

MADAHA DJALELO: A PUSTULE ON THE NEGOTIATION OF THE ANGLO-FRANCO-ETHIOPIAN (SOMALILAND) BOUNDARY TRI-JUNCTION, 1933-1934

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ABSTRACT

The issue of Ethiopian boundary with Somalia is one of those highly controversial tracts in African diplomacy and it is asserted more of artificial colonial origin that discrete one ethnic group under different administrative authorities. This article sheds a new insight on the process, outcome and dynamics of the complex and multiple levels of the Anglo-Franco-Ethiopian tripartite boundary negotiation to bring up the tri-junction of the British Somaliland, French Somaliland and Ethiopian boundary. Moreover, the article tries to reflect the factors for the move of Ethiopia to ensure a legal framework to the continued uncertainty of its border with Somalia during colonial era. In the article it is tried to employ untapped archival resources found at the Ethiopian National Archive and Library Agency (ENALA). Apparently, examination in the study framed on the agreements that were signed between Great Britain, France and Ethiopia at different times. Secondary works of literatures are also used to frame the study. During the process of the tripartite boundary negotiation, four major segments were identified as a challenge to the tripartite boundary commission in general and to the representatives of Ethiopia in particular to discover the tri-junction and to avert the problem of the continued uncertainty of the border: 1) the ill specification of the tri-junction on the February 9, 1888 Anglo-French boundary accord as well as on the May 14 and March 20, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian and Franco-Ethiopian boundary report respectively; 2) the avidity of parties on negotiation to snatch additional land using the gap of former boundary accords; 3) the rigid diplomatic approach among parties to emerge as a sole winner; 4) the negative set of believe of the local tribal groups about the boundary negotiation that divide them into different administrative zones and isolate them from their kin.

Key words: Madaha Djalelo, Boundary, Tri-junction, Ethiopia, France, British, Somaliland

ÖZET

Somali ile Etiyopya sınırı sorunu, Afrika diplomasisinde son derece tartışmalı olan konulardan biri ve farklı idari makamlar altında bir etnik grubu birbirinden ayıran yapay sömürge kökenli daha fazla iddia ediliyor. Bu makalede İngiliz Somaliland, Fransız Somaliland ve Etiyopya sınırının yanı sıra İngiliz Somaliland, Etiyopya sınırının üç-kavşağını ortaya çıkarmak için Anglo-Franco-Etiyopya üçlü sınır müzakeresinin süreci, sonucu ve dinamikleri hakkında yeni bir içgörü bulunmaktadır. Ek olarak, makale aynı zamanda Etiyopya yürüyüşünün sömürge döneminde Somali sınırının sürekli belirsizliğine hukuki bir çerçeve sağlama nedenleri hakkında ışık tutmaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışmada Etiyopya Ulusal Arşiv ve Kütüphane Ajansı'nda (EUAKA) bulunan arşivlenmemiş arşiv kaynakları kullanıldı. Ayrıca, İngiltere, Fransa ve Etiyopya arasında farklı zamanlarda imzalanan anlaşma üzerine yapılan çalışmada incelemektedir. Üçlü sınır müzakeresi sürecinde, dört ana bölüm genel olarak üçlü sınır komisyonuna ve özellikle Etiyopya temsilcilerine üç-kavşak keşfi ve sınırın belirsizliğinin sürekliliği sorununu önlemek için bir meydan okuma olarak tanımlanmıştır. I) Anglo-Etiyopya ve Franco-Etiyopya sınır raporundaki üç kavşakın kötü göstergesi; ii) tarafların eski sınır anlaşmaları arasındaki boşluğu kullanarak ek arazi yakalama müzakereleri; iii) tek kazanan olarak taraflar arasında katı diplomatik yaklaşım; iv) yerel kabile gruplarının, onları farklı idari bölgelere bölen ve akrabalarından soyutlayan sınır müzakeresi hakkındaki olumsuz inanış seti.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Madaha Djalelo, Sınır, Üç kavşak, Etiyopya, Fransa, İngiliz, Somaliland

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia experienced a complex and challenging relationship with neighboring colonial powers (i.e Italy, France, and Britain) since the beginning of European colonial penetration to the hinterland of Africa. The tension between Ethiopia and colonial powers had been primarily revolved around the intention of colonial powers such as Italy to control the heartland of Ethiopia. However, when Ethiopia successfully defended the colonial penetration the issue of boundary delineation and demarcation emerged as a new challenge (Johan, 2003: 62-65).

That being the case, this study examines the process and outcomes of the dynamics of the Anglo-Franco-Ethiopia (Somaliland) tripartite boundary commissions negotiation to demarcate the British Somaliland, French Somaliland and Ethiopia tri-junction. The tripartite negotiation was held between November 2, 1933 and April 18, 1934. Apparently, even if border uncertainty had been and continued to be a challenge for the Ethio-Somalia relation in the late 20th century or contemporary era, this article tries to shed light and forward reasons why Ethiopia worked to carve out a legal framework to the continued uncertainty of its border with Somalia during the colonial era. Apparently, the reflection of the confirmation of the tri-junction (Somaliland tripoint) by European colonial powers in favor of Ethiopia is also considered in the study.

