

DAHOMY AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

1708 - 1818.

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by

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to trace the 18th century political developments in the kingdom of Dahomey, and its central theme is Dahomey's attempt to create a politically stable and economically viable state. Economic questions are therefore important, but they have been treated mainly as contributory factors to the main question of political development.

The introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade into the Aja country had, by the end of the 17th century, weakened the Aja institutions and created a political vacuum. Before the process had reached an incurable stage however, a group of Aja had founded a new state, later called Dahomey, designed to withstand the corrosive influences of the new economic system.

By the beginning of the 18th century, Dahomey had grown sufficiently strong to fill the political vacuum being created by the decay of the traditional system. Between 1724 and 1727, Agaja, King of Dahomey, conquered and incorporated all the ancient Aja states. The Oyo immediately rose up in defence of the traditional system and the Europeans in defence of their economic activities. In 1730, Agaja submitted to Oyo and agreed to co-operate with the slave traders.

After that Dahomey was forced to concentrate on economic and administrative reconstruction, rendered necessary by the Oyo ravages and practicable by the pax imposed by Oyo. By

1751 the reconstruction was virtually completed.

After a brief period of prosperity, the inadequacies of the slave trade economy started to appear. Neither the European ships nor the supply of slaves were available in sufficiently large numbers. A deep economic depression started from about 1767 and despite all efforts, remained incurable in 1818, producing a widespread dissatisfaction which finally led to the deposition of Adandozan in 1818 and the replacement of the Tegbesu line by another headed by Gezo.

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Abbreviations

- ABNJ: Archivo Bibliotheca Nacional de Rio de Janeiro.
- Adm.: Admiralty.
- ADN.: Archives Departementales, Nantes.
- ADR.: Archives Departementales, La Rochelle.
- African Committee: Committee of Merchants Trading to Africa.
- AHU.: Archivo Historico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- AN.: Archives Nationales, Paris.
- APB.: Archivo Publico dos Bahia.
- CCR.: Chambre du Commerce et de l'Industries de La Rochelle.
- CMS.: Church Missionary Society.
- CO.: Colonial Office.
- EUL.: Edinburgh University Library.
- FO.: Foreign Office.
- MMA.: Methodist Missionary Archives.
- PRO.: Public Records Office.

PREFACE

This study of the kingdom of Dahomey in the 18th century is conceived as a contribution to African history. Approximately the southern third of the modern Republic of Dahomey is the area occupied by the ancient kingdom of the same name, whose capital was at Abomey. Compared with other West African kingdoms, it has been well served with travel accounts and scholarly works. This is not surprising for the kingdom was, in many ways, remarkable and has never lost its attraction for academic and non-academic writers. To anyone who is fairly familiar with the area, there might seem, at first sight, nothing new to be gained from a study of its history in the 18th century. Such a view, though erroneous, might seem to be borne out by the long list of books that have appeared on the kingdom.

In the 17th century, long before Dahomey became famous, the region featured in the works of Dapper, a Dutchman, whose work was translated into English by John Ogilby.¹ William Bosman,² also a Dutch, and John Barbot³, a French man settled in England, equally included in their works, an account of the Aja kingdoms that preceded the emergence of Dahomey.

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1. John Ogilby: Africa, being an accurate description of the Regions of Aegypt, Barbary, Lybia and Billedulgerid, the land of Negroes, Guinea, Aethiopia and the Abyssines (London 1670).
 2. W. Bosman: A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea (London 1705).
 3. J. Barbot: A Description of the Coast of the North and South Guinea (London 1732).

In the 18th century, when Dahomey had become the dominant power in Aja, there were the accounts of William Snelgrave,¹ John Atkins,² William Smith,³ Robert Norris,⁴ and of Captain John Adams,⁵ all Englishmen. Towards the end of the century, Archibald Dalziel published his History of Dahomey⁶ which was a compilation largely of Snelgrave's and Norris's accounts.

In the 19th century, John Macleod,⁷ John Duncan,⁸ Frederick E. Forbes,⁹ and Sir Richard Burton¹⁰ not only relate the events at the time of their visits, but also show an awareness of the previous writers.

These accounts have been supplemented in this century by large collections of the oral traditions of Dahomey by both Le Herisse and Edouard Dunglas as well as numerous others. Both Le Herisse's¹¹ and Dunglas's¹² collections have been published

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1. W. Snelgrave: A New and Accurate Description of some parts of Guinea and the slave trade (London 1734).
2. J. Atkins: A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil and the West Indies (Lond. 1735).
3. W. Smith: A New Voyage to Guinea (London 1744).
4. R. Norris: Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahadee, King of Dahomey (London 1789).
5. J. Adams: Sketches taken during ten Voyages to Africa, 1786-1800. Edinburgh ? 1823).
6. A. Dalziel: The History of Dahomey, An inland Kingdom of Africa (London 1793).
7. J. Macleod: A Voyage to Africa (London 1820).
8. J. Duncan: Travels in West Africa 1845 and 1846 (London 1847).
9. F.E. Forbes: Dahomey (London 1851).
10. Sir R.F. Burton: A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahomey (Lond. 1864).
11. Be Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume du Dahomey (Paris 1911).
12. E. Dunglas: "Contribution a l'histoire du Moyen-Dahomey" in Etudes Dahomeennes Vol. XIX, XX and XXI (1957-58).

the latter's posthumously. Dahoman citizens have also added to the collection and interpretation of their oral traditions. Of these, the work of Akindele and Aguessy¹ is perhaps the best known but by no means the only one. There have been thorough anthropological studies, the most prominent of which are the works of the late Professor Herskovits,² and scholarly and general historical interpretations based on the above evidence by Fage,³ Newbury⁴ and Cornevin.⁵

If all that is needed is just enough background knowledge for a detailed study of the colonial period, all the above sources may indeed be regarded as sufficiently satisfactory. If however what is wanted is an understanding of the historical development of the people themselves, their actions, their reaction to external stimuli, and the process of growth which made Dahomey the strong kingdom it was in the 19th century, in short if what is wanted is an objective history of the African kingdom of Dahomey, then these sources cannot be taken as adequate in themselves.

A close study of all of them reveals certain attitudes which may in fact make it impossible, without a new study of

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1. A. Akindele et C. Aguessy: Contribution à l'étude de l'Ancien Royaume de Porto Novo (Dakar, IFAN, 1953).
 2. M.J. Herskovits: Dahomey. An Ancient West African Kingdom 2 Vols. (New York 1938).
 3. J.D. Fage: An Introduction to the History of West Africa (Cambridge 1956).
 4. C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers (Oxford 1961).
 5. R. Cornevin: Histoire du Dahomey (Paris 1962).

this type, to arrive at an accurate historical interpretation of Dahomey in the 18th century. Not all the travel accounts were written out of a healthy regard for Dahomey, but to satisfy a demand, or to contribute to an argument current, in the country of the author at the time of writing. No one will seriously doubt that Norris's account of the reign of Tegbesu was intended primarily as a contribution towards the controversy about the abolition of the slave trade, a project which Norris opposed, or that everything that Burton wrote on Dahomey was deeply coloured by his blind belief that Africans were inferior beings. A good example of just how much Burton cared for the history of Dahomey can be illustrated by a historical "fact" he related. On one page, he said that Agaja died in 1727, and on the very next page, he went on blithely reporting what the same Agaja did in 1732.

Even Dalzel, whose venerable work remains the only "history" of the 18th century Dahomey, did not write for the edification of Dahomey. He was mainly interested in showing, despite the many incidents in his work which proved the contrary, that Dahomey was one of these "savage nations" which were "under little controul (sic) than that of their own will" and by that to extol the British civilisation. The commonest epithets which he used for Dahomey were "barbarous" and "savage". His explanation for the wars of Dahomey were the "insatiable thirst after blood, the barbarous vanity of being considered the scourge of mankind, the savage pomp of dwelling in a house

garnished with skulls and stained with human gore." Most serious historians no longer regard such supercilious attitudes as a valid basis of historical judgement.

Moreover, an examination of these accounts will reveal that in fact only two decades of the 18th century Dahomey, 1724-34, and 1770 -80, were actually covered by published eye-witness accounts. In Dalzel, the remaining decades have been filled in as best as the author could.

Equally inadequate as histories in themselves are the oral traditions. The historians distrust of anything that is not written has largely prevented, until recently, an objective attitude towards this source. Consequently there has been no uniform approach to its use.

My own experience during two years of collecting different kinds of oral traditions among the Yoruba, a people closely related in history and culture to the Dahomans, has convinced me that most writers on West Africa have not clearly distinguished between different kinds of traditions. They do not seem to be aware that certain kinds of traditions are "documentary" in character and that others are largely "interpretative", and that both have different "evidential" values. For Dahomey, the "interpretative" kind of oral traditions have been mostly collected and largely presented as the "history" of Dahomey.

Our knowledge of 18th century Dahomey up to date therefore is a mixture of facts, fables and prejudices, sanctioned

by usage and rendered acceptable by a general lack of interest in genuine African history except as an aspect of European imperial activities. In other words, there has been no scholarly historical work, devoted mainly to a study of the political developments in Dahomey in the 18th century. There is therefore something yet to be learnt from a study of this type.

In the 19th century, Dahomey was obviously an important West African kingdom, an oasis of internal order and sound administration in a sea of surrounding chaos. The basis of this unique position was laid in the 18th century. What then was the process of its political growth, what were the factors governing that process, and why did Dahomey succeed where other neighbouring kingdoms apparently failed?

The only contemporary documents to which the historian can turn for answers to these questions are the records of the different European African companies, five of which were established at Allada and Whydah at different times during the 17th and 18th centuries. They were the Brandenburgers, the Dutch, the English, the French and the Portuguese. The Brandenburgers, established in 1684, did not operate for more than a few years and had left the country before 1700. The Dutch too were gone by 1730, driven away by Agaja. For the greater part of the 18th century therefore, the English, the French and the Portuguese, the last of which officially established their

fort at Whydah in 1721, were the most permanent European traders in Aja. Accordingly, their records have been mostly used.

The records of the English Royal African Company, or after 1751, the Committee of Merchants Trading to Africa, are chronologically the fullest, though they are far from being complete. They are now part of the Treasury Papers (T70) in the Public Records Office. Usually the few surviving private papers of the local officers are much more helpful for this work than their public dispatches, particularly in the case of Whydah.

The records of the successive French Companies, from 1712 to about 1791, are lodged in the Archives Nationales in Paris, as part of the Colonial Office Papers under the index C.6: Senegal Ancien. They do not contain as many items as the English records, but usually they have been better preserved. The French officers' practice of writing separate dispatches at the same time, one on the trade and the other on current affairs, and of keeping full diaries of their interviews with the kings of Dahomey, have made their surviving documents very full and useful.

A most unexpected and invaluable French source are the records of the Provincial traders deposited in the Archives Departmentales, particularly at Nantes and La Rochelle. The B. and C. series in both places and especially at Nantes, are very useful. The series contain the short reports of all the captains who made round voyages from Nantes or La Rochelle to

West Africa, America or the West Indies and back. Usually, each account gives the date of departure, the description of the articles of trade carried away, different ports of call in West Africa and the length of stay in each port, events in the ports during the captain's stay, the number of slaves carried away and date of departure from West Africa to the West Indies. It also contains similar informations on the captain's activities in the West Indies. These informations are sometimes supplemented by similar ones at the local Chamber of Commerce of which the papers at La Rochelle have been most useful.

In Paris, I was able to secure the private papers of an 18th century slave trader, M. Proa, from one of his descendants, M. Marchand, through the kind introduction of M. Delafosse, the Archivist at La Rochelle.

In Paris, also, I was fortunate enough to meet the surviving head of the Wegbaja family, Prince Justin Aho, who, if Dahomey were not now a Republic, would presumably be king, and who still keeps court and performs court ceremonials as his ancestors had done. The four different interviews I had with him were very helpful towards my understanding of certain place names, and certain names of the kings of Dahomey.

I was not able to consult the Portuguese sources myself. Those that have been used in this work have been collected and translated for me by M. Fatumbi Pierre Verger. They are mainly

the official correspondences between the kings of Dahomey, the Viceroy (later Governor) of Brazil and the Kings of Portugal. In the Archives at Bahia, they are kept under the title Ordens Regiais (OR) or simply under "Correspondence". At Rio de Janeiro, they are numbered serially. At Lisbon, they are usually kept in Boxes (Caixa) and stamped with names that do not at first sight suggest their connection with the Aja country, e.g. Sao Thome.

For the last thirty years of this study, the Companies' records are either non-existent or are very thin. To fill in the gap, Admiralty (Adm.I) Foreign Office (F.O.) and Colonial Office (C.O.) records have been consulted, as have Parliamentary papers, and the letters of certain agents of the Church Missionary Society (CA2), and Methodist Missionary Society (MMA) who are known to have been in Dahomey within the first sixty years of the 19th century.

Although these documents were not mainly concerned with Dahoman affairs, and are by no means as complete as could be wished, they have repaid patient search. They have been used to correct a few but important opinions, currently but mistakenly held, on certain aspects of the history of Dahomey, have brought precision, where our knowledge was only hazy and have served as a check on the oral traditions. This last function may have an important bearing on the future evaluation and use of oral traditions for serious historical purposes.

With the passing of the colonial era and the re-emergence of African states whose relation with the outside world is almost exactly similar ^{to} those of their predecessors of the 18th century, such a study as this should have more than academic interest.

I am indebted to a great number of persons who have all helped me in the course of my research. In England all the archivists, librarians and attendants at the Public Records Office, Church Missionary Society, Methodist Missionary Society, the Edinburgh University Library and the British Museum; in France, all the archivists and attendants at the Archives Nationales in Paris, the Archives Departementales in Nantes, La Rochelle and Le Havre and at the Chambre de Commerce et d' Industrie at La Rochelle, have all been very kind and co-operative, as has M.R. Cornevin, Chef du Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation d'Afrique et d'Outre-Mer.

My stay in France was made both fruitful and enjoyable by Mons. Fatumbi P. Verger, M.P. Mercier of the Sorbonne, Dr. Paul Rouget of the Musee de l'homme as well as by my fellow Nigerian student at the Sorbonne, Abiola Irele.

To mons Verger I must express my special gratitude, for, as has been noted, it was he who, at his own expense, collected and translated for me all the Portuguese documents I have used in this work. Just how kind he has been will be appreciated

when it is realised that these documents are deposited as far apart as Lisbon, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro.

The work has been done under the painstaking supervision of Mr. D.H. Jones.

Without the generous grant made to me by the British Commonwealth and Scholarship Commission, and the kindness of the officers of the British Council who administer the fund, the work could not have been done.

CHAPTER ONEIntroductionThe Weakening of the old Political System in Aja up to 1708

The great political consequences of the slave trade on the West African states have been more often noticed than studied. It has been credibly implied that the Europeans brought with them an experience of political activities different from those existing in contemporary West Africa, and that the economic activities in which they engaged were either completely new or had never been practised on such a vast scale. It has also been granted that the new situation arising from their presence ultimately gave rise to new political formations. Yet the growth of those states, the factors governing their growth and the part played by the Africans in that process have not been sufficiently studied in the several regions of West Africa where the European activities were concentrated.

Among those who had to make institutional and political adjustments as a result of the European activities in their country were the Aja people who later formed the kingdom of Dahomey. The strains and stresses of the new ideas and practices on their ancient institutions became apparent from about the middle of the 17th century. By the beginning of

the 18th century those institutions had become clearly inadequate. Their struggle in the 18th century to create a new, politically stable and economically viable, state, called Dahomey, is the subject of this thesis. Whatever happened in Aja affected all their neighbours, particularly the Yoruba, whose reaction formed an integral part of the Aja struggle.

* * * * *
 The area lying roughly between the mouth of the Niger and Longitude 1° east, and between the sea coast and latitude 9° north, can be regarded as constituting a single social, cultural and political entity and perhaps might have been so delineated if a political map of West Africa had existed, say, at the beginning of the 15th century. It might also have been, and here will be, called the Yoruba-Aja country. Its coastline was later called the "slave coast" by the Europeans from about the end of the 17th century onwards.¹ Early in 1826, when Clapperton asked an Oyo man for the boundary of the Yoruba country, he was given virtually the above description.²

Beyond a low lying coastal belt, the land gently rises towards the north, where it flattens out into a kind of table land, which nowhere rises higher than three thousand feet above sea level. The land formation makes the rivers flow from north to south and the area is well drained. Lagoon

1. See map 1.

2. Hugh Clapperton: Journal of a second Expedition into the Interior of Africa (London 1829) p.57.

systems, which have now silted up at many points, ran along the whole coastline. Rainfall is heavy in the south and east where thick forest prevails, but is lighter towards the north and west, where in consequence the country is more open. Conditions are widely favourable for agriculture and the rearing of livestock. In the 18th century for example, travellers reported the presence of the abundance of maize, which was harvested twice a year, and of animals such as sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, dogs, and poultry of all kinds including muscovy ducks.¹

The Yoruba kingdoms, numbering about fourteen major and many minor ones at the beginning of the 18th century, occupied the eastern portion of this area. The major kingdoms were Benin (or Ibini),² Ekiti (or Efon), Egba, Egbado (or Awori), Ife, Igbomina, Ijamo, Ijebu including Idoko, Ijesha, Ketu, Ondo, Owu, Oyo and Sabe. The smaller ones were scattered all over modern Dahomey and Togo republics.

Their oral traditions have not been exhaustively collected, nor have those collected been definitively analysed. They appear, however, remarkably agreed that the founders of all their major kingdoms migrated from Ife though they differ on exactly the number of these major kingdoms.³ The tradition

1. A. Dalziel: A History of Dahomey (London 1793) p.iii

2. J. U. Egharevba: A Short History of Benin (Benin 1953) pp.5-7

3. S. Johnson (Ed. O. Johnson): The History of the Yorubas (Lagos 1956) pp.17-18 says they were seven; Ife traditions says they were sixteen.

of Oyo collected by Johnson, goes further to say that Ife itself was founded by emigrants from Arabia,¹ but the Ife tradition maintains that the whole world originated from Ile Ife.

Until further evidence comes to light therefore, the date of the foundation of Ife and of most of the major kingdoms cannot be stated with certainty. Guesses about the probable date of the foundation of Ife range from 2000 B.C. to between 600 and 1000 A.D. It can however be said with some degree of confidence that most of the Yoruba kingdoms known to be existing in the 18th century had been founded by the beginning of the 14th century.²

The Aja occupied the western portion of the Yoruba-Aja country. At the beginning of the 18th century, the most important of their kingdoms were Allada, Whydah, Popo, Jakin and Dahomey.

It may well be true that before these kingdoms were founded, the Aja lived in autonomous villages.³ However, oral traditions would suggest that from the time they came into contact with the Yoruba, probably before the 14th century, they started to adopt the Yoruba institutions and to live in kingdoms.

These traditions collected in Togo and among the Ewe in

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1. S. Johnson (Ed. O. Johnson) The History of the Yorubas (Lagos 1956, first published 1921).
 2. Frank Willet: "Investigations at Old Oyo 1956-57" in JHSN Vol.2 No.1, Dec. 1960, p.75; T. Hodgkin: Nigerian Perspectives; (London 1960) p.23.
 3. M. J. Herkovits: Dahomey, An Ancient West African Kingdom (New York 1937) Vol.II, p.3.

Ghana would suggest that the Aja and their related people, the Ewe, were gradually pushed westwards as the Yoruba expanded until they gathered around Tado, from where they dispersed in various directions. Some went to Nuatja or Watchi which later became the centre of Ewe dispersal, and others returned eastwards as a result of dynastic quarrels and settled at Allada, from which centre they founded the above named kingdoms. It has been suggested, and may well be true, that the stories of the migration of the Yoruba and the Aja peoples constitute a single series of migration with Ife, Ketu, Tado and Nuatja as the four main stopping and dispersal points.¹

The date of the foundation of Allada is uncertain but all the earliest events connected with it would suggest a period towards the end of the 16th century, probably about 1575. First there is a curious Oyo tradition which relates that "Sabigana" emigrated from Sabe to the Yoruba country during the reign of Obalokun, the Alafin of Oyo,² which can be dated to the last decades of the 16th century. This tradition would seem to refer to the last stage in the eastward movement of the Aja from Tado to Allada because the suffix "-gan" (gana) was used for Aja titles and because the "Sabe" in question was not that founded by a descendant of Oduduwa,

1. Jacques Bertho: "La Parente des Yoruba aux peuplades de Dahomey et Tago" in Africa 1949 pp.121-132.

2. S. Johnson: History p.168.

the ruler of which was called "Onisabe". It would seem to be the name which survived in the capital of the old Whydah kingdom written as "Savi" or "Xavier" by the Europeans but which may have been pronounced "Sabwe" with the "bw" sounding like the "w" in modern Ewe.

Then there is the Dahoman tradition which relates that two reigns after the foundation of Allada by the Tado emigrants, certain Aja princes left there as a result of dynastic quarrels to found Abomey. Dahomey was most probably founded about the beginning of the 17th century, about 1620,¹ and the reigns of two kings at such an unsettled time could not have extended for more than fifty years. At all events, the first known European notice of 'Aradra', appeared in the map of Arnold de Langum published in 1596.²

The dominant cultural influence in the whole area were the Yoruba, who, judging from the large area of land which they are said to have occupied in the different oral traditions, were obviously by far the more numerous of the two groups.³ Travellers in the early 17th century noticed, for

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1. J. D. Fage: Introduction to the History of West Africa (Cambridge 1956) p.93; C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers (Oxford 1961) p.10; R. Cornevin: Histoire du Dahomey (Paris 1962) p.92.
 2. R. Cornevin: Histoire du Dahomey, p.24.
 3. All the oral traditions relating to the foundation of Dahomey agree that the Abomey plateau belonged to the Yoruba people of Igede (Gedevi) before the Aja came. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume du Dahomey (Paris 1911) Ch. XII.

instance, that the lingua franca there was "Alkomysh", the language of the Olukumi, the name by which the Yoruba of the area were known.¹ Modern anthropologists have also recorded that most of the religious beliefs in the whole area tend to originate from Ife, or some other part of the Yoruba region.²

Religious beliefs and language are agents which generally modify social institutions and we may assume that the Aja borrowed a great many of the Yoruba institutions as well. Common institutions freely borrowed or imposed, common religious beliefs and a common language made the unity of the Yoruba-Aja country a reality. Yet within this unity, the Aja retained their distinct identity even though there were, and still are, areas where distinctions were blurred.

* * * * *

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Yoruba-Aja peoples lived under a particular kind of government, had certain ideas about which authority was legitimate and which

1. John Ogilby: Africa, being an accurate description of the
of Aegypt, Barbary, Lybia etc. (London 1670)
p.647. The words Oluku mi means "my friend". Early Yoruba from modern Dahomey to the Benin region seem to have borne the name. Some people in Haiti are still called "Lukumi", and they speak recognisable Yoruba. Others in Ibo area of Nigeria are still called Onukumi.
2. Jacques Bertho: "La parente de Yoruba aux peuplades de Dahomey et Togo" in Africa (1949) pp.121-132; P. Hazoume: Le Pacte de sang au Dahomey (Paris 1937) p.139; Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume pp.92-155 enumerates many of the gods though his spelling of their names may sometimes make them at first sight unrecognisable.

was not, and expressed relationships, social and governmental, according to a single accepted "social theory". This social theory was never written. It was more practised than theorised about, but was, nevertheless, generally known and accepted, and was woven into the social fabric of the people's lives so thoroughly that even today traces of it are still discernible among them. It is these survivals that have made possible the attempt to reconstruct the theory as the basis underlying the traditional political organisation of the Yoruba-Aja country.

From the way in which the relationships between kingdoms are today explained in the whole of the Yoruba-Aja country, it is clear that the people regarded the state as a larger version of the family,¹ with the king standing in the same relation to his subjects as a father to his children. They also regarded a country as a collection of any number of these kingdoms whose kings in turn acknowledged a single ancestor. In other words, each "father king" of each "family state" looked on his neighbour in a particular family relationship, and all the "father kings" of all the "family states" looked on one particular king as "Father" who in turn regarded all the other kings as "sons".² This way of looking at the state

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1. In the Yoruba country for example, great care is taken to connect all the most important kingdoms to Ife and their founders as "sons" of Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yoruba. In Aja all the kings equally descended from one common "father".
 2. This situation still obtains in Western Nigeria today. The Ooni of Ife is still regarded as "father" by the most important Western Nigerian Obas. Dahomey no longer has kings.

and country will be called the "Ebi" social theory,¹ and the country thus formed will be called, for lack of a better expression, an "Ebi Commonwealth". The Yoruba-Aja country was therefore not a "national" state, but an "Ebi Commonwealth".

It is not known how far this theory had historical beginnings among the Yoruba-Aja for such notions were not peculiar to them. Political relationships were expressed in more or less similar terms all over West Africa. Other peoples in different parts of the world at different periods in their history have had similar notions. The example of the children of Israel, with their twelve tribes, easily comes to mind. In the form that the Yoruba-Aja peoples used this notion, it is probable that the idea spread from Ife, and may have started from some of the sons of Oduduwa, the legendary father of the Yoruba, founding kingdoms of their own. As time went on however, it certainly became rationalised, as anyone collecting oral traditions within the boundaries of the ancient Yoruba-Aja country today would easily sense.²

It is necessary to look briefly at the nature of an "Ebi Commonwealth", since the future political developments in Aja arose out of the impact on it made by the European ideas and activities. At its head was a king whom all the other kings

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1. Ebi means family, but will be used in preference to the English word to avoid the idea of English family which is different from the African one.
 2. Yoruba traditions sometimes talk of seven, sometimes of sixteen sons of Oduduwa founding the first kingdoms. Obas who claim direct descent from Oduduwa today are more than thirty two. In Ekiti alone there are sixteen.

of the component states regarded as their "father". He was supposed to have been directly descended from the original founder of the first kingdom of the country, and his capital was necessarily in the town over which the first founder was believed to have ruled. All the kings of the component ^tates regarded one another as "brothers", and their relative importance was fixed by the supposed order of seniority of the original founders of those states. This family feeling, renewed or re-enacted at the accession of every new king, gave unity to the "Ebi Commonwealth". Common culture, common religious beliefs, common currency and a common language, which helped to bolster up the unity, flowed from this original source.

The first corollary that must be noted therefore is the belief that the relationship was not forced, but natural. The "father kingdom" did not take his title from conquest but from descent. His authority did not depend on force, but on natural obedience freely given. No kingdom could be correctly described as dependent on another, Just as in a family, all the kingdoms were interdependent. Each kingdom had its duties to the father-kingdom, just as the "father-kingdom" owed duties to all the others. These duties, which were regarded as sacred, were for the most part well defined. It was believed that the non-performance of them would offend

the souls of the departed ancestors and bring both temporal and spiritual disasters upon the whole commonwealth.

The second corollary is that the bond of society was blood relationship, not security or common economic interests. A man was a citizen of a kingdom because his family was a unit within the kingdom and he was a citizen of the whole country through his kingdom. Nobody could assume citizenship without being born into it, and once born into it, no one could opt out.

The smallest unit within the state was not the individual, but the family, which included dead and unborn generations, and to which belonged such things as state offices, agricultural lands, industries, priesthood and the like. A foreigner could join the society through intermarriage with any of the "citizens" but only the issue of such a marriage who could later claim blood relationship were regarded as citizens.

This form of political organisation had many advantages. For example, it simplified local administration in an age when transport was difficult and it devolved social service commitments on small family units. It had many faults however, the greatest of which was its weak central authority. By emphasising that obedience was based on natural allegiance, the "father" of the "Ebi Commonwealth" was left without his

own army to defend the overall interests of the "Commonwealth" either against a recalcitrant member or against an outside intruder.

This fault was all the more serious because the emphasis on "family" and "blood relationship" made the overall interests of the "Commonwealth" a secondary and often a remote concern for the citizens. In the face of an external pressure, their first instinct would be to defend their own immediate "family" interests, which might easily lead to fragmentation.

This great fault notwithstanding, the Yoruba-Aja peoples had reached a degree of political stability under this system by the beginning of the 16th century. Each kingdom had had its relationship to all the others fixed. None of the "son-kingdoms" could simply march an army on the "father-kingdom" and hope to become head of the country by conquest without widespread repercussions. Even when they migrated in large numbers, relationships in their new places of abode were easily re-established.

It is not suggested that life then went on in perfect harmony, without quarrels and without frictions. It is not even suggested that the model worked perfectly. No political model ever does. What is suggested is that within the country, certain rules had been established, which if broken would incur a general censure.

The economic activities in which the Aja engaged at Allada were probably quite similar to those in which they had long engaged, and which the Europeans reported in the 17th and 18th centuries. Agriculture was the main occupation.¹ The Allada region, like most of the Yoruba-Aja region, was a good agricultural land, and the Aja people were reported to be so industrious that they planted every available space.²

Industries included cotton spinning, cloth weaving, calabash and wood carving, iron works, beer brewing and salt making. Exchange was stimulated by a series of markets established in different parts of the country. One such market was situated in a place called "Ba" where

"every four days they have a free market of salt brought from Jojo in great quantities by canoes and from thence carried to the territory of Ulkama".³

At another spot

"four or five miles from Ba by a great tree, a free market is kept every day where the inhabitants sometimes to the number of three or four thousand, come with all sorts of commodities".⁴

Commerce consisted of the exchange of agricultural and manufactured goods. There was a common currency in cowrie shells, which with the existence of a lagoon system and a common language, encouraged long distance trading between all parts of the country and perhaps beyond.

1. John Ogilby: Africa, p.396.

2. W. Bosman: A New and Accurate Description, pp.342-343.

3. John Ogilby: Africa, p.367. Ulkama probably means Olukumi, that is Yoruba.

4. John Ogilby: Africa, p.367.

It would seem that the slave trade was not a significant part of the economic activities of the Yoruba-Aja peoples before the Europeans introduced it. The first piece of evidence for this assertion is a negative one. Although the earliest Europeans to visit the Aja coast reported seeing markets where many things were bought and sold, none reported actually seeing a slave market, which was what interested them most, and for which they earnestly enquired as they reported having been told that such markets existed eight hundred miles inland, that is, far beyond the limits of the Yoruba-Aja country.¹

The second piece of evidence is more positive. An English traveller writing of the 18th century Aja said that

"the discerning natives account it their greatest unhappiness that they were ever visited by the Europeans. They say that we Christians introduced the traffick (sic) in slaves and that before our coming they lived in peace".²

* * * * *

The arrival of the Europeans and the introduction of the "traffick in slaves" in an unprecedented scale brought new factors into the politics of the Aja. European exploratory activities in the Western coast of Africa started around the middle of the 15th century under the Portuguese initiative. Between 1461 and 1471, the Yoruba-Aja coast had become well known.³ For a long time, the Portuguese maintained the monopoly of the

1. John Barbot: A New Description, p.327.

2. W. Smith: A New Voyage to Guinea (London 1744) pp.266-267.

3. John Barbot: A Description of the North and South Guinea (London 1732), p.11.

advantages accruing from their discovery, but from about 1530 onwards, they were gradually but increasingly challenged. First came the French from about 1530, then the English from about 1553¹, and finally the Dutch from 1595.²

Dutch attacks on the Portuguese possessions in West Africa were particularly vehement, because the Dutch had, since 1568, been fighting a war of independence against Spain. When Portugal became an integral part of the Spanish monarchy in 1580, all the former Portuguese possessions came under Dutch attack. In 1637, the Dutch captured St. George d'Elmina, the Portuguese headquarters in West Africa, and by 1642, had practically driven the Portuguese away from the Gold Coast region.

Arguments about the economic advantages which these European explorations and adventures conferred on West Africa are still going on. It has been suggested that the Portuguese introduced maize to West Africa, but the latest evidence on this controversy would seem to contradict that suggestion.³

For the purpose of understanding future political developments, it is important to bear in mind first that the arrival of the Europeans increased social insecurity. The earliest Europeans were not particularly friendly to the African whom they often seized as objects of curiosity to be shown to the

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1. J.W. Blake: European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1668 (London 1937) pp.106-160.
 2. A.W. Cardinal: The Gold Coast, 1931 (Accra 1932) p.19;
J.D. Fage: Introduction to the History of West Africa p.60.
 3. D.W. Jeffreys: "How Ancient is West African Maize?" in Africa Vol. XXXIII No.2. 1963 pp.115-129.

kings and nobles in Europe,¹ or to be sold. The Portuguese sent armed galleys along the coast to burn the houses and canoes of the natives for alleged "recalcitrance".²

The slaves that were being exported from West Africa to the West Indies, from the early years of the 16th century until jointstock companies were formed, were not all bought from African vendors. A great many of them were secured by violence committed by the European captains. Towerson reported that when he visited Elmina in 1555, the natives would not come near him because a Mr. Gainish had stolen natives the previous year and carried them off while pretending to buy gold from them.³ John Hawkins, who went on three slave trading voyages to Sierra Leone between 1562 and 1568, surprised dancers at night and burnt whole villages to obtain his cargo.⁴

Secondly, the arrival of the Europeans in West Africa sharpened political rivalries. This was most apparent on the Gold Coast where the European activities in lower Guinea were at first almost entirely concentrated. The Europeans brought their rivalry from Europe to their new settlements and they fought there as they were used to doing in Europe. During these local wars, they all hired African allies to fight their fellow Europeans. Such African allies became enemies of one another as they became of the Europeans against whom they were hired

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1. Elizabeth Donnan: Documents illustrative of the History of the Slave trade to America (Washington D.C.1930) Vol.I. pp.18-19.
 2. W. Blake: European Beginnings in West Africa (Hakluyt Society Series Vol.I. 1942) p.55.
 3. E. Donnan: Documents Vol. I. p.43.
 4. E. Donnan: Documents Vol. I. pp.18-19.

to fight. Such enmity must have been a fruitful source of quarrel and wars between the African kingdoms.

