

**THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES  
CROSS THE COLONIAL BORDER:  
OPPOSING VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF  
THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF THE JOLA HULUF  
AND AJAMAAT OF THE LOWER CASAMANCE (1886-1909).**

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**Introduction<sup>2</sup>**

The case of the Jola people – also Diola in French transliteration – is an example, among others, of the abuse of the colonial borders. Nowadays the different Jola groups are found in three different states: Gambia (Joola Kombo), Senegal (Joola sub-groups, such as, Jola Karon, Buluf, Foni, Huluf, Kwoatay, etc...) and Guinea-Bissau (Jola Ajamaat). Each of these neighbouring states – whose societies, in pre-colonial times, occupied the same socio-economic space, although not under the same political structure – bears today the legacy of a different colonial reality: the British, the French and the Portuguese.

Like in so many other places in Africa, the Europeans had established their trading posts along the Atlantic coast or on the

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riverbanks, in order to facilitate the transport of merchandise and slaves. Thus, the Portuguese, particularly in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, settled in enclaves located on the Rivers Cacheu (enclave of Cacheu) and Casamance (enclave of Ziguinchor), the British along the Gambia River (enclaves of Bathurst and James Island) and the French, who had settled from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the north of the Gambia River (Dakar, Gorée and Rufisque) and at the mouth of the Senegal River (Saint-Louis), arrived at Casamance in the 1830s (settling in Karabane and Sédhiou), entering in direct competition with the Portuguese authorities of Ziguinchor and Cacheu.

Nevertheless, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – following the abolition of slavery – European presence in the region was restricted to the enclaves mentioned above and none of the colonial powers dominated the inland populations of this coastal region, such as the Jola, Balanta, Mancana or Manjack. Following the Berlin Conference of 1885, the colonial authorities of these three metropolises divided the region in treaties drawn up in European offices, through pacts with some of the local authorities, and by the force of military penetration in the area (see Roche, 1976).

This article presents a concrete case which took place with the Jola Ajamaat and Huluf. We will describe the first events that developed between these Jola groups and the French colonial authorities in an area that, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and from the perspective of the Europeans, had on paper become the border between Casamance/Senegal and Portuguese Guinea to the west, that is, on the boundary with the Atlantic Ocean<sup>3</sup>.

### **The Europeans in the Jola territories of the Lower Casamance**

The first Europeans that arrived at Casamance were the Portuguese, as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to the Portuguese chronicles, we can ascertain how the relations between the Europeans and the

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<sup>3</sup> We will not discuss here if at that time France considered the region as part of Senegal or part of Casamance. (See Tomàs, 1999)

Africans of the land developed over the following centuries (see, for example, Lemos Coelho, 1669, 1684).

The Portuguese founded Ziguinchor in 1645 and established commercial relations with the towns of the region, taking always the southern enclave of Cacheu as their base.

The French arrived at the island of Carabane at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. Jean Baudin was the first trader to settle on the island in 1828. Shortly after, in 1837, the French signed an agreement with the inhabitants of the town of Kanut, on the mainland, as a result of which the colonial authorities were able to settle in Carabane<sup>5</sup>. A year later they crossed the river and, against the orders of the resident Portuguese in Ziguinchor, they settled in Sedhiou, which was to be the main Gallic enclave in the region for many years.

The French administration on the island of Carabane maintained hostile relations with the Jola neighbours for decades:

*Malheureusement cette sécurité (...) ne s'étend pas plus loin que l'île de Carabane. Tous les villages environants sont habités par des noirs de la tribu des Yolas dont la force et la ruse en est la seule religion, et avec qui nous n'avons guère eu de relations que pour les punir d'actes de pillage et de piraterie commis sur nos propriétés.*

(Simon, 1839).

### ***The Portuguese-French dispute of the region***

From the moment that the French settled in Carabane and Sedhiou, it was clear that the Gallic project was based on gaining control of the inland areas of the region. Several authors have studied this lengthy conflict between the French and Portuguese powers in this part of Africa (see Roche, 1976; Pélissier, 1989; and particularly Esteves, 1988), which

<sup>4</sup> From Bathurst, today Banjul. The English were also interested in the region of Casamance but, with the exception of the English traders who crossed the river, the British government never initiated significant military action in this sense (Pélissier, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Bertrand Bocandé (1856) "Carabane et Sédhiou". *Revue Coloniale: extrait des Annales maritimes et coloniales*. 1856. De Juillet à décembre (2<sup>ème</sup> series, T. 16): 398-421.

