elder, Nkar, 27th May 2016.

¹³ Nfi pointed out that some of the polities were allowed to retain their languages, matrimonial practices as well as different political institutions. See J. Nfi, “Intercommunity Relations and the Politics of Identity in Nso Chiefdom”, Bamenda Grassfields, Cameroon, in *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development*, Vol.4(4),2014.

¹⁴ E.M.Chilver et al, “From Tribute to Tax in a Tikar Chiefdom”, in *Africa*, XXX, No.1, 1960, p.6.

¹⁵ Fanso, “Traditional and Colonial Boundaries,” p.8.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.10.

¹⁷ Briges, Re-Assessment Report on Bansa District, 1934, pp.37-52.; Also see V.G.Fanso et al, “Nso Military Organisation and Warfare in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuuries”, in I. Fowler and D. Zeitlyn, (ed.), *African Crossroads: Intersection between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*, Berghahn Books, Oxford, 1996.

¹⁸ Bridges, Bansa District, pp.37-52.

borders was safeguarded by religious conceptions associated with land and above all by the central authorities in Kimbo, the capital of the paramountcy. Boundaries in this way ensured harmonious coexistence in Nso paramountcy.

COLONIAL BOUNDARIES

The British, in spite of their claim to adhere to indigenous laws and customs, supplanted indigenous boundaries in Nso paramountcy with colonial ones. These colonial frontiers unlike indigenous frontiers were impermeable with the tendency to separate people and inherently disrupt the cordial relations that were upheld by indigenous boundaries.¹⁹ Colonial boundaries in Nso *Fondom* were of different categories with each fashioned to meet required colonial exigencies. The first of these was the international boundary designed to separate the Aglo-French frontier, inter-ethnic boundaries, designed to separate Nso *Fondom* from neighboring ethnic groups, village boundaries designed to separate various villages in order to facilitate the collection of taxation within the Nso state and the grazing boundaries fashioned to divide pastoral land from farming land. Grazing boundaries were meant to secure land for pastoral activities from the indigenous people.

The defeat and exit of Germany from Kamerun was followed by the partition of the territory by an international boundary into the British and French spheres, which was recognized by the League of Nations in 1919. This was followed by the conversion of the territory into a mandated territory during the Versailles Peace Settlement. The Nso *Fondom* was one of the territories along the Anglo-French frontier that was affected by the partition. The initial partition was followed by the delimitation of the Anglo-French frontier in 1926 in which River Bui was made part of the frontier. During the delimitation exercise, Fumban and Dschang which were at the outset under the British were handed over to the French. The result was that a portion of Mbokam which was the hunting reserve of the paramount *fon* of Nso was cut off from the Nso realm. As part of the exercise, the population of Nso and Bamum was assembled by the British and the French to declare their newly created boundary.²⁰ This was an indication that the locals were not involved in the delimitation exercise. They were merely informed of the boundary that was imposed on them by the British and the French. It was therefore not a surprise that the information did not mean anything to the indigenous people as they assumed that it was a boundary separating only the colonial authorities.²¹ It did not take long for the disruptive nature of the colonial frontier to emerge as it soon became a barrier to the flow of trade following the imposition of custom duties. It equally became a source of discord between Nso and Bamum as Mbokam became a disputed territory in 1933.²² All these underline the shifting significance of boundaries from factors of integration to factors of disintegration as a result of colonial influence. In other words, the imposed Anglo-French frontier along Nso-Bamum boundary enclave disrupted the harmony that existed between the two groups as revealed by the flow of trade before the introduction of the new international boundary but equally created a dispute for the two groups where none had existed before.

The British went further to impose boundaries on indigenous communities under the Inter-Tribal Boundary Settlement Ordinance and by administrative decisions.²³ It was this ordinance that empowered Jeffreys to carry out the demarcation of ethnic groups in the Bamenda Grassfields by means of stone camps. In 1934, Jeffreys imposed a boundary between Nso and Bamessi. Before his boundary, the indigenous boundary which the British failed to recognize was permeable enough to have ensured the “peaceful penetration of Nso farmers into Bamessi territory.” Jeffreys’s boundary was a misconstrued solution to a conflict that originated over the ownership of a grove of raffia palms between Nso and Bamessi inhabitants.²⁴

Before the imposition of Nso-Bamessi boundary, Jeffreys had forced an inter-village boundary between Oku and Mbesenaku in 1923. This was contested by Oku elements thereby testifying the shift of frontiers under colonial rule from factors of harmony to factors of discord. Other inter-village boundaries like Nso-Nseh, Nso-Kwanso which were basically taxation boundaries were erected with the former contributing to a boundary dispute between Nso and Nseh. Therefore, even colonial taxation boundaries were a source of discord in the Nso realm.²⁵ This again indicates the shift of the significance of boundaries from vectors of harmony to vectors of discord under colonial influence.

¹⁹ V.G.Fanso, “Transfrontier Relations and Resistance to Cameroun-Nigeria Colonial Boundaries 1916-1945,” Ph.D Thesis in History, University of Yaounde, 1982, p.60.

