

Samori Toure: The Legendary Warrior



Samori Ture

The legendary warrior Samori Toure was born in 1830 in the village of Manyambaladugu, located in the southeast region of Guinea. His father was a trader so Toure also became a trader until the age of twenty. West Africa was being influenced heavily by European culture due to colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. In 1848, Toure's mother was kidnapped during a slave raid by King Sori Birama (also pronounced Séré-Burlay); to free his mother Toure became a soldier in the king's army. During his time in the army he developed himself into one of the best warriors in the Guinea. After serving his time in King Birama's army Toure left the army with his mother, he then sought refuge with the Béréte army for two years. He mastered fire arms and improved is military skills by leading the Béréte army into battle. Toure left the Béréte army and reunited with his own people the Malinke of Guinea armed with an empowering vision to help his people.

Using the military skills and education he gained over the years, Toure systematically organized his people and the surrounding kingdoms into a single army with a single focus. The goals of the Malinke were to protect themselves from rival tribes, Europeans and expand their territory. Toure's army was legendary; a well-oiled machine consisting of over 65,000 men with a cavalry and

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infantry. Both the cavalry and the infantry were individually organized to function singularly and as a unit of the entire army. Toure would declare himself the Monarch of the empire he was building; his territory expanded from as far north as the borders of Sierra Leone to Liberia in the south; from the Ivory Coast in the west to the Sudan in the East. It is said that Toure's empire reached its apex between 1883 and 1887; during this time Toure became the Almami, or the religious leader of his empire. Islam was the dominant religion of Toure's empire.

Toure would be the founder of the Wassoulou Empire, which is also referred to as the Mandinka/Melenke Empire. The Wassoulou Empire was solidified around 1878 with Toure as its leader and founder. He was also gaining a name for himself by standing strong against European colonialism. The French declared war on Toure because he would not allow them to steal land and monopolize the trading of goods at the Kenyeran market center. The Wassoulou and the French were at war from 1882 to 1885, the warring led to the signing of peace treaties between the French and the Wassoulou in 1886 and 1887. The Berlin Conference occurred in 1884, which basically was Europe dividing Africa between the countries and taking the land. As expected, the French did not honor the peace treaty and the Wassoulou waged war against the French in 1888 to defend their lands. Because his army was able to deny the French, Toure and his army's reputation grew. The final peace treaty between the Wassoulou and the French was signed in 1889. In 1890, Toure was able to reinforce his army by obtaining arms from the British and implementing guerrilla warfare tactics to fight the French. Unfortunately, in 1891, the French was able to overpower Toure's army forcing him to move his capital eastward to Dabakala, cote d'ivoire. Toure was able to rebuild his empire despite the advances from French colonizers, his new capital city was Kong and he used the landscape along with the guerrilla tactics to fight off the relentless pursuit of the French forces. Toure's army was invaded by the French in 1898, during the invasion Toure was captured and eventually forced into exile in Gambon.

Toure would die two years into his exile in 1900 as the warrior king who fearlessly fought off French colonization. During the years of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade African people were constantly being kidnapped and taken into slavery. Fortunately for Toure when his mother was captured she was not sold to the Europeans, this allowed the legend of Samori Toure to begin. He was able to hone his military skills and develop himself mentally as a leader. Toure is revered for his fortitude, strategy, leadership, loyalty and victories. Even though the French were able to eventually overtake Toure, they were never able to kill his movement, his spirit and his legendary status. Legendary Warrior Emperor Samori Toure, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

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