

Anglo-French Boundary Commission and the British Military expedition Against Foday Kaba and His Allied 1891-1898

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore how the warfare of Kaba and Foday Sillah led to demarcation of boundary between the British and the French. The continuous war of Kaba required an official mapping out of the boundary that would determine the legitimate sphere of influence of French and British for peace and stability in the entire South Bank of the Gambia. It also reveals the determination of British administration in setting up of the military expeditionary force to exterminate the strategic political and military entrenchment of Foday Kaba in the area.

Keywords : Anglo-French, Boundary Commissions, Territory, expeditionary

Introduction

Anglo-French Boundary Commissions and the First British Expedition against Foday Kaba

In 1891 the Anglo-French Boundary commission supposed to commence the delimitation of the boundary on the south bank. Foday Kaba threatened to interfere whenever the commissions attempted to erase his country. During this period Kaba territory stretched from part of Foni in the present day south of Bintang Creek as far as part of Casamance Foni in the Southern Senegalese region of Casamance. The other part of his territory

included part of eastern Kiang and western Jarra, and another territory comprising of part of eastern Jarra. Therefore, the need for the warship to anchor off could have a good effect. In addition, the men on the ground would serve as an escort for the commission.¹

When the information reached the British that Foday Kaba and the French entered into treaty, the British thought that the disturbances in the South Bank were over. However, his re-appearance in Kansallah

marked the re-opening of trouble in Foni. It was thereafter that the British realized that Kaba signed a treaty with the French, and for the British Kaba was using that as a diplomatic tactic to justify his claim in Foni.² When the British realized his elusive tactics, preparations were made by the gunboats at Kansallah to avert any interference. As the natives and British hatred for Kaba increased the British deemed it prudent to invite Kaba's main

¹ CSO1/118, C H Harley, Acting administrator to secretary of state for colonies, 21st 1891 (Archive of the Gambia)

² Ibid

warrior to explain the purpose of the presence of their warriors, and to discuss the situation with the acting administrator. Franzwoi affirmed that Kaba had no intention to attack the expedition.³ Consequently this enabled the Boundary commissions to complete their work in the troublesome country occupied by Foday Kaba. When Mr. Carter, the acting British administrator left, he was succeeded by Llewellyn, who seemed very stringent on Kaba. He was even determined to convince the British government to give directives and military support to embark on thorough campaign to exterminate Kaba's entrenchment in the South Bank region. It was also re-affirmed to the home government that Kaba did not even have hereditary right over the places he claimed, as reported by Llewellyn

I have no doubt that Foday
Cabba will have someplausible
cunning service of this sort for his action,
but I beg your lordship will now consider
that the ime has arrived when this wondering
robber whohas no hereditary right of any of
sort, should be dealt⁴

In 1892 the British planned to attack Kaba, they perceived it prudent to get the cooperation of Musa Molloh who would receive Kaba at the eastern part,

³ bid, Bisset Archer. *The Gambia colony and protectorate, an Official Handbook*(Frank CASS, 1967)PP.84--85

⁴ CSO1/118, Llewellyn to Lord Kuntford, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26th, May, 1891. (Archive of the Gambia)

while the French could watch him in their country. During this period Foday Kaba stayed at "Marige", about three miles from south of Bondali. The expedition led by commander Royle was able to trace Kaba at Mirage. During the course of the attack, the British expeditionary force made every effort to keep Kaba in the town until the daylight. However, Kaba was surprised to see the expedition at Marige, "by the fortune of war, he escaped under cover of the darkness from Marige." As a result of his disappointment, Llewellyn instructed Royle to destroy the stockade towns of Marige and its suburbs. Thereafter, the naval Brigade under Royle marched on Foday Kaba at Marige in a combination of men comprised few sailors under commander Loane, 100 West Indian soldiers under Major Claridge. They landed at Kansallah and proceeded to Sangajour where Franzwoi, the principal warrior of Kaba was based. But he also left before the troops reached Sangajour.⁵ Inside Marige, the British soldiers found correspondence from French in Seahiou. According to Llewellyn it was not indicated in that correspondence that Kaba was not suppose to destroy towns in English ground. They also found cartridges of French manufacture, and the slaves that were freed at Sangajour had been recaptured at a town of Karunu on the French side of the line and returned them immediately.⁶ From Marige, Foday and his warriors went to Medina which is 7 miles south of the Boundary line.