So, in this paper it is tried to see the general historical evolution of actions taken by Ethiopia to solve its frontier uncertainty with those adjacent colonial powers (i.e Italy, France, and Brittan). The dynamics of the tripartite boundary talk between Ethiopia, Britain and France to solve the tri-junction boundary complication between the French Somaliland, British Somaliland and Ethiopia is also a focus in point in this article. Contesting interests among the negotiators of the tripartite commission that hindered the fast development of the tripartite boundary discussion was also the other point in focus in this article.

2. EVOLUTION OF ETHIOPIA'S MOVE TO END BORDER UNCERTAINTY

Historically the Somali inhabited territories of the Horn of Africa region was under the colonial divisions between Great Britain, France and Italy. This was the case following the treaty of protectorate signed between the Somali tribal lords and colonial powers from 1884 to 1886. In the last quarter of the 19th century Ethiopia also extended its territorial limit on the eastern frontier against the Somali inhabited territories of Ogaden and Haud (Clifford, 1936: 289; Gilbert, 2010: 267-269).

Subsequently, the administration of the border area that carve up the Somali inhabited land, in the northeast Africa, experienced a complex boundary administrative reality during the later eras of the 20th century. The complexity of the regions boundary reality partly emanated from the division of one ethnic group under different administrative zones as well as the transfer of territorial sovereignty from one state to another that consequently resulted to be the means for the recurrent challenge against Ethiopia's boundary uncertainty. The uncertainty of border in turn created apprehensions on Ethiopia. Ethiopia's apprehension was stemmed from the irredentist assertion of the Somali nationalists and from an unending interest of the surrounding colonial powers for colonial expansion against Ethiopia. For instance, based on the colonial division, the northwestern territory of the Somali inhabited land was asserted as the protectorate of the British Somaliland. The area to the north of the British Somaliland was classified as the French Somaliland within the domination of France. The southern peninsula of the Somali inhabited land was labeled as the Italian Somaliland. The western portion of Somalia such as the Haud and Ogaden become an overland territory of Ethiopia. Nonetheless, it was not easy for Ethiopia to get borderline recognition from the surrounding colonial powers. Later the victory of Ethiopia at the battle of Adwa against Italy (1st of March, 1896) enabled Ethiopia to shift the table of boundary issue in favor of its own advantage and required the adjoining colonial powers to revise their boundary policy towards Ethiopia. Accordingly, in 1897, Italy, Great Britain, and France unequivocally renounced their colonial and territorial claim against Ethiopia and signed different agreements that recognized the jurisdiction and national status of Ethiopia. Yet the issue of boundary demarcations with mentioned colonial powers remained unsolved and transferred to Somalia Republic during independence in 1960. (Barnes, 2011: 1; Abdisalam, 2000: 90; Harold, 1994: 103; Lewis, 1965: 40-41; Lewis, 1981: 25-27).

On March 28, 1897 Italy sent Major Nerazzini, who was one of the leading Italian representatives during the Italo-Ethiopian Addis Ababa treaty (1896) to Menelik II's palace to discuss the issue of boundary between the Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia. The focus of the discussion between Emperor Menelik II and

Nerazzini was to answer “where was the boundary between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia”. Then agreement was reached between Nerazzini and Emperor Menelik II. Based on their agreement, in order to carve up the boundary issue with binding legal document and to avert the uncertainty of Ethiopia’s border with the Italian Somaliland, on the 24th of June, 1897 Menelik II stipulated and pointed out on the map about the ceiling curb of boundary admissible to Ethiopia. Major Nerazzini presented the request of Menelik II to the Italian authorities during his homecoming. Subsequently, on the 3rd of September, 1897 the Italian officialdom sent an acceptance telegram on the subject of the suggested bid, which was considered as the second victory for Ethiopia next to Adwa over Italy during the period. Nonetheless, the formal narrative of the agreement about delimitation of boundary between the frontiers of the Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia were not exchanged. The carbon copy of the proposed plan is also not yet found (Saadia, 1978: 3; Abdisalam, 1996: 18; Morone, 2015: 95; W. B. Stern, 1936: 193).

Later, in 1908, despite Ethiopia and Italy agreed on the delimitation of the boundary between Ethiopia and the Italian Somaliland, the move to woo Italy to the action of demarcation was not easy for Ethiopia and continued to be a problem even after the era of decolonization until present. The resistant position of Italy to demarcate the southern section of Somalia’s boundary with Ethiopia created a situation of apprehension and boundary uncertainty to Ethiopia. The acceptance of the boundary demarcation work over the tri-junction by the other neighboring colonial powers (i.e Great Britain and France) was considered as a good opportunity by the Ethiopian authority to resume the issue of boundary demarcation with Italy. So, one of the goals of Ethiopia while involving on the tripartite boundary talk with Great Britain and France, was to use the situation as a strategic opportunity to resume the issue of boundary demarcation with Italy. Yet the opposition of Italy was not changed.