also severely affected the sub-region focused on in this article. Although the governor of Guinea, Honório Pereira Barreto, had recommended the cession of Ziguinchor to the French as early on as 1857, in exchange for the village of Youtou, in Ajamaat territory (Pélissier *idem*), the tension in the region increased progressively and many towns were forced to take sides in the dispute. In 1865 the French attacked Diembereng, whose inhabitants had sacked a number of ships anchored on their shores. News of the harsh repression of the Jola town of Kwoatay on the Atlantic coast spread throughout the region, causing fear among some of the local authorities in the neighbouring towns. Thus, on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1865, the leaders of the town of Kumbana, in Soungrougrou territory (Jola Foni), requested protection from the Portuguese of Ziguinchor. At the same time, the French signed agreements with several towns in the area, leading to protests from the Portuguese and even the imprisonment of some inhabitants from towns that, like Uonk (in Portuguese territory), had signed an agreement with the French. In spite of the Portuguese denunciations, the French perceive that Portuguese sovereignty was only really exerted on Ziguinchor and, given that the Portuguese did not conduct practically any trade on the Casamance River, they contend that they were free to establish agreements with any of the towns in the region (Roche, 1976).

The tension between the European powers in the region increased progressively in the following decades, and several towns suffered the consequences of this ambition. For example, the town of Sidone, to the east of Ziguinchor, was coveted by both European powers: in 1884, it became a military target and was in the end sacked and set afire (Trincaz, 1981).

In other cases, however, the lack of definition of the border between Portuguese Guinea and Senegal partly restrained the action of the French. For example, in 1877, a French Blanchard trading ship ran aground in the river of Sukujak and the inhabitants of the region, indigenous to Guinea, sacked the ship. Despite the lack of a well-defined border and even of the administration of the town of Sukujak, the French chose not to attack it – as they had done a few years earlier in the neighbouring Diembereng area – and decided to pardon the case in exchange for a fine (Roche, 1976).

Finally, on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1886 – a year after the Berlin Conference, both powers came to an agreement, on paper, as to the delimitation of the borders between Portuguese Guinea and Senegal, in what was called the Convention of 1886<sup>6</sup>. This agreement determined that the border was to be established from the intersection point between 12.40° latitude and 17.30° longitude up to Cabo Roxo at an equal distance from the rivers Cacheu and Casamance (Esteves, 1988). Although on paper the region was divided between these two colonial powers, different missions of delimitation were necessary in the field, often finding, as we will see, that there was deep-rooted opposition among the Jola Ajamaat and Huluf in the area. What were the reasons behind this strong opposition? On the one hand, as in the rest of the continent, the local populations were against the European presence in their land and opposed to invasions on the part of foreign forces. On the other hand, the border imposed by the treaty of 1886 divided a region that was historically united by religious, political and economic ties. The European border cut the Jola Huluf-Ajamaat settlement in half, whose union could be symbolised by the most important towns in the region: Oussouye, which was under French administration, and Kerouhey, under Portuguese administration. As we will see further ahead, it also divided the towns themselves, leaving some parts under Portuguese administration and others under the French.

### **The case of the Jola Huluf and Ajamaat: the arrival of the French army in the kingdom (1903)<sup>7</sup>**

Although the French did not enter the kingdom of the Bubajum Áai or the Huluf – whose capital was Oussouye – until 1903, it is evident that the Jola inhabitants and their governors were keenly aware of their intentions in the island of Carabane, as well as of their military capacity: the town of Kanut, in Esulaalu, no more than 12 kilometres from the

<sup>6</sup> To see the Treaty see Roche (1976) or Esteves (1988).

<sup>7</sup> For an explanation on the history of the kingdom of the Bubajum Áai see Tomàs 2005b, in which the possible relation between the Bubajum Áai and the kingdom of Kasa is explored, as well as a listing – always provisional – of the kings of the Bubajum Áai.

kingdom's capital, Oussouye, suffered a major military attack on the part of the French in 1854, a reprisal to an alleged act of looting that had been committed by the town's Jola on a ship bearing the French flag that was shipwrecked near the town (Simon, 1839).

Despite this episode – and of others in the Diembering region of the Jola Kowatay –, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French did not dare to attack the kingdom of Oussouye and the Jola Huluf and Ajamaat. Towards the end of 1880s or beginning of the 1890s, according to some informants from Oussouye, King Aumussel, predecessor to Sihalebé, had sent envoys to Karabane to negotiate a treaty between the two parties, as some other kingdoms had done with the French. Apparently, Aumussel's successor, Sihalebé, who rose to power during the 1890s, did not agree to the policy of signing treaties and chose not to negotiate with the Europeans under the same conditions as those initially drawn up with Aumussel.

At the same time, the French received complaints from the Wolof, also settled in the territory, about the Jola. Indeed these Wolof informed the French about Jola activity in the region:

*J'ai l'honneur de vous informer que les chefs subalternes des villages de Loudia, Santiaba et Samsam du canton de Carabane viennent de me dire que les Diola Fouloupes les menacent nuit et jour de les attaquer. Les wolof habitant ces villages ont peur. Je mêle ma voix à leurs plaintes, car j'ai entendu dire que les Fouloupes fondent des balles, afin d'être prêts à nous répondre en cas d'attaque.<sup>8</sup>*

The French set about gathering information to evaluate the Jola's military capacity. Oussouye and Oukout, the most populated settlements, with about 4000 inhabitants, could, according to French calculations, summon up to 1200 soldiers, with about 700 or 800 guns. According to a plan prepared by General Mauny, a military campaign with an infantry of 300 men on the French side would not last more than 15 days.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Birama Guèye, Chief of the Karabane Canton, to the Governor of Senegal, 25<sup>th</sup> January 1903. ANS. I3G502.