The British continued to explore every mean to capture Foday Kaba and bring the chaos he was causing to an end. They established a new military

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ *Ibid*

camp at Karling. ⁷This was to serve as a mean of checking Kaba against his attempt to retaliate. It would also remain there until it was decided that he was to be attacked. Llewellyn sought the cooperation of the French administration and Musa Molloh in forming a triple military alliance to capture Kaba. He was convinced that the attack on the town of Kartol on the French line could be used to induce the cooperation of the French. ⁸He also perceived the cooperation of Musa Molloh on the basis of his rivalry with Foday Kaba.

When Musa was invited to join the British to crush Kaba, he was delighted. The British did not understand that Musa could be brave enough to face Kaba; he only wanted to use the attack of the British to loot and capture men. This clandestine agenda of manoeuvre by Musa made the British to consider him as an undesirable collaborator as stated by Llewellyn, 'I expected great assistance from Musa Molloh. He wanted the British soldiers to break down the Stockade with cannons and then he could massacre everyone he could catch and loot all the houses and women, such native allies are not desirable.'⁹ However, the French did not allow the British to cross their side to attack Foday Kaba. The French saw their assistance to Kaba as an opportunity in retaliation for the protection given to two French opponents, Sait Marty and Biram Njaay by the British administration in Bathurst. The French therefore helped Foday Kaba in his effort to strengthen his authority in Jola territories. They promised to pay Foday Kaba an annual fee of 5,000 francs. Kaba then agreed to

⁷ Bintou Kolly, interview Bondali village, 11 January 2009.

⁸ CSO23/2

⁹ *Ibid*

recognize French sovereignty In May 1893 the French made Kaba to sign a convention in which French reduced his jurisdiction to Casamance area of Kiang. This made Kaba to lose the Northern part of Kiang to the British in the Gambia.

Consequently the British decided to break their camp and destroyed all the villages on the south of their Boundary line. These villages included Kusambu, Kanfiramba and Sanya Kunda. The villages in the whole of the district between Kansallah and Karling up to Jaror on the east were destroyed. However, Karling, Kantumba and Sanding were not affected since the British considered them loyal friends.¹⁰⁷ As Kaba and his principal men retreated to Medina and Datore north on the French side of Boundary line, Llewellyn considered the expedition completed. This did not mark the end of Kaba's empire. He remained calm within the French line, yet maintained regular contact with Toniataba, in Jarra and part of Kiang within the British jurisdiction. In protest to French alliance to Kaba, Llewellyn instigated the chiefs in Western Jarra and Eastern Kiang to reject the authority of Kaba.

Anglo-French Politics in the South Bank

Following the French disapproval to allow the British to cross their line of the Boundary to attack Kaba, Llewellyn wrote formerly, requesting the French Governor in Senegal to outline steps to be taken to prevent Kaba from causing trouble in their protectorate. Consequently the Governor of Senegal arrived in Banjul on the 8th January, 1892 to meet Llewellyn to discuss issues on Foday Kaba's truculence and the possible steps to prevent him from crossing into their side to carry his marauding activities.

However, it could be understood that when the

Boundary commissions completed the delimitation of the boundary between the Gambia and Senegal, large portion of Sillah`s sphere of influence was given to French, and part of Northern Kombo was surrendered to the British.¹⁰⁹ As a result, this did not only deprive Sillah from administering the large portion of territory, but lost a huge amount of income that accrued from the tributes. He therefore demonstrated his grievance on the innocent Jola Traders from the French side that used to be under his rule, and who passed through his country to trade in Bathurst were stopped, captured and sold as slaves as stated in the correspondence to Sierra Leone by Llewellyn: “Complains that Fodi Silah who is the chief within our protectorate, seized, robbed, sold as, i.e. a party of thirteen Jolahs who reside in Casamance and who were returning home after working in Bathurst.”¹¹⁰

The French traced these prolong malpractices of Sillah to the negligence of the British administration. The French Governor of Senegal therefore proposed the idea of inter-exchange of territory which would give Foday Kaba and the French a footing on the considerable strip of land on the South Bank of Bintang Creek, and the British would now handover their right over the portion of Foday Sillah`s country which is now outside the line of “Allahi River”. However, Llewellyn considered the proposal impossible and turned the offer down. He further appealed the Senegalese Governor to allow him to accompany to him Seahiou to witness his interview with Kaba but the Governor did not allow him. The British also made it clear to the French that they kept Sait Mattie, whom they could make a chief in Badibu to commit raid in French side. So their apathy in forming a joint alliance with British to end Kaba`s

marauding activities in Foni could not be justified. However, the British failure to extradite Sait Mattie to French in Senegal was another underlying factor for French failure to cooperate with British to end Kaba`s marauding in Foni.¹⁰ The British further clarified their stance on the part of Foday Sillah. According to Llewellyn the said trouble caused by Sillah had occurred prior to the delimitation of the Boundary.