On the 20th of March 1897 the Franco-Ethiopian boundary convention was initiated and France signed a protocol with Menelik II to delaminate the French Somaliland-Ethiopian borderline that stretched from Ras Doumeira to Madaha Djalelo. Madaha Djalelo was later agreed to be the tri-junction of the British Somaliland-French Somaliland-Ethiopian boundary on April 18, 1934. The March 1897 Franco-Ethiopian agreement was taken by the Ethiopian authority as an opportunity to avert the uncertainty over its borders with colonial powers and as a good signal in ensuring lasting peace around the frontier. In addition, the agreement was helped Ethiopia as a good backup to undermine the quest of territorial question by the Somali nationalists during the later era or 20th century (Belete, 2014; International Boundary Study, 1976: 2).

On 14th of May, 1897 Ethiopia signed an agreement with Great Britain that readjust the maximum freezing point of the British Somaliland boundary line disbaring the Haud grazing land to Ethiopia (International Boundary Study, 1978: 3; ENALA, Ogaden District A4.7.11, 1953; Dereje, 2015: 122-130). Ethiopia regarded the agreement as important step to legalize its boundary line and to undermine its frontier uncertainty with the British Somaliland. Regarding the frontier recognition of Great Britain, on the May 14, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian agreement at Addis Abeba, in annex I, the message of the Queen to Emperor Menelik II was presented by Rennel Rodd (the representative of the her majesty) as follows:

With reference to Article II of the Treaty which we are to sign to-day, I am instructed by my Government, in the event of a possible occupation by Ethiopia of territories inhabited by tribes who have formerly accepted and enjoyed British protection in the districts excluded from the limits of the British Protectorate on the Somali Coast, as recognized by Your Majesty, to bring to your knowledge the desire of Majesty the Queen to receive from Your Majesty an assurance that it be your special care that these tribes receive equitable treatment, and are thus no losers by this transfer of suzerainty (Mohamed, 2006: 73).

The above message from her majesty to Ethiopia reflects the frontier recognition of Britain to Ethiopia which was taken by the Ethiopian as a good step in averting Ethiopia’s frontier uncertainty with the neighboring colonial powers.

The then emperor of Ethiopia, Menelik II, replied:

Your letter, written in Genbot 1889 [May 1897], respecting the Somalis, has reached me. With regard to the question you have put to me, I give you the assurance that the Somalis who may by boundary arrangements become subjects of Ethiopia shall be well treated and have orderly government (Mohamed, 2001: 600).

That being the case, the general content of the May 14, 1897 agreement between Rennel Rodd (representative of Great Britain) and Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia on delimitation of the British Somaliland-Ethiopian Boundary summed up as follows:

The Treaty between Great Britain and Ethiopia signed at Addis Ababa on the 14th May 1897, by the Emperor Menelek II and Her Majesty's Envoy, and which was ratified in December last, the frontiers of the British Protectorate on the Somali Coast have been recognized as follows: Starting from the seashore opposite the well of Hadou, the boundary-line follows the caravan road by Abbasouen till Mount Somadou; from Mount Somadou to Mount Egu; from Mount Egu to Moga Medir; starting from Moga Medir it goes in a direct line to Eylinta Kaddo and Arran Arrhe on 44° up east of Greenwich and 9° north, and again in a direct line until 47° east and 8° north, thence along 8° north to 48° east, thence in a straight line to the inter-section of 9° north with 48° east, and thence along 49° east to the sea (Ibid).

This reflects that the frontier uncertainty question of Ethiopia was yielding fruits at list in signing a frontier agreement on a paper which was a prerequisite for the later period (i.e 1931-35) boundary demarcation work between the British Somaliland and Ethiopia.

However, the matter of demarcating the boundary of Ethiopia with the neighboring colonial powers remained silent until the 1924 European tour of the then Empress Zewuditu's regent, Ras Teferi Mekonen (later come to be recognized as Emperor Haileseilase I). During his European visit nearly for three months, from 16th of May 1924 to 13th of August 1924, one of the issues reflected by the regent was the wish of his government to discern all the demarcation of Ethiopia's borderline. One of the countries that showed a green light for the desire of Ras Teferi was Great Britain. The other state that gave positive response for the quest of Ethiopia was France. Subsequently, negotiation to initiate the work of demarcation steadily advanced and at the turn of 1930 come to the stage of conclusive provisions. Afterward, the tripartite boundary commission was established with members from Ethiopia, Great Britain and France (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935; Boris, 2013: 383-389).

The establishment of the boundary council was regarded as an important success towards Ethiopia's demand for boundary demarcation. This was mainly for the following reasons: 1) the Ethiopian authority believed that the beginning of the boundary demarcation work by Great Britain and France would help as a good model and example to halt the stubborn move of Italy to demarcate the Italian Somaliland and Ethiopian boundary; 2) in order to end border uncertainty and to institutionalize its boundary affair on the eye of western powers, international observers and international organizations; 3) to send message for the Somali irredentist and to quiet their irredentist move; and 4) to create a secured buffer zone for the challenge that was suspected from neighboring colonial powers and Somali irredentist (ENALA, Ogaden District Folder ,A17.1.7.25, 1977).

The authority of Great Britain was motivated to engage on the tripartite boundary talk for the following reasons: 1) to safeguard the ever-growing commercial interests of Britain in Ethiopia; 2) to gain the heart of Ethiopian officialdom against France due to the lack of trust. This suspicion of Great Britain against France was stemmed from France's old interest in the region to engage in furthering her colonial suzerainty in to the Nile through Ethiopia; 3) to get the assurance of the Ethiopian officialdoms not to allow the passage of arms support to the resistance groups in Sudan (ENALA, B17.1.7.25, Ogaden District Folder, 1977).