²⁰ PAB,NW/QF/A.1928/1, File No. 325, Subject:Boundary Dispute between Neighbouring Villages,p.4.

²¹ Fanso, “Traditional and Colonial Boundaries,”p.36.

²² Bridges, Bansa District, p.36; PAB, NWQF/a.1928/1, File No.325, Boundary Dispute between Neighbouring Villages, p.33.

²³ PAB,NW/QF/a.1939/1, Intercommunity Boundary Ordinance, p.1.

²⁴ PAB,NW/PC/b.1934/1, Affray between Nso and Bamessi, p.7-13.

²⁵ PAB,NW/QF/a.1974/1, Land Boundary Matters, General Matters, p.356.

Another aspect of the colonial boundary with the same significant shift of functions was the grazing boundary. The demarcation of grazing boundaries began in 1941 by Jeffreys in Nso Native Authority Area. It became one of the main activities of the Cattle Control Staff under V.M. Walters; following the enactment of the Grazing Rules in 1947. Grazing boundaries were erected to ensure the success of the Fulani Welfare Scheme. Beside these, Jeffreys holds that the object of the grazing boundaries was to eliminate the uncertainty in actions in Native Authority Courts for the damages to crops by Fulani cattle. That is, without a boundary, it was difficult to decide who was guilty in a land dispute between a pastoralist and a farmer. In most cases, a fallowed farming land was demarcated as grazing land, which transformed grazing boundaries into steady sources of disputes. This retarded the integration of the Fulani pastoralists into the indigenous community.²⁶ Grazing boundaries thus indicate a shift in the importance of boundaries in Nso *Fondom* from a source of harmony to a source of disintegration.

MANIFESTATION OF THE SHIFT

The shift in the significance of frontiers under colonial rule was manifested by conflicts generated by the arbitrary and destabilizing effects of colonial frontiers. Most of the land disputes in the Nso *Fondom* were a direct consequence of the boundary by Jeffreys, the Divisional Officer of Bamenda Division. He was responsible for the carving out of colonial boundaries in Nso *Fondom*. The boundaries he established led to inter-ethnic land disputes in the paramouncy. That is, the peaceful co-existence which the indigenous frontiers between various polities were designed to uphold was brought to an end. Following the setting up of colonial boundaries, a shift was made in the role of frontiers in Nso from zones of social, economic and diplomatic cohabitation to zones of confrontations.

This was the case in the Nso-Bamessi, Mbesenaku-Oku frontier zones amongst others where the establishment of colonial boundaries led to the shifts in the relevance of frontiers from zones of peaceful coexistence to zones of conflict. As far as Nso-Bamessi frontier enclave was concerned, the degeneration of cordial relations along this zone started with the imposition of a colonial boundary between the two communities by Jeffrey. Before Jeffreys' invention of the Nso – Bamessi boundary, the Nso claimed that their boundary was along the stream known in Nso as “Bam-Nka” extending to a rock called “Ngwobietu”, then to a tree called “Bonejueke” and to another tree called “Toh” in Bamessi.²⁷

Regulated by these indigenous boundary marks, the relationship between Nso and Bamessi was cordial right into the German colonial period. This was equally true of relations between Bamessi and Bamum. In order to avoid German colonial exigencies, some Nso farmers from Waikovi resettled at Bamyam within Nso territory from where they farmed across the Ijam or Masombo stream in Bamessi territory. This peaceful resettlement of Nso farmers was not resented by Bamessi farmers. In fact, Nso, Bamessi and Bamum indigenes were farming commonly in the locality without land or boundary conflict. This cohabitation testified the conviviality that prevailed along indigenous boundaries. Fanso put forward other activities like marriages, cultural and social festivals, cultural associations, cultural institutions as well as the locals and ethnic markets as undertakings that encouraged close contacts between neighbouring people.²⁸

The hostility between Nso and Bamessi in 1934 did not emanate as a boundary dispute, but as a dispute over the ownership of a certain grove of raffia palms. Prior to the dispute, there was no boundary problem between Nso and Bamessi.²⁹ Due to the misconception of the nature of the relations that prevailed in this farming community under the regulation of indigenous law, the British introduced an inter-ethnic boundary in the locality after the 1934 affray. This to them was a solution to the affray in spite of the fact that the scuffle was generated by dispute over ownership of a raffia grove. This was an arbitrary boundary as it did not respect the indigenous boundary that was in place prior to 1934. As the British administration was concerned, the locality was without a boundary. The administration later imposed a grazing boundary in the same locality during the 1940s. The grazing boundary followed neither the indigenous boundary nor the 1943 boundary. The institution of a multiplicity of boundaries along the Nso-Bamessi border zone resulted in the shift from the cordiality that existed in precolonial times to conflict between the two ethnic groups.³⁰

Another border zone in Nso where there was a shift from mutual friendly relations to mutual distrust as a result of the demarcation of a colonial boundary by the British was the Ichim Oku-Mbesinaku enclave. Prior to the imposition of the colonial boundary, Mbesinaku was an integral subordinate polity in Oku *Fondom*. The British administration

²⁶ PAB, NW/QG/a.1964/2, File No. DBA3154, Farmer/Grazier Issues in the N.W.P., P.30.; PAB,NW/Fa.1937/1, File No. B.14140A.,Inspection Notes,p.30.