Consequently, it was recommended that the French Governor should meet Kaba, warn him not to cross anywhere into the British protectorate, and if he cross to make disturbance the French should send a strong force against him.¹¹ Thereafter, the British Government decided to hoist their flags in all the frontier villages, and arranged for the customs for the future Government of the protectorate.

In response to the outcome of the meeting the French elusively show their commitment in the form of deploying guards on the frontier at Bajakunda just above Sanding on the Bintang. They posted other guards at Makuda near the Boundary pillars on the Allahi River which passed through a country claimed by Foday Sillah. The British however were not convinced; they considered the move as a mere camouflage to watch Foday Sillah instead of Kaba.¹² The British then had deemed the need to deploy the forces along the international frontier, along the South of the Gambia. It was obvious that Foday Kaba did not commit any raid for four years. However he kept on regular contact with Toniaataba. He sent and supplied ammunition. Therefore he was even

¹⁰ CSO1/118, 27th, December, 1891.

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

accused of masterminding the attack on the traders at Toniataba because all the spoil of traders on the river Gambia had been sent to him at Medina and Datore.¹³ It was further confirmed that some of his principal warriors like Buba Mata, Lamin Saide, Kabu Mansa, Yowsiri and Ousman Touray kept regular contact with him.¹³ Anytime the British attacked the town of Toniataba, these warriors would escape and take refuge at Datore and Medina.

The expedition to Tonataba

Following the defeat and the escape of Foday Kaba at Marige from the British expeditionary Force, the British Administrator summoned all the chiefs of Western Jarra and Eastern Kiang to a meeting held at Tendaba. However, all the chiefs responded except the chief of Toniataba, Sulayman Suntu. In that meeting all the chiefs expressed their predicament and tiredness of Foday Kaba.¹⁴ They were ready to recognize and accept the British government. After this meeting a party of dozen of men of West India Regiment led by major Malden, was sent to summon Sulayman Suntu to appear before the administrator. Toniataba being a stockade Town, the expedition found all the gates of the stockade closed. When Major Malden attempted to break one of the wooden gates of the stockade, a number of muskets was projected within two or three yards of Major Malden's back. Before he could be aware of anything, Lance-corporal W.J Gordon shouted, threw himself between the muskets and the officer. Unfortunately Gordon was wounded in his lungs. The party then withdrew from Toniataba.

A strong measure was to be applied against

Sulayman Suntu. Accordingly, another operation was organized to punish the people of Toniataba under the defiant chief, Sulayman Suntu. This expedition comprised a contingent of Her Majesty's Ship, Alecto and Shallow and the First West India Regiment. This time the town of Toniataba was attacked and destroyed., Kaba's allied; Sulayman Suntu was assassinated during course of the attack. Thereafter, the district was divided into two administrative districts, and the chiefs deposed by Foday Kaba eight years ago were reinstated to take charge of the area. Subsequently the chiefs in Eastern Kiang and Western Jarra signed treaties accepting the British Sovereignty "whereby they agreed to demand only such customs, and duties as the administrator might fix, to deliver up criminals and repel invasion.

3.5 Conclusion

In this situation we can infer that the British stringent attitude towards Foday Kaba through military attacks demonstrates that the war was a threat to their commercial interest in the South Bank. The British effort to solicit the co-operation of the French and Musa Molloh to stop Kaba's onslaught failed because Sillah was in the British site of the boundary causing trouble on French natives from Casamance. Thereafter the British had to mobilize the chiefs not to recognize the authority of Foday Kaba in the South Bank.

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¹³ CSO1/118,27th, December, 1891.

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Archives and libraries

In addition to published sources, I have used unpublished materials in two main archives and libraries in the Gambia. These include

The Gambia National Archive, Banjul. The documents are identified with the prefix CSO. They include British records from nineteenth and twentieth century.