The French army began the so-called “column of the Floups” (Report n. 165/I3G502: 1903), that is, the penetration of Huluf territory, at the beginning of March 1903<sup>9</sup>. The troops disembarked on the mainland from the steamship Alfred Stwerken, which had arrived coming from Baïla on 26<sup>th</sup> February, and advancing southeast to Saout (Essaout), where they arrived on 8<sup>th</sup> March. The following day, 9<sup>th</sup> March, the French army sent envoys from Essaout to the king of Oussouye, Sihalebé, who refuses to respond. Finally, the French decided to deploy a military action with the objective of conquering the kingdom of Oussouye or the Bubajum Áai.

Moving forward from the coast, they arrived at Loudia, a town located about 15 kilometres from Oussouye. Shortly before their arrival, the local population decided not to face the French invasion and, according to the colonial records, women and children were sent to Eyoun (today Siganar) and livestock was taken to the Portuguese border.

Confronted with no resistance from the Jola at Loudia the French army decided to continue, advancing next on the town of Boukitingo. Upon their arrival, the town had once more been abandoned and they only found an old woman who told them that the inhabitants were waiting for them in the “place des fétiches” to negotiate.

The French remained at Bukitingo overnight and the following day attacked Oukout – also deserted – and Oussouye. In this case, there was a relatively stronger resistance to that encountered at Oukout, Boukitingo or Eloudia, although according to the commander of the detachment which invaded Oussouye, the task was quite an easy one. Most of the population had fled and those that had remained to defend the town died in the combat or were taken prisoner. Final balance, according to the French: no dead on French side, 20 dead and wounded on the Jola side. As a result of this attack Oussouye was left deserted and King Sihalebé and other authorities fled with the population.

The French locked the prisoners in the royal palace – “la case de Sihalebé” –, an act which was considered, according to local tradition, a severe offence. And they had hopes that the Jola would return to the town, acknowledging their military superiority.

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<sup>9</sup> The French transcribe the word Ajamaat as “Diamates” and Huluf as “Floups” or “Felupos”; see Maclaud (1907) and Carreira (1964).

On 14<sup>th</sup> March, the Captain of Maugras sent a concise official telegram to the High Commander:

“Ai occupé Ocoute, Oussouye, centres résistance Floup; faible resistance, pas de perte; Chez Floups vingt tués ou blessés. Administrateur entre, en pourparler avec Sialebé, compte sur une soumissions complète region.”

On first impression and given the almost non-existent resistance they had encountered, the French believed that the submission of this kingdom – the last one to be conquered in the south near the border with Guinea – would be speedy and overall.

### ***The French administration and the local authorities***

After their arrival to Oussouye, the French sought to have talks with the local authorities. Soon they realised that the “Floup nation”, as they designated it, was led by the king and the religious authorities, and that all the neighbouring towns depended on the king of Oussouye.

*Chaque village a un chef obei de tous, reconnaissant la supremacie de celui d'Oussouye et de son chef feticheur. Nous nous trouvons donc a présence d'une organisation réelle dont nous aurons à nous servir.*

(Étude sommaire des Floups: 13G502/1903, March).

In fact, the day before arriving at Oussouye, as we have seen, the old woman from Bukitingo had already announced the importance of the “fetiches” (shrines):

*les indigènes sont groupés sur la place des fetiches où ils vous attendent pour parler.*

In any case, the French, who had occupied Karabane for almost seventy years, where there were also some Jola of traditional religion, were already aware of the importance of the “fetiches” (shrines), as can



be seen in colonial texts of Simon (1839), Bocandé (1856), Bour (1883), Brosselard-Faidherbe (1892-1994) and Maclaud (1907).

Therefore, as the captain said, the invading authorities developed efforts “to make use of the existing organisation” (religious, political, social, territorial), structured around the “fetiches”, and summoned all the religious leaders of the region, in a meeting that took place in Oussouye on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1903. The leaders of all the towns in the kingdom were summoned before Captain Fontclair, with the exception of King Sihalabé, who had not been captured yet:

*Tous les chefs de villages Floups avec nombreux indigènes sont réunies à Oussouye. (...): Eifoulo, chef de Kalobon (today Calobone); Saibouit, chef de Diongo (today Edhioungou); Simandone, chef de Diouhent (today Djiwant); Koumbass, representando a Oukout, Ayoune (today Sigantar), Karounat (Carounat), Niambalang, Blouf, Katakal, Kabonkout, Oussal (hoy barrios de Sigantar); Bassi Conaye, chef de Sangalène (Senghalène); Koutolito, chef de Kink (today neighbourhood of Calobone); Atabakir, chef d'Oukout; Signournfai, chef d'Effoc; Amaya, chef d'Emaye; Sakayen; chef de Youtou; et Coufoual, chef de Oussouye.*