When the Europeans had become well established, they all took part in local African politics.¹ In this again, the Dutch probably excelled every other European nation. They tried to subject African kingdoms to their own authority and hired natives in one kingdom to fight against another kingdom particularly when trade was dull.¹ Participation in local African politics was not however confined to the Dutch. The English and the Brandenburgers practised it. Sir Dalby Thomas was an implacable enemy of the Fetu over whom he forced a woman ruler in 1704, contrary to their tradition.¹ ✓

The European activities on the Aja coast in the 16th century are not as well documented, or at least they have not been as well studied, as their activities further west on the Gold Coast. The Portuguese built no forts there as they had done on the Gold Coast, and they did not seem to have come into contact with any powerful rulers as they had encountered at Benin or Ijebu. One explanation for this might be that the Aja were still living largely in Tado and did not move eastwards until about the 1570's. Another might be that the Portuguese were not particularly attracted to the region because they were predominantly engaged in exporting gold and pepper,

1. H.A. Wyndham: The Atlantic and Slavery (London 1935) pp.15-16;
 Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 1st Jan 1706 (T70/6).
 K.G. Davies. The Royal African Company 1672-1713 (London 1967)
 p.284.

to reign at Allada, between Te-Agbalin, his elder son, and Dogbagri genu (Dako), his younger son. The latter was elected but was later deposed whereupon his supporters went northwards to the Igede (Gede or Guede) kingdom where they later founded Abomey.¹ The Ajase Ipo (Port Novo) version of the same tradition relates that Te-Agbalin also left Allada at the same time and went eastwards to found Ajase Ipo.² This latter version is a rationalisation of later events as it will be seen that Ajase was founded in 1730.³ It seems probable that it was Te-Agbanlin, the contender who first lost, who procured the means to oust his brother from the throne and who later ascended the throne.

There can be no doubt that this incident, which led to the foundation of the kingdom of Dahomey ought to be dated to the early years of the 17th century, perhaps around 1620.⁴ It has been pointed that Leo Africanus mentioned a kingdom named "Dauma" early in the 16th century, that in 1575, Thevet mentioned a kingdom of "Dauma" in his *Universal Cosmography*, which occurs^{red/} in Mercator's atlas of 1560 and that of Ortelius in 1570,⁵ located in almost the exact position of modern

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1. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume du Dahomey (Paris 1911) p.279.
 2. A. Akindede and C. Aguessy; Contribution a l'etude de l'Ancien Royame de Port Novo (IFAN 1953) pp.20-28.
 3. See Chap. 3.
 4. J.D. Fage: Introduction to the History of West Africa (Cambridge 1956) p.93.
 5. R. Cornevin: Histoire du Dahomey p.96.

Abomey.¹ It must however be borne in mind that Allada itself was not founded until late in the 16th century. Moreover, the earliest Dahomey kinglist given by Agaja in 1728 makes it improbable that any names could have been left out of the kinglist now existing. In 1728, Agaja made it clear that he was the fourth leader of the Aja in the Igede region, coming after his grandfather, his father and his brother.² This would make him the third king (for his grandfather was not regarded as king) and the second generation after the formal inauguration of the kingdom. The relative longevity of the Wegbaja kings notwithstanding, it would be extraordinary if two Dahoman kings covered more than a hundred years before 1708.

If the location of a kingdom called "Dauma" was correctly sited in the 16th century in the area where Abomey later grew, it would pose the problem as to whether there was a previous kingdom, a proposition that cannot be entirely ruled out in the present state of our knowledge of the area, the name of which Aho (Wegbaja) took over, and whether the traditional meaning given for the word Dahomey (in Dan's belly) is a rationalisation of a word strange to the Egun (Gun) language. There would seem to be little doubt that the Dahomey kingdom over which the descendants of Dako and Wegbaja

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1. Adande: "Notes and Comments" (unpublished), kindly shown to me by Mr. D.H. Jones.
 2. Delisle: "Extrait du Registre", 26th Aug. 1728 (AN.C.6/25). Later traditions, accepted by Newbury and others, would tend to stretch the list further back and thus increase the genealogy. C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast p.10.

ruled was founded in the early years of the 17th century, after the establishment of the Dutch activities among the Aja at Allada.

It would seem extremely probable that the foundation of Abomey was the first reaction of the Aja to the Dutch activities among them. Before the Aja settled at Allada from Tado, they would already have been familiar with the European activities on the Gold Coast and with the social insecurity and political upheavals arising from them. Their own migration from Tado to Allada may have been partly due to their desire to seek security from the chaos in the west. When therefore the Dutch came among them in the early years of the 17th century they must have been faced with a very difficult choice.

Their dilemma would be that the Dutch possessed superior firearms, and if not befriended, might give those arms to an unfriendly neighbouring kingdom. In their new insecure position, the Aja could not afford to make enemies. To allow the Dutch into the country however was to start the same process which had caused chaos on the Gold Coast and had contributed to their own migration. One section among the princes of Allada appear to have favoured an outright expulsion of the Europeans and another championed their being welcomed under strict control. It appears that Dogbagri-genu, leader of the anti Europeans first won but was later driven out by the pro-Europeans.

It is quite clear from such evidence as we now have that whatever forced Dogbagri-Genu and his supporters out of Allada also caused them to harbour an inveterate hatred for the Dutch, to oppose the slave trade and most important of all, to reject the traditional social theory and the political system based on it.

When Agaja, king of Dahomey, conquered Allada and Whydah in 1724 and 1727, he chased out the Dutch, not only from Dahomey but also from all the neighbouring territories from Badagry in the east to Little Popo in the west. These actions of Agaja would suggest that the Dutch probably played a part in deposing Dogbagri-Genu, Agaja's grandfather.

Although before 1727, references to Dahomey (or Foin, Fon), were few and far between, yet it is known that in 1670-71¹, and again in 1687-88², they barred the way to the Allada slave raiders who were going into the interior to procure captives. There was no suggestion that the Dahomans wanted to act as middlemen. On each occasion, the raiders came back without slaves, bought or caught.

The proposition that the foundation of Dahomey was "initially stimulated by the need to resist attacks from Oyo"³ does not seem to be supported by any evidence yet known.

1. J. Barbot: A New Description p.120.

2. P. Roussier: L'Etablissement d'Issigny (Paris, 1935) pp 14-15.

3. D.H. Jones: "The Kingdom of Dahomey" in History and Archaeology in Africa (London 1955) p.63; R. Oliver and J.D. Fage: A Short History of Africa (1962) p.123.

First it should be noted that Igede, where the migrant Aja settled after leaving Allada, was already a Yoruba kingdom² and not a new frontier open to constant Oyo raids. Secondly, it does not appear that Oyo had yet enthusiastically embraced the slave trade by the early 17th century. In fact Oyo's enthusiasm for making any contact with the Europeans cooled greatly, when, according to oral traditions, eight hundred Oyo messengers sent by Obalokun, the king of Oyo, to a king in Europe, failed to return.² Thirdly the number of the Aja who migrated from Allada northwards does not appear to be large. They occupied about two villages under their first leader,³ and were probably not more than six hundred persons in all. These obviously could not have resisted an Oyo army at that time.

The most important development that followed the expulsion of Dogbagni-Genu was that he and his followers rejected the Ebi social theory and the political organisation based on it. They decided to found a new kingdom based on a completely new concept. They represented a state as a pot perforated all over and a king as water which must be made to stay in that pot. Before that could be done however, there must be a group of people prepared to put a finger each in each hole and such

1. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume pp.277-278.

2. S. Johnson: History of the Yorubas p.168.

3. Delisle: "Extrait du Registre", 26th Aug. 1728 (AN.C.6/25).

persons represented the subjects.¹

A comparison of this symbolism with that of a state as a family written large, would at once reveal startling and ominous differences. In a dry place like the Abomey plateau, water was uncommon and precious and so, by analogy would be the kings of the new state. Secondly, the qualification required for citizenship was not blood relationship, but simply a willingness and ability to serve the king. Anybody at all from any part of the world could be a citizen. Emphasis was on individuals, as signified by "one finger" and not on families. Thirdly the relationship between the king (Dada or father) and his subjects was not interdependent as in a family. On the contrary, every citizen must serve and be subservient to the king, the precious article that must be maintained in place by all.

From the way in which the Dahoman oral traditions explain how Dahomey came to possess any piece of land, the founders of Dahomey would seem to have believed that the only sure source and guardian of a right was no longer blood descent, but might. For although as refugees they were received by kind hosts, they did not take their title from gifts. On one pretext or another, they killed their hosts and gradually

1. My attention was first drawn to this tradition by Mr. Pierre Verger, who has spent many years collecting oral evidence in Dahomey. M. P. Mercier confirmed it when I met him in Paris, as did also Prince Justin Aho, the oldest representative of the ancient kings of Dahomey, whom I also met in Paris in 1962. No one however seems to have realised the revolutionary nature of this symbolism.

possessed their kingdom,¹ a possession that they then realised could only be held by force. Nothing in the new Dahomey resembled the immutable natural law of relationship laid down by departed ancestors whose wishes were sacred.

This principle ran very close indeed to the European idea of a national state. It certainly made it possible for several people, seeking adventure or security to come to Dahomey and become citizens. Many Portuguese mulattoes and at least one Englishman became Dahomans in the 18th century. It is no accident that the population of Abomey as far as it has been examined, is cosmopolitan.² The principle made it possible for the Dahoman army to be quickly replenished in the troubled times of the early 18th century, whenever it appeared to have been almost completely annihilated.

It was however a dangerously revolutionary principle for the time and place. Its most dangerous implication was that a determined section of the Aja had rejected the Aja constitution and had formulated an alternative which had a strong central direction, the very element which the traditional system had lacked. Unless the traditional system could be modified successfully to serve the new needs of the European economic activities, this new principle would eventually challenge the old one.

1. Le. Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p.279.

2. C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast p.6.

Te-Agbalin and his supporters who had thought that the European economic activities could, without damage, be accommodated under strict control, formulated their policies in the light of their knowledge of the contemporary events. First they decided that the Europeans should not be allowed to build forts in Aja. Tezifon, king of Allada enunciated this policy fully in 1670 when the French asked him to allow them to construct a fort in his territory

".. With regard to the factory at Ardra, he would give directions to the prince and the two great captains to go in person there and augment the buildings, but that he could not allow them to build a factory in their manner. 'You will' says the king, 'make a house in which you will put at first two little pieces of cannon, the next year you will mount four, and in a little time your factory will be metamorphosed into a fort that will make you master of my dominions and enable you to give laws to me.' 1

Secondly they decided that all the European activities in Aja must be concentrated at the capital, Assim (Allada), to which place all the Aja would be free to go. This would avoid the risk of European diffusion, prevent rivalries and quarrels amongst the Aja, and enable uniform action to be taken as new issues arose.

These policies of centralisation and control reckoned without two factors. The first was the reaction of the other Aja, whose kingdoms were closed to the Europeans, though they themselves were free to trade at Allada. Their rulers failed to see why they should be deprived of a greater share of the

ill gotten wealth which the slave trade brought. However much Allada might stress the security aspect of its policy, there could be no doubt that the slave trade brought wealth¹ which had not been part of the traditional perquisites of the Allada monarchy, and it was this aspect which the other kingdoms saw and resented.

The second factor with which Allada did not reckon was the European reaction. With the establishment of the European colonies in the New world, each European nation wanted its own exclusive source of African labour with which to work the plantations, and a European power already established in one place in West Africa did not like to see another power established in the same place. As the Aja country was populous, and therefore most inviting for the slave traders, it inevitably became the scene of sharp European rivalries. As the Dutch were already established in Allada, the other European powers would have preferred to settle in the other Aja kingdoms and must have resented the restriction imposed on their "freedom of movement" by the king of Allada.

These two factors were significant because if the Europeans and the other Aja kingdoms decided not to co-operate with Allada in carrying out its policies, there was practically nothing that Allada could do. Obedience to Allada having never been based on force could not be maintained by force

1. J. Ogilby: Africa pp.465-467 gives an indication of the likely revenue from sales tax.

without Allada seeming to break the Aja constitution, and indeed Allada did not have the force with which to coerce the Europeans.

With the Europeans wanting to establish factories in the other Aja kingdoms, which wanted them to come, it is not surprising that Allada's policy of centralised control of the trade eventually failed.

This failure was not due to lack of exertion on the part of Allada, which, in the thirty year period between 1640 and 1670, did all it could to achieve success. Twice during this period, the kings of Allada sent embassies to the European monarchs in an attempt to persuade them to concentrate at Allada all the activities of their subjects in the Aja country.

The first embassy was sent by Toxonu (Toshonu) in 1658 to Philip IV of Spain who was probably regarded in Aja as the most powerful European monarch. It was provoked by the abortive attempt in 1644 of certain French Capuchin missionaries to establish a post in Whydah¹ which Allada had seen as a breach in its policy, and a recurrence of which Toshonu was determined to prevent. Toshonu sent an Aja man, called Bans, to ask that the Spanish subjects be sent to establish both trading and missionary posts at Allada, and probably intended by that to convince the other Europeans that Allada could serve as a convenient centre for whatever activities they wished to engage in in Aja. It is doubtful

1. J. Barbot: A New Description p.120.

whether he ever wanted to change his religion or encourage his subjects to change theirs. It is even probable that he was not particularly eager to increase Allada's slave trade.

Spain, debarred by Papal Bull from trading in West Africa, took the missionary aspect very seriously. With the help of Bans, a booklet entitled "Doctrina Christiana" was prepared. It was a catechism written in Spanish and Egun (Gun), the language of Allada and was designed to teach easily the rudiments of Roman Catholic belief. Armed with these, eleven Capuchin missionaries left Spain on 15th November 1659 and reached Allada on 14th January 1660.¹

The mission however failed. Toshonu did not show the expected enthusiasm to change his religion. In fact he declared, after many prevarications, that he had no intention of doing so. Nor did he readily allow his subjects to change theirs. When nine of the eleven missionaries had died of various causes, the remaining two left Allada in 1661.¹

The main achievement of the venture was that the Allada people enthusiastically learned to read and write. In 1670, d'Elbee reported that the king had been trained in Sao Thome and that he, his eldest son and most of the chiefs in Allada spoke Portuguese to perfection.²

1. H.A. Wyndham: The Atlantic and Slavery (Lond. 1935) p.35; H. Labouret and P. Rivet: Le Royaume d'Ardra et son Evangélisation au XVIIe Siècle (Paris 1929) pp.6-30.

2. T. Astley: Collection (Vol.III) pp.68-72.

By the time the Capuchin missionaries left, the resentment of the other Aja kingdoms against Allada for being deprived of European establishments had become alarmingly pronounced. The division which Allada had sought to prevent by centralisation had been created. Dissatisfaction of Whydah against Allada was about the first thing that the missionaries learned when they landed at Allada in January 1660, and their presence at Allada while Whydah as yet had no European post, could only sharpen the disagreement.

The second Allada embassy to Europe in the interest of the Allada policy was dispatched to France in 1670 by Tezifon, Toshonu's successor, and was directly caused by the arrival of the French into the Aja country in that year.

The French West India Company was formed in 1664.¹ In 1666, it sent out a mission to West Africa to reconnoitre and recommend places where French forts and factories ought to be built.¹ In November 1669, it sent out two ships under d'Elbee to establish a French factory at Allada. In January 1670, d'Elbee reached Allada where he met Tezifon,¹ probably the son of Toshonu.

It was clear almost from the moment that the French arrived that Tezifon was going to be hard put to it to retain the French in Allada. The first problem was that of the supply of the slaves which was not very large in Allada and which

1. T. Astley: Collection Vol.III pp.65-76; J. Barbot: A New Description pp.325-350.

Tezifon was not particularly eager to expand. When Dubourg, who was in charge of the trade side of the expedition, promised that the French would build a factory at Offra and would send four ships annually for the slave trade, Tezifon replied that he already had more ships than he could load with slaves.

"Last year some had been forced to go away without cargoes, that there were then six on the coast and four at Elmina who only waited advice from their factory to come here. So that he wanted neither ships nor merchandise." ¹

It was in the interest of the policy of Allada however to let them stay and not go to Whydah. So, after the French had bestowed handsome presents on all who mattered in the capital and had raised the price of slaves, Tezifon allowed himself to be persuaded, issued a proclamation on 8th January 1670 that the French were allowed to trade and gave them a house as he had the Dutch.¹

The second problem arose immediately. Neither the Dutch nor the French wished to settle down and trade peacefully together. The Dutch strongly objected to the French being allowed to trade at Allada and asked Tezifon for a treaty that would confer the exclusive trade of Allada on them, but Tezifon refused to sign such a treaty. Then, as soon as the French were given the freedom to trade, they started to outdo the Dutch and to ask for conditions which would have made them "the most favoured nation" at Allada, but the king equally refused saying

1. T. Astley: Collection Vol. III pp.65-76; J. Barbot: A New Description pp.325-350.

that he regarded all the foreigners in his territory as being of equal standing.

Unable to obtain the right of exclusive trade or precedence at Allada from Tezifon, the French and the Dutch turned on each other. They started disputing about which of their national flags was more important, and resorted to a free fight to settle the issue. Tezifon's officers stopped them and warned

"both parties how much his master would be offended at such proceedings, adding that he would never suffer such disputes in his dominions, but would banish the aggressors". 1

The contending parties therefore referred their dispute to the king for decision which in effect would have enabled one of them to claim precedence over the other in Allada, but Tezifon emphasised that he regarded them as equals in his territory. He advised them to ask for the verdict about which of their flags was more important from their countries, and ordered that until the verdict was known no more flags must be displayed.¹

It was after this incident that Tezifon, either on his own initiative or at the instigation of the French, decided to send an embassy to France. If successful the move might induce the French to remain at Allada and not seek other posts, at least in the Aja country. Matteo Lopez, whom he sent, spoke Portuguese very well like most of the ruling class at Allada during that period. He reached France on 3rd December 1670 and in the following two weeks was given a truly royal welcome,

which he reciprocated with a dignity, grace and due deference characteristic of his own people.

Below the glittering surface, things did not move as much as either the French or Lopez wanted. The French traders attributed to Lopez, a speech which they read to the French king but which Lopez neither composed nor wished to make. Lopez would not sign the treaty proposed by the French because he objected to the first and the fifth clauses, which went against the policy of Allada and would have given the French preference over all the other Europeans and allowed them to cover their factories at Allada with tiles. Probably because of the winter cold to which he was not accustomed, Lopez asked to be taken back as quickly as possible.

He left Paris in the middle of January 1671,¹ and ought to have reached Allada, at the latest, by the following March. For some unexplained reason, he did not reach Allada until October.² In the interval, he and Carolof, the French trader who accompanied him, quarrelled, about what is not known, and Carolof refused to hand over to Lopez, as he ought, the presents which the king of France had sent to Tezifon in return for the ones which Tezifon had sent him.

The embassy was therefore largely a failure like the previous one. Neither the French nor the Allada had any cause to be particularly fond of each other after it. To worsen

1. T. Astley: Collection Vol. III p.79.

2. J. Barbot: A New Collection p.120.

matters, Carolof could not see Tezifon for a long time after his arrival as Tezifon was engaged in pacifying the Dahomans who had, for the first time recorded, barred the way to the Allada raiders.

The failure of this embassy pricked the bubble of Allada's policy of centralisation and control. Boredom at Allada or a preconceived plan, induced Carolof to wander westwards. First, he went to Great Popo, where the king, who probably shared Whydah's disgust for Allada's centralisation policy, offered to take much lower duties from Carolof than those taken at Allada. From Great Popo, he went to Whydah, where the king again lured him with all kinds of promises and inducements unobtainable at Allada. For this reason, Carolof established a French factory at Whydah in 1671. Probably as a result of Carolof's establishment, which the king of Allada could not prevent, ships started to go to Great Popo whose people therefore started trading in their own port.¹ With Whydah and Great Popo ports opened, Allada's policy was defeated and the stage set for the internecine rivalry which Allada had wanted to prevent.

For the next thirty years, Whydah, Allada and Great Popo vied with each other for a greater share of the slave trade in the Aja country. Whydah won the contest because it threw itself wholeheartedly into the trade and offered

1. J. Barbot: A New Description p.325.

the Europeans every alluring condition which they sought. The English who had established at Allada in 1674,¹ started sending ships to Whydah in 1681² and finally removed their headquarters thither in 1683.³ The Dutch settled a factory at Whydah in 1682, and the Brandenburgers in 1684.⁴ The Portuguese too were back, for they were reported to be taking part in Whydah politics between 1670 and 1680.⁵ Whydah's victory was complete in 1704 when in a six clause convention, all the European traders agreed that Whydah port should be regarded as an international neutral port, and that the ships in harbour or in sight of it should not be molested, even if there was war in Europe.⁶

Fundamentally the cause of the failure of Allada's policy was the inadequacy of the Aja institutions to cope with the new situations arising out of the European activities. Allada lacked and did not devise the machinery for the equitable distribution, among the Aja states, of the new wealth accruing from the European trade. Because of this, it could not successfully persuade all the other Aja kingdoms to acquiesce in its policy. These latter therefore continued to feel cheated. The longer this feeling continued, the less respect they had for

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1. K.G. Davies: The Royal African Company (London 1957) p.228.
 2. William Cross to R.A.C., 13th June 1681 (T70/1).
 3. K.G. Davies: The Royal African Company p.228.
 4. J. Barbot: A New Description p.453.
 5. W. Bosman: A New and Accurate Description pp.365-366;
J. Barbot: A New Description p.334.
 6. P. Labat: Voyage des Marchais Vol. 11, p.109.

the authority of the "father" and the weaker the bond between the "father kingdom" and the "son-kingdom" grew.

Moreover, Allada lacked the force with which to make the Europeans obey its orders. The Europeans did not have the same respect for the authority of the "father" as the Aja had, and they were not bound by any fear of religious sanction if they disobeyed him. The only thing that could make them respect the wishes of the Allada authority was force, which the tradition constitution did not give to the king of Allada. Therefore Allada could not effectively prevent any lawlessness that the Europeans might decide to indulge in, nor could it stop them from establishing anywhere else in the Aja country when they finally decided to do so. This lack of adequate force also finally made it impossible for Allada to check the chaotic consequences that followed the failure of its policy.

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 The result was a further weakening of the already inadequate Aja institutions, a process that dealt a great blow at the preservation of the traditional political system. Whydah's success in attracting the Europeans led to a general scramble for the slave trade and the least attempt by Allada to hinder any of the kingdoms was regarded as a sufficient reason for enstrangement. Between 1671 and 1682, relations were so strained that the Ebi social theory was proving no longer adequate to hold the country together. European visitors talked of Great Popo as being "independent" of both Allada and

Whydah,¹ of Whydah and Tori as being "separate" kingdoms (meaning they were independent of each other and of Allada), and even of Offra, Allada's port, as "rebellious" against the authority of Allada.¹

Allada tried to restore its own authority by force, but was under the disadvantage of never having been a military kingdom, and therefore never having an adequate force. To repair the inadequacy, it hired other people to do its fighting. In 1680, it secured the services of the Little Popo-Accra, who, having been driven out of their kingdom in 1677 by the Akwamu,² were likely to be sympathetic to traditional authority. Ofori, their king, conquered Offra, but ran out of ammunition when he attacked Whydah and had to retreat,³ thus leaving the strongest of the rebels untamed.

If Allada could hire mercenaries, so could the other Aja kingdoms. Agbangla, the new king of Whydah, hired the crew of a French ship in 1682 and sent them unsuccessfully against the Great Popo,⁴ He did not, however, rely on European alliances alone which were too transitory. He turned naturally to an alliance with the Akwamu, the enemy of the Little Popo-Accra. Allada, using the displaced Accras, and Whydah using the free booting Akwamu, fought inconclusive wars in the years immediately after 1680.

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1. W. Bosman: A New and Accurate Description pp.335-336;
J. Barbot: A New Description p.323.
 2. Ivor Wilks: "The Rise of Akwamu Empire 1650-1710" in Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana (THSG) Vol.111 pp.100-128.
 3. J. Barbot: A New Description p.323.
 4. W. Bosman: A New and Accurate Description: pp.335-336.

It may be pointed out that this was the basis of the relationship between Whydah and Akwamu. The Whydah-Akwamu alliance was something like the solidarity of bandits against the traditional legalism of the Allada-Little-Popo-Accra. The alliance was in all essentials completely ineffective, but it was remarkably enduring. Whydah's invitation in 1702 to the Akwamu army after its victory over Little Popo, was in effect a demonstration of their solidarity and did not constitute an Akwamu conquest of Whydah.¹ We shall see Akwamu taking up the cudgels on behalf of Whydah in 1728 when the latter had been conquered by Dahomey.²

In the 1680's the lack of decisive victory by either Allada or Whydah, and the weakening of all the accepted values created a power vacuum, which in turn brought lawlessness. With the new enthusiasm for the slave trade, manstealing was widespread. Slave raids, sanctioned by the authorities, became the new fashionable occupation. Everyone sought slaves and no one seems to have questioned any slave owner how he got them. For example, the people of Tori kingdom, hitherto farmers, took to manstealing.³ The Whydah people stole their Great Popo neighbours in such great numbers that within ten years, even a casual European visitor noticed a sharp decrease in the population of Great Popo.⁴

1. Ivor Wilks in the article cited above erroneously thought it did.

2. See Chapter Three.

3. J. Barbot: A New Description pp.345-346.

4. J. Barbot: A New Description pp.323-327, 350.

It is not surprising therefore that the number of slaves exported out of the Aja country in the decades immediately after 1671 increased at a great rate. Up to about 1671, an estimated annual average of only about three thousand slaves were carried away from the whole of the Aja country.¹ In the 1680's, Great Popo alone could fill a whole ship in a few days. Whydah exported about a thousand a month, that is about twelve thousand a year, and Allada had increased its own annual quota. In 1678, an English factor at Offra, the port of Allada, estimated that Allada exported between six and seven thousand slaves per annum.²

While social insecurity was increasing and the traditional bonds between the Aja kingdoms were being slowly destroyed, the basis of the internal administration within each kingdom was also being slowly dismantled by the desecrating hands of the European factors. For once they had settled in a kingdom, their desire for pre-eminence for their individual nations and their building up of parties of native supporters that could be used to back their pretensions, became a fruitful source of friction that could mean unending civil wars. Moreover the factors made sure that the ruling classes were in favour of the activities in which they wanted to engage.

What this could mean was soon plain. The king who had brought the French into Whydah died soon after 1671. His

1. J. Barbot: A New Description pp.323-327, 350.

2. K.G. Davies: The Royal African Company p.228.

eldest son ought to have succeeded him after performing the traditional rites at Allada, and no native opposition to him seems to have arisen. The European traders however thought that he was not sufficiently pro-European, so the Dutch, the French and the Portuguese drove him out and forcibly installed his younger brother, who took the name Agbangla.¹

This was a complete breach of the constitution and the conservative chiefs may have refused completely to recognise his authority. It seems, in fact, that he relied for most of his reign on European support and always gave them whatever concession they sought.

This blatant European intervention was not an isolated case. When Agbangla died in August 1703,² the same process was repeated. By then the several European factors had each had the support of a faction within the Whydah state. Peter Duffield the director of the English fort, supported by his own faction, put Aisan³ or Amat, Agbangla's second son, on the throne of Whydah before the death of Agbangla was publicly announced and before the eldest son knew of it. The eldest son asserted his right, and a civil war broke out, but Duffield and his faction won,⁴ and for the second time in thirty years,

1. nW. Bosman: A New and Accurate Description pp.355-356;
J. Barbot: A New Description p. 323.

2. P. Duffield to R.A.C., 25th Aug. 1703, 7th Oct. 1703; John Carter to R.A.C., 26th Aug. 1703 (T70/13).

3. E.D. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX, p.34 has written the name "Hayehouin" but I shall keep the spelling Aisan, because it seems to me nearer the original.

4. Peter Duffield to R.A.C., 25th Aug., 7th Oct. 1703; John Carter to R.A.C., 26th Aug. 1703 (T70/13).

a king has been illegally installed on the Whydah throne by the Europeans and the ceremonies prescribed by the Ebi theory omitted.

Allada could not be expected to countenance any Whydah king so unconstitutionally installed. There was, however, nothing much the king could do to stop the process. For there appears to have been no traditional machinery by which he could divest an illegally installed "son" of his possession. The only course open was to deprive Whydah of the economic advantage that had enabled it to be so contemptuous of the traditional system.

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This proved impossible for many years because the chaos caused by the manstealing and the lack of effective authority in Aja brought the Oyo army down twice against Allada in the last twenty years of the 17th century.

Oyo, as we have noticed, was one of the major kingdoms of the Yoruba-Aja country. Its reputed founder was a prince from Ile-Ife, called Oranyan, who was also the founder of the present Benin dynasty. Because of its geographical position in a relatively dry area, and in easy contact with the muslim world, Oyo quickly became the richest of the Yoruba kingdoms and was able to build up a strong cavalry army. By the middle of the 16th Century, it had become the strongest kingdom in the Yoruba-Aja country.

Its first expedition against Allada was between 1680 and 1682.¹ The immediate cause is unknown, but was probably not Oyo's desire to clear a way to the coast for the Oyo traders seem to have had access to the coast long before then.¹ It may have been that certain Oyo traders had been affected by the Aja raids, which the Alafin sent his army down to avenge. Over half of Allada was destroyed during this campaign and the mere mention of the name of Oyo afterwards created panic among the Aja.¹

The second invasion occurred in 1698 and was directly caused by certain Aja people sending to the Alafin for protection. The Alafin sent to the king of Allada to advise him to govern more justly, but the king of Allada injudiciously killed Oyo's messengers. So once again a great part of Allada kingdom was destroyed, but the king, who was particularly wanted, escaped.²

These two attacks greatly weakened Allada and rendered it incapable of maintaining its rivalry with, let alone checking, Whydah, but it did not solve the problem of the disintegration of the Aja society. Whydah could not take the leadership simply because its wealth had increased, and Oyo, though an acknowledged overlord, could not pry too much into the "family" affairs of the Aja.

In 1705, when Allada had recovered sufficiently from

1. J. Barbot: A New Description pp.351-352; J. Ogilby: Africa p.480.

2. W. Bosman: A New and Accurate Description: p.397.

the ravages of the Oyo, the king promptly declared all the Allada roads leading to Whydah closed.¹ Aisan however behaved reasonably, pacified the king of Allada, performed the traditional ceremonies and had himself crowned by the traditional messenger from Allada.² About the time of his coronation, an agreement seems to have been reached between Allada and Whydah by which each agreed not to molest the trade of the other. It seemed that the new economic activities could, after all, be grafted into the old order. Then suddenly in 1708, Aisan died, leaving a minor of thirteen years as a successor, a minority which gave full play to the forces of disintegration.

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By the end of the ~~xxx~~ ~~xx~~ ~~xxx~~ 17th century therefore, it had become quite clear that the European activities in Aja could neither be concentrated in one place nor controlled by the Aja authorities. It had also become apparent that those activities had started to weaken the traditional institutions which were meant to contain them. The whole process had justified the stand which the founders of Dahomey had taken at the beginning of the century. The increasing realisation that they were right, the increasing social insecurity and the chaos into which the traditional institutions were falling would lead more and more Aja to join the supporters of Dogbagri-Genu in the Igede region.

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1. Richard Willis to Sir Dalby Thomas, 24th July 1705 (T70/5).
 2. T. Astley: Collection Vol.III pp.41-43; Labat reported this as having taken place in 1725, but there is an error in his dating, first because the king he mentioned was Aisan or Amat, who reigned between 1703 and 1708 and secondly because in 1725, there was no Allada to perform the ceremony, it having been destroyed by Dahomey in 1724.

All that can be safely said about this earliest phase of Dahomey's growth is that the descendants of Dogbagri-genu built their state quietly but surely. Dogbagri-genu himself was not made king in his new place of sojourn, there being no territory over which he could rule. When his son, Aho, had conquered a few more villages, he was made king and took the name Wegbaja. By the time of his death around 1680, he had added eighteen more towns and villages to the nascent kingdom.¹

Akaba ascended the throne after Wegbaja, and soon the little kingdom was attacked and almost completely destroyed by Weme. Akaba however recovered and was able to continue the Dahoman expansion. By the end of his reign in 1708, the Dahomey kingdom consisted of at least forty towns and villages.¹

The oral traditions do not give the names of all these earliest conquests, but the location of the few of them that are remembered is significant. They lay directly southwards and south-eastwards of Abomey, across the region which the Allada people would have to cross if they were going to raid for slaves. Probably Dahomey sought to control this area not to engross the trade, but to stop it, as the attempts of 1670 and 1687 already cited would seem to suggest.

Apart from this bare outline of the Dahoman expansion, nothing is known of the growth of its internal administration. It will be reasonable to suppose however that such

1. Delisle: "Extrait du Registre", 26th Aug. 1728 (AN.C.6/25);
E. Dunlas: "Contribution à l'histoire du Moyen Dahomey"
in Etudes Dahomeennes Vol. XIX. p.96.

organisations would be directly controlled by the king and would not be hereditary, that every citizen would be personally required to do obeisance to the king to symbolise his "putting a finger in the perforated pot" and that the state had a standing army. Much of these earliest organisation has been attributed to the efforts of Wegbaja, the first king. The emigrants who had been forced to seek safety under him as a result of the increase in the social insecurity that had followed the unrestricted slave trade after 1671, probably constituted the element which replenished the Dahoman army after it had been almost completely wiped out by Weme. By the time that Akaba and Aisan died in 1708, Dahomey had gained tremendously, not only in territory and men, but also in military experience and in confidence, and was ready to reimpose order on the Aja if the process of disintegration continued unchecked.

Chapter Two

The End of the Old Political System in Aja 1708-1724

In 1708, the crisis provoked by the impact of the slave trade on the traditional Aja political system entered its final phase. Huffon the king of Whydah¹, and Agaja the king of Dahomey², both ascended the throne in that year. They were to be the protagonists in this final act of the drama that saw the imposition of Dahoman rule on the old Aja country.