The authority of France accepted the boundary demarcation requests of Ethiopia and aspired to the trilateral boundary talk at Madaha Djalelo for two reasons. First, to magnify the importance of the 1888 Anglo-French boundary accord by pushing aside the 1897 Franco-Ethiopian accord. The 1888 Anglo-French arrangement referred to defined the inland depth of the French protectorate to Gildessa and beyond towards Harar; the so-called Franco-Ethiopian treaty of 1897 reduced the depth to Djalelo. So, France involved in the tripartite boundary discussion probably aiming to reassert its colonial territory based on the 1888 Anglo-French accord. This ambition of France was clearly reflected by the French representatives in the tripartite boundary talk while they propose to make the tri-junction at Abasyun. Second, the involvement of France to the boundary demarcation request of Ethiopia stemmed from the interest of France to gain the friendship of the imperialist Ethiopia which would give it commercial privileges and also advance its long ranges interests in the Nile head waters (ENALA, A17.1.7.25, Ogaden District Folder, 1977).

It was against this background that France and Great Britain accepted the boundary demarcation request of Ethiopia and involved to the tripartite boundary demarcation talk with Ethiopia between 1933 and 1934 at Madaha Djalelo.

During the progress of discussion by the tripartite boundary commission members under the hill of Madaha Djalelo between 1933 and 1934 the following complications affected the development of the tripartite boundary commission to initiate and precede the demarcation project with a well framed conceptual backup. The first was the ill specification of the British Somaliland-French Somaliland-Ethiopian tri-junction on the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian and Franco-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary accord. Second the ill specification of the boundary tri-junction on the 1888 Anglo-French (Somaliland) boundary agreement. This was because as stated before the members of the commission agreed to use the above agreements as a base to solve the tri-junction between the three countries. Unfortunately the gaps in the accords challenged the progress of the discussion to find the tri-junction. Third, the covetousness of Great Britain and France to gain additional land using the demarcation work as a good coincidental. Fourth, rigid negotiation approach can also be taken as an evil eye or an obstacle on the proceeding of the tripartite negotiation. Finally, the negative mindset of the Somali tribal lords (the Issa Somali in particular) and their followers on the tripartite course of action to discover the tri-junction and to demarcate the tripoint also hinders the development to find the tri-junction (Clifford, 1936, 289-90; Mesfin, 1964: 198-200).

3. THE TRIPARTITE BOUNDARY TALK AT MADAHA DJALELO

Madaha Djalelo, which is commonly asserted as the ‘Somaliland tripoint’, was one of the bones of controversies between Great Britain, France, and Ethiopia in the beginning years of 1930’s. In its natural feature, Madaha Djalelo is a hill like landform located in Djalelo district. Roughly the Abasyun hill and Guaz road runs on the southern side of Madaha Djalelo hill. The two Taranter hills and sand field that starched from east to west and from north to south also appears on the northern and eastern sides of Madaha Djalelo (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 63.1.3.03, 1933).

On the move of Ethiopia’s boundary demarcation to avert border uncertainty, the work of demarcation at Madaha Djalelo tripoint was considered as land mark and good example by Ethiopia on its journey to demarcate its frontiers with the surrounding colonial powers. So, the Ethiopian delegates in the trilateral boundary commission followed every activity in the commission critically and in a wary eye because there was a believe on the Ethiopian camp that the diplomatic success of Ethiopia at Madaha Djalelo could pave the way to end the question of Ethiopia’s border uncertainty with the neighboring colonial powers in particular and Somali nationalists in general (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 63.1.3.03, 1933).

In October 1933 the boundary commission of Great Britain under the leadership of E.H.M. Clifford visited the geographical environment of Madaha Djalelo for the first time in order to deal with a preliminary survey. Following the footsteps of the British delegate, on 25th of November, 1933 the Ethiopian boundary commission under the leadership of *Bejerond* (later *Fitawurari*) Tesema Benti also visited Madaha Djalelo to undertake initial study and gather information about the geography and general environment of the expected tri-junction. This all preliminary effort was to own the trump card during negotiation and to minimize faults during the proceedings of the tripartite boundary discussion (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

On 7th of March, 1933 the tripartite boundary commission met on the Ethiopian side of Madaha Djalelo hill to activate the negotiation. However, the representative of France, Muse J. Russan, avoided the negotiation proposal for two reasons: 1) J. Russan asserted that his presence was just for preliminary study and to visit the geography of Madaha Djalelo and nearby natural features; and 2) He also asserted that he and his crew members did not get the approval letter from the government of the Republic of France to start the tripartite negotiation. Consequently, the tripartite meeting on the move to identify the tri-junction postponed to the 2nd of November, 1933 (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

On 1st of November, 1933 the leader of the French boundary commission, J. Russan, together with his crew returned for the upcoming tripartite meeting at Madaha Dejalelo. Subsequently, J. Russan and the French boundary commission members visited the geographical seating of Madaha Djalelo for the second time in order to become keen on the area and introduce it to the new crew members, who were not there during the first visit (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935).