(15-03-1903; ANS-I3G502)

Although some were indeed religious leaders of the most important shrines in the region, it should be noted that, according to the data we obtained in the field, they were not in many cases the main leaders. Many of the great leaders were hidden in the proximities of the town; and it was in fact their counsellors who attended the meeting. For example, for Oussouye – with exception of the king, who would be captured that same day -, the representative at the meeting was Coufoual (today written as Ufulaal), a holy man of the *Bakin* or traditional Jaananande altar (holy places of worship for the Jola). The holder of this *Bakin*, Jamulon – the second leader following King Sihalabé – did not attend the meeting. In fact, he was the leader who was to carry out, according to the French, one of the most important uprisings against the French occupation of Oussouye in the following months.<sup>10</sup> Báciin

<sup>10</sup> In fact, it is common practice among the Joola that negotiations not be conducted directly by the highest representatives but rather by their councillors.

King Sihalebé was brought in right at the beginning of the meeting, having been captured by the French near the royal sacred forest, which the French had also occupied. Perhaps as a result of this capture or perhaps because of the evident military superiority of the French, according to Fontclair's report, the local authorities "promettent obeissance et soumission" to the French invaders. But not all was to run smoothly. In 1904, over a year after the occupation of Oussouye, 'Résident' Raymond would state that there was apparently a certain degree of tranquillity, "which kept the Jola obedient under the military surveillance 45 armed men". The Jola had in fact, in 1903, allowed the French to enter Oussouye, offering little resistance. As we will see further ahead, the French thought that the resistance was organised from the other side of the border, under Portuguese support. Thus, in a few weeks, the French went from the euphoria of an apparently easy victory, to a feeling of permanent insecurity that would last for decades.

### ***King Sihalebé***

Before examining how the Jola organised the resistance against the invading army, we will first describe the events following the capture of King Sihalebé, the highest authority of the kingdom of the Bubajum Áai of Oussouye. After having been detained, he was sent to Elinkin on the coast, and on 17<sup>th</sup> March, he and 20 other leaders were sent from Elinkin to Sedhiou. There, according to Fontclair's report, the 20 prisoners were progressively released except for the king, whose future had to be decided by the General Governor.

What the French could not anticipate, however, was that the Jola kings had – and have – a very strict norm. Jola kings are strictly forbidden to accept any food from others or to eat in public. Thus, King Sihalebé, obeying tradition, did not eat any food served by the French in the days following his arrest. Thus, he died from starvation in the prison of Sedhiou.

According to the new 'résident' of Oussouye, the Jola did not react in any significant way when they found out about the death of their king.

La mort de Sia Labbé (Sihalebé) ne doit pas être connue de les ancies sujets, ou elle à été apprise sans produire la moindre émotion apparente.

(May, ANS-2G3-50)

What perhaps the Jola did not know was that shortly after the death of the king, according to Diatta (1998), the body of the monarch was embalmed and today rests in a warehouse at the Louvre in Paris. Be that as it may, although the king had disappeared, his assistant Jamulon, the head of the second Bakin (altar or shrine), the Jaanaanande, had met with the Jola Ajamaat king, Fode Kaba, to the south in an area under Portuguese administration, so as to, the French believed, organise the resistance.

### **The traditional authorities and the “resistance” from south of “the border”: two contradictory versions**

Following the establishment of the French colonial administration in the kingdom in 1903, the resistance, according to the French colonial authorities, was to be organised from the neighbouring town of Kerouhey (or Karoal, in Portuguese transcription), located in Portuguese territory according to the 1886 treaty. The succession of a new king was not organised following the death of the king of Oussouye, Sihalebé, and the French believed that the resistance was headed by two traditional leaders, a priest from Oussouye, called Jamulon, and the king of Kerouhey, Fode Kaba<sup>11</sup>. Both populations were – and still are today – bound by the territorial organisation of the Uciin (the so-called “fetiches” or “shrines”), the mainstay of the Jola society, and all that is from there derived: religious, ritual, social and political ties.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The name Fode Kaba originally belonged to an inhabitant from the Upper Casamance who fought the French army until 1893, year in which an agreement was signed with the colonial authorities. He died in 1901. Nevertheless, someone else born in Jola territory adopted this name at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in honour of his predecessor. Under no circumstances is this the same person. There was also a leader with the same name in Gambia (see Roche, 1976; Trincaz 1981). This version is totally confirmed by the informants consulted in Oussouye.

<sup>12</sup> As we have said on another occasion, the incorrectly identified “fetiches” are in fact a

According to the French colonial archives, the 'résident' of Oussouye soon became aware of the strong influence of these two traditional authorities and went as far as to state that Jamulon detained greater power than the king, and that the influence of Fode Kaba of Kerouhey, not only held sway in Oussouye but spread as far as Ayun (today Siganar).