²⁷ PAB, NW/PC/b.1934/1, Affray between Nso and Bamessi, p.7-13.

²⁸ V.G.Fanso, “Inter-group Relations and Cameroon Reunification: A Prototype of African Frontier Problems”, in J.L.Dongmo (ed.), *Annals of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences*, University of Yaounde, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1985. P.38.

²⁹ PAB, NW/PC/b.1934/1, Affray between Bansa and Bamessi,p.7.

³⁰ PAB, NW/QF/a.1974/1, Land Boundary Matters, p.317.

through the services of Jeffreys transformed this warm relationship in 1923 to a conflictual one following the imposition of an arbitrary boundary. The boundary was rejected by the Oku but endorsed by the Mbesinaku elements, who saw it as a sign of their recognition as a separate people by the British. In other words, the Jeffreys' boundary for the Mbesinaku people gave them a territory while to the Oku it was a threat to their territorial integrity. Mbesinaku people manifested their acceptance of their new found independence through the non-respect of Oku sacred days in the locality. The Jeffreys boundary therefore led to a shift in the importance of boundary from a factor of peaceful cohabitation to a factor of protracted conflict between Oku and Mbesinaku.³¹

There was equally a shift in the function of the Nseh-Mbiyeh frontier from a vector of peaceful coexistence to that of conflict. This shift was brought about by the introduction of the British colonial boundary. Nseh was a polity that belonged to the Nso realm while Mbiyeh was of the Wimbun. The relations between Nso and Wimbun polities were punctuated by wars. In spite of the wars, Nso and Wiya (Wiya was an influential Wimbun clan before the German rule in the region), established peaceful relations through boundary treaties. This was realized through boundary rituals along their common border during which their rulers vowed to maintain peaceful coexistence.³²

It was due to this peaceful undertaking that when Nso later attacked the other Wimbun clans, Wiya was not attacked.³³ This accord was enforced when the British administration decided to impose a boundary between Nso and Wimbun. It was during this exercise that Jeffreys carved a boundary between Nseh and Mbiyeh. He later on in the 1940s imposed a grazing boundary when the carving out of grazing areas was in vogue. Unlike the Oku-Mbesinaku situation where relations were transformed into immediate conflict, this case resulted to a latent conflict between the two communities. The latency of this conflict was brought to an end when the enclave was exploited for grazing activities. (it should be noted that in 1964, Nseh was part of the Nso Council area under Kimbo while Mbiyeh was a local council area under Nkambe local government area.)

It was under these circumstances that Nseh-Mbiyeh frontier zone ceased to act as an area of peaceful coexistence. The Jeffreys boundaries in the locality had laid the foundation for multi-dimensional conflict between Nso and Wimbun on the one hand and between the divisional authorities of the then Nso and Nkambe divisions on the other hand. The issue at stake here was to which council area the cattle owner was to pay his cattle tax. This developed into an inter-divisional boundary conflict. It also took the dimension of an inter-ethnic boundary conflict as Nso and Wimbun people competed to ensure the territorial integrity of their ancestral lands. At the core of the problem was the difficulty of identifying which of Jeffreys demarcation was a grazing boundary and which an inter-ethnic boundary.³⁴ Thus colonial boundaries in this locality were a source of confusion, which changed this frontier from a zone of peaceful coexistence into a zone of confrontation.

CONCLUSION

Colonial boundaries which were introduced in Nso paramountcy changed the character of frontier zones from areas of peaceful coexistence to areas of confrontation. This shift in the significance of boundaries was necessitated by the inherent disruptive nature of colonial boundaries. Colonial boundaries were designed to serve colonial interests and as such, tended to ignore the existence of indigenous boundaries in Nso paramount *Fondom*. These boundaries were conceived and carved out without involving the local population and with little considering for local realities. This was what accounted for their arbitrary nature. It was their arbitrary character that brought about the shift in the importance of frontiers as zones of inter-ethnic harmony and inter-communal solidarity to conflict zones. This shift was manifested by various frontier disputes in Nso territory during colonial domination. These conflicts were bequeathed to the post-colonial administration in 1961. A satisfactory comprehension and solution to these conflicts cannot therefore be possible without revisiting the precolonial perception of boundaries in the paramountcy.

³¹ Ibid.p.356.

³² Jeffreys, *The Wiya Tribe*,p.26.

³³ Ibid.p.27.

³⁴ PAB, NW/Qg/a.1964/2, Farmer/Grazier Issues in the NWP., PP.410-411.; PAB, NW/QF/a.1974/1, Land-Boundary Matters, p.355.

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