

NTARE SCHOOL
HISTORY FOR WEST AFRICA
S4 A, C and D

THE CAREER AND IMPORTANCE OF SAMOURE TOURE AND THE MANDIKA EMPIRE

Samoure Toure was born in 1830 in a small Mandika peasant family near Kankan. His father was a Soninke and he practiced the traditional religion.

He was not a Moslem Jihadist or reformist like Uthman Dan Fodio, Al hajji Umar and Ahamad Seko.

As a youth he was active in the Dula trading groups which made him well known and he travelled widely in areas between Sierra Leona, upper Volta, Niger.

He travelled far and wide in the trading of gold, slaves, cola nuts, cattle, firearms etc.

This trade brought Samoure Toure near to the influence of great Muslims and reformists and later came too close to Islamic faith especially on local issues thus able to build the Mandika Empire.

In 1853 when his mother was captured by the Sere Bourley King of Serer, he abandoned trade and did all he could to have his mother released. That is why he became a prominent soldier purposely to secure release of his mother from captivity. After acquiring skill in the army he left forces/army in 1857 and built his state between 1857 and 1867 by winning support of traditionalist, clansmen and Moslem traders which he used in the building of the Mandika Empire.

The strategies Samoure Toure used to build the Mandinka Empire

- He established a strong standing army that he used to defend, protect and expand the Mandika
- He introduced a strong espionage network.
- He established a home of Muslims/state through conquests purposely to spread Islam.
- He had a well-equipped army with guns, ammunitions hence able to conquer great areas.
- He built many mosques and encouraged the rule of Sharia law.
- He introduced a very strong and efficient administration in the empire when he enforced the Arabic culture.
- For effective administration he set up his capital at Bisandugu.
- He acquired the title of Al-Mammi meaning the political and religious leader of Muslims and promoted unity hence effective administration

- He developed trade in the Mandika Empire where he controlled the gold producing areas of Bure and collected tributes.
- He charged customs and the merchant class loved him because of his shrewdness character.
- He promoted agriculture and encouraged exports.
- Established Qur'anic schools and made formal education compulsory to all sons of chiefs in mandika.
- However all the above brought him into conflicts with neighbors because he himself was arrogant, rude and could not cooperate with others, that is why the French fought him seriously.
- He was the 1st west African ruler to fight a modern war with current equipment in a well-placed battalion of 3 forms
- Through the Bisandugu treaty he signed, he played the British against the French for so long/ long resistance. He is sometimes called Bonaparte of Africa and he was captured on 29th Sep. 1898 after fighting 15 battles with the French in a period of 7 years but all intended to defend his empire mandika.

The political organization of mandika empire under Samoure Toure

The government of mandika was centralized and was headed by an "Al mami" who was the supreme political, religious and judicial leader of the empire.

- The village was the first level of administration with 20 villages grouped together in a district and there were 162 districts called cantons.
- Each canton/district was under a chief chosen according to mandika custom.
- Districts were grouped into provinces each under a governor usually a relative or a friend of Samoure Toure and each assisted by a chief Moslem scholar/Jurist.
- The political, religious and judicial matters were enforced at village and district levels.
- Samoure Toure used Islam to promote political social unity in the empire by destroying shrines, priests, traditionalists and witchdoctors.
- He built mosques and appointed Imams for each village.
- Education was encouraged and each village had a school and teachers with compulsory education to all sons of mandika chiefs/kings.
- The "Sofas" were usually slaves and volunteers from each village of about 300 professional soldiers

- There was a standing army of about 3000 called Sofas.
- A regiment of about 10 people of infantry and cavalry with carrier cops and amour bearers.
- There was a special guard of 500 well trained sofas of different ranks purposely to keep law and order.
- He had a workshop for the manufacture of guns of about 4000 blacksmith producing 200 guns weekly.
- The workshop also was meant to repair the old and faulty gun thus able to last long.

The economic organization

- Samoure Toure collected revenue from trade by foreigners
- Also collected taxes from villages by cultivating up special grounds under Almami (the commander of the faithful)
- Revenue came from personal wealth of Almami
- Also it came from booty goods captured in war and exchanged with Gold, slaves, guns etc.
- Money collected used for running of administration education and buying guns from Arabs and Europeans.

The reasons why samoure Toure was able to resist the French for so long (7 years)

- Samoure Toure's resistance against the French was supported by many, a lot, numerous, wide ranging factors.
- They were political, economic, and religious factors.
- The reasons were essentially centered around Samoure Toure's military and diplomatic skills.
- He was an efficient military organizer/mobilizer because he set up a formidable army and at one point it was 100,000 and of these were 3000 professional sofas.
- He made a strategy that each regiment was composed of cavalry and infantry and carrier corps. These were purposely to transport food and arms as part of supplies.
- Each regiment was placed on a section of the frontiers and was responsible for protecting and expanding the empire.