Between 1708 and 1724, constitutional issues in Aja were no longer solved according to traditional practice. This caused a breakdown in the internal administration of both Whydah and Allada and contributed to a war, precipitated by the Dutch factor at Whydah, which went on for eight years before it petered out. This breakdown was both the sign and the cause of a power vacuum in Aja. In 1724, Agaja was invited to Allada to use extra-traditional means to settle a traditional issue and he destroyed Allada in the process.

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1. Du Coulombier: "Relation envoyé à la Compagnie Royal de l'Asciente", 29th May 1714 (AN.C.6/25)
 2. No authority for this date before Dalzel has been found, but there is no need to doubt its accuracy, for Dalzel may have had access to information now lost, and all writers on Dahomey have followed the dating. A. Dalzel: History of Dahomey (London 1793), p. 7; M. J. Herskovits: Dahomey Vol. I p. 13; E. Dunglas "Contribution à l'histoire du Moyen Dahomey" in Etudes Dahoméennes (E.D.), Vol. XIX. p. 101; C. W. Newbury; The Western Slave Coast, p. 14.

Two main constitutional issues during this period show that important ruling sections among the Aja of Whydah were increasingly disregarding the traditional precepts in the early 18th century. The first and much the more important was the question of the succession. Huffon was a minor when his father died. The Whydah traditional constitution provided that whenever a king died without a successor, the Gogan of Sahe¹ was to succeed.² A minor who could not perform all the traditional ceremonies was not a suitable successor, and there was no provision for a regency.

The Gogan therefore put in his claim and was supported by a party headed by Chief Carter, the general superintendent of Whydah trade, and a pro-English chief.³ If the traditional practice had been followed, he would have succeeded without any serious opposition. Those who had supported Aisan's accession in 1703 under the leadership of Chief Assu, however, now backed Aisan's young son, Huffon. Two factions therefore emerged in 1708 probably along the same lines as in 1703, and both were prepared to use extra-traditional means to settle the issue.

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1. This is the spelling used by the present whydah descendants for the ancient capital of the old kingdom of Whydah. See Casimir Agbo: Histoire de Ouidah du XVIIe au XX siècle (Avignon 1959) passim.
 2. Du Coulombier: "Mémoire de la suite des affaires du pays de Juda", 14th Feb. 1715. A similar arrangement was known in ancient Ife where, the oral tradition says, if an Obaleaye lived to see the death of three Ooni (the king of Ife), he was automatically made the next Ooni.
 3. This must not be confused with the Yovogan, a post that had not yet been created.

Chief Carter gathered an army of between twelve and fifteen thousand soldiers to back the Gogan. Chief Assu obtained the help of about eight hundred European soldiers and marines to support Huffon,¹ and with the backing of his own followers he quickly won the contest that ensued. Huffon, a child of about thirteen years, was forcibly enthroned as king of Whydah.

The second issue arose in 1717. On the night of the 18th July, the death of the reigning king of Allada was announced to Huffon in the traditional way.² Instead of performing his duties as prescribed by tradition on such an occasion, Huffon sought the advice of Bouchel, the director of the French fort. Bouchel told him to do nothing until a new king was elected at Allada, and then to send presents and request the new king for harmonious relations. Huffon accepted this advice.

A week later the Allada chiefs, who must have been surprised at Huffon's behaviour, came again to announce that a new Allada king had been installed. Huffon then sent presents, not as tradition prescribed, but as Bouchel advised.

Such apparently minor breaches of the tradition show that the Aja rulers who ought to have been the jealous

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1. J. Barbot: A New Description p.453; Du Coulombier: "Relation envoyer à la Compagnie ...", 10th Aug.1714 (AN.C.6.25).
 2. "Conseil de direction", 27th July 1717 (AN.C.6/25).

guardians of the established order, were themselves not unwilling to use foreign ideas to solve their problems when it suited them. By such behaviour, they and their European accomplices were weakening the binding force of traditional belief and causing its eventual destruction.

Probably neither Huffon nor the Europeans consciously set about breaking up the Aja political organisation. They may have thought that they were merely protecting their different economic interests. Huffon to the very last believed in the traditional set up,¹ but he wanted to encourage the Europeans to send ships to his port rather than to the Allada port of Jakin. The Europeans also looked on Whydah as the greatest slaving port in West Africa in the early 18th century and did not wish to lose it. They opposed the succession of the Gogan probably because they had long regarded him as a difficult man to deal with,² and they may have felt moreover that a minority would offer them greater opportunities to influence the development of economic policy.

The result of Huffon's accession in 1708 was however a complete breakdown of the internal administration at Whydah.

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1. In 1722, when he could have been happy at the armed revolt against Allada's authority, he offered to help Allada. See Bouchel to La Compagnie, 30th Ap. 1722 (AN.C6/25).
 2. T. Astley: Collection Vol. II. p. 412. Philip called the title "Springatha", trying to render intelligible the Aja sound.

Huffon's tender age which prevented him from performing all the crowning ceremonies, rendered him a king without authority until about 1726 when he was old enough to do so. As there was no constitutionally accepted regency, there was no central authority. The chiefs who had backed the rival claimants remained unreconciled with one another. Chief Carter swore never to forgive chief Assu, and chief Aplogan, who probably supported Huffon, remained an inflexible enemy of the Gogan. The chiefs who had opposed Huffon's accession were able to treat him as if he were no king at all.

Examples abound between 1712 and 1715 of the lawlessness that ensued as a result of this situation. In October 1710, an unidentified chief raised a rebellion against Huffon, but was quickly defeated with the support of the general populace.¹ Huffon however was not allowed to punish the rebel as good administration demanded. Instead an extraordinary council of the elders met in which he was obliged to effect a reconciliation with the rebel and at which he provided a feast for all.¹

About 1712, Huffon himself, for unknown reasons declared war against the Gogan and asked his chiefs to aid him. The Aplogan, a sworn enemy of the Gogan, very promptly responded and did more than he was requested, by burning all the

1. Hicks to R.A.C., 18th Oct. 1710. (T70/22); Seth Grosvenor and James Phipps to R.A.C., 3rd Jan. 1711 (T70/5).

houses, farms and villages belonging to the Gogan. When Huffon and the Gogan were later reconciled, the Aplogan and the Gogan persisted in their enmity. Between 1712 and 1715, they fought private battles in Whydah which Huffon was completely unable to stop.¹

The behaviour of the European directors of the forts increased this chaos. Once Huffon was on the throne, the same self-interest that had led them to support his candidature tended to drive them into competition for the greatest share of the Whydah slave trade. This attitude was carefully fostered by their employers in Europe. The instructions which the English Royal African Company gave to William Hicks, its representative at Whydah in 1711 was typical.

"We pray you to cultivate so good an understanding with the king that upon our settlement and obligeing (sic) to furnish him with everything, he will yield to discharge the French from any trade in his country, and advise us your thoughts of the best methods of securing to us the sole trade of Whidah."²

Each European Company also wanted the largest share of the gold brought by the Portuguese traders to Whydah

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1. Du Coulombier: "Mémoire de la suite des affaires du pays de Juda", 14th Feb. 1715. (AN.C.6/25).
 2. R.A.C. to William Hicks, London 13th Nov. 1711 (T70/52).

to buy slaves. The Dutch considered that the Portuguese traders there were under their authority by virtue of a clause in the Treaty of Munster of 1648. But the Portuguese authorities in Brazil had never acknowledged the Dutch right.¹ The English wanted to be the chief carriers of any European goods which the Portuguese might need at Whydah, so that they could monopolise the Portuguese gold.²

Irrespective of the Company's direction, exactly how the "sole trade of Whidah" was to be secured depended largely on the temper of the factor on the spot. If he believed in friendly persuasion he could follow the Company's instructions, give presents and employ intrigue to bring the authorities round to his side. Even such a method however tended to weaken the Whydah administration, by producing a violent

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1. The Dutch claimed the right to impose a tax of ten per cent of the total cargo on any Portuguese ship carrying European goods which came to trade within an area called "Costa da Mina", which seems to have been defined as the area lying roughly between the Western coastal boundary of modern Ghana and Godomey in modern Dahomey. They maintained that the right had existed since 1621, was officially acknowledged by the Portuguese in the Treaty of Truce signed between the United Provinces and Portugal in 1641 and incorporated into the Treaty of Munster in 1648. See Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, Bahia 9th May 1726 (APB.OR21.132), enclosing a letter from the Dutch general of Elmina Castle to the Viceroy of Brazil where the General's quotation of the exact wording of the clause of the treaty has been torn out; A.F.C.Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese factories on the Costa da Mina to the mid-18th century" in J.H.S.N. Vol.I No.3 Dec.1958.p.160.
 2. Thomas Pindar to R.Willis, 19th Sept.1707 (T70/52); R.A.C. to Ambrose Baldwyn, 14th Dec.1720 (T70/53).

reaction from the other directors who were less successful, as is clearly shown by the result of the manoeuvres that followed the accession of Huffon.

In January 1709, the English Royal African Company presented Huffon with a crown that cost thirty pounds and was requested by Hicks, its representative at Whydah, to send a "fyne scymeter, a hat and feather and scarlet cloak for the king who is 14 years old", to secure the trade monopoly at Whydah. To achieve the same advantage, the French offered Huffon "the Dartmouth Galley and her cargo, with the cargo of the 'Joseph and Thomas'". Hicks then went a step further and placed one Charles Green at Sahe, made him a factor and charged him with the duty of cultivating the friendship of the Whydah authorities.¹

By 1710, it was clear that Hicks had been immensely successful and the English were preferred to any other European nation at Whydah. This alarmed the French and aroused the resentment of the Dutch against both the English and Huffon. They threatened to burn the English fort and when prevented, the Dutch remained un placated and promised to take vengeance on Huffon. The good understanding existing between Hicks and Huffon prevented the Dutch design from being immediately carried out but they continued to watch for a favourable opportunity.²

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1. William Hicks to R.A.C., 12th Jan. 1709 (T70/5).
 2. W. Hicks to R.A.C., 15th Mar. 1711; S. Grosvenor and J. Phipps to R.A.C., 3rd Jan. 1711 (T70/5); R.A.C. to W. Hicks, 4th Oct. 1711 (T70/52).

If the use of presents ultimately threatened the Whydah administration, still more dangerous to law and order was the use of force to secure commercial advantage. Every European nation trading at Whydah had important Whydah chiefs attached to its interest. A fight between any two European directors was therefore easily transferred to their Whydah supporters and, if not quickly checked, could ultimately lead to a civil war, as Blaney's attitude in 1714 showed.

Blaney the English director proposed two measures for "improving" the Whydah trade, to a council of Whydah chiefs. He sought permission to construct a canal from the sea to the forts so that ships, or at least boats, could be used to discharge the European merchandise and head portorage eliminated. He further proposed that he be allowed to control the canal and charge tolls from anyone who used it.

Secondly he proposed that he be allowed to control the Brazilian Portuguese captains because their activities were "injurious" to the Whydah trade.¹ No doubt if these two proposals had been granted as they stood, they would have resulted in great advantages for the English trade, or more probably to Blaney's personal advantage.

Du Coulombier, the director of the French fort, therefore told chief Assu that Blaney was motivated by avarice and

1. Du Coulombier: "Mémoire de la suite des affaires ...", 14th Feb. 1715 (A.N.C.6/25).

self-interest and that his proposals would not result in the general improvement of the Whydah trade nor bring any advantage whatsoever to Whydah. He further reminded chief Assu that there was a prior plan devised in 1712 by himself and the former English director, for controlling the Portuguese trade, which would be more beneficial to the trade and Whydah in general.¹ Chief Assu repeated du Coulombier's warning to the council of Whydah chiefs, whose suspicions had in fact been aroused by the 'unnatural' proposal to build a canal. The council therefore rejected Blaney's two proposals.

Blaney however resolved to subject the Portuguese to his own control by force. He armed eighteen "Mina" (perhaps Little Popo) men and asked them to break up the people assembled to trade with the Portuguese at the "captains' tree". The Portuguese complained to the king of the molestation and Huffon asked the Dutch to seize forty slaves belonging to Blaney as an indemnity for disturbing the market. When the Dutch carried out this assignment, Blaney armed eighty Africans, four Europeans and with himself at their head, went to the Dutch fort "to seek an explanation".¹

Blaney's action created panic in the town. Chief Assu who was then in the French fort transacting business gave

1. Du Coulombier: "Mémoire de la suite des affaires ...", 14th Feb. 1715 (AN.C.6/25).

the alarm that civil war had broken out and without knowing who was fighting whom, asked the French director to send out his "war boys" while he himself rushed home for his weapons. The French director sent twelve soldiers but by the time they reached the fort gate, the whole town was in an uproar and the Dutch director was being dragged, feet first, towards the English fort.¹ Blaney and the Dutch director were fined and Blaney later expelled for causing a breach of the peace. But the incident and the fact that the Assu could assume that there were permanent hostile camps into which each citizen fled as soon as there was a commotion, was a clear illustration of the disturbed atmosphere which had come to prevail at Whydah.

Some account of Allada-Whydah relations during these years will further serve to illustrate the disordered condition of the Aja country and the contribution of the European traders to the situation. Allada, the "father-state" of the Aja and the custodian of the Aja traditions, resented the breach of those traditions at Whydah. The accession of Huffon, which was carried out without any reference to Allada, strongly displeased the "aged king of Ardra". Huffon had refused moreover to pay certain customary gifts to the

1. Du Coulombier: "Mémoire de la suite des affaires..." 14th Feb. 1715 (AN.C.6/25); Gov. and Council.C.C.C., to R.A.C., 3rd Sept. 1715; J. Blaney to R.A.C., 20th Mar. 1716, 17th Ap. 1716 (T70/6).

Allada chiefs and dispensed with the services of his own traditional chiefs in the internal administration of Whydah. Those chiefs complained to the king of Allada.¹ So small however had the "fatherly" authority of the king of Allada become that he was completely unable to do anything to induce Huffon to obey the traditional precepts.

This sense of frustration was doubtless increased by the realisation at Allada that the only thing that made Huffon so defiant was the prosperity of the slave trade at Whydah and that Allada's trade was not equally flourishing. In spite of the agreement in 1705 between the two kingdoms, very few references are found in the documents to the trade of Allada between 1706 and 1714, a sure sign of its decline.

It was however the Dutch who caused Allada's suppressed anger and frustration to erupt into open hostility. The Dutch factor at Whydah still nourished a deep resentment against Huffon for his friendship with Hicks and the English. As soon as Hicks died on 5th April 1712, he precipitated a war between Whydah and Allada by sending one of his company's ships to attack a Portuguese ship lying in Allada harbour.²

A quarrel between the Dutch and the Portuguese might, at first sight, appear unconnected with the relations between

1. Du Coulombier: "Relation envoyer à la Compagnie...", 10th Aug. 1714 (AN.C.6/25).

2. Hilliard and Green to R.A.C., 5th Ap. 1712 (T70/5); 10th June 1712 (T70/2); J. Blaney to R.A.C., 22nd Ap. 1714 (T70/5).

Allada and Whydah. In fact it was. Any disturbance at Allada port was a matter of great concern to the Allada authorities, for a reputation that the port could not afford protection to the shipping would drive away the captains from there. Moreover, because the agent of this particular disturbance came from Whydah, the king of Allada held Huffon responsible for the affront. He looked on it as contravening the Allada-Whydah agreement of 1705 which stipulated that neither was to harm the trade of the other. The Dutch director must have known the unpleasantness that his action would cause and he probably designed it to punish Huffon.

Allada immediately declared a war on Whydah. The king of Allada closed all the roads linking Allada and Whydah, intending this as a measure of outright economic warfare to deprive Huffon of the wealth that had made him so disobedient and bring more European ships to Allada port. On the 13th of February 1714, he again summoned a grand assembly of all his provincial rulers for a deliberation. The assembly agreed to continue to keep the roads shut and each of the provincial rulers promised faithfully to prevent any slaves from being taken across his territory to Whydah. The blockade went on, with only a temporary lift in 1717, till 1720.¹

1. J. Blaney, M. Hardrett and W. Rogers to R.A.C., 22nd May 1714, 6th Aug. 1715 (T70/5); J. Errington to R.A.C., 7th May 1715; Governor, C.C.C. to R.A.C., Nov. 1715; 18th Feb. 1716 (T70/6); R. Mason, D. Welsh and W. Bramston to R.A.C. 10th Dec. 1715, 3rd and 12th June 1716; W. Baillie to R.A.C., 20th Nov. 1716 (T70/19); W. Baillie to ??, 31st May 1719 (T70/1475).

Its effect on Whydah trade was immediate. As early as 15th May, 1712,¹ Hilliard and Green, joint acting directors of the English fort at Whydah, reported that slaves were "scarce by means of the pallaver between the kings of Whydah and Ardrah". All the seven ships dispatched to Whydah by the Royal African Company between January 1713 and December 1714 returned with their slave cargo incomplete, and one of them had to be sent to Jakin for its slaves when there was none to be had at Whydah² the trade of which continued bad until 1720 with only occasional reliefs.

This economic war was Allada's answer to the weakening of the traditional bonds in Aja, but it did not achieve the quick victory needed if authority was to be restored. Its greatest achievement was to cause inconvenience to the European traders at Whydah, to impoverish Huffon and thereby to increase the internal chaos at Whydah and to aggravate the breakdown in its own authority.

Huffon took vigorous measures to solve his kingdom's

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1. Hilliard and Green to R.A.C., 15th May 1712 (T70/5).
 2. S.Grosvenor & H.Phipps to R.A.C., 6th Mar. 1713 (T70/2); R.A.C. to Hilliard and Green, 17th Mar. 1713 (T70/52); Green to R.A.C. 14th Oct. 1714 (T70/3); J.Blaney and C.Green to R.A.C., 29th Sep. 1713 (T70/3); J.Blaney to Bate and Steward, 12th Jan. 1714 (T70/3); R.A.C. to J.Blaney and C.Green, 8th Oct. & 22nd Oct. 1713 (T70/52); J.Blaney and M.Hardrett to R.A.C., 22nd Ap. 1714 (T70/18), 22nd May 1714 (T70/3), 5th Aug. 1714 (T70/18); R.A.C. to J.Blaney, C.Green and M.Hardrett, 1st Ap. 1714 (T70/52); J.Blaney and M.Hardrett to R.A.C., 3rd Nov. 1714 (T70/3).

problems. Since the traditional chiefs were too involved in their own personal squabbles to help in the duty of government, he turned to "new men" whom he styled "king's servants". In 1712 he formed them into a council from which he excluded all the traditional chiefs and in which he vested the final decision on every important issue. He himself accepted their decisions without question.¹ The traditional chiefs attributed this unconstitutional step to childishness on Huffon's part. Huffon replied by declaring himself of age in 1713,¹ when he was only about eighteen years old, an action that must have alarmed even those chiefs who had remained loyal to him.

These measures did not however solve Whydah's administrative problems. The new men were inexperienced and were unnecessarily elated by the power vested in them. They sought to bolster up their position by acquiring wealth by all means, fair and foul, and by poisoning the king's mind against his traditional chiefs. By 1714, their method of acquiring wealth was visibly harming the trade and they had so effectively maligned the traditional chiefs that even chief Carter, who seems to have become reconciled with Huffon and was one of the very few among them who continued

1. Du Coulombier: "Relation envoyé à la Compagnie...", 10th Aug. 1714 (AN.C.6/25).

to see the king regularly, was once seen standing in front of the palace for twenty-four hours before Huffon would consent to speak to him. All that the "new men" had achieved by 1714 therefore was to render the European directors and captains discontented, and the traditional chiefs afraid for the safety of their persons, their property and the kingdom of Whydah.¹

The critical stage which the hostility with Allada reached in 1714 probably caused Huffon and his traditional chiefs to patch up a truce before the end of that year. For it was necessary to find a way of breaking Allada's stranglehold on Whydah economy if the Whydah were not to be impoverished. Huffon decided to fight Allada and his chiefs probably agreed with him. He and his chiefs started to buy large quantities of guns and gunpowder. The English director and an English captain who noticed the rising demand for ammunition in 1713 wrote to England for fresh supplies. Between September 1713 and March 1714, the Royal African Company alone sent over three thousand guns of all descriptions to Whydah.² The French and Dutch could hardly have sent less than the English total.

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1. Du Coulombier: "Relation envoyer à Messrs de la Compagnie..." 10th Aug. 1714 (AN.C./25).
 2. J. Blaney to R.A.C., 29th Sep. 1713 (T70/22); E. Coward to R.A.C., 15th Oct. 1713 (T70/22); R.A.C. to J. Blaney, C. Green and M. Hardrett, 25th Mar. and 1st Ap. 1714 (T70/52).

With these arms, the first pitched battle was fought between Allada and Whydah about the middle of April 1714.¹ Considering the quantity of arms, the battle was a remarkably small and inconclusive affair. Whydah gained no advantage. The Europeans felt it as just one more minor inconvenience to the trade and it did not even increase the stock of slaves for export.

Huffon therefore started to make alliances. First he approached Blaney the English director, called himself "the company's son"² and asked for military help against Allada. Blaney laid down impossible conditions, because he did not believe, as Hicks had done, in allying with any African king:³

"If they will regulate the extravagant prices the Portuguese pay; if they recover the Company's debts by former agents; if they exclude all English but the Company's ships from trading in their country and demand no customs for any ships of the Company ...

These things he believes they'll not comply with."⁴

He would only recommend "a silk union flag for the king to show he is English".⁴

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1. J. Blaney to M. Hardrett to R.A.C., 22nd Ap. 1714 (T70/3).
 2. J. Blaney to R.A.C., 22nd Ap. 1714 (T70/5).
 3. J. Blaney to R.A.C., 4th Aug. 1714 (T70/5).
 4. J. Blaney to R.A.C., 15th July 1717 (T70/5); J. Blaney, M. Hardrett and W. Rogers to R.A.C., 22nd June 1714 (T70/26).

Disappointed by the English, Huffon turned to the Little Popo Accra and the Akwamu. Towards the end of 1714, he approached Ofori, described as the "king of Little Popo Keta and Accra",¹ and someone described as the "great Captain of Accra", for military help against Allada. Ofori seems to have agreed to send a contingent by the end of January 1715.

About May 1715, Huffon approached the Governors of Cape Coast Castle and asked them "to prevail with the king of Quamboe (i.e. Akwamu) to assist them"². The Governors showed no interest, but Huffon managed to contact the king of Akwamu and to continue discussions with him until 1718³.

On the first assurance of help from Ofori, Huffon dispatched an army against the Allada province of Tori. On the 18th of January, 1715, Chief Assu set out with his own contingent to join the expected Little Popo Accra army and together make for the front.⁴ The Gogan also set out with his own contingent. The unanimity with which these former opponents of Huffon rallied to his call gave high hopes of success.

The expedition however failed to achieve its purpose.

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1. Du Coulombier: "Mémoire de la suite des affaires...", 14th Feb. 1715 (AN.C.6/25); W. Baillie to R. Blesu?, 21st May 1717 (T70/1475). The "Accra" lived in Little Popo.
 2. Lancelot Green to Governor, C.C.C., 28th May 1715 (T70/6).
 3. W. Baillie to ??, 21st Aug. 1718 (T70/1475).
 4. "Mémoire de la suite des affaires..", 14th Feb. 1715 (AN.C.6/25).

Ofori did not send enough soldiers in January 1715 and fresh negotiations had to be entered into. Finally more of Ofori's soldiers turned up but it is not known whether they fought any battles nor for how long they stayed. In September and October 1716 they were still inactively camping near the European forts at Whydah.¹ Akwamu's intervention, if it took place, was, as usual, ineffective, and the expedition against Allada had petered out by 1717, long before the negotiation with the Akwamu was completed.²

Probably the most important cause of Whydah's failure was the irreconcilable enmity between the traditional chiefs. During the campaign of January 1715, the Aplogan refused to allow the Gogan's contingent to pass through his territory, which they had to do to get to Tori, the battlefield. Huffon could not coerce the Aplogan into obedience because the council of the traditional chiefs said that such a move would only result in civil war, that the Gogan's supporters would seek to revenge the insult of 1712, and the Aplogan's friends would resist them.³

Despite all his efforts, Huffon found himself quite powerless before the entrenched position of these chiefs.

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1. "Accounts and Journals, Cape Coast Castle", Sep. & Oct. 1716 (T70/383).
 2. R. Mason, D. Welsh and W. Branston to R.A.C., 10th Dec. 1715 (T70/19).
 3. Du Coulombier: "Mémoire de la suite des affaires...", 14th Feb. 1715 (AN.C.6/25).

First their offices belonged to their families and they could only be removed as a result of an offence against tradition, on the recommendation of their families who then had the right to nominate new candidates. As the chiefs were usually the heads of their families, and therefore the highest authorities on their family traditions, that meant virtually that they could not be removed. Nor could they be deprived of their land which also belonged to their families and not to the king.

Secondly Whydah, like Allada, had no central army, controlled exclusively by the king. Its army was made up of the contingents contributed, armed and led by each chief to the king's wars. Only a king who had completed all the traditional rites, which Huffon had not, could summon such an army and expect an implicit obedience.

In such an arrangement, a single powerful chief could easily cause the failure of a whole expedition, as the behaviour of the Aplogan has shown. As the situation worsened, many chiefs probably reserved their strength for their personal enemies rather than for the king's service. As Huffon was not yet a full king, some of the chiefs may have decided to ignore his summons altogether.

The way in which the slave trade was organised at Whydah actually increased the power and influence of the

... chiefs. Certain chiefs were originally given the duty of collecting the taxes from each of the European nations who traded at Whydah and of being the immediate protectors of such nations against any injustice. Under that arrangement, chief Assu was the "French" chief and Carter the "English" chief. By the beginning of the 18th century, such chiefs had virtually become the controllers of the trade of those nations put under them. This became an important source of patronage, and some of the chiefs probably became richer and commanded more immediate respect than the king.

It would seem that Huffon realised perfectly well that the fundamental cause of his own failure was the weak position of the monarchy in the actual practice of the Ebi social theory. He also knew that theoretically, the king was absolute. So from 1717 onwards, he applied, with increasing vehemence, what may be called "the reserved powers of the crown".

He resuscitated and extended the institution of the "king's men" and created them into chiefs, each with specific duties, to replace those of the traditional chiefs. Between 1717 and 1720 he

"among them appointed whitemen's captains as he called them, or rather judges and superintendents of trade to

whom all addresses must be made and by them a decision given so that a hundredth part of what was done never came to his ear or what did being delivered by them he received as from an oracle".¹

He created a standing army of his own, which was an innovation, the nucleus of which was formed by a sergeant and twelve soldiers, all in uniform, contributed by the English fort. The French director also sought permission from his employers to contribute a similar contingent so that he might not be outdone,¹ but whether he did so is not known. To this nucleus were added the Whydah citizens whom Huffon had "marked in the face so that everyone may know and not oppose them".¹

In 1718 he tried to centralise the slave trade by creating a chief and ordering "that all slaves come to this cebra's hands who may dispose them to whom he had a mind"² and at the same time ordered that all the Europeans who traded privately at Whydah must pay duties on the slaves that they sold to the ships just as all the African traders did.³

He tightened the internal security by ruling that the European directors must not go out of the country or visit

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1. W. Baillie to Governor of C.C.C., 10th May 1720 (T70/54). "Conseil de Marine", 16th Sep. 1717 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. W. Baillie to Gov. C.C.C., 21st Aug. 1718 (T70/1475).
 3. W. Baillie to Dawson, 26th Oct. 1717 (T70/1475); W. Baillie to Phipps and Blesu, 15th Ap. 1717 (T70/1475); 10th May 1720 (T70/54).

any Whydah chief without first obtaining his permission or re-export any merchandise once landed at Whydah.¹ He also tried to raise the prestige of the crown by ruling that all his subjects must remain prostrated while talking to him and no chief must be seen going around too frequently with the Europeans without his prior permission. Wealthy subjects who might be uncontrollable were accused of some crime or the other and fined very heavily, a practice that did not exclude the European directors.¹

None of these measures were actually beyond the constitutional powers of the king, but it had not been customary to apply them as vigorously. They therefore aroused the discontent of the people, who in 1717 made a representation to Huffon that if they were not treated more gently, they would desert the country. Huffon pacified them, but the traditional chiefs openly said that they no longer cared for the king.²

By 1720 the traditional chiefs had retired to their country houses and would not go to Huffon even when summoned. Baillie reported, probably without exaggeration, that

"Those new customs quite disgusted the cabbasheers, so that not one of them gives a pin for him or minds

1. W. Baillie to Dawson, 26th Oct. 1717 (T70/1475); W. Baillie to Phipps and Blesu, 15th Ap. 1717 (T70/1475); 10th May 1720 (T70/54).

2. "Conseil de Marine" 1st Nov. 1717 (AN.C.6/25).

any law he makes...Here I had from some of the greatest men in the country who assure me if he continues his tyranny much longer, they'll be obliged to take a violent course with him, they know that they have in him too much experienced the ill fate of a country governed by women and children and this shall never succeed him. There is not at present one of his great men that will go neare (sic) him when he sends for them.... In short sir, these people are not without solid judgment... The Blacks are not so abjectly slavish in what concerns themselves, if he was to meddle with any of the great men here, they would soon show their horns".¹

In 1720 when Huffon made a law that the European ships must be supplied with slaves in turn, according to the order of arrival, Whydah citizens openly took their slaves to any ships they pleased as if the law had not existed. When Baillie and the French director asked the king to enforce his order, he withdrew it.¹

The European directors also reacted very unfavourably to Huffon's measures. They refused to co-operate with him in his attempt to centralise the slave trade. They resented the taxes imposed on them and the limits set on their

1. William Baillie to Governor, C.C.C., 10th May 1720 (T70/54).

freedom of movement, and they regarded Huffon's whole policy with distaste and himself with intense hatred. Baillie said that he was expressing the feelings of all the Europeans at Whydah when he wrote on 10th May 1720:-

"I have in this short time come through more difficulty than in all the forty-five months I have been at Whydah through.... the insupportable villany of this insupportable tyrant, whose insolence is now grown to such a height that neither whites nor blacks are able any longer to tolerate it. There is not any of our privileges he does not daily dispense with where he finds his present interest or is buzzed by his bribed D-S or wives, no customs or settled law of his country in respect to Europeans which he does not impetuously break through, no injustice robbery (sic) or other villany he does not encourage. In short he is a monster of a nature, appeared designed for a public plague and till he is by some extraordinary means reduced to reason, here will be no peaceable living for any European of the least spark of soul, nor any security at all for their effects in this country".¹

It is not surprising therefore that the actions of the Europeans were completely unhelpful to Huffon in all his attempts to solve Whydah's problems. Frightened by the

1. W. Baillie to Governor C.C.C., 10th May 1720(T70/54).

breakdown of the Whydah administration and by the inept management of the war, they constantly attempted, between 1714 and 1720, to get out of Whydah and settle at Allada or wherever there was a prospect of the slave trade between the Volta and Epe.

In 1714, after the first inconclusive battle between Whydah and Allada, Blaney, the English director at Whydah, decided:-

"to settle Aguga near river Volta and continue the settlement at Jacquine and settle a factory at Appah (Epe) by which and the help of a good sloop or long boat, they can easily have communication with the Bight and Calabar".¹

He thought that the settlement at Epe would be easy because an exiled prince from there who was being invited back had asked him to come and settle an English factory in his territory.² But his plans did not materialise.

Du Coulombier, the French director, planned to remove the French headquarters to Allada. He instructed Bouchel the French resident agent at Allada to conduct the negotiations for a planned withdrawal thither. Bouchel asked the king of Allada to grant seven conditions before the French would establish their headquarters at Jakin which by that date

1. J. Blaney to R.A.C., 4th Aug. 1714 (T70/5).

2. J. Blaney and M. Hardrett to R.A.C., 3rd Nov. 1714 (T70/6).

had become Allada's chief port. First that the king of Allada would allow the French to sit on chairs, secondly that the Epe port would be closed, thirdly that as soon as a French captain reached Allada, the king would grant him audience and declare the trade open the same day; fourthly that the king would build a tradinghouse on the coast at his own expense for the French; fifthly that the trade would henceforth be carried on at the seashore and not in the capital as hitherto; sixthly that the king would make insulting a white man an offence for his subjects and punish anyone offending against such law to the satisfaction of the Europeans and finally that the king and his chiefs would promise that the Allada traders would offer their slaves to the French first before offering them to any other European trader.¹ Negotiations on these points went on until April 1715 when they were called off by Bouchel.

Again between 1717 and 1720 all the European directors planned to leave Whydah. Baillie thought of removing the English headquarters to Keta and Little Popo and started serious secret negotiations with Ofori which do not, however, appear to have had any success.² In 1718 both the English

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1. "Mémoires des negociations du Sieur Bouchel à Ardres", 2nd Jan. 1715; Du Coulombier to Messrs de la Compagnie, 16th April, 1715 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. W. Baillie to R. Bleau?, 21st May 1717 (T70/1475).

and the French looked to Jakin.¹ And the Dutch headquarters at Elmina summoned the Dutch director at Whydah to recommend whether it was worth while keeping a fort there any longer.²

Soso who ascended the throne of Allada in 1717 was as determined as his predecessor to ruin Whydah's trade and keep Huffon the "obedient son" he ought to be. In 1717 and 1718, while the Europeans were thus trying to get out of Whydah, he kept sending "daily invitations" to all of them³ to come and settle in his kingdom. He was on the point of success in the first quarter of 1718, but the strict measures he then enacted ended all the probability of European removal to Allada.⁴ In 1721 when the Portuguese decided to build a fort in Aja, they chose Whydah rather than Allada.⁵

The failure of the Europeans to remove to Allada meant the failure of Allada's attempt to weaken Whydah trade and end the power vacuum in Aja, and can be accounted for by several reasons. The first was the general hostility of the Aja kings, for economic or security reasons, to such removals. In 1714, du Coulombier had to pay Huffon heavily

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1. W. Baillie to Phipps and R. Bleau, 15th April 1718 (T/1475).
 2. W. Baillie to Phipps and R. Bleau, 4th Dec. 1717 (T70/1475).
 3. W. Baillie to ? , ? , 15th Ap. 1718 (T70/1475).
 4. W. Baillie to the Gentlemen at Cape Coast Castle, 30th Ap. 1718 (T70/1475).
 5. "Etablissement d'une Comptoire Portugaise à Juda, 1721" (AN.C.6/25); A.F.C. Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese....." in JHSN Vol.1 No.3. 1958 pp.160-161.

before he was allowed to remove certain articles from Whydah to Jakin for trade.¹ When the other European directors followed his example he was expelled from the country after being accused of being the cause of all the economic misfortunes of Whydah.¹ When the ruler of Jakin heard that Blaney wanted to establish at Epe, he successfully prevented it, though we are not told how.²

Secondly Allada did not want to give any more concessions to the Europeans than they already had, which might further weaken the authority of the Allada monarchy or cause discontent to the Allada chiefs and citizens. This was partly why the negotiation between Bouchel and the king of Allada broke down in 1715. All the seven conditions demanded by Bouchel were calculated to give special privileges to the French at the expense of everyone else concerned.

