

C.S. SALMON TO SIR A.E. KENNEDY

CAPE COAST CASTLE, 4 DECEMBER, 1871.

The Constitution was handed to me in Government House by Mr. Davidson, the Vice- President and Mr. Brew, Assistant-Secretary. I refused to forward it officially to your Excellency on their part. The parties have never applied for any sanction to their proceedings. I officially proclaimed them to be illegal some time since.

The people of the country, the merchants and traders, and all the kings and chiefs, except those immediately interested, are one and all utterly opposed to this new Confederacy. Kings Edoo of Mnakessim and Otoo of Abrah are the only two cognisant of the actual proceedings, and even they have been partially imposed on. Four of these mentioned as kings are very small chiefs. The majority of the names appended to the Constitution have been put down without the knowledge or consent of the parties themselves.

I have arrested all the Ministry except Grant. Warrants are out against the other members of the Executive Council. I have sent for the judge. The parties will be tried in the judicial assessors court.

If the kings come down, I shall send magistrate to Mankessim to make enquiries and to obtain the seal.

This dangerous conspiracy must be destroyed for good, or the country will become altogether unmanageable. The people could not stand a double taxation. The Government have for a long time been attempting to do what this Confederation states to be its object; but they, the originators of it have, more than all else, hindered us, by keeping up a state of feuds and destroying unity and confidence.

(1) Colonial Secretary and acting Administrator of the Gold Coast.

KIMBERLEY TO KENNEDY

LONDON, 16 JANUARY, 1882.

Sir,

I have received your dispatch of the 16th ult. transmitting dispatches from the Administrator of the Gold Coast, reporting the proceedings of the so-called Fante Confederation, and the steps which he had taken to check what he regarded as a dangerous conspiracy.

As the information before me does not lead me to attach so much importance to this movement, I cannot but regret that persons claiming to hold office under the Confederation should have been arrested, although they were subsequently, and apparently after a short interval, released on bail.

And if on the receipt of this dispatch, the proceedings which the Administrator contemplated in the Judicial Assessor's Court should not have taken place, you will instruct him to stay all proceedings and to free the parties from bail.

But whilst I feel it necessary to give these directions, I fully recognise that the Administrator acted under a strong conviction that it was incumbent upon him to take the promptest and most effective measures for putting down a movement which, in his judgment, infringed the conditions of the British Protectorate, and was likely to prove delusive and injurious to the native who would be affected by it.

There is hardly room for question that some of the articles in the constitution of the Confederation were practically inconsistent with the jurisdiction of the British Government in the protected territory.

I think that the Administrator might have confined himself to issuing a proclamation warning British subjects from taking office under the Confederation and stating that those who did so in declining to recognise in any way the 'Constitution' until the articles had been approved by Her Majesty's Government, and in publishing Mr. Grant's disavowal would be held responsible for their acts. He would have been quite right also of participation in the proceedings of the Confederation.

Her Majesty's Government have no wish to discourage any legitimate efforts on the part of the Fante kings and chiefs to establish for themselves an improved form of government, which, indeed, it is much to be desired that they should succeed in going.

But it is necessary that all parties concerned should understand that so long as they live under the protection of Great Britain, the protecting Government must be consulted as to any new institutions which may be proposed.

The manner in which the new 'Constitution' was brought into operation and certain acts performed under it, without any previous communication with the British authorities would be more likely to tend to discord and disorder than to further the ends which the promoters of the Constitution profess to have in view.

C.S. SALMON TO J.J. KENDALL

CAPE COAST CASTLE, 20 JANUARY, 1872

The Confederacy is at present confined to the small district of Mankessim and the larger one of Abrah: but the Abrah people are discontented at this king residing so long at Mankessim, and have sent for him.

When the king returns to Abrah, the last and only prop of the new Confederacy will have fallen, and the palaver may then be considered at an end.

The duplicity with which the promoters of the Constitution of the new Confederacy acted throughout is well illustrated by an extract from a letter of Major Brownell's dated the 17th instant: 'At a meeting of the chiefs and headmen at Winneba, they refused to do, stating that they did not approve of the Confederation, and would not join it in anyway.

The Constitution apparently attempted to leave the British towns out, but the above extract demonstrates that the promoters intended differently.

The worst features in the new constitution is the complete manner in which all power is taken from the native kings and placed in the hands of the 'Ministry' and 'Executive Council', composed of young men, some of doubtful respectability, none with any means, or holding any position in the country.

After deep and searching inquiries, I am perfectly convinced that the two kings, and the few chiefs under them, that really formed the confederacy, were misled by the Cape Coast young men, both as to the end to be attained by the so-called constitution, and as to its scope.

The movement as regards the people of the Protectorate is now virtually at an end. It never reached the Eastern District. The Ashante ambassadors watched the proceeding with interest, and no doubt kept the king well informed of our divisions.

(2) Captain J. J. Kendall served in the Crimea and under Maximilian of Mexico, 1865-7: Colonial secretary, Sierra Leone, Acting Governor-in-Chief, West African Settlements, August-December, 1869, and January-February, 1872.

From: "Constitution of New Fante Confederation," Modern Ghana, (accessed April 18, 2017), <https://www.modernghana.com/news/123177/1/constitution-of-the-new-fante-confederacy.html>