On November 2, 1933, Thursday morning at 9:00 A.M. the meeting for the Anglo-Franco-Ethiopian tripartite boundary commission officially inaugurated at Madaha Djalelo hill. But this time the meeting was held on the British side of the hill. During the meeting the involved commissions of the tripartite representatives exchanged legal letters. After that, the tripartite commission agreed to deduce and decide the tri-junction using the following three legal agreements as a reference: 1) the Anglo-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary report on 14th of May, 1897; 2) the Franco-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary accord on 20th of March, 1897; and 3) the Anglo-France (Somaliland) frontier agreement on 9th of February, 1888 (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935).

4. CONTESTING INTERESTS

During the progress of discussion, in the middle of the first tripartite meeting, the representatives of Great Britain, E.H. Clifford, asserted that since Madaha Djalelo is inside the British Somaliland the tri-junction of the three countries should be along the cross section of Abasyun-Hadu hills and Madaha Djalelo-Rahale straight-line (direction). The boundary commissions of France accepted the claim of Great Britain. Nonetheless, while accepting Madaha Djalelo as integral territory of the British Somaliland the representative of France asserted Abasyun as a tri-junction of the three countries. While rejecting Madaha Djalelo as a tri-junction, Great Britain and France presented the following reasons: 1) based on the 14th of May, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian boundary report Madaha Djalelo was not mentioned either as a starting or ending reference of the boundary line between the British Somaliland and Ethiopia; 2) despite Madaha Djalelo hill was mentioned on the February 9, 1888 Anglo-France (Somaliland) as well as on the March 20, Franco-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary report, it was not marked on the map as a reference for the Anglo-France (Somaliland) boundary line, and; 3) France also argued that the boundary report and accord between Great Britain and France on February 9, 1888; France and Ethiopian on March 20, 1897; and Great Britain and Ethiopian on May 14, 1897 had a contradictory view about Madaha Djalelo and subsequently proposed rejection of using this agreements as a reference (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935). But the real reason for the opposition of Britain and France to make Madaha Djalelo as a tri-junction might stemmed from the ambition of the two colonial powers to reassert the 1888 Anglo-French arrangement that referred the inland depth of the French protectorate to Gildessa and beyond towards Harar, which was very hard to accept on the side of Ethiopia (ENALA, A17.1.7.25, Ogaden District Folder, 1977).

Particularly the representatives of France strongly argued for the rejection of Madaha Djalelo as a tri-junction of the British Somaliland, the French Somaliland and Ethiopia because the rejection of Madaha Djalelo as a tri-junction increases the possibility of accepting Abasyun as a tri-junction that helps France to get additional territory from Ethiopia (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, March 1935). The Ethiopian authority tried to handle the case systematically because the contesting interest might be an obstacle to the mission of Ethiopia to end the issue of uncertainty of boundary. Besides, in Ethiopia the success of the boundary demarcation at Madaha Djalelo was considered to bring the following blessings: first, the demarcation of the tri-junction at Madaha Djalelo hill would help Ethiopia to develop confidence of security by creating a buffer zone against the irredentist Somali nationalists as well as neighboring colonial powers. Second, since the territory is near to the important railway line from Djibouti to Addis Ababa that connect Ethiopia to the sea the demarcation of the territory would help to more legitimize and institutionalize the issue of boundary on its eastern front as well as to withstand external pressure and security threat. Third, it would give more confidence for Ethiopia to manage the Issa Somali and other Somali tribal groups that came to Ethiopian territory under the banner of looking pasture but attack and rob Ethiopian citizens. Fourth, there was also a believe that the demarcation could help to change mind set up of the Somali nationalist by showing the only possibility to overcome the quest of Somali nationalist is to cooperate, rather than wasting time and resources on an ended boundary issue (ENALA, A17.1.7.25, Ogaden District Folder, 1977; ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

That being the case, the Ethiopian representative argued against the claim of Great Britain and France asserting Madaha Djalelo as the tri-junction of the three countries for the following reasons: 1) the March 20, 1897 Franco-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary accord mentioned Madaha Djalelo as a starting point for the Franco-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary, 2) the map drawn during delimitation of the Franco-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary also mentioned Madaha Djalelo as a reference for the southeastern end of the boundary line between the French Somaliland and Ethiopia; 3) in the 1931 instructional report of the Anglo-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary demarcation the boundary commissions of Great Britain and



Ethiopia agreed to consider Madaha Djalelo as a reference in the northeastern directions of the two countries boundary; 4) the 1931 instructional technical report between Ethiopia and Great Britain also infer Madaha Djalelo as a reference for the boundary demarcation from Madaha Djalelo to Rahale but not Abasyun. Simultaneously, on the March 20, 1897 Franco-Ethiopian boundary agreement it was mentioned that the boundary line between Ethiopia and French Somaliland runs from Madaha Djalelo to Rahale but not from Abasyun to Rahale. Accordingly the Ethiopian representatives argued that despite the absence of Madaha Djalelo on the Anglo-French (Somaliland) boundary report as a reference point if Madaha Djalelo was agreed to be a starting point for the French Somaliland-Ethiopian and British Somaliland-Ethiopian boundary, analogically Madaha Djalelo is the tri-junction for the British Somaliland-French Somaliland-Ethiopian boundary (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, 1933).