Thirdly the slaves bought from Allada cost the Europeans on the average much more than the slaves bought from Whydah. The cost of porterage was higher at Allada than at Whydah,³ probably because the Allada capital, where the trade was centred, was farther inland than the European forts at Whydah. Moreover it had become traditional at Allada to buy slaves in lots, by which the European captains were forced to take the

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1. Du Coulombier to Messrs de la Compagnie, 29th May 1714 (AN. C6/25).
 2. J. Blaney to R.A.C., 20th Mar. 1715 (T70/6).
 3. W. Baillie to Gov. C.C.C., 30th Ap. 1717 (T70/1475).

good and the bad slaves together, whereas at Whydah the slaves were bought singly and the Europeans could choose the good ones and reject the bad ones. This was probably why the Portuguese, who insisted on only the healthiest slaves, "as good as waxwork", were more fond of Whydah than of Allada. Finally Allada traders insisted on being paid in cowries for slaves¹ while the Whydah traders did not mind being paid largely in cheap goods.

Soso was unwilling to change this pattern of Allada trade which was on the whole advantageous to the Allada traders. In fact he concluded, from the information he had picked up from European captains, that the Europeans would always want slaves. He was therefore confident that no matter what measures he took, the European slave traders would always come to Allada, "and the great prices they sold slaves at where they carry them can enable them to be at some more charge to him."²

Accordingly in April 1718 he more than doubled the customs duties hitherto paid by the captains and enforced the law that all the European captains must go to Allada to trade.³ An attempt to get him to relent by one Albertus, the Dutch factor at Jakin, who was generally regarded as

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1. Du Coulombier: "Relations envoyé à Messrs de la Compagnie" 10th Aug. 1714 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. W. Baillie to Gov. and Council, C.C.C., ? Dec. 1718 (T70/1475).
 3. W. Baillie to Gov. and Council C.C.C. 30th Ap. 1718 (T70/1475).

his friend, was unsuccessful and Albertus himself was forced to obey the new regulations.¹

The European directors, on their own side, did not always seriously mean to remove even when they threatened. For removal involved great expenses in building and new establishment. Usually they used the threat as an instrument for securing greater concessions for themselves from either Allada or Whydah. William Baillie clearly expressed this in 1718 when Huffon's measures were making all the directors uneasy:

"The French and I have had several consultations concerning this and think far more advisable to try to curb him by sending some of the first ships to slave at Jacquine whereby we can perhaps make him sensible of how far the trade of his country depends on his friendship with Cos chiefs....."²

Behind the mind of the Europeans lay the feeling that there was really nothing to choose between Whydah and Allada. In 1715 Du Coulombier concluding his dispatch to the French Minister on why he had terminated the negotiation with the king of Allada wrote:-

"but as up till now I see nothing stable in this coast of Ardra, I do not believe, Monseigneur, that

1. W. Baillie to Gov. & Council, C.C.C., 21st Aug. 1718 (T70/1475).
2. W. Baillie to ??, 15th Ap. 1718 (T70/1475).

this is the suitable time to hurry to make an establishment at Jakin and accordingly I have made no more move..."¹

In August and again in December 1718 Baillie wrote:

"you see gentlemen how these kings agree and may judge thence what we may expect, this being altogether as much sett (sic) on his interest as the other is on his and will surely go by the ears together".²

The Allada-Whydah war had therefore achieved nothing when it petered out in 1720. Whydah still kept the European forts and Allada still controlled the paths to the supply of the slaves. Whydah had not been able completely to prevent the Europeans going to Allada nor had Allada been able completely to stop the slaves from being brought to Whydah, the trade of which remained sufficiently encouraging for the Portuguese to decide to establish there in 1721.

Though it did not solve anything the war had important negative consequences. Because it was indecisive, it confirmed and indeed aggravated the power vacuum in Aja. It worsened the internal chaos in Whydah and left the Whydah chiefs contemplating "violent action" against Huffon and the European directors looking for "an extraordinary means" to

1. Du Coulombier to Messrs de la Compagnie, 16th Ap.1715 (AN.C.6/25).

2. W.Baillie to Gov. and Council,C.C.C.,?Dec.1718(T70/1475).

reduce him to reason.

It worsened the relations between Allada and Whydah. Eight years of hostility and fratricidal wars left behind a great deal of bad blood and made it impossible for the two kingdoms to join together to recognise, much less oppose, a common danger. Harmony between the Aja kingdoms was never again completely restored under the old political system which was greatly weakened if not virtually ended by the very fact that the war lasted so long. Allada could no longer command the filial duties of Whydah as promptly as in the past.

The losses which the traditional chiefs suffered from the lack of the success caused acute internal problems in both Whydah and Allada which persisted after the war had ended and which were much more dangerous to the existence of those kingdoms than any specific act of hostility undertaken during the preceding eight years of war.

With the return of peace, however precarious, trade revived at Whydah¹ and the Portuguese started building their fort there in 1721, in spite of loud protests from the Dutch, the French and the English. The revival probably eased some of the old discontent and made the European traders and the

1. Baldwyn and Peck to R.A.C., 8th Sep. 1721, 25th Jan. 1722 (T70/27); 27th Oct. 1722 (T70/23).

African chiefs much more friendly to Huffon than formerly. Baldwyn the English director who had succeeded Baillie in 1721, rejected the idea of a new establishment at Jakin as being disadvantageous to trade which he said could best be carried on from Whydah.¹

The threat to Whydah trade caused by the activities of the European pirates in 1719 and 1720 certainly produced a new community of interest between Huffon, his chiefs and the European directors.² Huffon summoned a grand council consisting of his chiefs and the European directors to consider positive action against the pirates. For the first time since the beginning of Huffon's reign, they all agreed on a course of action. Whydah authorities wanted the Europeans to take their cannons to the seashore for use against the pirates. The European directors agreed on the condition that they would be allowed to build forts on the seashore. Finally the Whydah authorities agreed, though reluctantly, and everybody seemed happy.² Unfortunately nothing resulted from this harmony mainly because the English sent warships to patrol the West African coast, thus rendering any effort at Whydah unnecessary.

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1. Baldwyn to Lynn, Jan. 1722 (T70/7).
 2. J. Atkins: A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil and the West Indies (Lond. 1735), p. 18; "Mémoire concernant la colonie de Juda, Côte de Guinée", 1722 (AN.C.6/25).

The end of the war does not seem to have produced peace and internal stability at Allada. Exactly what went on inside Allada in the first two decades of the 18th century is obscure, mainly because European references to the kingdom are few. Those few references however tend to suggest that its internal problems were similar to those of Whydah, that the authority of the king was rapidly diminishing, that his chiefs were recalcitrant and that the king, though not a minor, was as incapable of solving those problems as Huffon. In short, in Allada as in Whydah, the old precepts no longer had a strong binding force.

The breakdown of the French-Allada negotiations of 1715 was partly caused by the inability of the king to make his chiefs obey him. Both the Jakin and the Allada chiefs made it plain to the French captains then trading at Allada that they would behave as they thought fit, irrespective of the king's agreement with the French. The ruler of Epe was not prepared to close his port to satisfy French wishes, nor could the king of Allada coerce him to do so, even though it was recognised that the former was under the latter.¹

In November 1717, Soso who had just ascended the throne of Allada, made a law that all firearms brought into the country must be sold to him alone.² In April 1718, he again

1. Du Coulombier to Messrs de la Compagnie, 16th Ap. 1717 (AN.C./25).

2. W. Baillie to Dawson, 9th Nov. 1717; W. Baillie to ??, 30th April 1718 (T70/1475).

ruled that the European captains must buy his slaves before they bought any from anyone else and that all the cowries that came into the country must be sold to him alone. These actions suggest that Soso was also trying hard, as Huffon was doing around the same time, to raise the power, the prestige and the wealth of the monarchy above those of his subjects.

Not all the Allada chiefs had continued scrupulously to observe the king's closure of the Allada-Whydah roads for the whole length of the Allada-Whydah war,¹ particularly after the end of 1714. For it would appear that some slaves continued to filter through to Whydah from Allada as from 1715. This meant that the chiefs who obeyed the king were sacrificing the gains they might otherwise have made and pinning their hopes on the eventual success of their cause. When the war ended inconclusively, the loyal chiefs became dissatisfied and put pressure on the king to renew the war. This came to a head in April 1722, when Soso was forced to close anew the Allada-Whydah roads. The action however seemed too late and did not satisfy the Allada chiefs who then asked Soso to abdicate or grant a list of concessions, which has not been preserved. Soso was completely powerless

1. W.Baillie to Dawson, 9th Nov.1717; W.Beillie to ??, 30th April 1718 (T70/1475).

and was forced to grant all that they demanded.¹

In spite of that, not all the chiefs were satisfied. A ruler of one of the provinces declared himself "idependent" of Soso's authority and got an army together to back his assertion.¹ This in the Ebi social theory was not only incomprehensible but monstrous. Even Huffon was appalled and he offered all the help he could muster in guns, cowries and gunpowder, to bring back the rebellious chief.¹ It is not known how the attempt fared.

About January 1724 Soso suddenly died,² and a succession contest ensued between two candidates. The defeated candidate, instead of acquiescing, sought the help of Agaja, king of Dahomey and the issue took an unexpected turn.

Since 1708, the Dahomey kingdom had continued to grow in strength. The accession of Agaja in that year is generally agreed to be a departure from normal usage. The traditions about his succession are confused, but there is no need to doubt the fact that he succeeded his elder brother, Akaba.³ The general explanation given for this seems to involve some

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1. Bouchel to Messrs de la Compagnie, 30th Ap. 1722; Levesque to Messrs de la Compagnie, 30th Jan. 1723 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. Tinker, Mebyn and Humphrey to R.A.C., 7 Jan. 1724 (T70/7); F.P. Mendes to V.F. Cezar de Meneses, 16th July 1724 (APB. OR. 19 Doc. 56); W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp. 6-7.
 3. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p. 15, pp. 294-295; Sossouhountto; "Les Anciens Rois de la Dynastie d'Abomey" in E.D. Vol. XIII 1955, pp. 25-30; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX, pp. 99-100.

confusion with later events. The official version, related to Le Herisse, says that Akaba reigned with his twin sister Ahangbe and that the arrangement had worked well because Ahangbe had been content to remain in the background. When Akaba died, this version continues, the problem of keeping the kingdom together faced the kingmakers, because if they wanted to be strictly just, they would have had to choose the sons of both Akaba and Ahangbe as joint kings.

To avoid the chaotic results that could follow such a division of authority, the sons of both were set aside,¹ and Dosu,² Akaba's younger brother was elected under the name of Ageja.

This rationalisation however leaves many questions unanswered. If Ahangbe had been enthroned with her twin brother, then she ought to have been qualified to carry on after his death since the traditions do not say that both died at the same time. Moreover Dahoman society is patrilineal³ and the sons of Ahangbe, being descendants on the female side, could have had no serious claims to the

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1. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p.15, pp.294-295; Sosshountto: "Les Anciens Rois de la Dynastie d'Abomey" in E.D.Vol.XIII 1955, pp.25-30; E.Dunglas in E.D.Vol.XIX, pp.99-100.
 2. In Dahomey Dosu is the name given to a child born immediately after twins. In Yoruba the same name is spelt Idowu.
 3. M.J.Herskovits: Dahomey Vol.1.p.87.

throne with which to challenge the sons of Akaba.

Coissy has sought to explain away these difficulties by postulating that Ahangbe reigned for a short time after Akaba and that when she died, Akaba's sons were too young to occupy the throne.¹ Dunglas agrees with Coissy about the probable age of the sons of Akaba and further proposes that Agaja was originally made a regent for Akaba's son but refused to hand over when the heir was old enough.

Both Coissy and Dunglas overlook one statement in the oral tradition that Akaba was already advanced in age when he ascended the throne. He is also generally accepted to have reigned for between twenty and twenty-eight years.² Under normal circumstances therefore he ought to have had grown-up children when he died.

Agaja's statement to Delisle in 1728 would tend to contradict any suggestion that Ahangbe reigned between Akaba and himself and would suggest that he directly succeeded his brother. Recounting his and his ancestors' achievements to Delisle, he mentioned his grandfather, his father and his brother (L. 2. 37a).³

1. Anatole Coissy: "Une reine de femme dans l'ancien Royaume d'Abomey" in E.D. Vol. 11. 1949 pp. 5-8.

2. Le Herissé: L'Ancien Royaume pp. 14-15; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XV p. 90.

3. Delisle: "Extrait du Registre", 13th Sep. 1728 (AN.C.6/25).

In short it would seem that Ahangbe did not reign in Dahomey, that her sons could not have been serious rivals to Akaba's sons, who, if they existed, are unlikely to have been too young to succeed in 1708. The puzzle as to why Agaja succeeded in 1708 remains entire.

A solution can be attempted from other statements in the Dahomen traditions. The full meaning of the proverb from which the name Agaja was extracted is "no one throws into fire, a green tree which is still standing." Le Herisse has rightly interpreted this adage as meaning that the line of Wegbaja was still able to supply a king and could not yet be jettisoned or brushed aside.¹ There is here an implication that the paternity of Akaba's sons was in doubt, that Ahangbe's children were not regarded as full-blooded AhoVi or princes, and that as long as there was available a candidate certainly of the true blood, he should be preferred to any with such doubtful claims.

Dunglas, from some curious tradition he had collected, has attributed infertility to Tegbesu.² But contemporary documents say that he had children³ and that he was succeeded, not by a brother, but by a son.³ Could it be

1. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume pp.15-16.

2. E.Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XX pp.3-4.

3. Norris: Mémoires p.105; Conseil de direction à la Compagnie, 10th July 1754; Gueslard to la Compagnie, 10th July 1754 (AN.C.6/25); Gueslard to Ministre de Colonies, 7th June 1774 (AN.C6/26).

that the traditions have become confused and that it was Akaba who really had no sons of his own, even though oral traditions gave names of his supposed sons? The suggestion is tempting as it would solve most of the apparent contradictions in the accepted account.

The choice of Agaja as king in 1708 had great consequences for Dahomey. He was the most minutely described and the most admired of all the 18th century Dahoman kings. A French director at Whydah in 1728 described him as middling in height and full-bodied "slightly bigger and having wider shoulders than Molière".¹ Snelgrave who saw him in 1727 said his face was pitted with the smallpox but was nevertheless attractive and that he had a majestic bearing.² Estimates of his age by Europeans are untrustworthy, but in 1727, twenty years after he had ascended the throne, Snelgrave said that he was about forty-five. If however he was ~~the~~ the brother next in age to Akaba, as tradition affirms and as his name Dosu³ would suggest, then Agaja could hardly have been less than thirty-five in 1708 and fifty-five when Snelgrave saw him in 1727.

At his accession, the kingdom of Dahomey covered the Abomey plateau and consisted of at most between forty-two

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1. "Extrait du Régistre", 26th Aug. 1728 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. W. Snelgrave: A New Account of some parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade (London. 1734) p.7.
 3. In Dahomey, Dosu is the name of the child born after twins. In Yoruba, the name is Idowu.

and sixty-two towns and villages. This would imply that the total area was small, since urban life was the rule rather than the exception in that part of West Africa and villages were packed very closely together. The kingdom was probably not as large as either Allada or Whydah.

What it lacked in size, it gained in efficient organisation. Its monarchy was a strongly centralised institution controlled all the appointments and the dismissals of the chiefs and had a standing army.

As soon as Agaja ascended the throne he took two steps which showed his political astuteness and military genius. First he instituted a system of spies, the Agbadjigbeto, whom he sent to any town or village he might wish to attack. They were required to present themselves in such a place as simple merchants and learn the local language. They were to study the military potentiality and the defence arrangements of such places, know their protective gods, and report all these details to Agaja on arrival. If possible they were to enter into a pact of mutual friendship and non-violence with the most important chiefs there. Back at Abomey they were to manufacture reasons, for propoganda purposes, why the particular places they had visited must be attacked.¹

1. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume, pp.64-65; P.Hazoume: Le Pact de sang du Dahomey, (Paris 1937) pp.19-20.

Secondly, Agaja instituted a military training scheme, which in time produced a highly efficient, though not wholly professional, army, by allowing "every common soldier a boy at the public charge, in order to be trained up in hardship from their youth."¹ The armies that conquered Allada and Whydah were trained in that way and when Snelgrave saw them during an early morning exercise in 1727, his comment was "this sight was well worth seeing, even by us Europeans".¹

The details of the history of Dahomey between 1708 and 1724 are obscure, but must have consisted of successful wars against a number of the neighbouring towns and kingdoms. Agaja inherited a number of disputes from the previous reign one of which was against Weme. Tradition remembers him as having sent an army to Aslo-Ouessa soon after his accession,² and it was probably during this campaign that his army caught one Agazaye whose head was one of the eight heads of "famous kings" which Agaja showed to Delisle in 1728. Some of his successes before 1724 probably also included the taking of Didouma and Povey (Pobe), both lying northwest of Abomey.² But the majority of them have been forgotten.

By 1714 the "kingdom of Foin" (i.e. Dahomey) had become

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account of some parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade, p.78.

2. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Roysume, p.295; A. Dalzel: History, p.7.

a power to be reckoned with by Allada and very well known to the European traders through the port of Epe which the Dahomen traders used.¹

In 1717, Dshomey quietly intruded itself into the Allada-Whydah dispute in a way that showed the efficiency of Agaja's spies and Agaja's own calculations. At that time the internal disagreement at Whydah was at its height, and Allada-Whydah relations at their worst. Agaja then approached Soso to be allowed to intervene in Whydah affairs. In October 1717, both Soso and Agaja agreed that Huffon should be driven away from the Whydah throne.² How the booty was to be shared we do not know but for the next month, rumours were flying around the forts at Igelefe that Soso was planning to instal his "brother" at Whydah in place of Huffon.³ This probably meant that Agaja had been promised the Whydah throne.

Agaja probably expected a quick military action, the kind of which Soso was not used to, or which was impossible under the Ebi system. The project however had not developed beyond the stage of rumour when Allada Started the So Anubomey² ceremony in December 1717. As this was expected to last for

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1. Du Coulombier to Messrs de la Compagnie, 16th Ap. 1715 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. W.Green to R.A.C., 22nd Oct. 1717 (T70/22).
 3. "Conseil de Marine", 22nd Nov. 1717 (AN.C.6/25). The document actually says that the ceremony was "le Sou" (the So) and that it was expected to last for three months. That suggests that the "Customs" of Dshomey had a long ancestry.

at least three months, and military expeditions were generally not undertaken during the period of the festival, Whydah residents breathed a sigh of relief.¹

Nothing resulted from the grand design. Agaja had to wait patiently for the next ten years.

No more was heard of Dahomey until 1724 when the defeated candidate to the throne of Allada appealed to him for help. Such internal division was the most helpful situation that Agaja could have hoped for in his design, manifested in 1717, to destroy the coastal kingdoms.

The new king of Allada approached Huffon and represented to him that Agaja's invasion of Allada would be dangerous to both Allada and Whydah,² and ought therefore to be the joint concern of both. But Huffon refused to offer any help.

Huffon may have been influenced in this attitude by private assurances from Agaja, or by his own belief that whatever rendered Allada too weak to close the trade routes was advantageous to Whydah. Certainly the bad blood caused by the previous twelve years of active and cold war rendered the two kingdoms a prey to Agaja's ambition.

On the 30th of March 1724, Agaja's army entered Allada³ ostensibly in aid of the defeated candidate to the Allada

1. "Conseil de Marine", 22nd Nov. 1717 (AN.C.6/25).

2. A. Dalzel: History p.9.

3. F.P. Mendes to V.F. Cezar de Meneses, 16th July 1724 (APB.OR. 19 doc.56).

throne. Apparently there was no resistance until Agaja's army got to the capital where the king's palace was the first objective. The new king resisted and there followed a battle that went on for three days and which has been described in great detail by Bulfinch Lambe, the English factor who was then being detained at Allada for some alleged offence.¹

The king's palace was taken and set on fire after the king had been killed. The houses of the most important chiefs where large contingents of troops may have been stationed were then attacked. One such house was that of a "Captain Blanco" where Lambe had been imprisoned as soon as the alarm of the invasion was given and from where he was taken prisoner and led to the Agau, the General Commander of the Dahoman forces, who was still in the king's palace, watching it burn.

The sight witnessed by Lambe when he was being led out stunned him.

"When we went out there was scarce any stirring for bodies without heads, and had it rained blood, it could not have lain thicker on the ground."¹

After the first day's battle the war was virtually over.

1. W. Smith: A New Voyage to Guinea, (Lond. 1744): pp. 171-189 contain a full reproduction of Lambe's letter; W. Snelgrave A New Account of some parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade p. 7; F. P. Mendes to V. F. Cezar de Meneses, 16th July 1724 (APB. OR. 19 doc. 56).

The next two days were spent in looting and making captives.

On the third day of the invasion, the Agau invited Lambe

"to come and sit down with him and the petty captains of war while they counted the captive slaves, which they did by giving a booge to everyone. The whole amounted to upwards of two grand cabess, or above eight thousand in number."¹

The contestant who had sought Agaja's help was not installed. Instead he was driven out and became a fugitive, encamping with all his followers somewhere on the Whydah coast.² Agaja permanently and by force took possession of Allada, the ancient capital of the Aja.

This conquest of Allada effectively ended in Aja the old political system based on the Ebi social theory. The fact that the reigning king was killed, the capital burnt and the people disbanded meant that the link with the souls of the ancestors had been cut. And although the Aja remained a people in the Yoruba-Aja country, leadership among them could no longer be claimed according to the traditionally accepted Ebi social theory. Agaja had precipitated a revolution the end of which was not yet in sight.

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1. W. Smith: A New Voyage to Guinea, (Lond. 1744;) pp. 171-189 contain a full reproduction of Lambe's letter; W. Snelgrave A New Account of some parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade p. 7; F. P. Mendes to V. F. Cezar de Meneses, 16th July 1724 (APB. OR. 19 doc. 56.)
 2. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, (encl.), 22nd May 1726 (APB. OR. 19 doc. 61).

It is not surprising that Agaja turned the appeal for help into an occasion of conquest. Dahomey, it will be remembered, had rejected the traditional constitution and had formulated a new one. There was therefore bound to be a clash between the "old" and the "new", and Agaja, who had fully prepared for the eventual clash seized the opportunity offered by the internal division at Allada. In other words the conquest was the logical culmination of the principles for which the Wegbaja dynasty had stood, the principle of authority deriving from and backed up by force rather than based on the order of birth.

The events of the last sixteen years would easily explain why Allada fell so easily. Since 1708 the power vacuum in Aja had increased and deepened. Both in Allada and in Whydah, the authority of the kings was increasingly challenged and weakened. Instead of helping the king to govern, the chiefs refused to obey the king's orders and fought private battles among themselves. A war had broken out between Allada and Whydah which could not be stopped for eight years and which only petered out. Nothing that Huffon did was able to restore tranquillity at Whydah. The Europeans contributed to the lawlessness and fanned the disunity. No one in Aja had the power and the prestige

any longer to hold the country together.

In such a situation, ancient precepts would no longer have the binding force that they used to have and the lives and property of the ordinary citizens would be most insecure. Such people would lack the will to defend an institution that did not give them protection.

In contrast to the situation in Allada and Whydah, Dahomey was a stable kingdom where the king had the supreme authority and controlled an army. Life there was comparatively safe. Its history since 1708 had consisted of successful wars against little-known Yoruba-Aja towns. Once Allada was taken the rest of the Aja country must be brought to recognise the new basis of authority.

CHAPTER IIIA New Political System 1724-1740.

Having destroyed Allada, and therefore the basis of the old political system in Aja, Agaja was next faced with the problem of extending Dahomey's rule over the rest of the Aja. Between 1724 and 1727, he easily subjected all, or most of the remaining Aja kingdoms. He soon discovered however that it was not so easy to hold his new conquests, for the Oyo resolutely defended the traditional political system and the Europeans and a few important Dahoman subjects showed, in no uncertain terms, their dislike of Agaja's policy towards the slave trade. The result was that between 1726 and 1740, Dahomey suffered a series of external invasions and internal revolts which resulted in the loss of its independence to Oyo in 1730 and nearly led to its complete destruction between then and 1740.

It was an unexpected turn of events. In March 1724, as a result of Agaja's successes, all the other Aja kingdoms were confronted with a very delicate problem of political readjustment. They had not yet accepted force as constituting a valid basis of right. Yet Dahomey, hitherto regarded as the "younger son" of Allada and therefore the least privileged in the Ebi social theory, had destroyed the "father" and donned his mantle. Clearly they must either submit or be prepared to defend the

old system.

Some of the rulers quickly decided to readjust as best they could. The ruler of Jakin, whose territory at the eastern seaboard of the Old Allada kingdom had not been touched in the sack of March 1724, suspected that it might be Agaja's next target. He, like the rest of the Aja rulers, had no adequate forces with which to resist attack. To keep his territory out of danger, he submitted to Agaja about April 1724,¹ though mainly to buy time.

The Aplogan, ruler of Gome, a province of Whydah, which adjoined the former Allada province of Tori, took a much more decisive step, which is not surprising when his record of insubordination is remembered. The chaotic situation in Whydah had apparently convinced him that the traditional system no longer had any future and was therefore not worth defending. In the second half of 1726, he transferred his allegiance and his territory from Huffon to the victorious Agaja.²

Only Huffon, still keeping the rest of Whydah kingdom, made no move. Since he was a staunch believer in the Ebi social theory, he could hardly have been pleased with Agaja's treatment of Allada, but he betrayed a deplorable inability to assess Agaja's strength. He seems to have believed that Whydah was

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account, pp.20-21.

2. W. Snelgrave: A New Account, p.9; A. Dalzel: History p.17; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX, p.152. Contrary to Dunglas, Agaja probably did not invade Gome, because it would have been unlike him not to pursue a victory home.

in no immediate danger and was in any case strong enough to beat back any attack by Dahomey. He told Snelgrave in an interview that

"if the king of Dahomey should offer to invade him, he would not use him when taken according to their customs that is, cut off his head, but would keep him for a slave to do the vilest offices"¹

In spite of this boast, Huffon neither defended the traditional system nor showed a proof of his confidence by trying to bring back the Aplogan to obedience.

His attitude is all the more surprising because Agaja made no secret of his determination to incorporate the rest of the Aja country into Dahomey. As soon as he had conquered Allada, he prepared for an invasion of Whydah. About April 1724, he discussed his intentions with Bulfinch Lambe, his English prisoner of war.² Lambe, completely misjudging Agaja's temperament and underrating his competence, had attempted to dissuade him from the enterprise by saying that Whydah kingdom was populous, that the people knew how to use firearms and that the European forts might aid it with their artillery against an invading army.

However, Agaja had not been intimidated. Even the Oyo invasion of Dahomey in 1726, which will soon be related, was not sufficient to make him abandon the project. He had found out "by his spies how much the great men and people of Whydah were divided".² He probably also knew that the European

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.6-9; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX p.151; A. Dalzel: History, p.17.

2. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.6-9; A. Dalzel: History p.17; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX p.151.

directors and traders were usually inclined to scuttle out of a country rather than stay to offer help if any difficulties arose. He had however learned from Lambe's warning the need to plan his intended invasion more securely.

Between 1724 and 1727 he carefully sought to neutralise Whydah firearms and the European artillery which Lambe had pointed out as the two possible sources of great opposition to his forces. Oral tradition in Dahomey, which seems quite credible, relates how Agaja rendered Whydah arms useless, by asking Na Gueze, his daughter who had been married to Huffon, to pour water on all the gunpowder in Huffon's arsenal, which she did the night before Agaja's descent on Sahe, the capital of Whydah.¹ Agaja next sought to make the Europeans neutral in the impending struggle. Through his trade representatives at Whydah, the best known of whom before the invasion was Jongla (or Zunglar), he promised them that

"if they stood neuter, and were not found in arms, they should receive no damage in their persons or goods in case he proved conqueror, and that he would ease their trade and remove diverse impositions laid on it by the king of Whydah. On the contrary if they appeared in arms against him, they must expect his resentment".¹

As soon as the European directors received this message they immediately started to think of how best they could keep

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.12-13, 59-61; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX. p.152; Dunglas has suggested that Agaja worked entirely through Na Gueze.

neutral. At first they contemplated leaving the forts temporarily, but finally decided to remain and take no part in the fighting.

Agaja's thorough preparation paid dividends. When on the 26th February 1727, his army descended on the rest of Whydah kingdom,¹ they met hardly any resistance. As soon as the first alarm was sounded, the whole populace took to their heels in disorder. Huffon was conveyed away in a hammock to the safety of an island near Great Popo, just in time before his palace was set on fire. Eyewitnesses related that

"about five o'clock the same afternoon, they saw such numbers of people flying from all parts of the country towards the seaside that it was surprising, for the fields were covered with them many miles round and their black colour made them more conspicuous in a clear sunshiny day, on a fine champaign country".²

Faced with practically no opposition, Agaja's army subjected the major part of Whydah kingdom within five days. More than five thousand Whydah were killed and between ten and eleven thousand made prisoners. The European factories at Sahe³ were burnt and looted, with the English factory alone losing goods worth about 77 Marks or about two thousand five hundred

1. "Accounts and Journals for Whydah", 28th Feb. 1727 (T70/598/; W. Smith: A New Voyage: p.190; W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp. 2-3; Smith says the invasion took place "about the beginning of February", but Snelgrave is more accurate.
2. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.14-17; W. Smith: A New Voyage p.190.
3. These factories at Sahe must not be confused with the forts at Igelefe. They were unfortified houses, built originally by the Whydah authorities for the convenience of the Europeans visiting the capital, and maintained subsequently by the European occupiers.

pounds sterling. More than forty Europeans, directors and traders, were taken prisoners and marched to Agaja at Allada where they were kept fifteen days before being released.¹ The occupation of Whydah kingdom was complete and the Whydah were never again able successfully to re-occupy their land, try as hard as they might afterwards.

With the conquest of Whydah, all the most important kingdoms of the old Aja had been absorbed into the new kingdom of Dahomey. In Aja, but not yet in Yoruba, the Ebi social theory had been replaced by the "perforated pot" theory. Why was the Revolution so easy?

One reason of course was the thoroughness of Agaja's preparation, but a much more important reason was the complete weakness of the old political system. Whydah fell, like Allada before it, without striking a blow because of its internal division and its complete administrative breakdown. One might have expected that after March 1724, Huffon and his chiefs would have appreciated the urgency of the threat from Agaja and sunk their differences to meet the common danger. No such reconciliation however took place. Instead, several incidents between 1724 and 1727 show that the same internal troubles that had been weakening the administration in Whydah since 1708 continued and perhaps increased.²

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1. "Accounts and Journal for Whydah", 21st Mar. 1727 (T70/598); A mark was about thirty pounds in the 18th century money. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, Bahia 18th June 1727, transmitting a letter from Whydah dated 4th April 1727 (APB.OR.22 doc.58); A. Dalzel: History p.27.
 2. W. Snelgrave: A New Account p.5.

There seems to have been a civil war early in 1725 between Huffon and certain of his chiefs. Huffon had lost to his enemies, had been forced out of his capital and had to borrow goods to resettle there in April of that year.¹

His authority, which had never been really strong, was never fully re-established after that event. Towards the end of 1725 and early in 1726 the Dutch were able with impunity to flout the laws and conventions of Whydah. A Dutch Galley, ignoring the established neutrality of Whydah port, carried out a veritable campaign against the Portuguese shipping. In November it sank one Portuguese ship, the "Tempeste", after a fifteen minute battle in Whydah harbour, and on the 18th December ordered another Portuguese ship trading at Whydah to weigh anchor, and go to Jakin to trade.² In March and April 1726, the Dutch twice attempted to set the Portuguese factory at Sahe on fire but failed on both occasions. Had they succeeded, they might have burnt Huffon's palace as well. Although the Portuguese complained to Huffon and pointed out the seriousness of the Dutch lawlessness, Huffon did, and probably could, not take any measures to bring the Dutch to order.³

The extent to which authority had completely vanished in Whydah kingdom was shown in April 1726 when a drunken brawl

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1. "Accounts and Ledgers for Whydah", 31st Jan. - 30th June 1725 (T70/889); Wyatt to R.A.C., 28th Ap.1725 (T70/4).
 2. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, 13th March 1726, encl. a letter from Whydah dated 3rd Jan. 1726 (APB.OR.21 doc.131); Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, 9th May 1726 (APB.OR.21 doc.132).
 3. F.P.Mendes, director of the Portuguese fort at Whydah to Viceroy of Portugal, 22nd May 1726 (APB.OR.21 doc.61).

developed into a civil war in which all the important chiefs immediately took sides without pausing to discover the rights and wrongs of the case. There was a pitched battle between the chiefs who supported the English and the Portuguese on the one side, and those who supported the French on the other. A fire started by them burnt three quarters of Igelefe and fighting went on sporadically for more than a month,¹ without Huffon being able to stop it.