Two months following the occupation of Oussouye, the colonial authority wrote:

*Fetichistes invéteris, coinvancus de la puissance ilimité de leur chef, les Diolas le craignent ou le respectent et ils ne trahiront pas Dia Mouillon (Jamulon), bien plus, je les crois capables de l'avertir à la moindre alerte et de protéger sa retraite.*

(Mai 1903 ANS-2-3G/50)

For this reason, the French resorted to their collaborators, indigenous to the region north of Senegal, in an attempt to capture the local religious leaders.<sup>13</sup> It is unusual to note that European incursions by either the Portuguese or the French along the border were accompanied by African foreigners to the Jola territory. The French arrived in the region accompanied by guides and original translators from the north that often had very hostile attitudes towards the local Jola population. These Wolof collaborated actively in the persecution of the Jola king, Sihalebé:

*plusieurs traitants wolof se sont efforcés de capturer ce chef de religion. Leurs essais ont été infructueux.*

(Mai 1903 ANS-2-3G/50)

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powerful system of representation of the society as well as a very complex system of religious, political and economic territorial organisation of the Jola. See our article: "The Joola «Fetiches», the Casamance revolt and the Senegalese state. Notes on the dynamics of a traditional, social, politic and religious system at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century." (in the press).

<sup>13</sup> Some of the towns in the Huluf area were – and are still today – inhabited by Wolof. These towns often had conflicts with the neighbouring Jola towns. That was the case of the confrontation between Bukitingo (Joola) and Diakène Ouloff in 1870 (Roche, 1976).

Also the Portuguese, in their advance from the south, arrived at Jola territory accompanied by Africans coming from southern areas outside the Jola-Ajamaat land: as from 1899, the Papels accompanied the Portuguese authorities everywhere in the area around Varela (Esteves, idem).

To some extent then the European penetration into Huluf and Ajamaat land could be considered as a clash between the French authorities and their Wolof assistants from the North, and the Portuguese authorities and their Papel guides from the South.

Both religious leaders sent envoys with news and information to Oussouye from Kerouhey, in Portuguese Guinea. Thus, for example, in March 1904, an envoy from Fode Kaba arrived at Oussouye and summoned the Huluf and Ajamaat peoples to inform them – this according to the French – that Fode Kaba and Jamulon were organising a march on Oussouye. When news of the attack reached the ‘résident’ of Oussouye, military reinforcements were requested (7/3/1904-ANS-I3G507-4: Oussouye).

Kerouhey was – and still is today – one of the most important towns in the region at a religious and symbolic level. After the French-Portuguese agreements, they were placed under Portuguese rule. Despite this, pressure was exerted from Kerouhey on the local inhabitants who were under French administration not to collaborate with the colonial authorities. Thus, some inhabitants from towns like Ering who worked as carriers or guides requested protection from the ‘résident’ of Oussouye because they feared that there could be retaliation from the chief of Kerouhey and wished to abandon the left shore of the mangrove swamp of Soukoudiak to cross to the other side, to the town of Essaout.

The power of the leader of Kerouhey was indeed recorded by Maclaud, following the so-called Maclaud mission:

*La puissance des féticheurs est considerable; c'est uniquement sur l'ordre du féticheur de Kérouhey, que les Diamates (Ajamaat) vinrent attaquer la mission, pendant qu'elle se livrait à ses opérations pénibles géodésiques.*

(Maclaud, 1907).

The power of the so-called “fetichistes” that, as we have said, were – and still are today – (see Tomàs, 2005a) the religious, political and territorial leaders of the Jola society, is constantly mentioned by the colonial authorities. Maclaud would write that in Mossor (district of Kabrousse, on the south-western borders of the Lower Casamance, on the Atlantic coast, a few kilometres away from Cabo Roxo), the uprisings and their aims were instigated by the heads of the “shrines”:

C'est sur l'ordre des féticheurs que les gens de Mossor firent leur soumission.

(Maclaud, 1907)

In fact, during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the border zone from the Atlantic to Niambalag was an area of intense conflict for both European powers. It is possible to conclude that in different towns in the border zone whenever there was greater French and Portuguese pressure from the north and the south respectively, greater was the resistance in the towns, and greater the colonial repression. In most cases, “temporary surrender” came following orders from the “religious leaders”. Also, more intense rebellions arose – in some cases in an attempt to halt the authorities. In fact, one of the greatest rebellions (according to the ethnocentric colonial terminology) took place at Kabrousse: the districts of Cadiaroye and Mossor armed 200 men with guns to prevent the colonial soldiers from detaining one of the local leaders (ANS-2G4/43-1904-Juillet). Nevertheless, a great contradiction emerges when we compare the colonial version with the local one. According to the French and the Portuguese, the traditional authorities led the defence and resistance of the town – with the support of their advisers. According to the existing local Jola version – very extended – the resistance was not led by the religious leaders. See, for example, the Jola version of the case of Jamulon, explained in its French version above.