The representative of Great Britain reacted to the argument of Ethiopia forwarding the following four ideas: 1) since the issue of Madaha Djalelo is not mentioned on the February 1888 Anglo-French as a reference point and on the May 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian boundary report, the mere presence of Madaha Djalelo on the March 20, Franco-Ethiopian boundary accord is not binding for Great Britain; 2) likewise, the representative of Great Britain asserted that in the instructional report of 1931 Madaha Djalelo was mentioned neither to replace the May 14, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian boundary accord nor as a reference point for the tri-junction, but the name Madaha Djalelo was mentioned because the name of the nearest reference district for the area asserted as a tri-junction by Ethiopia has the same name with the district; 3) the 1888 Anglo-French boundary report also clearly put Madaha Djalelo some kilometers east inside the British Somaliland; iv) even in the March 1897 Franco-Ethiopian boundary report Madaha Djalelo was mentioned just to show the direction of the French Somaliland and Ethiopian boundary line which runs through Rahale to the east (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, 1933; ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935).

According to annex 3, in the May 14, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopia (Somaliland) boundary agreement, the recognized reference points for the British Somaliland and Ethiopia boundary line runs:

...frontier of the British Protectorate on the Somali Coast the line which, starting from the sea at the point fixed in the Agreement between Great Britain and France on the 9th February 1888, opposite the wells of Hadou, follows the caravan-road, described in that agreement, through Abbasouen till it reaches the hill of Somadou. From this point on the road the line is traced by the Saw Mountains and the hill of Egu to Moga Medir; from Moga Medir it is traced by Eylinta Kaddo to Arran Arrhe, near the intersection of latitude 44° east of Greenwich with longitude 9° north. From this point a straight line is drawn to the intersection of 47° east of Greenwich with 8° north (Mohamed 2006: 602).

Subsequently the Ethiopian boundary delegates well aware of the worthlessness of their approach to farther the boundary negotiation using the 1931 instructional technical report because as mentioned by the representative of Great Britain the 1931 instructional technical report was not signed to replace the May 14, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary accord. Concomitantly in the 1931 instructional technical report there was no expression that shows the 1931 instructional report was better accepted than the May 14, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopia (Somaliland) boundary accord (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, 1933).

That being the case, the representatives of the Ethiopian boundary commission presented another argument that asserts the officialdom of the British Somaliland repeatedly mentioned in their speech that Madaha Djalelo is a tri-junction for the British Somaliland-French Somaliland-Ethiopian boundary. Nonetheless, this argument also did not bring any change on the position of Great Britain and France. Rather the representative of the British boundary commission undermined the argument asserting that the authority of the British Somaliland could not have the right to pass such kind of binding and final decision on the state of the proceeding of the tripartite boundary talk to agree on the tri-unction (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935).

On its other line of reasoning Ethiopia asserted that during the beginning of the bilateral Anglo-Ethiopian (Somaliland) boundary demarcation talk at the inception of 1930's the two countries boundary commission members agreed to use Madaha Djalilo as a reference and intended to proceed the work of demarcation from Madaha Djalilo to Rahale but not from Abasyun (claimed as tri-junction by the French) to Rahale. This might be taken as a remark that shows the instinctive acceptance or recognition of Madaha Djalelo as tri-junction by the British boundary commission members (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935; ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, January 1933). But this argument of Ethiopia also did not get weight on the eye of Great Britain and France boundary commission crews.

In the meantime, during the progress of the tripartite boundary talk on November 14, 1933 the Anglo-French boundary commission staffs agreed to use the detach of Abasyun hill as a reference point for the western end of the British Somaliland and the French Somaliland. The agreed remark of the detach of Abasyun hill by the Anglo-France boundary commission was located on the western end of Guaz road which is starched along Abasyun, Madaha Djalelo and Hasen opening. Concomitantly the western end of the Guaz road is found on the downside of the detach of Abasyun hill. The reason for choosing the western end of the road as a reference was because it was mentioned on the report of February 9, 1888 Anglo-France boundary accord. This move was claimed by the Anglo-French boundary commission delegates as a step forward on the discovery of the tri-junction. But at this stage, while the Anglo-French boundary commission agreed to use the detach of Abasyun hill as a reference on November 14, 1933, the representatives of Ethiopia was under the state of apprehension because the Ethiopian representatives suspected that the Anglo-French team might create a common front to assert the 1888 Anglo-French accord as more valuable accord in finding the tri-junction that put or assert the French protectorate deep into Gildessa and beyond towards Harar (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935).

After critically evaluating the November 14, 1933 Anglo-France commissions agreement on the decision of the western end of the Guaz road as a reference, the Ethiopian boundary commission's representative, Bejerond Tesema Benti, asserted that since Abasyun is part of the territory of the region of the Guaz road the accord should develop accordingly. The Anglo-France boundary representatives reasoned that in both February 9, 1888 Anglo-France and May 20, 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian boundary report there is no statement that mentions Abasyun as part of Guaz road (ENALA, Ethio-Somali, 17.2.268.02, 1935).