In this state of lawlessness, the ordinary citizens of Whydah would lack any protection and might have no urge to fight for the preservation of their kingdom. Many of them may have joined Agaja as the Aplogan had done. In such a situation it is not surprising that Whydah fell without striking a blow.

Scholars of the history of Dahomey have suggested that Agaja invaded both Allada and Whydah because he was an enthusiastic slave trader who was shut in from the direct contact with the Europeans on the coast and who therefore had to force his way through for the benefit of his own slave trade.²

They have been led to their conclusion largely from the evidence of such eighteenth century writers as Snelgrave and Norris, and from the oral traditions collected later. In 1734

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1. F.P.Mendes, director of the Portuguese fort at Whydah to Viceroy of Brazil, 1, 22nd May 1726 (APB.OR 21 doc.61)
 2. J.D. Fage: An Introduction to the History of West African (Cambridge 1956) p.93; C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers (Oxford 1961) p.23.

Snelgrave related what seems an eyewitness story of the cause of Agaja's attack on Whydah. He said that Agaja had sent an ambassador to Huffon to ask him for a free pass to the coast and to offer to pay the normal duties. When Huffon refused to grant this request, Agaja decided to invade Whydah.¹

In 1789, Norris wrote with very great emphasis and a tinge of impatient annoyance, that he

"Knew many of the Whydasians as well as Dahomans who were present when Trudo attacked that kingdom. They attributed his enterprize solely to the desire of extending his dominions and of enjoying at first hand those commodities which he had been used to purchase of the Whydasians who were in possession of the 'coast,'" 2

and went on to repeat Snelgrave's story.

Le Herisse and Dunglas have recorded traditions which strengthen the theory that Agaja needed to be in direct contact with the European traders at Whydah to possess European manufactured goods like Huffon.³

A thorough examination of these sources however raises doubts as to whether Agaja's motives are to be correctly inferred from them. Both Snelgrave and Norris wrote mainly to defend their vested interests in the slave trade, which they felt were being threatened. When Snelgrave wrote, Bulfinch Lambe, who had been Agaja's prisoner of war in 1724, had just brought to St. James's Court, a bogus prince called

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.5-6.

2. R. Norris: Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahadie, King of Dahomey. (London 1789) pp.XIII-XIV.

3. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p.296; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX p.149.

"Prince Adomo Orinooko Tomo" to deliver what was probably a genuine message from Agaja to the effect that Agaja wanted other Europeans than the slave traders,

"that the natives would sell themselves to us on condition of not being carried off, that we might settle plantations".¹

Snelgrave, who since 1704, had been trading in slaves in all parts of the "slave coast", and had discovered that Whydah "was the principal port of all the Guinea Coast for the slave trade,"² wanted to show emphatically that Lambe's message, as well as his prince, was bogus, to safeguard his own interests.

Nor was Snelgrave consistent though he was nearer the event and wrote at the times as an eye witness. Although he said that the negotiation between Huffon and Agaja for a free pass to the coast failed completely, yet almost in the same breath, he spoke of one Zunglar (Jongla) "who was formerly the king's [i.e. Agaja's] agent for several years at Whidah, where I had seen him in my former voyages."³ If the negotiation had failed as completely as he implied, Jongla could not have remained Agaja's agent at Whydah for many years.

Moreover, Snelgrave spoke of one "Buttance", Agaja's messenger, who "spoke very good English", and also told the story of the Portuguese mulatto whom Agaja bought and brought to his court.³ Jongla spoke at least two languages, English and French, and the implication is that Agaja kept all these linguists for

1. J. Atkins: A New Voyage to Guinea pp.121-122.

2. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.2-6.

3. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.56-61.

trading direct with the different European nations on the coast. For if he was only allowed to trade with Whydah and Allada middlemen, linguists would not have been necessary, since the Dahomans, the Allada and the Whydah spoke the same language. Indeed their presence among Agaja's officers was an eloquent witness to the ease with which the Dahoman citizens had access to the coast.

Norris' statement was made when the abolition issue was a burning question in England. He was a slave trader of long standing and a complete anti-abolitionist.¹ He had once been thrown out of his slave trading job by the American war of independence, when he had to turn a smith "for want of a better thing to do",² and he did not want to be deprived of it again by the humanitarians. He devoted the last section of his book to a detailed argument in defence of the continuation of the slave trade. It was part of his case to show that the Dahomans loved slave trading.

What Norris heard in 1772, even if impartially reported, was not necessarily Agaja's intention in 1724 and 1727. Forty five eventful years had passed since the invasion of Whydah and the changes in the national policy could easily have led to changes in the people's conception of the original intention. As will soon be plain, Agaja had been forced to become a supporter of the slave trade in 1730 and Tegbeu had put the slave

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1. "Report of the Lords of the Committee appointed for the consideration of all matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations" 1789.
 2. R. Norris to R. Miles, 29th June, 1779 (T70/1538); Although Norris visited Dahomey in 1772, he did not write his account immediately.

trade before any other national activity since 1740.¹ No private citizen therefore could have told Norris that there were other reasons for invading Whydah when the official policy was "trade before war".

As for the oral traditions, they must be regarded as propaganda material, spread by the Agbadjigbeto and probably generally widely believed. For in 1724, the Dahomans were not completely prevented from trading directly with the Europeans on the coast. They had been trading directly with the Europeans through the Epe port as early as 1714, possibly earlier. It was partly because of this that the king of Allada had refused to close the port when the French director requested it in 1715.

The observation of Bulfinch Lambe who was in Agaja's court for about a year did not suggest that Agaja was greatly deprived of European goods, for he saw in the palace, three years before the conquest of Whydah

"great quantities of plates, wrought gold and other rich things, also all sorts of fine gowns, cloaks, hats, caps etc., he also has all sorts of common goods beyond measure and gives away boogies like dirt and brandy like water".²

If Agaja was not shut in in 1724, still less was he in 1727. For after his conquest of Allada and the submission of Jakin, he had two ports at his own exclusive control. The first was Offra which SoSo had started to rebuild in 1717 and the

1. See Chap. IV.

2. W. Smith: A New Voyage pp.171-189.

second was Jakin. Both of them were near each other and were about twenty five miles east of Whydah. If all that Agaja wanted was to trade with the Europeans, he knew enough of the internal weakness of Whydah, controlled enough of the inland slave trade routes and was clever enough to realise that if he continued to develop the two ports and kept the inland routes closed to Whydah traders, the instability of Whydah and the abundance of the slaves that would come to his own ports would quickly induce the Europeans to abandon Whydah for his ports.

Despite this obvious fact that Agaja was hardly at any time completely shut inland, he himself made diplomatic statements in 1727 and 1728 which might mislead the unwary as to his reasons for invading Whydah. In April 1727, a few weeks after the conquest of Whydah, he gave the Portuguese director, who had visited his court, the impression that he had invaded Whydah to be in direct contact with the European traders and professed that he was a friend of the Europeans, "with whom he wanted all kind of commercial relations".¹

In the same month, when Snelgrave complained to him about the many indignities which the Europeans had suffered from Huffon and the Whydah people and how bad the trade had been because of the bad management of the Whydah authorities, Agaja said that "his God had made him the instrument to punish the king of Whydah and his people for the many villanies they had

1. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal 18th June 1727, encl. a letter from the Portuguese director at Whydah dated 4th Apr. 1727 (APB.OR.doc.58).

been guilty of towards both blacks and whites."¹ In September 1728, he told Delisle, an officer in the French court that he did not think it just that Africans should make profits out of the Europeans.²

These statements were made when Agaja was not yet in a position to dictate terms, and were probably intended to win the goodwill of the Europeans. Certainly they were all capable of more than one interpretation. "All kinds of commercial relations" might mean "not just the slave trade" which might mean in turn a diminution or even total abolition of that trade. The "villanies" of which the Whydah were accused might be their excessive slave trading activities. And Agaja's unwillingness to let the African profit out of the Europeans certainly meant that he would not allow his subjects to trade freely in slaves, rather than that he would control the prices in favour of the Europeans.

Therefore neither the 18th century slave captains, nor Agaja's diplomatic utterances, nor yet the popular, "textbook", oral traditions collected almost two centuries later can point to a correct assessment of Agaja's motives for invading the coastal Aja kingdoms.

The safest evidence to go on therefore would be Agaja's actions immediately after his victory. When these are considered, it immediately becomes clear that Agaja had very little

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account p.64.

2. "Extrait du Registre" 13th Sep. 1728 (AN.C6/25).

sympathy for the slave trade when he invaded the Aja coast. His first motive appears to have been to sweep away the traditional political system which had completely broken down and was no longer capable of providing basic security and justice. Such a policy was implied almost inevitably by Dahomey's rejection of the traditional system and its formation of an alternative.

The second motive would appear to have been to restrict and eventually stop the slave trade, which had been the cause of the breakdown of the traditional system in Aja, and to substitute other "legitimate" items of trade between Europe and the new kingdom of Dahomey.

Indeed Dahoman opposition to the slave trade appears to go back beyond Agaja and may have been among the basic principles upon which the kingdom had been founded. As has been noticed, nascent Dahomey was twice recorded as preventing the Allada slave raiding in the last thirty years of the 17th century.

The anonymous Aja, who, early in the 18th century, accused the Europeans of introducing "the traffick in slaves" was a contemporary of Agaja. He was probably not the only Aja who felt that the form of contact which they had with the Europeans was not good for them and Agaja may have shared his views fully.

Agaja's own idea about the slave trade was probably fully discussed with Bulfinch Lambe, the first European of any

standing he ever came into contact with. He seems to have impressed on Lambe that he wanted other kinds of Europeans than the slave traders. When Lambe had been in his court for eight months, during which time he must have had several discussions with Agaja, he recommended that

"if any tailor, carpenter, smith or any sort of white man that is free be willing to come here, he will find very good encouragement and be much caressed and get money if he can be contented with this life for a time." 1

Agaja was supposed to have accepted the submission of Jakin after the conquest of Allada because of the experience of its traders and because of its commercial rivalry with Whydah.² In fact he made no attempt to persuade the European factors to settle in either Offra or Jakin, neither did the Europeans, who were always threatening to leave Whydah, approach him for permission to settle in any of his ports, despite the unsettled condition at Whydah.

Certainly the supply of slaves did not increase from Dahoman sources between 1724 and 1727. The Portuguese director wrote in July 1724 that as a result of Agaja's destruction of Allada, slaves had become abundant,³ but such slaves could have been those sold by the slave owning Allada people driven away from their homes and in extreme distress. They could equally have been free Allada people who in extreme distress,

1. W. Smith: A New Voyage pp.171-189.

2. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.20-23; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX p.151.

3. F.P. Mendes to V.F. Cezar de Meneses, 16th July 1724 (APB. OR .19 doc.36).

preferred slavery to a wretched death, as the Whydah were later reported to have done.¹ As soon as these sources dried up, the Europeans at Whydah felt the effect of Agaja's conquest. The slave routes were effectively shut and slaves became scarce and dear.² Offra port was laid waste and no attempt was made to reopen it for fifty years.³

Snelgrave's ship must have been the first slaving ship that reached Whydah after its conquest, when about eleven thousand captives were made. He personally demanded from Agaja enough slaves to fill his ship and Agaja promised to grant his wish. But it was only with very great difficulty that he got the six hundred slaves he wanted. At one point when he needed only eighty more to complete his cargo, he sent a special messenger to the king to ask for his help in supplying them. Agaja replied that although he had many slaves who tilled his farm, he had none for sale, and was in fact surprised that Snelgrave needed so many slaves. Many Portuguese slave ships which came after Snelgrave's stayed at Whydah for a long time hoping in vain that trade would revive.⁴

Before the conquest of Whydah, only Agaja sold slaves in his kingdom, and he sold mainly women. This practice he meant to continue after the conquest.⁵ In April 1727, some Dahomans

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1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account p.70;
 2. Tinker and Humphrey to R.A.C., 23rd Feb.1725 (T70/7); "Conseil de Marine", 13th Aug. 1728 (AN.C.6/25).
 3. In 1776, under totally different circumstances, an unsuccessful attempt was made to reopen it. See below Chapter V.
 4. W.Snelgrave: A New Account pp.70/107. Snelgrave spent 94 days at Jakin before he got his complete cargo of slaves. Before the conquest, the largest ships spent not more than 30 days.
 5. W. Smith: A New Voyage pp.171-189; W. Snelgrave: A New Account p.94.

who had believed that their conquest of the coast gave them the opportunity to trade as the former Allada and Whydah people had done, went to Jakin to sell their slaves to Snelgrave. As soon as Agaja heard it, he sent to arrest them all. Most of them fled, but some were caught. Their fate is not known, but the Dahomans did not, after that, trade indiscriminately in slaves.¹

Between the 1st and the 19th March 1727, Agaja's army laid siege to the European forts at Igelefe. (Written Grigwe of Gregoy by the Europeans) The European residents in all of them collected themselves in the French fort and put up a show of force, but it was only the large quantities of presents given to the Dahoman soldiers, to Jongla, Agaja's chief agent at Igelefe and to the Dahoman chiefs at Allada "in order to influence them in our favour in this calamitous juncture" that induced the army to withdraw.² In November and December 1728, Agaja's army again attacked the English fort and again withdrew when they were given presents by the governor.³

In April 1727, Agaja ordered the remaining European factories still standing unburnt at Sahe to be burnt. This was accordingly done in the presence of their European owners who were just then being released from captivity. They were greatly surprised and complained bitterly to Agaja who denied giving any such orders.⁴ As he neither punished those who had burnt the factories

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1. W. Smith: A New Voyage pp.171-189; W. Snelgrave: A New Account p.94.
 2. "Accounts and Journals for Whydah", 21st Mar. 1727 (T70/598). Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, Bahia 18th June 1727 (APB.OR.22 doc.58).
 3. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", 31st Dec. 1728 (T 70/392).
 4. W. Smith: A New Voyage p.191; Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, 1st June 1727 (APB.OR22 doc.58).

nor ordered them to be rebuilt, it is difficult to believe that their destruction was contrary to his wish.

The Europeans had not helped the Whydah against Dahomey and they had not in any way contested Agaja's authority in Whydah kingdom which, they admitted, "had become his by right of conquest". It would be difficult therefore to explain Agaja's hostility to them save on the assumption that he sought to either ^{to} expel all the slave traders from his dominion or at least to impose upon them his own terms of trade.

That Agaja and the European directors were not thinking in the same terms when they talked of "trade" is clear from their attitude to the conquered Whydah. The Europeans would have liked the old Whydah to become Agaja's subjects because they were experienced slave traders, and many Whydah would gladly have accepted such an offer. The Portuguese director went to Agaja early in April 1727 to plead their cause and to convince Agaja of the economic advantage of permitting their return.¹ Wilson, the English director, gave presents in February and May 1728 for the same purpose, but Agaja refused to allow the Whydah to return,² precisely for the reason adduced by the Europeans.

The European directors and traders realised from these actions that Agaja was opposed to their slave trading interests.

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1. "Accounts and Journals for Whydah", 21st Mar. 1727 (T70/598); Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, Bahia 18th June 1727 (APB.OR. 22doc.58).
 2. "Accounts and Journals C.C.C.," 13th June 1729 (T70/392).

They complained very bitterly and very loudly. D'Ayrie, the French factor at Jakin, advocated that it was time to find a route to the Mahi country whence the slaves came since the Dahoman soldiers had effectively prevented the traders from bringing the slaves down to the coast.¹ The Viceroy of Brazil, judging from the reports he got from the Portuguese director and traders, said he considered the trade there was ruined and would remain ruined for a long time.² The English Company declared itself "concerned that the trade of Whydah is in such precarious circumstances,"³ and the Dutch withdrew to Jakin and Epe and started intriguing against Agaja. All the Europeans who had hitherto regarded Agaja as their friend and deliverer from the tyrannical impositions of Huffon and the dwindling trade of Whydah, immediately became his enemies and champions of the vanquished Whydah.

Even before his success at Whydah, Agaja had discovered that it was one thing to destroy the old political and economic systems in Aja but quite another to establish others in their places, for these systems had powerful defenders outside the old Aja states. These defenders of the status quo strenuously opposed Agaja between 1726 and 1730. The Little Popo and the Akwamu refused to recognise Agaja's right over the conquered territory⁴ and the disillusioned European factors sought to

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1. "Conseil de Marine", 13th Aug. 1728 (AN.C6/25).
 2. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, Bahia, 13th May 1729 (AHU.Codice 254 f.61r.62r.).
 3. Court of Assistants to J. Brathwaite, R. Cruikshank and B. Peak, 14th Aug. 1729 (T70/54).
 4. As 1 above.

bring back to the old Whydah.

Of all the forces opposing Agaja's political designs during these years, Oyo was the most dangerous because it was the most powerful and because it felt its own political interests were directly involved. By the 18th century, the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo had grown into a large empire, controlling both Nupe (Tapa) and Borgu (Bariba)¹ in the north. To the south Allada and therefore indirectly all the Aja country had been its tributary since the sixteen eighties. It had a strong cavalry army which was the dread of all the surrounding states. It inflicted a sharp defeat on an Ashanti army in 1764 and remained throughout the eighteenth century, the strongest imperial power in the whole of West Africa between the mouths of the Niger and the Volta and between latitude 10° north and the sea.

Yet in spite of its strength, the rulers of Oyo had never overthrown or rejected the Ebi social theory. The Alafin (kings of Oyo) continued to regard themselves as "sons" of the Ooni (kings of Ife) and to go regularly to Ife for the final constitutional sanctions,² even though Oyo was much stronger militarily than Ife. To such rulers, Agaja's action in killing the "father" of the Aja was the greatest sacrilege and if he was allowed to get away with it, there was no knowing where he would end or how many such law breakers would arise.

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1. S. Johnson (Ed. O. Johnson): History pp.161-163; These traditions seem quite reliable and we shall see in Chapters V and VI that the Bariba and the Nupe achieved their independence in 1783 and 1791 respectively.
 2. Every Alafin up till today continues to go to Ife for the final authority before being crowned king.

In the third decade of the 18th century, Oyo was ruled by capable men. Ojigi, the reigning Alafin, has been described as "a powerful and warlike king". He seems to have been the choice of the Oyo army, and to have been installed for his known military ability. His Basorun, Yamba, was "one of the most famous men in Yoruba history", and his Gbonka, Latoyo, was an army general of note.¹ Such men would not stand idly by while Agaja overthrew ancient customs and spread confusion.

The purport of diplomatic exchanges that took place between Oyo and Dahomey after Agaja's conquest of Allada in 1724 is not known. Whatever Agaja's terms may have been they did not satisfy Oyo. So on the 14th April 1726, the Oyo army entered Dahomey.² Agaja's recent victory, his stock of fire-arms and some artillery which he had captured during the sack of Allada, emboldened him to make a stand and hope for an even chance against the Oyo cavalry.

The battle that followed was short and terrible. The Oyo army killed a large number of the Dahoman soldiers and enslaved a still larger number. Abomey was burnt and Agaja surrounded by his bodyguard and women escaped into the bush to save his

1. S. Johnson (Ed. O. Johnson): History p.74.

2. Director of the Portuguese fort to Viceroy of Brazil, 22nd May 1726 (APB OR.21 doc. 61); W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.55-59. E. Dunglas in E.D.p.147. Dunglas argues powerfully without any evidence but the words "ancient treaty" that this invasion took place in 1712. The phrase may however refer to those that followed the Oyo invasions of Allada in the 1680's and in 1698. This firm date, given by a Portuguese eyewitness disposes of his doubts.

life. The Oyo, having taught the upstart the lesson of his life, went back home.¹

It was widely believed that Agaja was finished and that he would never again be able to threaten further the traditional order. Early in May 1726, "Hussar", the disappointed pretender to the Allada throne, who had originally invited Agaja for help, left his place of refuge and joined the "Mina" (perhaps the Little Popo Accra), in order jointly to attack Jakin later that month and from there march steadily on to recover Allada. How the attempt fared is not known. Agaja was back at Abomey by 22nd May, purposefully rebuilding his burnt capital and his presence may have discouraged the invaders.

After this short and terrible experience Agaja had no cause to underrate the difficulties that would confront him in his bid to take over the Aja country. Those difficulties however did not discourage him. Instead, he planned carefully to overcome them all. In the nine months between the withdrawal of the Oyo in May 1726 and Dahomey's invasion of Whydah in February 1727, Agaja planned his tactics. He rightly calculated that he had enough military strength to deal with any opposition from the small neighbouring kingdoms. Only the Oyo presented a serious danger and those he hoped to buy off with presents. If they refused to be bought off, then he would

1. Agaja's agents, obviously to boost up the morale of the Dahomans, claimed a tactical victory over the Oyo at the end of this battle. The original version of their made up story was repeated to Snelgrave in 1727 and later oral traditions have manufactured more stories.

defy and outwit them by burying his treasure, burning his farms and towns and fleeing to the European forts. These measures and the exigencies of the climate, would, he thought, prevent them from occupying Dahomey for much longer than a month, and enable him to return to his capital after only a short inconvenience.

Accordingly, immediately after his conquest of Whydah in February 1727, Agaja sent presents to the Alafin of Oyo, whose messengers came to him at the Allada camp about the middle of April 1727.¹ He seems deliberately to have prolonged the negotiations in order that the onset of the rains might delay any Oyo invasion of Dahomey until the next dry season, and thus give him about a whole year during which he could prepare solidly for his flight.

The details of the negotiations are obscure, but, as Agaja had expected, they broke down. The Oyo probably felt that the Dahoman presents could not sufficiently atone for the break of established principles involved in Agaja's action. Besides all the princes of Allada, Weme and Whydah sent messengers, to the Alafin, imploring him for help to regain their patrimony from the illegal grasp of Agaja.²

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1. J. Brazilio to Viceroy of Brazil, 17th July 1731 (APB.OR.28 f.129); W. Snelgrave: A New Voyage p.59.
 2. Viceroy of Brazil to King Of Portugal, 5th Ap.1728 (APB.OR.24 f.40); Dupetitval to La Compagnie des Indes, 4th Oct. 1728 (AN.C6/25); W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.121-122, 132; A. Dalzel: History pp.52-53; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX pp.158-159; S. Johnson: History p.174. Snelgrave, Dalzel and Dunglas are completely mixed up about the number of Oyo invasions and the events in each of them. Usually they record one or two; Oyo traditions say there were three, but the documents record four between 1726 and 1730.

On the 22nd March, 1728, the much dreaded Oyo army descended on Dahomey. According to his plan, Agaja buried his treasure, sent his subjects out of reach and completely burnt all the provisions that might help the invading army. Not finding the Europeans friendly, he avoided taking refuge in any of their forts and ran into the bush instead. The Oyo army, deprived of both booty and provisions, found it impossible to remain long in Dahomey from which they had been forced to withdraw by the end of April 1728. There is no suggestion that Agaja offered them any presents to induce them to withdraw. He probably simply defied them.

Agaja's difficulties were not over, however, for another factor emerged with which he had not reckoned. During the Oyo invasion, the European directors and particularly Dupetival the French director, encouraged the Old Whydah to re-establish in their kingdom and supplied them with everything they would need for such a settlement.¹ When Agaja later sought to drive the old Whydah away after the withdrawal of the Oyo, his army encountered a stiff resistance from the Europeans who collected themselves in the French fort. The Dahomans attacked the fort on 1st May 1728, but after a whole day of fighting were forced to retire. They besieged the fort again on the 14th May, forcing the European defenders to retire and to leave the old Whydah to defend themselves unaided. On 31st of May, the magazine in the fort caught fire and blew up, killing about

1. "Conseil de Marine", 11th Aug. 1728 (AN.C6/25); E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX. p.158; A. Dalzel: History pp.51-52. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C., 31st Dec. 1728 (T70/392). Both Dalzel and Dunglas mix up this episode with another which happened a

three thousand of its Whydah defenders. The rest who had thus been deprived of an effective means of resistance were enslaved by the Dahomans.¹

By July 1728, Agaja had realised that he had to reckon not only with the Oyo but also with the Europeans. Their opposition had not been well concerted but might be in future if adequate steps were not taken to deal with it. Agaja calculated that any future Oyo invasion could be rendered as ineffective as that of March 1728, provided the Europeans could be prevented from embarrassing him by encouraging the return of the old Whydah.

He therefore set about wooing the Europeans. Because the French fort had served as the centre of opposition to his army in March 1727 and May 1728, Agaja secretly admired the valour of the French whom he regarded as the bravest Europeans whose friendship would be most valuable to him.

Dupetitval, the director of the French fort, was not unwilling to befriend Agaja. After his fort had been burnt twice he had concluded that the interests of his country would be best served by being friendly with the winning side. In July 1728 he formally offered to help Agaja to oppose an Akwamu army which was then contemplating an invasion of Dahomey.²

The occasion gave Agaja the chance he had been looking for. He went about the task of winning over the French in a

1. See footnote 1 on previous page.

2. "Conseil de Marine," 11th Aug. 1728 (AN.C.6/25).

highly diplomatic way and frightened the French into professing their friendship for him. As if in a confidential talk with Antonio Pinto, a Portuguese factor at Jakin, he accused the French of plotting against Dahomey and promised to send his army against the French fort to ask for an explanation. Pinto repeated this to D'Ayrie, the French representative at Jakin, who promptly sent a messenger to warn Dupetitval of the impending danger. Dupetitval hurriedly summoned his council where it was decided that a memorandum be sent immediately to Agaja protesting in the strongest terms that the French were his friends and wished to remain so.

This was immediately done and Delisle, the Lieutenant of the fort was dispatched with the memorandum to Agaja on the 24th August 1728. Agaja listened to the French protestations of friendship and declared himself persuaded at the last moment from taking a punitive expedition against them. He then gave Delisle such good treatment to win his unqualified respect. Delisle stayed in Agaja's court until 4th October by which time he had committed the French to Agaja's cause as completely as Agaja himself desired.¹ It looked as though the latter would not only be able to flee to the French fort during the next Oyo invasion, but would also be able to rely on active help from the French against the Oyo.

1. "Conseil de Marine," 18th and 24th Aug. 1728; "Extrait du Registre des deliberations de la direction general des Comptoirs de Juda pour la Compagnie des Indes du fort St Louis Gregoy," 26th Aug. - 4th Oct. 1728 (AN. C6/25).

Mighty Oyo had however not been remaining idle. Ojigi and his skilful advisers had decided upon drastic measures. They had determined to occupy Dahomey permanently, settle Oyo citizens there,¹ and deprive Agaja of the whole of the kingdom. Their plan was to increase the severity of Oyo's action annually from 1729 onwards until Agaja was exhausted or caught. With this in mind, the Oyo army invaded Dahomey in 1729 and 1730.

During the 1729 invasion, the army and the colonists accompanying it set out about January and reached Dahomey around the middle of March.¹ Agaja repeated his earlier tactics and fled, but was hotly pursued by the Oyo army which advanced much further south than it had ever done before, as far as Gome the northern province of the old Whydah kingdom, where the Aplogan and his people narrowly escaped with their lives.

Then instead of withdrawing as they were wont to do and as Agaja had expected, they settled down building a town, and occasionally attacking the Dahomans in their forest hideouts. This went on until May, obviously much longer than Agaja had planned for or expected. Many Dahomans died of hunger and a large number was killed.²

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1. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, 28th July 1729 (APB.OR 25.f.158); "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.," 30th June 1729 (T70/395); W. Snelgrave; A New Account pp.122-123; A. Dalzel: History pp.52-53.
 2. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, 28th July 1729 (APB.OR. 25.f.158); "Accounts and Journal, C.C.C.," 30th June 1729 (T70/393). The name of the town they then founded is not recorded, but it probably was Cana (Galmina), which later became the Oyo headquarters in Dahomey.

To worsen the plight of the Dahomans, the French did not carry out everything that Delisle had promised and the Europeans again embarrassed Agaja. When it looked as though the power of Agaja had been completely broken, the old Whydah approached all the European directors for cooperation in their effort to re-settle in their ancient kingdom. The Portuguese seem to have refused all co-operation. Dupetitval prevaricated but he was finally persuaded by Gallot, his second in command, and offered to help. Testefolle the English director jumped eagerly at the opportunity and gave active encouragement.¹

On the 23rd of April 1729, Huffon and all his people solemnly came back to their ancient home. Testefolle announced enthusiastically that "the king of Whydah and all his people returned and settled and trade began to flourish." Gun salutes were fired for Huffon and his chiefs, all of whom were well entertained by the forts' officers, but the joy was shortlived.

It seems that the Oyo did not find things very easy, for Agaja had destroyed most of the crops. They were soon seriously short of supplies and had to withdraw about the end of May 1729. About the beginning of June, Agaja emerged from hiding and immediately started to reduce the forts to obedience once again. Huffon and his people immediately fled back to their Popo island.

1. Charlot Testefolle to R.A.C., Whydah 30th Oct. 1729 (T70/7); "Memoire de la Compagnie des Indes", 8th Nov. 1730 (AN.C.6/25); A. Dalzel: History p. 54; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX p.158.

Dupetitval's punishment had already been meted out by Gallot, who soon after April 1729, convinced the old Whydah that Dupetitval was in fact their enemy. The old Whydah therefore seized Dupetitval one morning, kept him in confinement and proclaimed Gallot director of the French fort. When they fled in July they took Dupetitval with them and soon announced his death.¹ Etienne Gallot, who had once served in Agaja's army and spoke some Fon, the language of Dahomey, was soon able to make his peace with Agaja.

The Dahoman army next encamped near the English fort, mainly to keep an eye on the old Whydah. Testefolle, already piqued by the failure of his attempt to resettle the Whydah soon lost his nerve. He started to misuse all the Dahomans in his fort and beat a Dahoman chief, with threats to deal in the same way with Agaja if he could secure him. For that treasonable utterance the English fort was attacked on 4th November but was stoutly defended for six hours, when the Dahomans retired. Testefolle was caught when he attempted to escape and was taken to Abomey where he was sentenced to death,² and executed.

Although Agaja was able to master the forts once again,

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- 1; "Memoire de la Compagnie des Indes," 8th Nov. 1730 (AN.C.6/25); A. Dalzel: History p.54; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX. p.158. E. Dalzel's and Dunglas's accounts of the death of Dupetitval and the circumstances surrounding it are substantially different from that given by Gallot, who was a principal character in the drama and who later confessed the villanous part he played in it. His account has been adopted here.
 2. Accounts and Journals C.C.C., 28th Feb. 1730 (T70/395); Governor and Council, C.C.C. to R.A.C., 26th Dec. 1729 (T70/7); Court of Assistance to John Brathwaite, 31st Dec. 1730 (T70/54); A. Dalzel: History pp.57-58.

these episodes suggested to him that he really could not count on European support against the Oyo who had shown themselves determined to wear out his resistance.

Before their next invasion, in 1730, the Oyo tried to make their sources of provision much more secure. They made an alliance with the Mahi,¹ which would not only provide them with whatever they needed for maintenance, but would also deprive the Dahomans of a refuge in that direction during the invasion. Oyo's plan and strategy seem to have been known to Huffon by December 1729 when he confidently told Edward Deane, the English director, that he and his people "were resolved to return to their country in a short time and set trade on a flourishing foot again."²

News of the Oyo advance reached the European forts at Igelefe on 3rd January 1730, but the Oyo army did not reach Dahomey until about the end of February. Between 9th and 16th January, Agaja sent Dahoman citizens to Igelefe in such large numbers that all the old Whydah who had been around, fled. He also sent one Budaka to keep the European directors calm and assure them that the Dahomans at Igelefe would do no harm to the forts. Agaja himself fled to his usual forest retreat. On the 21st February 1730, Huffon, who must have been watching

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1. Mallis de la Mine to Prementil, 8th Jan. 1732 (ADN.C.739); For the history of the Mahi, see Cernevin: Histoire du Dahomey pp.140-142.
 2. "Copy book and Diaries for Whydah," 30th Dec. 1729, 3rd, 9th-17th Jan., 9th and 25th Feb. 1730 (T.70/1466).

the situation keenly, told the European directors that with the Oyo descending on Abomey, he was about to take possession again of his kingdom, and requested that they all send him the customary presents. All the directors thought Agaja was finished, took Huffon's success for granted and set the required gifts.¹

Agaja in his hideout found the prospect bleak. He offered the Oyo large quantities of presents, rumoured to be goods worth six hundred slaves, in order to induce them to withdraw.² The Oyo knew Agaja too well by now to allow him to buy time, but they accepted his presents and feigned withdrawal. Agaja then summoned his scattered subjects to come out of their hiding and start the work of rebuilding and those of them at Whydah set out for Abomey on 9th March.²

The Dahomans soon realised that they were walking into an ambush. They were attacked by the Mahi as soon as they had emerged from their hideouts and when they attempted to defend themselves, the Oyo who were thought to have gone, suddenly returned. Agaja managed to escape and his subjects who had left Igelefe on 9th March came back in a great panic on 20th. Agaja realised beyond any doubt that the Oyo were bent on permanently settling near or at Abomey, and therefore decided to evacuate it. On the 7th April, it was rumoured around the

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1. "Copybook and Diaries for Whydah," 30th Dec. 1729, 3rd, 9-17th Jan. 9th and 25th Feb. 1730 (T70/1466).
 2. Mallis de la Mine to Premenil, 8th Jan. 1732 (ADN.C.739); "Copybook and Diaries for Whydah", 9th and 20th Mar. 1730 (T70/1466).
 3. "Copybook and Diaries for Whydah", 9th, 20th Mar. 7th and 9th Apr. 1730 (T70/1466); Mallis de la Mine to Premenil, 8th Jan. 1732 (ADN.C.739).

forts that Agaja was coming to settle permanently at Allada.¹ On the 9th, the rumour was officially confirmed as the English director recorded cryptically:

"very few Dahomies to be seen. Messenger arrived from the king of Dahomey requiring that all chiefs [i.e. of the forts] go up to Dahomey to him to accompany him down to Arda." 2

The European chiefs, unwilling to commit themselves except to the winning side, excused themselves. Agaja moved permanently to Allada soon after that date, and for the next thirteen years, Allada remained the capital of Dahomey.