### ***The Jola version of the facts***

The Jola version of the facts is, today, very different from the one found in the French colonial archives. According to the grandson of Jamulon, today a priest in the same *Bakin* headed by his grandfather, Jamulon did not lead an armed revolt against the French invaders. According to this version, confirmed by other informants, not today nor in the days of the French occupation could the traditional authorities (kings or holders of traditional altars) ever lead, instigate or even have knowledge of the military activities related with the inhabitants of the kingdom. Nor could they participate in them, far from it. Since priesthood is a sacred post, upon which the physical, mental, economic, social and moral peace of the kingdom depends, a priest could never encourage any act in which human blood would be shed. What would happen if a traditional priest was killed in a war? Who would provide the stability that kings or priests bring to the kingdom?

Although this way of life seems strange to European eyes, or even appear to be an idealisation of the traditional authorities of the past, all the informants consulted – in their majority tied to titular families of traditional shrines – confirmed the same idea: among the Jola and the Huluf, the main *kulemba* (the religious leaders, and therefore the king) could never lead an armed revolt. They can participate in negotiations through their councillors with enemy powers, or even in certain acts of pacific resistance, but they could never participate in a military action. Military actions are initiated by leaders of lower importance who do not depend completely on the main religious leaders. And, as Robert Baum attested to in different works, the resistance was also organised through prophetic movements – mainly carried out by women.

Therefore, according to the local version, Jamulon had decided to remain to negotiate personally with the French. Many Jola, knowledgeable of the military practices of the French, following the disappearance of king Sihalebé, advised Jamulon to go into hiding: upon the death of the king, he became the highest priest of the kingdom, and the stability of the kingdom depended on his safety. The members of his family and other prominent members of the town advised him to go to Kerouhey, whose king, Fode Kaba, had important historical ties with the kingdom of Oussouye. In addition, the Portuguese had not yet

arrived in the area. Hence, it was necessary to wait for the situation to calm down so to negotiate later with the French.

Still in accordance with the local version, when Jamulon fled, an associate of his, Ufulaal, decided to seize the *Bakin* Jañañande and to assume Jamulon's functions, an act that went totally against the local laws and that infuriated part of the Jola people in the kingdom. As the months went by, and considering that, according to the French, Jamulon was organising the armed resistance, the Gallic authorities chose to negotiate with Ufulaal, who they would appoint "chef de village". When Jamulon returned, and attempted to recover the Jaañañande altar, Ufulaal refused to hand it over. This fact would cause a deep divide in the town between the Jamulon's supporters and Ufulaal's, leading to a profound crisis in the system of local government – anchored in the rule of the shrines – and whose memory would last until recent times. Finally, according to some informants, Ufulaal found death at the hands of the shrine members, which punished him for his disobedience, and Jamulon recovered his right to the Jaañañande. Nevertheless, the position of "chef de village" would remain in the hands Ufulaal's family. In the following years, the town was deeply divided among those who supported the religious leader and those, fewer in number, who supported the town's officials appointed by the French.

### ***Two opposing ideas on the functions of a traditional head***

Similar versions of this history can be applied, *mutatis mutandi*, to other cases in Jola territory as explained previously: for the French the highest traditional authorities were those in charge of the military actions against their army. In fact, the contradiction in the explanation of the events highlights the conflicting concept of power held by the French and the Jola. For the Europeans, with a centralised government like the French, the king – or the Head of State – holds the highest rank in society and is therefore the supreme leader when it comes to military issues (although he delegates his powers on the Minister of Defence), whereas Jola society is structured quite differently: power is divided among many families, each with a particular role. Although symbolically the king or, in his absence, the head of the Jaañañande,



was the highest-ranking leader in society, he was not the absolute leader. Thus, for example, in relation to the war, a specific person was in charge, the head of a shrine, who organised the resistance, perhaps with the collaboration of other leaders of smaller shrines, perhaps through a prophetic movement, but these types of actions could never be carried out by the king nor by the heads of important shrines. But the French – with the information provided by the Wolof translators – attributed the Jola king with characteristics of a European nobleman. And thus, they recorded in their chronicles that which took place in their new African surroundings from an ethnocentric view of African society, that is: that the rebellion against them was led by kings and “fetichers”. Nevertheless, the reality around them had to some extent revealed the Jola view of the world. For example, the king of Oussouye, Sihalebé, was detained without the need to draw arms, without offering resistance and without raising the town against the French to release him. The colonial authorities were coming to realise that, as in Mossor, the “fetichers” were inclined to approve or recommend surrender.