After a long and tough negotiation the British authority brings a new idea that made the tri-junction to be along Taranter hills and Madaha Djalelo hill. Ethiopia agreed with the British boundary commission's proposal. Nonetheless, France rejected the bid and tried to convince the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commissions to make the tri-junction at a place called Sahalar, which is located on the north east of Abasyun. This idea was also emanated aiming additional land. The proposal of the French boundary commission was rejected by the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commissions. Subsequently the tripartite boundary commission went to Rahale district to look for additional alternatives in the boundary negotiation and to discover the geography of the district (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

5. THE INCIDENT OF RAHALE AND INTERRUPTION OF THE TRIPARTITE BOUNDARY TALK

On November 2, 1934 at the eighth meeting of the tripartite boundary commission the representatives of Ethiopia proposed the idea of using the boundary line that runs from Madaha Djalelo to Rahale and the point where this line crossed the British Somaliland and the French Somaliland to be taken as the tri-junction of the three countries. This idea was previously reflected by the representatives of the British boundary commission during the second tripartite boundary meeting on November 3, 1933. As a result, the representatives of the British boundary commission unequivocally showed their support for the proposal of Ethiopia's representatives. However, the representatives of France showed reservation for the proposal and in return proposed the necessity of drawing or sketching the map of the area to the west of the district of Djalelo and Abasyun to show as evidence for their respective government about the tri-junction during homecoming. The representatives of Great Britain rejected the idea of sketching the map of the proposed region asserting the main purpose of the crew of the tripartite boundary commission was to discuss and reach a consensus about the tri-junction (ENALA, Ethio-somali 63.1.3.03, 1933).

Later, on January 24, 1934 the representative of France reflected another idea asserting Taranter hill as a tri-junction. According to this bid the gallery forest along Rahale River and the river itself remained on the side of the French Somaliland. Subsequently on February 2, 1934 the tripartite commission members moved to Rahale to visit the geographical seating of Rahale and to try to employ the practicability of the idea proposed by the French and the Ethiopian representative. On February 4, 1934 the tripartite boundary commission studied the surrounding localities of Taranter hill and the Rahale River as per the proposal of the French boundary commission. Finally, the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commission rejected the proposal of the French boundary representatives for two reasons. First, the proposal does not go in line with former agreements. Second, the proposal abuses the interest of Ethiopia and Great Britain (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, 1933).



While the tripartite boundary commissions were working at Rhahale they encountered different problems that directly or indirectly attempted to hinder the long wish of Ethiopia to see a demarcated boundary with neighboring powers aiming to put an end for boundary uncertainty. The first and unexpected incident at Rhahale for the boundary commission was the incident of February 2, 1934. On this date at seven thirty (7:30 A.M.) in the morning two French war helicopters float above the camp of the tripartite commission at near distance from the earth. On the same day with a gap of few hours the army of France come along the side of Rhale River and exchanged talks with the French boundary commission and returned son. The occasion put the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commission under the state of panic for a short time. To the surprise of the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commission the helicopters of France did the same action on February 9 and February 22. These actions were likely intended to create psychological influence on the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commission or due to security reason as asserted by the French boundary commission (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

The other challenge that the tripartite boundary commission encountered during their stay at Rahale was a repeated attack from the Issa tribe who opposed the boundary demarcation work. For instance, on February 26, 1934 nearly three hundred Issa tribe members launched an attack against the boundary commissions of the three countries. However, the nearby security of Ethiopia and Great Britain successfully defended the occurrence. On the next day (February 27, 1934) the crew of the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commission left Rahale to Mordale, which is found beside Abasyun station inside the land of Ethiopia. The crew of the French boundary commission also came together with the Anglo-Ethiopian except Muse J. Russen who was returned to Djibouti because he was seriously sick. The Somali tribe showed their opposition to the work of demarcation asserting the whole Somali inhabited territory of the region as a single country (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

After stationing at Mordale the boundary commission agreed to construct a road that runs from Teferi gate to Abasyun. This was necessitated for the easy evacuation during time of emergency for a problem like the case in Rahale. Nonetheless, on March 10, 1934 Chief Engineer Muse Baytes was assassinated by the Issa militant insurgent group while he was surveying a road from Teferi gate to Abasyun. The funeral of Muse Baytes came up on March 11, at Dire Dawa, one of the trade center and largest city in eastern Ethiopia. Between March 10 and April 1, 1934 the boundary commission entirely employed on investigating the assassins of Muse Baytes. However on April 2, 1934 the Ethiopian government assigned an especial investigative team to Mordale under the leadership of Djazmach Gebremariyam, who was the governor general of the district of Harer (Ibid).

The death of Muse Baytes together with the sickness of Muse J. Russan affected the progress of the tripartite boundary commission's negotiation and the work of looking for the tri-junction interrupted for some months (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, 1933; Ethio-Kenya Boundary, A17.03.14.02).

The delay of the tripartite boundary commission work to demarcate the tri-junction was a double punishment for Ethiopia's thought to end uncertainty of border through demarcation because the delay of the tripartite boundary commission side by side partly affected the boundary demarcation work between the British Somaliland and Ethiopia which was under operation between 1932 and 1935. This was mainly for two reasons: i) the attention of the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commissions were largely on solving the issue of tri-junction; ii) the absence of consensus on tri-junction weakens the boundary demarcation work between the British Somaliland and Ethiopia around and the nearby regions of the tri-junction (Ibid).