The whole incident must have given Agaja pause for deep reflection. That Dahomey continued to exist at all in 1730 could be attributed partly to Agaja's farsighted plans, but more so to the lack of effective co-operation between all the forces that had opposed him. The Akwamu and the Little Popo who had refused to recognise his right found themselves unable to co-operate and powerless to oppose him singly. Only the Akwamu once appeared on the Whydah beach with an army of about thirty thousand men, but they withdrew without striking a blow.² Although the old Whydah, helped by the European factors, had taken advantage of the Oyo invasions time and again to occupy Igelefe, they did not actively co-operate with the Oyo despite the fact that they stood to gain from such co-operation.

The circumstance most favourable to Dahomey was the complete

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1. "Copybook and Diaries for Whydah", 9th, 20th Mar. 7th and 9th Apr. 1730 (T70/1466); Mallis de la Mine to Prementil, 8th Jan. 1732 (ADN.C.739).
 2. "Conseil de Marine", 11th Aug. 1728; "Extrait du Registre", 26th Aug. and 4th Oct. 1728 (AN.C.6/25).

lack of co-operation between the European directors and the Oyo, which may be accounted for by their mutual lack of enthusiasm for such an alliance. The Oyo had not yet forgotten that during the reign of Obalokun, certain Oyo messengers sent to a "friendly" king in Europe did not return and they had since remained wary of befriending any Europeans established on the coast. The Europeans on their side had realised that they had burnt their fingers by giving Agaja their passive encouragement to invade Whydah and were unwilling to have as their allies a still stronger power, occupying a much wider area, whose intentions were no more known than those of Agaja before the conquest of Whydah.

These factors might not continue to help Dahomey as they had done in the last four years. Indeed despite them, Abomey had been burnt four times between 1726 and 1730, during which time the Dahomans had spent as much time in hiding as in their own homes. Agaja had become greatly impoverished, and the documents no longer speak of his riches and generosity. Most of his gold plate and beautiful garments noticed by Lambe in 1724 had either been burned or looted by the Oyo invaders. Even the dried heads of his conquered enemies, which Agaja loved to exhibit to his subjects and show to his foreign visitors, had all been burned to ashes either by Agaja himself or by the Oyo. The expenses attendant on the rebuilding of his towns every time they were burned were a further drain on his diminished resources.

Agaja therefore decided that his revolutionary programme for a new political system in Aja and the substitution for the slave trade of a new pattern of economic relations with Europe could not be achieved in the face of the determined opposition it had aroused. If he did not modify his policy, Dahomey might be completely destroyed.

He asked Bazilio, the Portuguese director, to help him to make a permanent peace with Ojigi,¹ to which request Bazilio agreed and for which he provided a large part of the preliminary presents that were sent to the Alafin and the Oyo Chiefs." There then followed the first comprehensive settlement between Oyo and Dahomey and among the Aja since Agaja overturned the traditional system. The details are not known, but its results were clear and far reaching.

Agaja was allowed to keep the whole of the Whydah kingdom and a substantial part of Allada kingdom,² but was not allowed to return to Abomey. He therefore remained at Allada where he died in 1740.³ The eastern boundary of the Dahoman kingdom was marked by Lake Nokoue, the So and the Weme rivers, and the whole of it became a tributary to Oyo. The Weme dynasty was re-instated⁴

1. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal. 10th July 1730 (APB.OR 27.f.140); A. Dalzel: History p.59; A.F.C. Hyder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese" in JHSN Vol.I.1958 p.16
2. Oyo never again invaded Dahomey on behalf of these kingdoms.
3. Oral traditions in Dahomey relate that Agaja died at Allada but do not explain why. Tegbesu removed to Abomey in 1743. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, 25th Feb. 1744 (AN.C.6/25).
4. In 1729, the prince of Weme was at Oyo asking for the help of the Alafin against Agaja. In 1732, Weme was sufficiently independent and safe from Dahoman wrath to harbour Agaja's son and his four thousand followers who had deserted from the Mahi campaign and for Hertog to be attempting to make an alliance between it and Jakin against Dahomey.

The Allada dynasty and the remnant of the Allada people were settled in a new territory called Ajase Ipo, which became the kingdom of Porto Novo in the 19th century.¹ Both Weme and Ajase Ipo lay outside the eastern boundary of Dahomey and, like Dahomey, were tributaries to Oyo. Places like Epe and Badagry, to which Allada and whydah refugees had fled, secured immunity from Dahoman attack because they lay outside the eastern boundary of the Dahoman territory, but the ownership of the territory did not seem to have been clearly defined. Dahomey, Weme and Ajase Ipo were left to manage their internal administration and to borrow as much of Oyo practices as they wished.

As a guarantee that Agaja would observe these agreements one of his sons, who later became Tegbesu, was given as a hostage to the Oyo. The treaty itself was sealed by an exchange of royal marriages, with Agaja sending his daughter to the Alafin Ojigi for a wife and Ojigi returning the compliment.²

In 1730 therefore, instead of Dahomey becoming the political master of the whole of Aja, it became one of the tributaries

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1. De Chenevert and Abbe Bulet: "Reflexions sur Juda", 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis). The relevant portion reads "Ardres à 7 lieues du N. N.Est, etait la capitale de Guedas: d'une division de ce peuple separees en deux royaumes, celui d'Ardra et celui de Xavier. Le roy d'Ardres a conserve une partie de son royaume, c'est lui regne a Ardra et Porto Novo; celui de Xavier est au Grand Popo" Porto Novo was originally the name of the Port only; P. Labarthe: Voyage a la cote de Guinee, (Paris 1803) p.115; C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast p.30; The last two authorities suggest that the constitution of places like Badagry and Porto Novo as kingdoms was post 1724. Given the events of the time and the power of Agaja, they could only have been constituted and guaranteed by Oyo.
 2. A. Dalzel: History p.59; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX 146-147 Dunglas dating as already noted, is incorrect.

of Oyo, on the same level, as far as Oyo was concerned, as Badagry, Weme and Ajase Ipo. This settlement, restated eighteen years later, remained the basis of the political organisation among the Aja, and of their relationship with Oyo until the beginning of the third decade of the 19th century, when Dahomey recovered its independence and started on a fresh career of conquest.

The economic settlement was also in sight. On the 12th of May 1730, about the same time as the Dahomey-Oyo negotiations were going on, John Brathwaite, one of the three chiefs directors of Cape Coast Castle, arrived at Whydah specially to settle the quarrel between Agaja and Huffon in the interests of the slave trade.¹ He had acquired the reputation of a peacemaker between warring African kingdoms because, earlier on in 1730, he had helped to settle a quarrel between the Akwamu and the Accra to the satisfaction of both parties.²

He planned to persuade the Whydah to return to their ancient kingdom as subjects or tributaries of Agaja, and to persuade Agaja to accept them. The Royal African Company also wanted him to make a treaty with Huffon, should he be allowed back in his old kingdom, to allow the Company's ships to trade with the Portuguese for gold free of customs duties.³ The Dahoman authorities were probably still too busy negotiating

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1. J. Brathwaite to R.A.C., 1st June 1730 (T70/7).
 2. Court of Assistant to J. Brathwaite, 31st Dec. 1730 (T70/54).
 3. J. Brathwaite to R.A.C., 1st June 1730 (T70/7); Court of Assistant to J. Brathwaite, 31st Dec. 1730/54).

with the Oyo to give immediate attention to Brathwaite and the negotiations between him and Agaja did not start until the end of July 1730.¹ These were conducted through Deane, the substantive director of the English fort at Whydah, who set out for Allada on 29th July and remained there until 22nd August.¹

Once again the details of the negotiations have not been passed down. Brathwaite probably found the political situation in Dahomey completely different from that on the Gold Coast, and was forced to leave politics alone and confine his negotiations strictly to trade affairs. Although Huffon agreed to Brathwaite's suggestion that he should become Agaja's tributary, Agaja seems to have refused entirely to accept the old Whydah and he sent troops to Igelefe to frighten away those of them whom Brathwaite and Deane had been encouraging to come and settle in anticipation of the agreement to be reached.²

Agaja negotiated fully on the slave trade however, which he offered no longer to oppose. Partly because the ruler of Jakin was not completely loyal, and to deprive him of any source of firearms, Agaja insisted that the port of Jakin should be closed, and that the European activities be concentrated at Igelefe. He also insisted that certain classes of goods including all firearms and ammunition must be sold to him alone.

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1. "Copybook and Diaries for Whydah", 29th July, 22nd Aug. 1730 (T70/1466); "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", May - Dec. 1730 (T70/396).
 2. J. Brathwaite to R.A.C., 16th Aug. 1730 (T70/7).

Deane agreed to Agaja's demand, and the English factory at Jakin to which goods had been sent on 16th August, began to be evacuated on the 25th August 1730, three days after Deane had concluded the negotiations. By the 17th September, all unsold goods at the English factory at Jakin had been completely removed to Igelefe.¹

This agreement, with which the negotiators appeared satisfied, seems to have been regarded as applying to all the European traders at Whydah. When Deane finally left Allada for Igelefe on 22nd August, he was accompanied by a detachment of the Dahoman army,² a sign of the new friendship between the Europeans and Agaja, and of the protection which the latter would henceforth give to the former.

All the other Europeans at Igelefe also showed their satisfaction at the conclusion of this treaty, though they did not seem to have closed their factories at Jakin as Agaja had demanded. The French and the Portuguese directors and their officers gathered at the English fort to celebrate the new accord. Sixty-three gun salutes were fired, twenty-one each in honour of the kings of England, France and Portugal. Healths were drunk on a lavish scale and altogether £18 was spent that afternoon by the English fort alone for the celebrations.³

For the Europeans, the occasion was worthy of this

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1. "Copybook and diaries for Whydah", 25th Aug. and 17th Sep. 1730 (T70/1466); J. Brathwaite to R.A.C., 16th Aug. 1730 (T70/7).
 2. "Copybook and Diaries for Whydah", 22nd Aug. 1730 (T70/1466).
 3. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.," May-Dec. 1730 (T70/396).

rejoicing, for at last, Agaja had been converted to a slave trader. For Dahomey the agreement marked a fundamental change in policy and prepared the way for making the slave trade the basis of the Dahoman economy and for its transformation into the incorrigible slave trading kingdom that it became in the 19th century. The conclusion of the two agreements, with Oyo and the European directors, also gave Dahomey a breathing space during which Agaja could gather up the remnants of his conquests and impose an administration and an economic system on such parts of them as were left to him by Oyo.

Not that Agaja had completely neglected any of these duties during the difficult years of the Oyo invasions. Whenever he found it convenient between his flights, he had sought to consolidate his hold over the conquered territories. In April 1728, soon after the Oyo's withdrawal, he sent his army to drive away the Whydah who had taken advantage of the Oyo invasion to resettle at Igelefe. In August he sent a Dahoman chief called Lansu, to Jakin to overawe its ruler, a move that kept that ruler quiet for a time.¹ In September, he reduced a province of Al-lada which lay south of Abomey but which had either revolted or had never before been effectively occupied.² While the Oyo invasions continued however, none of these successes could be

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1. "Conseil de Marine", 11th and 24th Aug. 1728 (AN.C.6/25); "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C." 31st Dec. 1728 (T70/392).
 2. "Extrait du Registre", 23rd Sep. and 4th Oct. 1728 (AN.C.6/25).

regarded as final.

With the security provided by the 1730 treaty, Agaja could assert his sole mastery over his kingdom. The reaction of Jakin and the Whydah to that agreement provided him with the opportunity.

The treaty between Dahomey and Oyo pleased neither the old Whydah nor the Jakin people, for neither secured their independence from Dahoman rule. Huffon, the king of Whydah still in the Popo islands, at first decided to submit to Agaja and asked Bazilio to help him negotiate. Early in 1731, Bazilio submitted Huffon's proposal to Agaja who agreed to suspend hostilities while negotiations went on. Meanwhile, certain Dutch agents assured Huffon that they would give him arms and would enlist the support of the Fanti and the Oyo in his interest. Huffon therefore changed his mind about submitting to Agaja and the negotiations were called off.

In anticipation of the promised help by the Dutch, Huffon adopted a scorched-earth policy against the Dahoman economy.¹ This is a strategy which the old Whydah repeatedly adopted from now on, whenever they found themselves too weak to fight Dahomey. In practice it meant making Igelefe port and beach unsafe for the European traders by plundering their goods, burning their tents and killing their agents, or blocking the lagoon passage between Great Popo and Igelefe. The old Whydah believed

1. J. Bazilio to Viceroy of Brazil, Ajuda 17th July 1731 (APB.OR.28. f.129).

that Dahomey held on to Whydah kingdom because of its economic advantages, and would eventually withdraw if it was deprived of them.

In March 1731, they killed a Portuguese in the Popo river. On the night of the 8th to 9th May, they made an attack on the French and the Portuguese tents on the beach at Igelefe during which the Portuguese fled but the French defended themselves.¹ On the 13th April 1733, the Whydah prevented a French ship carrying provisions to the French fort from passing to Whydah, and on the 18th May, they arrested a Portuguese captain who had gone to trade among them, imprisoned him for eight days, plundered him of all his valuables and sent him back to Whydah.¹

These activities inconvenienced the Europeans, but did not achieve their purpose. The blocking of the lagoon was neither sustained nor complete enough to force the Europeans away from Whydah, and the acting director of the French fort was, for instance, able to browbeat the old Whydah into allowing the French provision ship to pass. Their only effect was to drive the Europeans more and more onto the side of Agaja and to make them willing to co-operate with him against the old Whydah.

The Director of the English fort thought of building a fort on the seashore to be used against the incursions of the old Whydah.² The Portuguese, the greatest sufferers from the

1. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, Juda 26th Aug. 1733 (AN. C.6/25); Mallis de la Mine to Premenil, 8th Jan. 1732 (ADN.C.739); J. Bazilio to Viceroy of Brazil, Ajuda 17th July 1731 (APB.OR.28.f.129).

Whydah activities, successfully urged Agaja to take military action. On the 15th June, 1733, between four and five hundred Dahoman soldiers came to Igelefe and seized about eighty old Whydah resident in the English and the Portuguese forts without any murmur from the directors. On the 9th of August, Agaja sent the rulers of Paom, Tori and the Aplogan of Gome, with their contingents, to reside permanently at Igelefe and make the incursions of the old Whydah impossible.¹

It may be pointed out that this was the first attempt made by Agaja to populate Igelefe with Dahomans since its conquest in 1727. As can be inferred from the leaders sent, these "Dahomans" were simply those of the old Whydah and the Allada people who submitted to Agaja. Other attempts may have been made later, as has been suggested, to increase this nucleus.²

The Dutch who had promised Huffon arms and aid for a military alliance do not seem to have given much of either. From June 1733 to about the middle of 1734, a series of misfortunes befell the old Whydah which greatly weakened their fighting spirit for many years to come. On the 15th June 1733, chief Assu, who had fled with Huffon from Whydah and had become the most influential leader of the resistance against Dahomey in the Popo islands, died after an illness of about twenty days. His eldest son "Favory" (Fafore?) quickly succeeded to his title and his prestige. On the 17th July 1733, Huffon himself died

1. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast p.25.

and a succession quarrel ensued. Fafore backed one contender, quickly gained the upper hand and brought his protege to his own island, called the Assu island. Civil war ensued, and the other contender appealed to Agaja.¹

Agaja promptly sent aid. The appellant and his supporters were brought to Allada to submit to Agaja and unconfirmed rumours started to circulate that they would be allowed to re-settle at Sahe. Meanwhile Agaja's army laid siege to the Assu island, the defenders of which were closely hemmed in and were dying off of hunger by November 1733. The Dahomans dealt the final blow some time in 1734 when Delisle, an old friend of Agaja, who had become the director of the French fort, lent Agaja ships and cannons to finish the campaign.¹ If the economic policy of Agaja had not again forced discontented Dahomans to flee to the old Whydah, the latter might never again have been able to oppose Dahomey.

Jakin's reaction to the 1730 settlement was different from Whydah's. Its ruler, like Huffon, had hoped that the Oyo invasions would deliver Jakin from Dahoman rule. When this hope ^{was} disappointed, he asked all the European directors to build forts in his territory, thinking that such forts might be an effective defence against Dahoman attack,² and increase his chances of securing firearms.

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1. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.C.6/25). A. Dalzel: History pp.81-82. Dalzel is wrong on the date of the death of Huffon which he puts at 1741; E. Dunlas in E.D. vol. XIX p.157.
 2. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, Bahia 29th Apr.1730 (APB.OR.27)

At first there was no response to these overtures, but in May 1731, events at Jakin took a new turn which caused Agaja some alarm. The Portuguese built a fortified mud fortress there and were planning a bigger one without consulting Agaja or in any way obtaining his permission.¹ The Dutch also started to make preparations to build strongholds at Jakin, and by August 1731, their agent, Mynheer Hertog, was actively negotiating an alliance which was expected to include Jakin, Oyo and Fanti.² Agaja's information services kept him well informed of all these developments.

The situation was particularly alarming because, by that time, Agaja was campaigning against the Mahi. He and his main army had left Allada on 20th May 1731 for Mahi,³ probably in retaliation for the part which the Mahi had played in the Oyo invasion of Dahomey in 1730. They chose the rainy season partly to make sure that the Oyo would not be able to help the Mahi. The season was however not particularly favourable to the Dahoman infantry either.

On 26th June, after a month's siege, the Dahoman army suffered a very heavy defeat. A large section of the army was dispirited and asked that the siege be raised. Agaja became stubborn, executed the officers who advised retreat and maintained his ground. Discontent and desertion followed and one

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1. J. Bazilio to Viceroy of Brazil, Ajuda 17th July 1731 (APB. OR. 28 f.129).
 2. J. Bazilio to the Viceroy of Brazil, Ajuda 7th Sep. 1732 (AHU.S.Tome Caixa 4); W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.150-151; A. Dalzel: History pp.60-61.
 3. Edward Deane to R.A.C., 26th June 1731 (T70/7).

of Agaja's sons, perhaps the heir apparent, deserted to the king of Weme with about four thousand men under him.¹ These could make any hostile alliance which included Weme very dangerous to Dahomey. After a series of minor successes which in part offset the ignominious defeat of the previous June, Agaja returned in haste to his capital at Allada on 30th March 1732.

The situation demanded quick and decisive action, which Agaja brilliantly took. On the 1st April 1732, he caused it to be rumoured that his army had gone against Paom, "a big city belonging to Ajuda" in order to hide his real objective and catch it unprepared. The following day, 2nd April, his army suddenly attacked Jakin. By luck and presence of mind, the two most wanted men, Hertog and the ruler of Jakin, escaped to Epe, but the whole town was burned, including all the factories except the Portuguese. Twenty Europeans and four thousand five hundred and thirty eight Jakin, including the mother of the ruler, were taken captives. Goods to the value of eight hundred and fifty slaves were also seized. Altogether, it was a very rich booty.²

Jakin was effectively reduced. In September its ruler in exile at Epe asked Agaja for permission to come back on the

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1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account p.149; A. Dalzel: History pp.59-60
 2. J. Bazilio to Viceroy of Brazil, Ajuda 7th Sep. 1732 (AHU. S. Tome. Caixa 4); W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.150-151; A. Dalzel: History pp.61-63; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XIX. pp.161-162; A.F.C. Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese" in J.H.S.N. (1953) p.166. Dalzel's dating is slightly inaccurate. It is possible that he has mixed up the date of the deaths of Haffon and of Agaja, for Agaja did not die soon after this event. Haffon died in 1733.

conditions that he would be allowed to keep his garrison and would not be forced to go to Allada personally to make his submission. Agaja found the request so absurd that he thought it useless to waste any time in negotiation. He simply said he agreed. The ruler of Jakin found such an easy agreement coming from Agaja rather unconvincing and he remained in exile.¹ The reduction of Jakin and of Whydah between 1732 and 1734 left Agaja the sole master within the sphere conceded to him by the 1730 treaty.

It remained to give his whole territory an effective administration. The attempt had probably been going on since 1725, though the details are unknown and the Oyo invasions must necessarily have made such efforts at best disjointed. It is probable however that the traditional administrative boundaries remained largely unaltered, for there is no fundamental difference between the set-up described by Dapper and Du Marchais in the early 17th and early 18th centuries when a large part of the Aja had not yet come under Dahomey, and that described by Dawson in the late nineteenth century,² when Dahomey had been the sole kingdom for more than a century. Out of the administrative districts of the old kingdom of Whydah, Agaja seems to have kept Gome, Paom and Igelefe. He also seems to have kept Tori, Jakin and Allada divisions of

1. See footnote 2 on previous page.

2. J. Ogilby: Africa p.465; T. Astley: Collections Vol.iii pp.8-9; J. Dawson to Fitzgerald, 17th Nov. 1862 (CA2/016).

the old Allada kingdom.¹ He probably did not tamper much with any of the other remaining districts, except as in the case of Sahe, where the wars may have wiped out the population.

The system of government and the terms under which the rulers of each administrative division held his office however changed. Dahomey being a centralised monarchy, no office, under Agaja was inalienably hereditary. Every official was appointed for his ability and was liable to be transferred from one duty to another, to be promoted, demoted or dismissed by the king. He had his duties defined and limits set to his power. The practice under Agaja was probably not much different from that under Glele. Each officer

"has to answer every question of that district [under him] to settle all petty disputes and to inform the king; but very serious cases he has to send to the capital to be settled by the chief minister or by the king himself." 2

Filling up the posts of all the administrative districts of the old Allada kingdom probably presented no difficulties since the king of Allada had been killed. Agaja kept the ruler of Jakin as his officer until 1732, when he was driven to Epe, and he also kept the ruler of Tori. Up to 1730 he probably kept captains of the garrison stationed at Allada to take care of his new conquests. From 1730 to 1743, Allada was the capital of Dahomey kingdom, where the king himself resided.

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1. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, Juda 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.C.6./26); W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.9-10; A. Dalziel: History pp.17-18.
 2. J. Dawson to Fitzgerald, 17th Nov. 1862 (CA2/016).

Manning the administrative units of the old Whydah kingdom was slightly more difficult. Firstly, Huffon was still alive. Theoretically therefore, his traditional chiefs still held their rights. Secondly, the government of the coastal belt of Whydah involved a direct relationship with Europeans of which Agaja had had no previous experience, there never having been permanent European forts at Allada. However Agaja^{retained} the ruler of Gome, and probably the ruler of Paom, as his officer. The territory of Sohe had been burnt and rendered uninhabited. For a whole year after the conquest of Whydah, Agaja could not decide how to govern Igelefe.¹ He simply continued to use his trade officers, Jongla, Buttence, and others to maintain contact with the Europeans, and his army to keep order.

Events moved a stage further after the withdrawal of the Oyo in 1728. Agaja probably then concluded that the old Whydah would never again be able to re-occupy their old kingdom. He certainly saw the need to have a regular basis of contact with the Europeans. On the 7th September 1728 he appointed three officers, one for each of the European forts at Igelefe. He made Alege,² formerly the chief prison officer, the chief of the French, "Ouroukaye",² probably the same as the official who appears as Budoka in the English records, the chief of the English, and "Baagba"² the Portuguese chief. Surprisingly,

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Account pp.9-10, 61-62; A Dalzel: History pp.17-18; "Extrait du Registre", 13th Sep.1728 (ANC.6/25); "Accounts and Journals for Whydah", 21st Mar. 1727 (T70/598).
2. These would appear to be personal names, not titles.

Jongla was dropped, probably because he was too keen on the slave trade before Agaja had made up his mind on it.

Delisle, the French officer who was present when the appointments were made, showed that he was pleased. Agaja, surprised but gratified, confessed that he had not chosen them earlier because he did not know whether it was his right or the privilege of the Europeans to choose their own Dahoman chiefs.¹

The duties of the three Dahoman officers were clearly defined. They were to take the customs duties on the ships of the respective nations under them, to transmit the king's messages to them and take theirs to the king and to transact such trade as the king decided on.¹

How each of them fared between 1728 and 1733 is not completely known. Alege probably held his post right through, though at one point he also acted as the English chief. Baagba was soon dropped, and replaced by the veteran Jongla who continued to be the Portuguese chief until 1733.² Budaka played a very prominent part in keeping the English on the side of Agaja during the critical months of 1730, but he too for some unknown reason had been replaced by another officer called Nançou (?Yansu) before 1733.³ During the Oyo invasion of 1730, all the three officers were superseded by another Dahoman chief called "Vodehay"⁴ but they later resumed their normal duties

1. "Extrait du Registre", 13th and 23rd Sept. 1729 (AN.C6/25); Copybook and Diaries for Whydah, 7th Jan. 1730 (T70/1466).
2. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.C6/25).
3. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.C6/25).
4. "Accounts and journals, Cape Coast Castle, 28th Feb. 1730 (T70/395).

after the settlement with Oyo.

The European directors, completely unused to Dahoman etiquette and its strict "civil service", were dissatisfied with this arrangement. Their main grievance was that each of the Dahoman officers visited all the forts in turn, sometimes twice or thrice daily, and put the directors to great entertainment expenses. But they did not confess this to Agaja. Instead they complained of the bad behaviour of the Dahoman chiefs and falsely accused Jongla of planning to take the French fort by force, an accusation which Agaja did not believe.¹

However, in January 1733, when all the directors went to Allada for the Anubomey (annual customs), they jointly and vigorously complained to Agaja that his officers were causing injury to trade. Agaja realised that the directors were dissatisfied with the arrangement and recalled all three, Alege, Yansu and Jongla. He appointed in their place, only one man, Tegan, to whom he gave the title, Yovogan, which meant White-man's chief.¹ Thus in January 1733, Tegan became the first man to occupy the unenviable post of the Yovogan of Whydah. With this, it may be said that the basic pattern of the administrative settlement of the new Dahomey kingdom was complete.

It remained for an economic pattern to emerge. It soon became clear that when Agaja finally subscribed to the slave trade in August 1730, he did not more than legalise his usual

1. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.66/25)

practice up to that time. After 1730, only Agaja, and nobody else in Dahomey, sold slaves to the Europeans and he conducted the trade through his officers. At Allada, the chief jailer took orders from him to sell a certain number of slaves of certain descriptions according to Agaja's need of European goods. Such slaves were then sent, as from 1733 onwards, to the Yovogan at Whydah, who sold them to the European forts and captains through his own "trading boys", who were also king's officers. At Jakin, one Antonio Pinto, a Portuguese factor, became Agaja's agent.

Certain classes of goods could only be sold to the king, others, only to the chiefs, and some to everybody. As a rule, all guns and gun-powder, and every ounce of gold that entered Dahomey could only be sold to the king; similarly all white hats with gold or silver ribbons and corals of certain descriptions. The list could be amended by law from time to time. Goods once landed at Whydah could not be reshipped out of the country and no European once in Dahomey could leave without a royal permit. Lest there should be any doubt in the minds of the Europeans about this last provision, Agaja stationed a permanent military post on the beach.

The slave trade in Dahomey became in effect a royal monopoly. In 1733 when Guyonzuay, who had become the chief jailer after Alege, took advantage of his position to sell slaves without Agaja's authority, and did not give an account of his

1. Dubelay to La Compagnie des Indes, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.C6/25).

sales, he was promptly executed.¹ When one of the servants of the Yovogan sold slaves on his own account for gold, both the slaves and the gold were confiscated and the seller led in irons to Allada and presumably executed.¹ In the whole of Jakin, whenever Antonio Pinto was away, not one ~~xxxxxx~~ slave could be obtained by the Europeans.

To the Europeans, Agaja's monopoly and strict control was distasteful. It increased the prices of slaves because Agaja demanded just what goods he needed and gave the number of slaves he thought reasonable. For instance in November 1733, Dubelay reckoned that Agaja demanded three thousand and thirty guns of all kinds and descriptions, ten thousand pounds of gun-powder, six cases of organs "with 12 or 14 airs" and one hundred and fifty pounds of large corals, for three or four hundred slaves. Alternatively, he would take eighty thousand pounds of cowries, one thousand two hundred anchors of brandy, two thousand five hundred pieces of platilles and eight hundred pieces of salempory.² None of these goods were the cheap and gaudy kind that Europeans had been pleased to exchange for slaves in the past.

Agaja demanded any amount of goods he needed on credit and could only be refused at the owners' risk. In February 1733, when Levet, the acting French director, refused to sell his entire stock of gunpowder to Agaja on credit, he was ordered

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1. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, Juda, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN. C6/25).
 2. Dubelay to La Compagnie des Indes, 21st Nov. 1733 (AN.C6/25). Platilles and salempory were kinds of cloth.

out of the country. Dubelay, who was present at the council meeting that decided Levet's expulsion, remarked that the rulers of Dahomey would not be trifled with.¹

Finally trade became slow and the European ships could no longer count on quick round voyages. The Portuguese complained that in 1730 each round trip took fifteen or sixteen months instead of the six or seven months it used to take before the Dahoman conquest of Whydah.² Snelgrave accurately reflected the frustration of the European traders when he wrote of Whydah in 1734:

"there is no prospect of trade there again for many years, or at least as long as the conqueror lives. What little there is is carried on chiefly at Appah".
[Epe] 3

The Europeans therefore tried the traditional solution by planning to abandon Dahomey. The English built a factory at Epe and one of their chief agents at the Cape Coast Castle who visited Whydah in 1735 recommended that the English fort should be removed from Whydah and built at Keta.⁴ But nothing came out of the suggestion. The French traders started to extend their trading activities from Cape Mesurado to Badagry and Epe⁵ and to avoid trading at Whydah.

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1. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, Juda 26th Aug. 1733. (AN.C.6/25). Dubelay to the Compagnie des Indes, 21st Nov. 1733 (AN.C6/25).
 2. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, 29th Apr. 1730. (APB.OR.27).
 3. W. Snelgrave: A New Account: p.156.
 4. Court of Assistants to E. Stephens, G. Wheeler & W. Rogers, 10th July 1735 (T70/54).
 5. "Enregistrement des rapports de capitaines au long course", 13th, 28th, Feb. 1737, 13th Jan. 28th June 1738, 3rd July 1739, 20th June 1740 (ADN.B.4587).

The reaction of the Dahoman citizens to Agaja's measures cannot be exactly described for internal events in Dahomey between 1733 and 1740 are confused and obscure. It seems probable, however, that the measures and particularly the economic ones, were greatly resented by some of the most important chiefs in Dahomey. Most of them probably believed that they had possessed the coastal kingdoms to enjoy the slave trade with the Europeans and felt bitterly disappointed at being deprived of the fruits of their success. Some of them therefore staged a series of revolts which Agaja mercilessly put down between 1733 and 1736, to ensure his own unimpaired control of the slave trade in Dahomey.

In 1733, the Possu, lieutenant general of the Dahoman forces, was accused of planning to desert the kingdom to join the ruler of Savalu in Mahi and was executed on 9th June.¹ In December, Gome, the Aplogan's territory, was burnt and the Aplogan himself narrowly escaped.² On the 24th November 1734 Agaja again attacked Jakin where he heavily punished the European traders³ who seem to have continued to trade there despite Agaja's known opposition to such activities. The following year the Mehu, the second highest officer in the kingdom, led a revolt which was mercilessly put down,⁴ and Ashampo, one of the ablest generals of Agaja, successfully escaped to Little Popo after he had received warnings that Agaja was about to seize him. At

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1. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 26th Aug. 1733 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. J. Dubelay to la Compagnie des Indes, 7th Jan. 1734 (AN.C.6/25)
 3. "Enregistrement des raports ..." 26th Nov. 1736 (ADN.B.4587).
 4. A. Dalzel: History pp.68-71; 97-98.

Little Popo he was welcomed and seemed to have been made the general of their army.¹ There may have been many more desertions of less public figures.

Although Agaja was enabled by these strong measures to remain master in Dahomey without sacrificing any of his principles, he had created new problems for himself. The series of revolts and the desertions greatly weakened Dahomey internally. The fact that the European traders were trading in large numbers in the neighbouring ports raised the possibility that the states behind those ports could obtain arms and threaten the security of Dahomey from without. The danger would be more serious if the Dahoman deserters joined the external aggressors.

This fear of external aggression which from now on continued to haunt the Dahoman rulers was not entirely unfounded. It was partly through the importation of large quantities of arms that Agaja was able to conquer the coastal states. The presence of the Dutch at Little Popo, whither Ashampo had fled, and at Badagry where Hertog continued his hostile activities, further justified Agaja's fear of external aggression, for the Dutch were notorious for inciting one kingdom against another.² Their promise to Huffon in 1731 to help him make an alliance against Agaja, their help for the ruler of Jakin against Agaja and the activities of Hertog at Badagry whither he had withdrawn in 1734,

1. A. Dalzel: History pp.68-71; 97-98.

2. P. Labarthe: Voyage a la Cote de Guinee pp.110-111.

were all such as to justify this reputation.

Agaja's operations in the last years of his life therefore had two aims. The first was to prevent external invasions, and the second was to root out Dutch influence from the immediate vicinity of Dahomey.

In 1736 and again in 1738, certain unidentified enemies attacked Jakin.¹ The aggressors may have been the Badagry people acting under the instigation of Hertog. Agaja sent his army to aid Jakin and attack Badagry and it was during these Dahoman attacks that Hertog died fighting in June 1737.² In the following month, a Dahoman force destroyed the Dutch factory at Keta and captured the factor. The Dutch were however too well practised in local political intrigues to be attacked with impunity. As a result of their obscure manoeuvres, Ashampo was soon in the field at the head of a combined army of Krepi and Little Popo Accra. The Dahomans were intercepted and completely wiped out and Ashampo followed up his victory with a raid on Igelefe.³

This crushing reverse still further weakened a Dahomey already torn by internal dissension. Agaja was by now loosing his grip on the internal administration of Dahomey and the very survival of his dynasty appeared to hang in the balance. In 1737, an English visitor to Whydah observed that

1. A.F.C. Ryder: "The re-establishment of the Portuguese ..." in JHSN pp.169-170.
2. "Enregistrement des rapports" 3rd Feb. 1738 (ADN.B.4587).
3. Steimark's declaration, 4th Dec. 1737 (WIC). I owe this information and reference to Mr. Ivor Wilks of the University of Ghana.