### ***The Portuguese and French define the border: from war to co-operation***

Apart from viewing Jola leaders from a totally European perspective, the French and Portuguese proceeded to do what they had already accomplished in other parts of the continent: they divided whole towns in half. One of the most paradigmatic cases of colonial abuse in the design of borders is that of the town of Casselol. According to the archives, it was divided in two, one part placed under French administration and then other under the Portuguese. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why the town was particularly resistant to the French administration as well as to the Portuguese and, on more than one occasion, the inhabitants refused to pay the colonial authorities taxes. For example, in July and August 1903, the Casselol population decided not to pay taxes and it was only after lengthy negotiations that they proceeded to do so. Finally, even though they had complied with the demands of the French colonial agents, the administrator of Casamance ordered that the town be severely punished for its disobedience. The reason for refusing to pay the taxes was that, according to French records, the locals had

already paid the Portuguese soldiers. The Jola Ajamaat of Casselol had paid the Portuguese after these threatened them “to brûler leurs cases s'ils payaient l'impôt aux français.” (ANS- 2G3/50: Aout 1903). The people of Casselol were apparently considered dangerous by the Portuguese, as first lieutenant J.A Muzanty registered in his reports. (Esteves, idem). The entire border zone, Catao, Varela and Casselol, was considered by French and Portuguese as very hostile to Portuguese dominion. At first, the Europeans attempted to combat this “hostility”. But finally they had to change their strategy.

Indeed, during the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the French and Portuguese attacked these communities each from their “new territory” to control the towns that had fallen under their administration following the establishment of the border. As we have seen, the problems between both powers continued even after the treaty was signed. As the years went by, both powers came to realise two facts: first, it was very difficult to control the towns along the border zone. Second, it was not often clear exactly where the border lay. As a result, both powers finally decided to cooperate, firstly, to establish the border with precision, and secondly, to act militarily to subdue those Jola towns that were located on the border. Esteves (idem) describes this situation perfectly.

Thus, a mission to determine the boundary of the French-Portuguese border between Casamance and Guinea was organised in 1905. In March, the first lieutenant Muzanty reports on hostility from the head of Kernay (Kerouhey), Fode Kaba (that in Portuguese is translated as Fode Cabá), who was opposed to the arrival of the Portuguese to the region.<sup>14</sup> Upon the arrival of the French-Portuguese mission at Kerouhey, the confrontations caused several deaths on the Jola side and the loss of a Senegalese “tirailleur” (of the French colonial forces) and the town was set afire by the French and Portuguese.

The mission continued with many problems towards the Atlantic. After passing Esukujak – that had been, like Youtou or Casselol, divided between both colonial powers<sup>15</sup> – and before arriving at the towns of the

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that, for the French, it was the main leader, Jamulon, who was making life impossible for them at Oussouye.

<sup>15</sup> This division can be seen today in the maps of the region: we have Essoukoudiak – to the north of the border, with French transcription – and Sukujaque – to the south, with Portuguese transcription.

Jola Her of Kadiakaye, Mossor and Nalu (today Kabrousse), the troops faced the native populations again, which this time they were able to defeat (Roche, 1976; Esteves, 1988). Thus, the Portuguese and French, once united, were able to delimit the European border in Jola land. Finally, the two colonial powers, reunited in Oussouye after having achieved their objective, congratulated themselves by the success of the mission.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, although they had temporarily overcome the opposition of the border towns of Jola Her, Ajamaat and Huluf, the truth is that soon the revolts against both powers would return.

More than twenty years after the 1886 treaty between Portugal and France to divide the Jola territories of Casamance and after several reconnaissance missions in the region, the towns that had been divided by the European border – either physically, as in the cases of Casselol or Youtou or because it divided their land, forests and their rice fields-, continued to offer strong resistance. Thus, in 1906, Effock rebelled against the French; in 1908, the Portuguese troops attacked the towns in the Ajamaat region of Casselol, Kerouhey and Suzanna; and, in 1909, the French and Portuguese jointly attacked again the town of Youtou. After one of the attacks, the French find the town deserted. The ‘résident’ of Oussouye – successor to the first governor who had assured that pacification would be rapid six years earlier – did not feel secure in the area:

*Aussitôt tous les tambours de guerre ressoneront, les flutes de combat siffleront, et je jugerai prudent de battre précipitamment en retraite. (...) Il sera certainement utile (...) de faire séjourner après l’hivernage quelques tirailleurs à Youtou, si l’on veut définitivement ramener à la raison ce village rebel.*

(ANS – 2 G 9 44, 1909, Juin)

Although the border was well-delimited on a map, the native Jola population never gave up their fight against the European invaders

<sup>16</sup> According to several Jola informants, during the missions to delimit the border, the French got the Portuguese drunk and, at night, they changed the border boundaries locating them, to their own benefit, further towards the south to gain more territory from the Portuguese crown. That would partly explain why the border, in the south-western zone of Oussouye, is so irregular.

and the insecurity of the Governor of Oussouye lasted until World War II, when in 1942-1943, one prophetess from Mossor (Kabrousse) called Aliin Situé – again a very secondary traditional authority, in charge of the cult of Kassila -, led a new rebellion against the French.<sup>17</sup>