- In the times of war, provincial levies could raise the fighting force strengthened by about 20,000 armed men hence keeping security law and order in a society.
- Samoure Toure had a special guard of 500 sofas who were well trained and well-armed. They were well equipped with rifles bought from European traders.
- He ensures steady supply of arms by setting up state workshops and these supplemented foreign arms supply. The workshop could produce rifles and gunpowder to equip the forces.
- He had 4000 blacksmith at one time producing about 200 guns a week and this gun workshop depended on Samoure Toure strength a reason why he fought the French for over 5 years (1894 – 98) after he had lost the access to Freetown market.
- Samoure Toure also imported horses and this sustained his cavalry forces in their resistance against foreign forces/ French.
- He waged a modern war by mobilizing all the nationals of Mandika against a common enemy- the French.
- He rendered the French artillery useless when he applied new methods of fighting like avoiding pitched battles and fighting in fortified positions.
- He ensured that small regiments followed the big by retreating into 3 stages, with the 1st being repeated rifles, the second protected and the third ready to conquer/attack.
- He is said to have applied the scorched earth policy which left behind a trail of burnt villages and farms with no local population working for the French.
- The scorched earth policy made food supplies for the French difficult and so lowered their chances.
- He often ambushed/surprised his enemies i.e resorting to the use of guerrilla war tactics.
- He equally appealed to the mandika people to have solidarity/promoted unity, the idea of social equality embodied in principles of Islam as his great ancestor of Mansa Musa.
- Samoure Toure exercised skills of diplomacy i.e he played the British against the French hoping to preserve his independence.
- Samoure Toure exercised skills of good governance of Freetown willing to accept British protection only against the foreign French imperialism.

- In 1886 he signed the Basandugu treaty as a part of his diplomatic man-overs
- He was also quick to repudiate treaties eg after the French capture of Segu (1890). He had even employed his Dula traders to spy on the French.
- He was very rich with gold and ivory which helped him to sustain the war. This was supplemented by having horses of chariots to ensure strategy of food transportation and that of troops in times of war.

Reasons why samoure toure was defeated

The factors of defeat of Samoure Toure were many, diverse, numerous, wide-ranging.

- They were political, social, economic etc
- Factors were internal and external
- Samoure Toure had faced internal opposition eg resistance from the commercial states eg Kong and Sikasso as well as from Merchants classes that had revolted
- The increased sale of Sikasso (1887 – 1888) had been costly i.e he lost men thus weakening his military strength
- The Franco – mandika war was too long i.e it lasted for about 7 years (1891 – 98) and this was very costly causing weariness/fatigue led to untold suffering and left many starving to death.
- The scorched earth policy was destructive i.e it caused food shortages and famine
- Under the French pressure the empire became very mobile and its final location (east) was advantageous i.e cut off valuable sources of supplies a case of firearms, horses and gold
- The French soldiers were disciplined, well-equipped and well-trained hence giving quick defeat to Samoure Toure
- His ammunitions for gun manufacture was not particularly effective. They could produce inferior weapons/riffles which would not match with the superior French troops.
- Economically the French were far ahead of the mandika hence an advantage of wining Samoure Toure’s supporters
- The eventual capture of Sikasso and Bobo Dioulaso (1893) by the French was equally disastrous. It cut off the northern trade routes opening him to the external enemies

- In the eastwards the Asante and British blocked, retreated and attacked. This forced him to vacate Dabakalla as well reducing his strength.
- The French attacked from the southern frontiers on the Ivory Coast. He was later forced to lack support from other African states and so the areas of Sikasso, Kong, Segou, Futa Jalon and Asante.
- The French adopted diplomacy of divide and rule isolated these states and so made the cooperation with Samoure Toure very difficult.
- The French were equally treachous eg they repudiated every treaty they signed even the Bisandagu treaty of 1886 was later abused.
- Even Samoure Toure was also accused of being insensitive to human suffering eg even when the nationals complained of painful wars, he listened not.
- He was let down by British as well as general shifting of the economy leading to standstill.
- Trade equally came to standstill leading to decline in food shortages/acute famine
- Decline in local industries eg of gun manufacture
- Decline in trade particularly slave trade and other forms of trade affecting the general economy
- The French were very determined to finish up mandika empire and this imperialistic factor came to pass when Samoure Toure gave up but later went ahead to arrest him until in 1900 when he died in Gabon where he had been deported.

This symbolically marked the French victory and ended one of the biggest Africa's resistances to European colonialism and occupation.

End of Samoure Toure

Guiding questions

1. (a) Why did the French defeat Samoure Toure after the 7 years? (10 marks)
- (b) How did this war affect the mandika? (15 marks)
2. (a) Describe how Samoure Toure built and consolidated his mandika empire? (15 marks)
- (b) Why was he able to resist the French for so long? (10 marks)

End