"the power of the king of Dahomey . . . is at present at so low an ebb that it has been lately employed " and often without success, upon his own tributary subjects. 1.

Agaja was no longer able to enforce his royal monopoly on the slave trade in which complete freedom again became the rule. He blamed his misfortune on Bazilio whom he arrested and imprisoned for six months.

Worse was however to befall Agaja. The attack on Badagry in June 1737 contravened the 1730 settlement made with Oyo which, by implication, forbade Agaja from extending his military operations east of Lake Nokoue and the Weme river. Moreover, it is probable that the series of internal revolts and falling trade since 1733 had greatly impoverished Agaja and made him unable to pay the annual tributes regularly to Oyo.

The Oyo army therefore came down against Dahomey about the beginning of 1739.² The attack appears to have been unexpected by Agaja who precipitately ran into hiding while the Oyo again wasted the country.

Agaja was now a tired old man. The chaotic situation inside Dahomey and the renewed external attacks, particularly

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1. King of Portugal to Viceroy of Brazil, 22nd July 1740, enclosing a letter from a Treasury Officer dated 18th Sep. 1739 (APB.OR.53 doc.41); "A description of the castles and forts belonging to the Royal African Company, 1737," (T70/1470).
 2. A Dalzel: History pp.71-74; Dalzel's dating is not quite accurate. Isaac Gregory, the English director did not reach Whydah until March or April 1739.

by the Oyo must have greatly disheartened him. He died soon after he re-emerged from his forest hideout about May 1740.¹

With his death passed one of the greatest kings of Dahomey and one of the great military leaders and state builders of history. Dalzel's homage to him is likely to remain the aptest epitaph ever:

"Trudo, considered as a conqueror, seems little inferior to any other of that class which has sworn the page of history. Like them he waded to glory through an ocean of innocent blood; and like them experienced the vicissitudes of fortune. Yet he never lost his magnanimity nor wept like Alexander when his general refused to follow him; he knew how to enforce obedience and drove when he could not lead them to conquest." 2

No one could go through the documents of this period tattered, scattered and incomplete as they are, without being enormously impressed by the personality of Agaja. A middle sized, stout, athletic figure with spare shoulders, Agaja had a majestic bearing and an attractive countenance that never failed to impress his visitors.³ Dubelay, a French director, saw nothing incongruous in seeing a physical similarity between him and the celebrated French writer Moliere, though he thought his request for a suit of armour was "Don Quixotic".⁴ Bulfinch Lambe and Delisle remained in his court for fairly long periods and saw enough of him to know the quality of his mind and to study his temperament.

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1. The various dates, 1727, 1728, 1732 etc. usually given as the date of Agaja's ^{death} can be taken as incorrect. See Vice-roy of Brazil to King of Portugal, 18th May 1741 (APB.OR.38); "Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 18th Nov. 1753 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. A. Dalzel: History pp.63-64.
 3. W. Snelgrave: A New Account p.80.
 4. J. Dubelay to la Compagnie des Indes .., 21st Nov. 1733 (AN.C6/25).

From their accounts Agaja emerges as a far sighted man who knew his own mind, and was not easily deflected from his purpose except by sound reason. He had a quick mind and knew how to wriggle out of unfavourable positions.

He was open to constructive ideas and was eager to learn any new methods that might be useful. He learnt the art of making leather cartouch boxes for his powder from the Mali,¹ the art of firing the great guns from Lambe,¹ of building fortresses from Delisle, and of forming a guard of honour from Gallot. He was greatly interested in reading and writing which he affected to practise with the aid of both his Portugese mulatto slave and Lambe.

He could be unpredictably generous, magnanimous in victory and endowed with that sense of humour which men of great hearts possess. He knew too how to create fear in his enemies and respect in his friends, as well as to support the morale of his people in very adverse circumstances.

It was he, in his thirty-two years reign, who finally attempted to complete the task that the Wegbaja dynasty had set itself -- to sweep away the old political system in Aja and to stop the slave trade. Although he succeeded in ending the old political organisation in Aja, he brought on

1. W. Snelgrave: A New Voyage pp.171-189. Not much is known of role of theMali in the growth of Dahomey. Twenty four of them were said to have been in Agaja's camp in 1724. They were said to have come from the ancient state of Mali and were Muslims.

Dahomey a series of Oyo invasions and a stubborn resistance from the European slave traders. In the end he submitted to the Oyo, the defenders of the traditional order, and was forced to make the slave trade into a state enterprise in Dahomey. His vigorous attempt to enforce the royal monopoly over the slave trade brought internal revolts and desertions and led to renewed external aggression. By 1740, when Agaja died, these had greatly disorganised the internal administration of Dahomey, weakened the power of the monarchy and threatened the very existence of the kingdom.

In spite of these difficulties, Agaja laid down a firm basis of administration throughout his territories which he had greatly enlarged. And in his resounding failure he left one intangible but important legacy. To the very last he maintained the principle of absolute authority of the king within Dahomey unimpaired. It was through the application of this principle that Tegbesu, who succeeded Agaja, was able to put Dahomey on its feet again.

CHAPTER FOURRECONSTRUCTION CONTINUED 1740-1767.

In 1740, Dahomey had to be rebuilt almost from nothing. Although Agaja had created a tradition of how the enlarged kingdom should be governed, and had left unimpaired the principle of absolute monarchical control of its internal affairs, at his death, the authority of the monarchy had fallen into disrespect. The trade of the kingdom had diminished to vanishing point and its very existence was threatened by renewed Oyo invasions and the raids of the Little Popo and the old Whydah.

Agaja had died without an obvious successor. So-Amamu or Zingah, his eldest son had weakened his own chances when he deserted the Dahoman army during the Mahi campaign of 1731. He put forward his claim nevertheless, but was challenged by Avissu, the youngest of the four eligible princes. Manoeuvres followed during which each candidate gave presents to those who were likely to influence the election. Finally Avissu was elected and he chose Tegbesu as his title.¹

1. E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX pp.165-167; Le Herisse: L' Ancien Royaume p.161, pp.299-300. Both these authors record different oral traditions which agree in essentials; R. Norris: Memoirs pp. 7-8 and A. Dalzel: History confirm that Agaja's successor was not his eldest son.

Probably the kingmakers took largely into consideration the relationship and attitude of each contestant to Oyo. Agaja died just as a new series of Oyo invasions was beginning. Therefore, whoever was to rule Dahomey after him would have to be capable of making peace with Oyo without betraying Dahoman interests. So-Amamu, because of his desertion in 1731, did not seem to possess the qualities needed.

Avissu, on the other hand, possessed them. He had served Dahomey by being a hostage at Oyo and through that stay had become familiar with the Oyo nobles and their manners. It would be very much easier for him than for anyone else to treat with the Oyo authorities. His election might to some extent satisfy the pride of the Oyo and incline them to offer lenient terms of submission. Whether Oyo actually supported his election is not however known.

That the desire to placate Oyo formed a large element in Tegbesu's election is further suggested by political developments in Dahomey from 1789 onwards. When antagonism to Oyo grew, opposition to the Tegbesu line also developed. As will be seen, Kpengla, Tegbesu's son and successor, adopted the policy of independence from Oyo rule. From then on Tegbesu's line was increasingly

challenged. Kpengla's son and successor, Agonglo, was murdered in a palace revolt and Agonglo's son and successor, Adandozan, was deposed in 1818 when Gezo vigorously carried out the anti-Oyo, pro-independence policy of Dahomey.

The greatest immediate danger confronting Dahomey at the accession of Tegbesu was then the renewed Oyo invasions which had started in 1739. Just how many times the Oyo came down between 1740 and 1748, when Tegbesu again made his submission, is uncertain. Dalzel says that they came every year until 1747,¹ but perhaps he exaggerates. Certainly they came in 1742 or 1743² and threatened to come in 1748³. The causes of these invasions are obscure, but the 1748 threat followed immediately after Tegbesu's attack on Epe in 1747⁴ and suggests that the overlordship of Epe and perhaps of some other small territories between Jakin and Badagry was still being disputed by Dahomey.

Whenever the Oyo army came down or threatened to come, the Dahomans simply followed the tradition laid down by Agaja. The king and his court ran into some remote forest

1. R. Norris: Memoirs pp. 15-16; A. Dalzel: History p. 74.
 2. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 20th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25).
 3. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.," 1st Jan.-30th June 1748 (T70/424).
 4. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.," Nov. & Dec. 1747 (T70/42)

and the citizens were distributed in small parties to safe places. One director of the English fort, Issac Gregory, who was at Allada during one of these invasions, was taken away to the king's secret hideout.¹ These invasions, apart from being the greatest threat, were also the root cause of most of the other difficulties confronting Dahomey at Tegbesu's succession.

They emboldened the Little Popo and the old Whydah to resume their raids on Igelefe and the Whydah beach.² Again we do not know exactly how many times they came. They probably came whenever the Oyo invaded Dahomey and sent Tegbesu into hiding. They certainly attacked the forts during the Oyo invasion of 1742 or 1743 and in 1747. On the first of these occasions there was a pitched battle between them and the Dahomans during which Bazilio helped the old Whydah.

1. A. Dalzel: History p.74; R. Norris: Memoirs p.15; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX. p.170.

2. Levet to la Compagnie de Indes, 20th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25) Conselho Ultramarino to king of Portugal, Lisbon 29th. Oct. 1744 (AHU.S. Tome Caixa 5); A.F.C. Ryder "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese" in JHSN p.171. Contrary to Ryder's opinion, the Dahoman charges against Bazilio were well attested by other Europeans at Whydah. Levet wrote of those charges: "Quoyqu' avant que de me rendre a Ardre, je fusse informe de toutes ces verites je fis cependant mois possible aupres du Roy qui etoit fort en colere, pour rebattre les coups....."

In the second raid, they suddenly appeared on the beach in the morning of the 8th August 1747 and overpowered the Dahoman garrison stationed there, but ran away before the Dahoman troops at Igelefe could reach the scene of action. Rumours then started that Ashampo of Little Popo had gathered an army to invade Dahomey kingdom from the beach, and fears of this impending invasion, which never took place, persisted until December.¹

The Dahoman administration was at best fitful and always weak while the invasions lasted. For example the law which had restricted the slave trade to the king alone was openly disregarded and ordinary Dahomans continued to trade in slaves, even though the trade was small.²

The European directors started to disobey the law which forbade the re-export of goods once landed in Dahomey, and to behave in other ways which were inimical to Dahoman interests but which were friendly to the winning side. Levens, the French director, refused to admit the Dahomans who had been sent to his fort for safety during the Oyo invasion.³ Bazilio, the Portuguese director, maintained a

1. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1747, Sep.-Dec. 1747 (T70/423).

2. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, Juda 2nd Jan. 1746 (AN.C.6/25).

3. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 20th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25); Conselho Ultramarino to King of Portugal, Lisbon 29th Oct. 1744 (AHU.S.Tome Caixa 5); A.F.C. Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese..." in JHSN p. 171.

very close liaison with the old Whydah by a nightly exchange of messengers, and openly supported them in war against Dahomey, nominating a new general for them when one had fallen in battle. Moreover, he harboured many hundreds of them in his fort, and was supplying the Epe and the Badagry with firearms. At Igelefe, he had arrogated to himself the right to make laws by forbidding all the Portuguese captains to sell their gold to anyone else but himself.

The chaos and the insecurity consequent upon these developments greatly impoverished the monarchy and the Dahomans in general. Tegbesu inherited practically no money from Agaja's treasury and one of his very first acts on accession was to borrow or buy goods on credit from the Europeans.¹ The slave trade almost completely disappeared from Whydah in the early years of his reign.

In 1740, the English fort was doing practically no trade. From about 1742 to December 1745, no goods or provisions were sent to it and at the end of December 1745, the total value of the goods there was only £247.10.8d.² A mutiny

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1. "Journal and Ledgers, C.C.C.", 1st May-31st Oct. 1746 (T70/204); "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", 1st Sept.-31st Dec. 1746 (T70/422); Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 18th Feb. 1753 (AN.C.6/25.)
 2. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.". July 1740-June 1745. (T70/413-421); "Journal and Ledgers, C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1745, (T70/702), Sep. and Oct. 1746 (T70/704); Minutes of the Court of Assistants", 29th Sept. 1744 (T70/95); Letvet to La Compagnie des Indes, 13th Oct. 1746 (AN.C6/25).

encouraged by Tegbesu in order that he might seize the gunpowder in the fort must have further discouraged the English trade, which was not increased by the decision to place the fort once more under the authority of Cape Coast Castle in 1746. After a long neglect, goods worth £21.5s. were consigned to Whydah in September and October 1746.

By that time, the fort was occupied by only two officers who did nothing but watch it going progressively to ruin. Towards the end of that year, one of the two occupants, the director, died. The other considering himself unfit to be director, appealed for re-inforcement to the captain of a Naval vessel which chanced to be in Whydah harbour at the time and William Devaynes was sent by the Captain. On reaching the fort, Devaynes found very little Company property there.¹

The derangement caused by the enemy invasion of Dahomey was only one of the reasons for the decay of the English trade at Whydah. Another, and perhaps much more important reason was that the Royal African Company was heavily in debt. Although Parliament gave it a grant of £20,000 in 1744, it could not repay the debts it had contracted before December 1743.² In such circumstances, the Company doubtless confined its activities to places in West Africa where conditions were

1. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal, Bahia 8th Mar. 1748 (AHU.S.Tome. Caixa 6); W. Devaynes to Melvil, 23rd Sep. 1753 (T70/1520).

2. "Minutes of the Court of Assistants", 29th Sep. 1744. (T70/95).

calm enough to ensure a profitable return, and the port of Dahomey was not one of those in the early 1740's.

The French trade at Whydah was not more flourishing than the English. When Levet reached Whydah in June 1743, he found the French fort in its worst conditions ever. The roofs were gone, all the walls were almost fallen, hardly any provisions were left, and those were rotten. In 1744, despairing of peaceful conditions ever returning to Dahomey, he proposed that the French activities at Whydah be carried on from two big ships to be stationed permanently in the harbour, from which officers should go ashore only when necessary. This should protect the French from the old Whydah raids and from the Oyo invasions.¹ The Anglo-French war which broke out in 1744 however prevented his plan from being adopted.²

Meanwhile the French trade at Whydah almost completely vanished. One French Company's ship that came there soon after Levet's proposal, departed without a single slave bought. Probably because of this, not a single ship belonging to the French Company came to Whydah to trade between 5th December 1744 and 1st February 1746.³ Levet thought that the

1. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, Juda 14th Mar. 1743, 31st. Jan. 1744 (AN.C.6/25).

2. Gaston Martin: L'Ère des Négriers 1714-1774 (Paris 1931) p. 215.

3. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, Juda 1st Feb. 1746, 1st Oct. 1747 (AN.C.6/25); A.F.C. Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese..." in JHSN p. 180.

French Company's trade at Whydah was at an end, and he never had the satisfaction of seeing it re-established as he was expelled from Whydah on 16th September, 1747.¹

The Portuguese trade did not seem to suffer as much as the English and the French. Although the Portuguese fort was blown up by the Dahomans in 1743, gold and tobacco, their two main articles of trade, secured them the best offers. The Portuguese themselves considered Whydah the only place in West Africa capable of supplying them with the bulk of the 6,000 healthy slaves^{which} they required annually for import into Brazil.¹ Their activities however did not greatly enrich the Dahoman monarchy because the Portuguese director did not allow gold to be sold to the king. Moreover, with the trade in everybody's hands, and Bazilio siding with the old Whydah against Agaja, it is unlikely that duty was regularly paid to the king on all sales.

Not only was Tegbesu thus impoverished by being deprived of the duties that should have accrued through trade, but also the European captains, particularly the French from Nantes, continued to trade at Little Popo, Great Popo, Epe and Badagry where they not only enriched the inhabitants, but also supplied them with firearms which threatened the security of Dahomey.

The case of "L' Achille" which traded between Cape Mesurado

1. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, Juda 1st Feb., 1746, 1st Oct., 1747 (AN C6/25); A.F.C. Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese ..." in JHSN, p.180.

and Epe, avoiding Whydah, between March and September 1741¹ and that of "Le Triton" which brought Levet to Whydah in June 1743 and then went on to trade at Epe², were two of hundreds of similar cases. It was not uncommon for captains of ships to be instructed, as the Captain of "La Reine Des Angers" was, positively to avoid Whydah, unless they were absolutely sure beforehand that the conditions there were calm.³

By 1744, the ports of Little Popo, Epe and Badagry not only rivalled, but individually had more trade than Whydah. The European traders showed that they preferred those neighbouring ports where, they said, slaves were abundant, and the European goods, no matter how poor in quality, fetched high prices.⁴

Tegbesu's duties were therefore to re-establish the authority of the monarchy, bring about the cessation of the Oyo invasions and the Little Popo and the Old Whydah raids, and make the Whydah port once more the centre of slave export in the Yoruba-Aja country. These duties required ruthlessness, diplomacy, administrative capacity and business acumen, qualities which are not necessarily complementary, but which

1. "Enregistrement des rapports.....", 7th June 1742 (ADN.B.4588)

2. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 14th June 1743 (AN.C.6/25).

3. "Journal de Trait du Navire Negrier 'La Reine des Anger'". (ADN.16/J/9).

4. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 31st Jan. 1744 (AN.C.6/25).

Tegbesu possessed in a very high degree.

As soon as Tegbesu ascended the throne, he set about making his title secure, in order to re-establish the absolute authority of the crown. First he ordered his elder brother who had contested the throne with him to be sewn up in a hammock and drowned in the sea, since royal blood must not be shed. He also ordered all his accomplices to be executed or sold into slavery. He deprived the sons of another brother of all chances of succession by putting a curse upon them.^I

Tradition explains that Tegbesu took these steps because his eldest brother and his supporters were unwilling to acquiesce in their defeat and were preparing to seize the throne by force, and because the cursed brother had reproached him for high handedness. Perhaps there was some truth in these explanations, but behind Tegbesu's actions lay the desire to eliminate all those who could question his or his descendants' title.

He seems to have sold into slavery many Dahoman princes who might contest the throne with his own descendants. Don Jeromino or Jeronimo, called Fuku by the Dahomans, was one of such princes. He was a playmate of the future Kpengla, but was sold into slavery probably to give Kpengla a chance to ascend the throne. He was however brought back from slavery

I. E. Dunglas in E. D. Vol. XIX pp. 165-167 ; Le Herisse :
L'Ancien Royaume. pp. 299-300.

in Brazil by Kpengla, after he had spent twenty four years there and he made a bid for the throne after Kpengla's death.¹ We shall never know how many such princes were sold, but Frukú could not have been the only one.

Tegbesu was also known to have executed many Dahoman citizens, whom he considered too rich, and any army captain who had lived too long or was too popular for his own convenience. He adopted the convenient Oyo practice of executing every army officer who lost a war.²

He restated the law governing the succession, probably with his own emmendment. The crown was hereditary in the male line, but it was left to the king to designate which of his sons should succeed him. Irrespective of the number of children that the king might have by his several wives, a successor could only be chosen from among the children born by the six wives designated as being legally capable of supplying a successor.³

All these measures left him the undisputed master in Dahomey. Contemporary European observers who did not understand

1. Abson to Miles, 14th Dec. 1782 (T70/1485); A. Dalzel: History p.223.

2. Guestard: "Memoir..." 1750; Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 13th Oct. 1746 (AN.C.6/25); R. Norris: Memoirs pp.49-53; A. Dalzel: History p.69. Generally Norris and Dalzel mix up the events of the last years of Agaja's reign and those of the early years of Tegbesu because of the wrong date which they ascribe to Agaja's death.

3. De Chenevert and Abbe Bullet: "Reflections sur Juda" 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis).

his motives completely misinterpreted his actions. Levet, the director of the French fort from 1743 to 1747, thought he was devoid of natural reason and justice. Norris and Dalzel thought him an unmitigated tyrant.

By 1751, Tegbesu's policy of liquidating all rivals had been immensely successful. In that year he designated his eldest son, who was about sixteen years old, as his successor. His intention was widely proclaimed and generally accepted. He then asked Guestard, the French director, to send the prince to France for education. For three years Guestard evaded this request because his instructions forbade him from encouraging Africans to come and study in France, and he could not tell Tegbesu this in so many words.^I

When Tegbesu saw that foreign education would be unattainable for his son, he decided to find out whether new rivals would challenge his son's right to throne. On 20th June 1754, it was announced that the king was dead and had been succeeded by his son. For about the next six months Tegbesu kept away from public engagements during which his son probably acted. The Dahoman chiefs at Igelefe declared that they were going to Cana to meet the new king and carried presents along with them. Everybody not privy to the scheme sincerely believed that Tegbesu was dead. As no one challenged his son's right to the

I. Consell dedirection. to la Compagnie des Indes, 10th July, 1754; Guestard to la Compagnie des Indes, 10th July, 1754 (AN.C.6/25).

throne, his ruse and policy were both proved successful.

Six months afterwards, when Guestart went to Abomey expecting to see the young king, he was shocked to find Tegbesu alive and well. Tegbesu enjoyed Guestart's astonishment and explained things away by saying that he had merely wanted to entice his enemies who might wish to take advantage of his death to bring war on Dahomey.^I

The authority of the king could not be complete without an obedient and efficient administration. To this task Tegbesu must have addressed himself. Though we do not know the details, he probably set up new chiefs in command of those administrative districts which had lacked them during the uncertain days of the Oyo invasions. What is known is that he applied himself early to the task of re-establishing the Dahoman capital at Abomey. For without a secure centre, control would be difficult.

In 1743, after one of the Oyo invasions, he succeeded in persuading the Oyo, with the aid of lavish presents, to allow him to return to Abomey. About August of that year, he removed the court thither from Allada. In a rather quiet way

I. Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 10th July, 1754; Guestart to la Compagnie des Indes, 10th July, 1754, (AN.C.6/25).

of announcing this great success, he sent for the European directors to come and see him in his new capital to discuss trade.¹ Levet, who went, found Abomey "the most unhealthy place in all the Guinea Coast." Thirteen years of evacuation had certainly made a great difference to the city, but Tegbesu set about purposely rebuilding it and making it the centre of the Dahoman administration.

We do not know much about ^{the} organisation of Tegbesu's court at Abomey. His stay in Oyo had certainly familiarised him with Oyo court institutions, some of which he introduced into his own court. The most notable of these introductions was the Ilari system.

The Ilari were the people whom the Europeans called "half heads" from the way their hair was cut. They were, throughout the Yoruba country, messengers-cum-civil-servants used by certain classes of Oba (Kings). The advantage of this class of people for Tegbesu was that they were mobile, could be sent to any part of the kingdom and thus used to check any remote officer or coordinate any national plans. From 1745 onwards, the Ilari were frequently sent down to the European forts.²

1. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 25th Feb. 1744 (AN.C.6/25).

2. "Journals and Ledgers C.C.C.," 1st Jan. to 30th Ap. 1746. (T70/704). "Half heads" were first mentioned as messengers of the king of Dahomey in January 1746. Henceforth they became recognised as the normal royal messengers.

He must also have created chiefs to fill up any vacant posts or new vacancies which he may have created for the overall national administration. Only a few of the national officers were well known during Tegbesu's reign. The Temigan (later Migan) was the equivalent of a modern Prime Minister for he was the general overseer of "all sorts of affairs". The Mehu, next in rank to him, was in charge of finance and commerce. The Agau was the General of the army. The Ajau was the "first Counsellor", and the Diau was the chief eunuch and guardian of the king's harem. There were also many other lesser ministers and officials stationed in the capital, each with his own specialised functions.

All the most important chiefs had lieutenants. The Aplogan was the Migan's assistant; the Yovogan, governor of Whydah, was the Mehu's assistant and the Sogan, master of the horses, was the Agau's assistant. The Bosu and the Fusupo were probably commanders of the right and the left wings of the army^I

The position of the administrative division of Whydah was of vital importance to Dahomey, especially as Tegbesu believed "that it was better to trade than to make war". It was essential that the officers there should be absolutely under the

I. De Chenevert and Abbet Bullet: "Reflections sur Juda" 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis). The title of the Sogan was probably a new one created during the reign of Tegbesu, for at the end of his reign, there were only sixteen horses in Dahomey and not a single cavalry man.

authority of the king, reliable, able to bring as much wealth to the king as possible without ruining the trade, and absolutely impervious to the temptation to amass wealth for themselves, at the expense of the royal interest.

These conditions were difficult to satisfy. An excessive zeal to serve the king might lead to extortion, which would either scare away the ships and thus diminish trade, or make the directors complain to the king. Either of these developments might cost the responsible minister his head. On the other hand failure to satisfy the king might give rise to the suspicion that the officer was either incompetent or amassing wealth for himself, both of which faults might also incur the death penalty. The result was that execution became the normal occupational hazard of the civil administrators of Whydah.

The multiplication of officials increased rather than diminished this risk. Up to 1746, the Yovogan, based at Igelefe, was the sole administrator of the Whydah division. In that year, an officer called the "Coki" was appointed.¹ The following year another officer called the "Bunio" was also appointed.² In theory these two officers were to assist the

1. "Journals and Ledgers, C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1746 (T70/704).

2. "Accounts and Journal, C.C.C.", Sep.-Dec, 1747 (T70/423).

Yovogan as members of his council. In fact they were spies on him and on each other. As all the posts were completely at the disposal of the king, an under-officer who was a good spy or telltale could expect to occupy the highest post.

Tegan who had been appointed the Yovogan by Agaja in January 1733, occupied the post until 1743. In that year he lost his head because Levet, the French director, had been displeased with his zeal in the service of Dahomey. Levet alleged that

"it was he who by his dark practices planned and carried out the deportation of Levens, and has for some time been sending messengers to propose to several officers of this fort that he would make them directors." I

In addition, he said that he had given "insults and continuous vexations" to the French and the Portuguese.

On the 20th July 1743, he represented Tegan to Tegbesu in such a thoroughly unfavourable way that on the 27th Tegan was seized when he visited Allada to rejoice with the King on the successful blowing up of the Portuguese fort. Within fourteen hours he was beheaded and all his property was sequestered by the king. I

I. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 20th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25). This would seem to be the real end of Tegan whom Norris and Dalzel call Tauga. Norris and Dalzel were probably mixed up about this first Yovogan and the man who beheaded the revolt, instigated by Tegbesu, against the English fort in 1745. In either case, the fascinating story about the fidelity of Tegan's wives is difficult to fit in. See Norris: Memoirs pp.40-48: A. Dalzel: History pp.91-96.

Tegan's fate was not unique. Of the nine more Yovogan appointed between 1743 and 1763, five were beheaded, three of them between April and November 1755, and one, in 1760, after occupying the post for only twenty days. Three were recalled in disgrace and presumably executed and the ninth still alive in 1763 had been severely wounded by the old Whydah and narrowly escaped death. Most of the executions had been decided on the basis of unproved allegation.¹ Nor did the under-officers escape. Of the five Coki sent to Whydah between August 1754 and October 1759, only one died a natural death.²

Although these executions, like the liquidation of all his rivals, revealed Tegbesu's ruthlessness, they nevertheless strengthened the king's hold on Whydah administration, and may be typical of the way in which Tegbesu kept on their toes all the officers whom he sent to all the administration divisions of his kingdom.

Because of the continuous threat posed by Ashampo of Little Popo and the old Whydah against the port and the forts at Igelefe, it was essential, in settling the Whydah administ-

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1. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", 1st Jan-30th June 1748 (T70/424): "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 30th Ap. 30th June, Dec. 1755, 30th June 1756 (T70/1158); 18th & 28th Ap. 1760, 4th Oct. 1761 (T70/1159). C.W. Newbury 'The Western Slave Coast' p.25.
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 31st Aug. 1754, 30th Ap. 1755, Sep. & Oct. 1756, 19th Aug. 1757, Sept. & Oct. 1759 (T70/1158).

ration, that the coastal garrison should be strengthened. The military post under the command of the Cockeracoe, established by Agaja, had grown into a small town called "Cockeracoe Croom".

In the early 1740's, this garrison was not strong enough to withstand the incursions from the west. In 1747, it was badly defeated. Between August and December 1747 therefore, Tegbesu strengthened the garrison village. Not only did he replace the Cockeracoe who had been killed by the Little Popo,^{b4t} he also sent down one more officer, the Cockavo and his contingent to live there permanently.¹ He made it a regular habit to send down two officers and their contingents as an extra precaution whenever an invasion was expected from Ashampo and the Old Whydah.¹ For every major threat, he sent down the Agau and all the generals under him.

No administrative settlement of Whydah could be complete without bringing the directors of the forts fully into the system. Tegbesu realised that their position was of very great importance indeed in his scheme. Dahomans called them "guardians" of the country² because they could attract ships

1. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", Sep.-Dec. 1747 (T70/423).
 2. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 31st Jan. 1744 (AN.C.6/25)..
 S. Berbain: Le Comptoir Francais p.97 gives the procedure as described by a French trader, which confirms the Dahoman view of the role of the directors.

to Whydah harbour by giving a favourable report of the harbour, and could drive ships away by giving an unfavourable one. Tegbesu therefore made it a policy never to allow in Dahomey any director whose friendliness to the Dahoman authorities was not beyond doubt. He also associated the directors with all his efforts to revive the Dahoman trade in slaves.

One of the first things he did on his accession was to deport Levens, the French director,¹ and Bazilio, the Portuguese director for the unfriendly parts they had both played during the Oyo and Little Popo invasions of 1739-43. Between 1742 and 1766, three more Portuguese directors and two more French were deported from Dahomey.² Whenever Tegbesu was asked why he had taken such actions, he replied that those officers were not friends of the country and were attempting to spoil the slave trade.

It was however not only by deportation that he kept the European directors loyal to the Dahoman interest. He also tried hard to bring them into the administrative system of Dahomey. He made it a practice to get personally acquainted with every new director, both formally and informally. In

I. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 20th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25); "Extrait d'une lettre particuliere ecrite de Juda", 16th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25); Conselho Ultramarino to King of Portugal, Lisbon 29th Oct. 1744. (AHU.S.Tome Caixa 5); A.F.C. Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese..." in JHSN p.171; A. Dalzel: History pp. 83-85. Dalzel's dating is inaccurate.

2. See Appendix II.

1743, he invited Levet to visit him at Allada immediately after his arrival,¹ and in 1746, he invited Turner, the English director, to come and spend some time with him at Dido², somewhere north of Abomey. During these visits, the directors were made to feel free to discuss their complaints with the king or give suggestions on Whydah trade. On other occasions they were also encouraged to take their complaints to the king. If Tegbesu had anything he wanted to discuss with them he said it then or he invited all the directors at some other time to tell them.

In this way the directors came to know and accept their rights, duties and places within the administrative system of Dahomey. Generally they were regarded as being just like any other Dahoman chiefs even though their special position as foreigners was recognised. They too accepted the position by giving presents whenever they visited the king just as any Dahoman chief did.³ They also had gifts bestowed on them in return just as on any Dahoman chief. They acquired the right to complain to the king whenever they felt they had

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1. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, Juda 14th June 1743 (AN.C. 6/25)
 2. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, Juda 25th Feb. 1744 (AN.C. 6/25); "Journals and Ledgers, C.C.C.", Jan. & Feb. 1746 (T70/703); Nov. and Dec. 1746 (T70/704); "Accounts and Journals C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1747 (T70/423); to cite only a few examples of when Tegbesu invited directors for personal acquaintance.
 3. By 1751 this had become the normal practice. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", 20th Jan-30th June 1751 (T70/425): Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 18th Feb. 1753 (AN.C.6/25).

been wronged by any of the king's officers. By this right they came to have a large say on the conduct of any Yovogan and, as Tegan's case shows, their opinion of any Yovogan could make or unmake that officer. This regularised position greatly attached most of the European directors during T~~egbesu's~~ reign to the Dahoman interest and brought them out in defence of Dahomey when the Little Popo and the old Whydah renewed their raids on Dahomey after 1752.

Stability could not exist in Dahomey while the Oyo persisted in their invasions. The only way to get them to stop was to offer them terms that they would be ready to accept and to observe such conditions as they might impose. T~~egbesu's~~ long residence in Oyo must have given him a fairly accurate idea of the power of Oyo and of the men who ran its affairs. It must also have made him wary of offending Oyo. Indeed, it seems that throughout his reign, he studiously avoided any action that might cause an Oyo invasion of Dahomey. It needed however a few Oyo invasions or threats of invasion to make him hurry to reach a definitive settlement with them.

He gave the Oyo a very lavish present in 1743 after one of their invasions. In the middle of 1746, he also asked the forts to defray some of the customery presents demanded by Oyo.^I It was not however until 1748 that a settlement was

I. "Journals and Ledgers, C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1746 (T70/704).

reached.

In March of that year, news reached the forts at Igelefe that the Oyo were up in arms against Dahomey, that Tegbesu "had quitted his habitation and carried all his valuable movables into the bush, and that he was making large dashes to avoid the impending blow." In a hurry the Yovogan and the most important officers at Igelefe were summoned to the king's secret hideout for urgent advice and necessary contributions.¹

The Preliminary presents were very effective, for the Oyo did not invade Dahomey. Negotiations then followed on a definitive peace treaty, which was happily concluded, probably around April, definitely before 30th June 1748.¹

The terms were probably largely a confirmation of those reached in 1730. In addition, Tegbesu must have been told to leave the ports east of Jakin in peace for until towards the end of the century when Oyo's power started to decline, Dahomey never again attacked any place east of Jakin, though it would have liked to attack Epe particularly to destroy the port.