So, the first Frenchman who became the Governor of Oussouye did not have a clear view of Jola character when in 1903 he said:

*Les Diolas sont fétichistes. Cette croyance à un Dieu président chaque phénomène engendre chez un peuple primitif l'entêtement et les Diola en sont un exemple frappant: jamais ou seulement dans nombre d'années on ne changera la façon de vivre des Floup.*  
(ANS – 2G3/50, 1903)

### **The colonial borders yesterday and today: paradoxes of history**

Several years after the Convention by which Portugal and France divided the Jola region into two different states (1886), the inhabitants of the region continued their religious, social, economic and political relations regardless of the “new border”. Despite the terrible historical crossroads at which the Jola king died, during which the traditional authorities were persecuted for having instigated events which they in fact had not, and despite the fact that the European military forces of two different countries had tried to sack the region... life, with small variations, continued to closely unite the Jola populations on both sides of the border. The fertile palms to the south of the town of Santhiaba continued to supply palm wine to the people of Oussouye, the inhabitants of the Ajaamat towns in Guinea visited their relatives of the Huluf (Senegal) to attend the most important ceremonies, the kings of Kerouhey and Essukujak visited their counterparts in the French-speaking zone of Essaout or Oussouye...

But during the entire process leading to the establishment of the border, several great misunderstandings took place: on the one hand, the border divided in two entire towns. In addition, two Jola kingdoms

<sup>17</sup> For more information on this prophet see Tomàs (1999) or Tolliver-Diallo (2005).

with close ties were separated: Kerouhey and Oussouye. On the other hand, as we have seen, the perception on the part of the indigenous populations and of the foreigners of the role of the traditional authorities in the resistance against the foreign powers was disparate. In our opinion, the paradox is the following: in general, in daily life, the Jola continued to ignore the border, moving from one town to other to carry out their commercial, religious or social activities. But, curiously, in some cases – when it interested them – they would decide to use the “border” when it came to social and family ties on the other side. Why? In order to take refuge in fact from those who had created the border: in the French case this happened as we have seen with the flight of Jamulon who took refuge with his counterpart Fode Kaba at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The inverse case occurred between 1963 and 1974 when the Jola populations in the north of the then Portuguese Guinea, fled from the Portuguese army to take refuge in the Senegalese state, which had become independent from France in 1960, cutting relations with Portugal as from that time.<sup>18</sup> That is, while the colonial powers governed one side or the other, the border was permeable. The border modified part of the daily routines, but the societies that had been separated by it maintained practically unaltered the ancient, religious, political and economic relations, etc. The permeability of the border was the dominant note during many decades.

The greatest paradox in this interesting border zone emerges more recently, with the arrival of the struggle for independence led by the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance* (MFDC). Since 1982 – and mainly with the arrival of Atika, the armed wing of the MFDC, in 1990 – the border was again used by rebels and military to fight or to take refuge to one side or the other. And since 1997, the use of mines was implemented on the part of the Casamance rebels (according to the Senegalese military) or of the Senegalese military (according to the Casamance rebels) and the border was abruptly blocked, and cut off almost any direct contacts between the Jola Ajamaat and the Jola Huluf:

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<sup>18</sup> In any case, the role of Senegal in relation to the war in Guinea is ambiguous: on the one hand, it supported certain groups of African liberation in Guinea; on the other, it feared that an independent Guinea would reflect on the southern region of Casamance. Which did eventually happen.

they terminated commercial activities (the sale of palm wine, palm oil and fish, specifically but not solely); family relations among people from the same town were truncated (the conflict led half of the population in some towns to emigrate towards the south, to Guinea Bissau, and the others towards the north, to Senegal); rituals (the Jola Ajamaat of the south did not attend, in general, royal ceremonies organised by the religious priests of Oussouye), etc.

It is particularly noteworthy, that in the last century, the border between present-day Guinea-Bissau and Senegal has always been more or less permeable to population movements, to commercial exchanges, marriage alliances, except in the period of the struggle for independence of the MFDC. The paradox of all paradoxes is this: that which, since 1886, the foreign French and Portuguese armies had never truly achieved, (to separate two territories under different administrations), was obtained a century later by those who had fought precisely for the opposite: the freedom fighters who had hoped to unite Casamance to the north of the Cacheu river (Guinea-Bissau) and the south of the Gambia eventually created a greater divide in the region than anyone had ever done in the past.

This insecurity in the border region caused by the Casamance guerrilla detachments and the Senegalese and Guinea-Bissauan military, had also affected the traditional Jola authorities: even today, the Jola king of Esukujak, in the border zone on the Guinea-Bissauan side, is guarded by the Senegalese army when he visits the king of Oussouye in Senegal (during the royal celebration of the Humabal, for example). That is, as a result of the independence conflict, that which had occurred at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the traditional authorities could take refuge from the enemy by visiting their counterparts on the other side of the border, could no longer be repeated. But this is a matter of another article.

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