Later the trilateral boundary talk resumed on November 1934. At this time the head of the French boundary commission Muse J. Russen was replaced by Captain Piyor Furg. Captain Piyor Furg was assigned as the leader of the France boundary commission within the tripartite talk on March 24, 1934. During this stage of boundary negotiation diplomatic talk at the level of government was also included. The diplomatic efforts of the three countries helped the tripartite boundary commission to soften their approach of negotiation. Subsequently on November 3, 1934 the Franco-Ethiopian boundary commissions agreed Madaha Djalelo to be the tri-junction of the British Somaliland, French Somaliland and Ethiopia on the bases of the March 20, 1897 Franco-Ethiopian boundary report. Nonetheless, at this time the boundary commission from Great Britain showed some resistance. But later on November 4, 1934 tripartite meeting which was conducted on the French side of Madaha Djalelo France lobbied the British section of the commission (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

Finally, on April 18, 1934 the tripartite boundary commissions agreed Madaha Djalelo hill, located at 100 59' 48" N latitude and 420 54' 55" E longitude, to be the tri-junction for the British Somaliland, French Somaliland and Ethiopia. However, the final agreement was signed on May 18, 1934 under the hill of Madaha Djalelo. Subsequently work of triangulation was heralded on the top of Madaha Djalelo hill and a mark named 'X34' was given during triangulation work as a tri-junction reference spot. Then to avoid complexity and to increase the reliability of the agreement the crew of the tripartite boundary commission visited the Madaha Djalelo hill and the end of tripartite boundary negotiation officially heralded (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935; ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, 1933).

The consciences of the tripartite boundary commission to make Madaha Djalelo as the tri-junction (Somaliland tripoint) perhaps can be considered as noticeable (if not notorious) diplomatic triumph for Ethiopia for the following reasons: 1) the tri-junction on the top of Madaha Djalelo hill was not as such far away from the bid proposed by the Ethiopian boundary commission that in turn enabled Ethiopia not to lose land neither to Great Britain nor to France; 2) the demarcation by itself was considered as a relief for the prospect stability of Ethiopian; 3) the agreement was also taken as a sign of growth of recognitions of neighboring colonial powers for the territorial integrity of Ethiopia; 4) the demarcation of the tri-junction was considered as a good beginning to insist the boundary demarcation works on the other directions (fronts) of Ethiopia including the Italian Somaliland and 5) above all the success of the demarcation work at Madaha Djalelo considered by the Ethiopian as the beginning for the end of Ethiopia's boundary uncertainty (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 63.1.3.03, 1933).

Despite Ethiopia's ambition to use the boundary demarcation work at Madaha Djalelo as a good model and good beginning for the upcoming boundary demarcation work and boundary uncertainty the reverse was true, because boundary uncertainty continued to be a question in Ethiopia even in the later 20th century up until the contemporary eras. For instance, after the era of colonization the boundary tri-junction agreement faced strong challenge from the peripheral society asserting self-determination to join Somalia Republic. Subsequently an identified wrestling began between the Ethiopian central government and the peripheral people in eastern Ethiopian whom overwhelm by the ideology of "Greater Somalia".

6. CONCLUSION

It was neither for territorial aggrandizement nor for colonial division that Ethiopia stood side by side with Great Britain and France during the tripartite boundary negotiation (1933-34) but demanding territorial recognition for the unspecified or unrestricted tri-junction at Madaha Djalelo (Somaliland tripoint). In order to restrict the tri-junction the tripartite boundary commission conducted twenty seven meeting between November 2, 1933 and April 18, 1934. During the progress of the tripartite talk, the move of France to take additional land from Ethiopia by proposing the tri-junction to be at Abasyun hill; and the demand of Great Britain to maintain Madaha Djalelo under its own sphere of influence; as well as the life and death diplomatic struggle of the Ethiopian representatives not to lose more land were some of the common features of the tripartite boundary talk. Concomitantly, the tri-junction demarcation work was considered and believed as a solid buffer for the prospect peace and good beginning to end border uncertainty by the Ethiopian authority (ENALA, Ethio-Somali 17.2.268.02, 1935).

However, the April 18, 1934 agreement between Great Britain, France and Ethiopia over the Madaha Djalelo tri-junction did not bring lasting peace and boundary security as expected by the Ethiopian officialdom. This was partly because the demarcation work largely employed straight line that divide one ethnic group into different administrative zone which later helped for the rise of irredentist Somali nationalism. This was farther intensified following the independence of the British Somaliland (June 26, 1960) and the Italian Somaliland (June 30, 1960) and the subsequent unification of the British Somaliland and the Italian Somaliland for the formation of Somalia Republic (1st of July 1960) and its afterward abrogation of colonial agreements. Therefore, since the Somalia Republic unilaterally abrogated colonial agreements, keeping constant the diplomatic victory of Ethiopia at the tripartite frontier negotiation the issue of boundary uncertainty between Ethiopia and the Republic of Somalia remain unending problem until today (Abdisalam, 2000: 93; Mohamed, 1992: 40).

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