Probably during these negotiations also, the annual tributes to be paid perpetually to Oyo were settled. Traditions both at Abomey and Oyo are remarkably agreed on these annual tributes. They consisted of forty-one men, forty-one young women, forty-one guns, four hundred bags of cowries and four hundred corals.²

1. "Accounts & Journal, C.C.C.", 1st Jan.-30th June. 1748 (T70/424).
2. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p.319; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XIX. p.146, p.171.

This was a very heavy tribute. A bag (oke) of cowries consisted of forty ^h thousand pieces. Four hundred bags would therefore consist of sixteen million pieces. In the mid-18th century, when twenty thousand pieces were worth four pounds,^I sixteen million pieces would be worth £3,200. When the value of all the other articles of the tribute are added, the extent of Oyo's power and the burden which Dahomey had to bear annually through this submission can be estimated. This tribute was paid annually in November, and carried from Cana, where the Oyo officers checked it, to Oyo by a Dahoman chief specially created for the purpose. It was paid for the next seventy years until shortly after 1818 when Gezo successfully declared his independence.

There was more to the 1748 treaty than the mere annual payment of tribute by Dahomey. The payments indicated that ultimate sovereignty in Dahomey remained with the Alafin of Oyo. This gave Oyo enormous responsibilities as well as rights in Dahomey. For instance, Oyo undertook the defence of Dahomey against external aggression and stationed its forces for this

I. I have arrived at this and subsequent amounts in this work, by a series of calculations and equations as follows:
 40 Cowries = 1 tockey, 5 tockies (200 cowries) = 1 gallina;
 20 gallinas = 1 cabess; 5 cabesses (20,000 cowries) = 1 ounce;
 Every Yoruba also knows that 40,000 cowries = 1 oke (bag),
 In 1750, 8 ounces = 1 Mark of gold, i.e. about £32; 1 ounce would therefore be about £4. See Guestard: "Memoir....", 1750; A. Dalzell History pp.133-135 notes, where the value of cowries would seem to have been less towards 1790.

purpose in the Atekpame area. In 1764, when one Odanquah of Ashanti trespassed with his soldiers into the area, the Oyo forces wiped out his whole twenty thousand soldiers.¹

Oyo also made laws for Dahomey, though we shall never know how many. The one law which the Dahoman kings long remembered with wounded pride was that which prohibited any Dahoman, be he king or commoner, from wearing silk damask in Cana.² Cana itself appears to have been the Oyo headquarters where the kings of Dahomey had a palace, but no authority at all and where any Dahoman was free to live. Generally no Dahoman law bound any Oyo citizen in Dahomey.

Oyo could ask Dahomey to send contingents to any military expeditions that it might wish to make, or could commission Dahomey to fight such wars under, or without, Oyo officers. It could also prevent Dahomey from undertaking any war. Between 1783 and 1789, Abiodun, the Alafin, exercised all these rights successfully to the great annoyance of the Dahoman authorities.³

The kings of Oyo became the heirs of all the most important chiefs in Dahomey, from the king downwards. In accordance

1. William Mutter to African Committee, 27th May 1764 (T70/31.) This is probably the engagement recorded by Dupuis as having taken place between Dahomey and Ashanti during the reign of Osei Akwasi, king of Ashanti, see Dupuis: Journal of a Residence in Ashantee (1824) pp. 238-239.

2. Dawson to Fitzgerald, 17th Nov. 1862 (C.A.2/016).

3. Numerous examples of this occur between 1774 and 1789 as will be seen in the next chapter.

with this right, when the Mehu died in 1779, Abiodun demanded all his movable property, including his wives.¹ It is probable too, that every Dahoman king on accession, was required to send presents to Oyo, though we have no definite example of this usage. Certainly, whenever an Alafin ascended the throne or did something noteworthy, the king of Dahomey sent presents to Oyo. In 1774, when Abiodun overcame Gaha in a civil war in Oyo, Kpengla sent presents.²

These rights are enormous and there may be many more than are known. They certainly show that the overlordship of Oyo over Dahomey was not as nebulous and as remote as the oral traditions would lead us to suppose, and will explain the hearty dislike with which the Dahomans regarded the rule of Oyo. Only the purely internal administration was left to Dahomey.

In some respects, even this settlement would appear to have been very generous and its term much lighter than those which Oyo made with some other tributary states. For there is no tradition which suggests that the Oyo placed any Ajele (resident superintendents) in any of the Dahomey towns, as they were, for example, in the Egba towns. Moreover Dahomey was allowed to retain its own army and seems to have been

1.A. Dalzel: History pp.173-177. Dalzel's dating of the Mehu's death is inaccurate.

2.A. Dalzel: History p.158.

allowed military initiative northwards and westwards of Abomey, wherever Oyo interests were not likely to be harmed. These concessions allowed Dahomey to revive and grow in future.

The conclusion of the peace treaty in 1748 was an occasion of the greatest joy to the Dahomans as it must have been pleasing to the Oyo. All round Dahomey it was celebrated with dances and feasts. At Igelefe, the Yovogan, the war generals and captains, councillors, chiefs, traders and all the inhabitants of the town danced round the forts. The European communities were called upon to provide presents. The English fort alone expended liquors worth £13 on the one day of celebration.¹

With his own constitutional position secure, the administration put in order and the danger of Oyo invasion removed, Tegbesu could concentrate wholeheartedly on the promotion of the slave trade, which he had regarded since his accession as one of his primary objectives. Indeed, most of the administrative measures which he took at Whydah and his settlement with the Oyo were designedly encouraging to the export trade of slaves in Dahomey.

It was certainly the keystone of Tegbesu's policy that the energies of the country were to be devoted to the slave trade rather than to military adventure. This was probably

1. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", 1st Jan.-30th June, 1748. (T70/424).

partly because the militarism of Agaja, though successful in its earlier years, had nearly ended in the complete destruction of Dahomey. It may also have been that Tegbesu saw the slave trade as the best way to refill the empty coffers which he had inherited.

His policy was stated in 1754 when he heard of the impending Anglo-French war and tried to offer his good offices to bring peace. Devaynes the English director reported that

"the king of Dahomey sent down two of his half heads as messengers accompanied by the Viceroy and other caboceers to desire I would write home to the king and company to desire in a friendly way that they would be at peace as he heard there was a report of an approaching war in Europe and that it was better to trade than to make war." I

He tried first to secure a complete monopoly of the trade in Dahomey for the crown, then to make Igelefe the only slaving port in Yoruba-Aja and finally to create an atmosphere in which the trade would flourish. At the end of 1744 or early 1745, he rounded up and executed all the Dahoman private slave exporters at Igelefe. He then invited the Migan and the Mehu to recommend two or three officers each, who were sent to Igelefe as "king's traders" and in whose hands the whole export trade in slaves in Dahomey was concentrated.²

This action at once restored the king's monopoly and

1. Thomas Melvil to African Committee, 30th Nov. 1754 (T70/1523)
2. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 1st Feb. 1746 (AN.C.6/25).

avoided the kind of dissatisfaction which Agaja's single-handed monopoly had caused. He reimposed Agaja's law which stipulated that goods once landed in Dahomey could not be re-exported and he maintained that it was his right, and not the directors', to decide who should trade at Whydah port and in what commodities. So he expelled Bazilio partly for forbidding the Portuguese traders to trade freely in gold, and Levet, partly for preventing the French officers in the fort from trading.

Early in 1746, in May 1747 and again in May 1748, he proclaimed a law, designed to make Whydah the entrepot of the Yoruba-Aja country. He ruled that the paths were free and open for anybody to go to and come from Epe, Weme and Ajara to bring the slaves from those places to Igelefe for export. At the same time he ruled that European captains must not go to any of those places to trade, and at the same time made it clear that if any of them was caught trading there, he would be ill-treated.¹

This aversion to Europeans trading in the neighbouring ports is a recurring theme in Dahomey's relations with all its neighbours. The attempt to centralise the trade at Whydah recalls Allada's policy between 1640 and 1670. The refusal

I. "Journals and Ledgers", C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1746 (T70/704); "Accounts and Journals C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1747 (T70/423), 1st Jan.-30th June 1748 (T70/424).

of the Europeans to obey this law after its first promulgation led to Tegbesu's raid on Epe in 1747 where he seized all the European traders.

Tegbesu saw to it that the European forts in his territory were kept in a fit condition to carry on the trade. He showed a particular concern whenever any of them was in difficulty, either for lack of a director or of means of sustenance.

Although he had blown up the Portuguese fort in 1743 in an attempt to reassert his authority over Igelefe, and over the Europeans, he had offered to rebuild it free of charge as soon as Bazilio, the director he hated, was safely out of the country, and he had appointed another director to take care of the fort until the Portuguese authorities appointed one. When his nominee died in 1746, he showed the same concern that the fort should not be without a head, though Nunes, the Portuguese whom he appointed, was a rogue whom he had to drive out of the country as soon as he discovered his true character.^I

In the same way, he appointed Druno^{de} la Court to succeed Levet, the French director whom he had expelled in 1747, and also lent the French fort 4000 "livres" of cowries free of

I. Conselho Ultramarino to King of Portugal, Lisbon 29th Oct. 1744 (AHU.S.Tome Caixa 5); Levet to La Compagnie, 20th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25); "Journal and Ledgers, C.C.C.", 1st Jan.-30th Ap. 1746 (T70/804); A.F.C. Ryder: "The Re-establishment of the Portuguese..." in JHSN pp.172-178.

interest to tide over the difficulties of its lack of provision.¹ When the English fort had no substantive director between the departure of Gregory, late in 1745, and the arrival of Turner on 1st January 1746, Tegbesu sent two Ilari to wait constantly at the English fort and to see that it came to no harm. When Turner came, he was welcomed like a royal visitor.²

One factor outside the control of Tegbesu helped to increase the number of ships that came to Whydah port from 1749 onwards. In that year, the British decided to enforce the exclusion of the French from any trade on the Gold Coast. They laid claim to the whole of Anomabu where the French used to trade and in spite of French protests, maintained the ban by force in 1750 and 1751. When the British fort at Anomabu was built, their control of the trade of the area was complete and a great number of French ships which would have traded at Amissa and Koromantine, increasingly came to Whydah from 1750 onwards.³

To make sure that the monarchy derived as much financial advantage as possible from these exertions, Tegbesu created, or resuscitated, a very efficient system of collecting taxes

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1. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", 1st Sep.-31st Dec. 1747, (T70/423); 20th Jan.-30th June 1751 (T70/425); Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 18th Feb. & 1st Ap. 1753 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. "Accounts and Journals, C.C.C.", Nov. & Dec. 1746 (T70/704)
 3. J.R. & W.H. to the French Captain at Cormantine and Amissa, 22nd Feb. 1749; Le Chevalier de Glanderès to John Roberts and Council, 12th Feb. 1750; J.R. and W.H. to R.A.C., 24th Mar 1750 (T70/68); Thomas Melville to African Committee, 11th June 1752 (T70/518).

from all parts of the kingdom. The inhabitants nearest the capital were asked to pay in kind by working for the king for a specific number of days in the year. Those farther away paid in cash (cowries) or with the products of their farms. Collectors were posted everywhere, on the high roads, in the market places, at the entrance to the forts and on the beach.¹

In the first half of 1751, Tegbesu took one more step in the interest of making Whydah the greatest centre for slave export in Yoruba-Aja. On the advice of the director of the Portuguese fort, he sent a two-man economic mission to the Viceroy of Brazil to ask for an increase in the Brazilian trade to Whydah and to give Tegbesu's friendly greeting to the Viceroy.² Tegbesu chose Brazil rather than any European country, probably for continuity of foreign policy, for it was the Portuguese who had first befriended his father Agaja. It was also probably their trade which remained the most constant during the depression of the last years of Agaja and of the early years of Tegbesu.

The mission however was accorded a very discourteous reception by the Viceroy of Brazil who lodged the ambassadors in a Jesuit convent, and refused to recognise them as ministers of the king of Dahomey. His excuse was that Tegbesu had blown

². Censellho Ultramarino to king of Portugal, Lisbon 5th May, 1752 (A.H.V. Codice 254 F. 245 V.)

¹. De Chenevert and Abbe Bullet: "Reflections sur Juda" 1776 (AN.C.6/27bis).

up the Portuguese fort in 1743 and had not rebuilt it. In exchange for four women, three men, six specially manufactured ofi garments and a sheep which Tegbesu sent to the king of Portugal through the Viceroy, the Viceroy gave the ambassadors some dresses and a high-toned message. He stipulated that if Tegbesu wanted any trade with the Portuguese, he must repair the Portuguese fort and restore all the Portuguese property that had been taken away by the Dahoman authorities.

The mission was therefore a failure. It had not been necessary. Portuguese needs, and not Dahoman invitation, forced them to stay in Whydah. Portuguese trade did not diminish because their fortress was blown up in 1743 nor could the mission have increased it appreciably unless there had been an increased demand for slaves in the Brazilian market.

This really was one of the main weaknesses of the methods which Tegbesu was employing to raise the fortunes of Dahomey. The revival which he sought was based on two external factors. The first was the transatlantic slave trade, which depended on European politics, needs and moods. The second was Oyo, the action of which was again conditioned by all kinds of local political and economic developments. Both these two factors were completely outside the control of the Dahoman authorities, To that extent therefore, Dahoman wealth could only last so long as these external conditions were concurrently favourable

to it.

That they might not always be continuously favourable was shown by the outbreak of the Seven Years war and the passing of a Portuguese law regulating their captains' trade in West Africa. Tegbesu's message to the king of England in 1754 about the impending Anglo-French war was sent partly because he realized that any such war was bound to affect his own economy. When the message failed to have any effect he re-enacted the law which made Whydah a neutral port.¹ In spite of his efforts, the outbreak of the war meant a great decrease in the number of ships calling at Whydah simply because fewer ships came out from Europe.

Equally disadvantageous to the Dahoman economy was the unexpected change in Portuguese trading habits. Late in 1756 or early 1757, the Brazilian authorities ruled that Portuguese ships going to "Costa da Mina" must trade there in turns, one at a time. Tegbesu thought that the law encroached on his own prerogative and protested very strongly. In spite of his protests however, the Portuguese directors from 1757 onwards enforced the law very rigorously on the Portuguese captains, and were not deterred by Tegbesu's deportation of the first director who attempted to do so.² Whydah port was at

1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah ", 31st Dec. 1755 (T70/1158)

2. "Theodozio Rodrigues da Costa to Viceroy of Brazil, Ajuda 10th Dec. 1757 (APB.OR.61 f.153); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", May & June 1759 (T70/1159); Felix Jose da Govea to Viceroy of Brazil, Ajuda 29th Jan. 1761 (APB.OR.69 f 97).

a disadvantage because it was there only that the Portuguese authority had a representative who could enforce the law. Impatient or even lawless captains therefore went to the other ports near Whydah, causing a loss to the Dahoman economy.

The second major weakness of Tegbesu's methods was perhaps a much more dangerous one than the first. His policy of putting trade before war meant that the Dahoman army was badly neglected. Observers who saw the soldiers trained under Tegbesu remarked that they had no discipline and knew no tactics.¹ That was a great deterioration from the days of Agaja. It may have been that the terrible Oyo invasions, and Tegbesu's first-hand acquaintance with the might of Oyo had convinced him that it was a waste of time and national resources to encourage militarism in Dahomey.

It is certainly no accident that the Dahoman oral traditions recall only two major wars fought during the long reign of Tegbesu, one against the Mahi and the other against Za. All the other campaigns were minor ones, probably the mere dispatch of raiding parties rather than wars.²

Of these two major wars, only the one against the Gbowele province of Mahi undertaken in 1753 could really be so regarded, for

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1. De Chenevert and Abbe Bullet: "Reflexions sur Juda" 1776, (AN.C.6/27 bis).
 2. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p.301; R. Norris: Memoirs pp. 21-24; A. Dalzel: History pp.75-77; Norris, followed by Dalzel, implies that the campaign against Mahi continued for many years, but his account is confused.

that against Za was more like the quelling of a civil rebellion. Dahomey tradition says that the cause of the war against the Mahi was that a Dahoman criminal had fled to Gbowele and had not been returned despite Tegbesu's insistent demands.

Contemporaries said that the war was provoked purely and simply by Tegbesu who insisted that the Mahi must have a king instead of being a republic. There followed a brief campaign. On the 10th March 1753, the Dahomans announced that they had been victorious.^I It is however doubtful whether their victory was anything final or spectacular.

The neglect of the army meant that often the raiding parties were unsuccessful and Dahomey was unable to procure for itself the slaves needed for export. Therefore it gradually came to depend on those sold to it by the Oyo traders. As those traders sold to many ports, the Dahomen supply became insecure.

Tegbesu's exertions also produced certain unfavourable reactions which increased the insecurity of his achievements. His repressive measures drove away many people from Dahomey. These exiles were able to live in other territories under the general pax imposed by Oyo. This meant that Dahomey no longer had any special advantages to offer anyone seeking security of

I. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 10th March 1753 (T70/1158).
 Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 18th Feb.
 1753 (AN.C6/25); A. Dalzel: History pp.75-77. Dalzel's dating is inaccurate.

adventure as it had during Agaja's reign. It was therefore no longer attractive to new immigrants who might have made good the losses through emigration. By 1750, the population of Dahomey was noticeably diminished, a further contributory cause of military weakness. At the same time the neighbouring territories, to which the Dahoman exiles had fled, disliked Dahomey intensely.¹ whether as a result of the activities of the Dahoman exiles is uncertain.

Moreover there were internal revolts in Dahomey itself. Two of these have been recorded, one in 1754 and the other in 1758. Both are obscure, but they appear to have been serious. In the former, the rulers of Tori and Ajara simultaneously raised a standard of revolt, but they were taken alive after a brief campaign and the movement collapsed. The second was hatched in Abomey itself and headed by a man who appears to have been very important, though his identity is not disclosed. He was however caught and beheaded in September 1758. His head was publicly exhibited, not only at Abomey, but also at Igelefe.²

The state monopoly of the slave trade in Dahomey was not advantageous to the European slave traders, and was indeed displeasing to them. For it meant that the king could charge whatever price he wished for his slaves, demand the European

1. Guestart: "Memoire..." 1750 (AN.C.6/25).

2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 31st Oct. 1754, Sep. & Oct. 1758 (T70/1158).

goods he needed and pay whatever price he thought reasonable for such goods. Levet, the director of the French fort put the frustration of the resident European traders as follows:

"if anyone has some merchandise to sell, he must sell it to them at the price they want or he may keep his ware since he can only sell to the [king's] merchants who find too dear everything that is not given to them free."I

Levet also pointed out that the slave trade in Dahomey was not regarded as a free economic activity, but as part of the national or even international politics, to be rigidly controlled by the king.

Indeed the Dahoman authorities made it plain that they expected the directors of the forts to encourage ships from their several countries to come to trade only at Whydah and to prevent them from going to any of the other neighbouring ports. Whenever a ship went past the Whydah harbour or simply sent its boats there from Little or Great Popo, the representative of the nation whose ship it was, was subjected to official inquisition. If any director remained long in Dahomey without his nation sending large numbers of ships, he was regarded as an enemy of the king, treated with disdain and sometimes ejected from the country.² These attitudes made the resident directors fear to offend Tegbesu but drove away the European

I. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 1st Feb. 1746 (AN.C.6/25).

2. Levet to la Compagnie des Indes, 31st Jan. 1744, 20th Aug. 1743 (AN.C.6/25).

slave captains.

The weaknesses of, and the reactions to, Tegbesu's policies and methods did not yet constitute a great threat to the ends which he sought. In general, Tegbesu was immensely successful up to 1767. By 1747, he had put the finances of the monarchy in order. By 1750 "the commerce of Whydah was easily very large,"¹ and in the early 1750's the export trade of Whydah, which was almost nil in 1740, exceeded those of Badagry and Epe. The measure of his success can be appreciated by a look at the volume and organisation of the trade at Whydah in 1750.

It was then estimated that about 9000 slaves were exported annually from Whydah by the French and the Portuguese alone. The English trade there was still much less important but they too must have been taking a few hundred out. These slaves were made up from the Fon, the Whydah, the Allada (all Aja) and the Anago (Yoruba). The Portuguese bought the Aja but not the Yoruba, and exported about four thousand of the total. The French bought the rest.¹

Each slave cost between 6 and 8 "ounces" or between £24 and £32 in eighteenth century money. On this reckoning Tegbesu's income in 1750 from the slaves exported by the French and Portuguese amounted to something between £216,000

I. Guestart: "Memoire pour servir a l'intelligence du Commerce de Juda...." 1750(AN.C.6/25).

and £288,000. If to this we add the customs duties that the ships paid before they were allowed to trade,^I the annual presents and other presents to Tegbesu, and the unknown value of the English trade, it will be agreed that Tegbesu's income from the slave export in the mid-eighteenth century was very substantial.

The Dahoman citizens who were lucky enough not to have been sold into slavery, also profited from the sale of their less fortunate kinsfolk. For the slave trade as revived by Tegbesu was a highly organised, if inhuman, business. From the moment of his arrival at Whydah harbour to that of his departure with a full cargo, each slaving captain had temporary establishments to facilitate his trade. At the beach he erected a tent, which served him as a clearing house, in which goods from his ship could be kept, en route for the forts, and ^{which} in/the slaves he purchased could be kept, en route for the ship's hold. At Igelefe, he also had another establishment, usually beneath the walls of the fort which belonged to his nation.

For his use in these two establishments, he employed, for the whole of his stay, Dahoman citizens who served him

I. The customs duties varied from time to time according to the law imposed by the king of Dahomey. In the 1790's every ^{three} three-masted ship paid the value of twelve slaves in goods. In 1803 the value of seven slaves was paid for every mast. C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast p.27; John Macleod, A Voyage to Africa, (London 1820), p.11.

as porters, canoemen, messengers, storekeepers, labourers, washerwomen, water carriers, rollers of water, slave prison keepers and nightwatchmen. He also had the services of the beach garrison.

All these workers had their daily pay standardised. A porter earned three tockies (120 cowries) for each load from the beach to the forts. If the parcel was heavier than normal, he took more in proportion to the weight. Each canoeman was paid a hat and a covercloth before the captain descended on land, the chief canoeman being paid more. After landing, each was given one anchor of brandy (8 gallons) for successfully crossing the terrible bar. Every Sunday, each crew was paid one cabess of cowries (20,000 cowries) and a flagon of brandy. At the end of the trade, they all had another cabess of cowries and an anchor of brandy.

On landing, each slave captain paid the chief of the beach garrison an anchor of brandy and a hat. On departure, he paid a covercloth, a barrel of flour and a quart of salt meat. The erection of a hut at the beach cost the captain four cabesses of cowries (80,000) and an anchor of brandy.

Messengers were paid two tockies (80 cowries) daily, and a flagon of brandy every Sunday. At the end of the trade, each messenger was paid an anchor of brandy and a piece of cloth. Each of the store labourers got two tockies daily and half a

piece of cloth at the end of the trade.

The woman water carrier, the washerwoman, the day watch and the rollers of water casks, took two tockies each per day with further payments in cloth or brandy. The public crier who announced the permission for a captain to open his trade was paid ten gallinas (2000 cowries) and a flagon of brandy. The messenger who went to inform the king of the arrival of a captain, was paid five gallinas (1000 cowries). If he was a "king's boy", he had double payment.^I

These wages were fairly high in relation to the cost of living. It was possible to feed well for a whole day on something between three and five cowries. So that a man who earned 80 cowries a day was doing well indeed. The more ships that called at Whydah port, the more workers would benefit from high wages, the steadier would the wages be, and the more prosperous would the Dahomas appear.

It is no wonder then that in the last years of Tegbesu's reign and even in the early years of his successor, Dahomey wore a prosperous look, to a degree which astounded Norris. The kingdom was packed with towns and villages whose population, reduced though they must have been if compared with what they had been fifty years earlier, were still contented and well fed. The king himself, far from being a wanted fugitive, hiding in remote forests, had seven palaces.

I. Guesterd: "Memoire....", 1750 (AN.C.6/25).

Tegbesu lived in very great affluence as Norris's visit to his court in 1772 showed, and as the eyewitness report of the Ato Anubomey (Annual Customs) of the same year would suggest.

During this ceremony, it was the practice to mount a daily exhibition of the king's belongings. Each day's exhibition must be different from the next one and no one single item was exhibited twice for the whole three months of the Ato ceremony.

Norris commented on some of the daily exhibitions which he saw while he was present. Of that mounted on 12th February 1772, when the daily exhibition had been going on for about two months, he said

"the variety and abundance of rich silks, silver bracelets and other ornaments, coral and a profusion of other valuable beads exceeded my expectation, besides there was another display of forty women with silver helmets" I

On the final day of the Ato

"a large stage is erected near one of the palace gates adorned with flags and umbrellas and surrounded with a fence of thorns to keep off the rabble. On it are piled heaps of silesias, checks and callicoes, a great many fine cloths that are manufactured in Eyeo country, and a prodigious quantity of cowries".L

It was not only Norris who witnessed to the affluent state of Dahomey. Mills, a former governor of the Cape Coast Castle, who visited Igelefe for the first time in February

1777 on his way back to England, preferred the place to the Gold Coast. He wrote:

"The natives both males and females are most civil, good kind people I ever saw, full of compliments and as quick and tame as you possibly can imagine ... The country appears amazingly populous, and they appear happy, contented and cheerful ... The people here are exceeding fond of wearing many clothes about them both men and women, they are also fond of their own manufactured cloths and wear grass ones ..."¹

In fact Mills admired what he saw so much that he said he would have settled in Dahomey had it not been for the consideration he had for his friends and family.¹

Though Mills might not know it, there was sumptuary laws. Only the king wore sandals and he alone could be carried in a hammock. All other Dahomans walked barefoot. The court dress, which was the same as the military dress, and in which all who attended the court were obliged to appear, was a short sleeveless upper garment over whatever kind of drawers one chose. Only a war captain had an umbrella, and every chief had a mule presented to him on appointment by the king, as a sign of his dignity.² As we have already noticed, no Dahoman was permitted to wear silk damask in Cana.

These few details show that the kingdom of Dahomey under Tegbesu was well organised, and the society a well-ordered one in which each individual knew his rights as well as his duties.

1. David Mills to R. Miles, 5th Feb. 1777 (T70/1534).
2. De Chenevert et Abbe Bullet: "Reflections sur Juda" 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis).

Meanwhile the growing wealth of Whydah port under the secure hold of Tegbesu made the old Whydah uneasy and aroused the envy of Ashampo of Little Popo, Agaja's old enemy. From 1752 onwards they renewed, with increasing vigour, not only the scorched earth tactics adopted by Huffon in 1731, but also their determination to deprive Tegbesu of Whydah.

Between 1752 and 1763, they came against Dahomey six times.¹ Thrice they defeated the Dahoman army, and on two occasions out of those three, they remained masters of the beach and the forts unchallenged for days.¹ The allegiance of the forts to Tegbesu, and the active support which the English fort gave to Dahomey during the 1755 and 1756 invasions, largely prevented the old Whydah from becoming the complete masters of Igelefe.²

The most serious of the Whydah invasions occurred in 1763.³ At 8.000 am on 12th July of that year, a Whydah force of some eight thousand well-drilled men appeared at Igelefe, led by Ofori, son of Ashampo. They easily overcame the Dahoman army on the beach, and marched towards the forts. Honu, the

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 1st May 1752, 4th Jan. 1753, May-Oct. 1753, 31st Dec. 1753, 28th Feb. 1754, 31st Aug. 1755, 31st Oct. 1755 (T70/1158); Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 25th Nov. 1755 (AN.C6/25); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah, Sep. & Oct. 1756 (T70/1158); A. Dalzel: History. pp.100-102; E. Douglas in E.D.vol. XIX.pp. 177-182. Dalzel's accounts of these events are incomplete.
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 31st Oct. 1755, Sep. & Oct. 1756 (XT70/1158).
 3. A. Dalzel: History pp.102-104; "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah" 12th July 1763 (T70/1159) "Memoire sur le Fort Juda" post 1763, "Le Royaume de Juda", n.d. (AN.C.6/25).

Yovogan who opposed them with about a thousand men, was soon wounded and carried off the field. The Coki then took command, but he too was easily made to beat a retreat.

The old Whydah and the Little Popo then started to burn Igelefe and to pursue the disorderly Dahoman army. At this point the English and the French forts unexpectedly opened fire on the invaders. Goodson, the director of the English fort, literally took command of the Dahoman forces, distributing powder and rum freely for the Dahoman soldiers and his own garrison, and ordering the wounded to be dressed with silesia supplied by his fort. By 2.00 p.m. , in the face of this combined attack, the invaders' ranks had been broken. Ofori, their commander, escaped, but shot himself for grief and only a skeleton army survived to tell the tale of their disaster.

Although the old Whydah and the Little Popo were so dismally defeated, their invasions had demonstrated the weak condition into which the Dahoman army had fallen and were not without adverse effects on the trade of Dahomey. From about 1752 onwards, ships increasingly avoided Whydah where they stood a real chance of being pillaged and suffering losses from Tegbesu's policies.^I In 1754, more ships went to Badagry,

I. "Enregistrement des rapports...", 16th June, 19th June, 3rd July, 10th Aug. 26th Sept. 15th Oct. 13th Nov. 19th Nov. 1753 (ADN.B.4592; Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 18th Dec. 1752, 25th Nov. 1757 (AN.C.6/25).

Epe, and Little Popo than went to Whydah. In 1755 very few ships indeed went to Whydah and the drift was not stopped by all the protests which Tegbesu delivered to the directors of the fort.¹ By 1763, Porto Novo, the new port of the kingdom of Ajase Ipo was being used both by the English and the French.²

Dahomey's problem was increased by the Portuguese law, already referred to, and the Seven Year's war. The drift of the ships not only caused the usual security problem for Dahomey but also a serious problem of unemployment, since Tegbesu's earlier successes had raised a large labour force whose livelihood depended on casual work with the slave ships. Stealing and burglary became common, a real threat at Igelefe and an added reason for ships to avoid the Whydah port.³

On 5th December 1763, Tegbesu sent a public crier to Igelefe,

"to proclaim through the whole place two days together that whoever stole the value of even a single cowrie the king was determined to punish with death." 3

However, the end of the Seven Years War, and the complete overthrow of the old Whydah and Little Popo invaders, both in 1763, brought ships flocking to Whydah in 1764⁴ and restored

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah" Feb. 1758 (T70/1158); May and June, 1759 to 20th July 1761 (T70/1159);
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah" 3rd xma Aug. 1763 (T70/1159);. "Cote d'Afrique, Memoire sur le fort Juda" , Post, 1763 (AN.C.6/26).
 3. Captain Jenkinson to African Committee, 28th July, 1762 (T70/31)
"Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 17th Mar. 21st. Mar. and 28th Mar. 1763 (T70/1159).
 4. Conseil de direction to la Compagnie des Indes, 29th Nov. 1764. (AN.C.6/26).

normal conditions at Igelefe. All the forts sank back into routine administration and the stealing and the burglary stopped. At the end of 1764, the French director was able to say that the Whydah trade "has always been the best and certainly preferable to the trade in other ports lower down the coast," and to express the fear that too many ships and an unnecessary competition among the captains might spoil the trade.

Yet the position could no longer be the same as before the old Whydah invasions started. In 1765, the total export of the slaves from Whydah port was about five thousand.¹ This compared very unfavourably with the nine thousand in 1750. The combined total of the slaves exported from Little Popo, Great Popo, Epe, Porto Novo, Badagry and Lagos was also about five thousand.² No doubt Whydah trade was predominant but as it depended largely on Oyo suppliers, its continued lead depended on Oyo preferences. The phenomenal growth of Porto Novo which in 1765 was exporting one thousand two hundred slaves,² more than the combined total of the long established ports of Epe and Badagry, suggests that the days of Whydah as the leading port in the Yoruba-Aja country were numbered.

However in 1767, Dahomey was enjoying a standard of affluence and orderliness which it was not to surpass for

1. "Cote d'Afrique" 1765 (AN.C6/26).

2. "Cote d'Afrique", 1765 (AN.C.6/26).

the rest of the century and which indeed its rulers would have to struggle from then on to maintain. The credit for this phenomenal progress from the gloomy days of 1740 goes entirely to Tegbesu.

Between 1740 and 1766, he had reconstructed Dahomey from the tattered ruins left by Agaja. He had made his own constitutional position and that of his descendants secure, he had rebuilt Abomey, re-established the internal administration, and re-integrated the Europeans into the system. He had bought peace from Oyo by submission and had concentrated the whole national energy on the slave trade which he revived and made a complete royal monopoly. Although his methods had caused a dwindling in the population of Dahomey, had produced revolts and dissatisfaction among the Europeans, yet he had greatly enriched both the monarchy and the general populace and had produced such an orderly and contented community as was not surpassed again for the rest of the century.

His policies had however placed Dahomey at the mercy of external factors that might not always be favourable and he had neglected the army. The years which followed were to see the grave consequences of these mistakes.

CHAPTER V.WEAKNESS IN THE NEW SYSTEM 1767-1789.

From 1767 onwards, the long term implications of Tegbesu's economic settlement became the dominant issues in the national life of Dahomey. By making the slave trade the basis of the economy of Dahomey, Tegbesu had placed the kingdom at the mercy of external factors which the Dahomans could neither control nor even influence. This became increasingly clear as international conditions became less favourable to the unfettered movement of European shipping. The experience of the next two decades would show that the Dahomans no longer controlled an important factor governing the stability of their kingdom and that the slave trade was, after all, not a secure basis for the national economy.

Between 1767 and 1789, both the Dahoman authorities and the European director constantly complained of the "badness of the trade" in Dahomey. The number of slaves available started to decrease, slowly at first, from about 1765. In 1774, the decrease was reaching an alarming stage, but the European directors still thought that it was either a passing trouble or simply a question of imperfect distribution. Guestard, the

director of the French fort, said he hoped that Kpengla would easily re-establish the declining trade of Dahomey and put the other faults right.¹

Soon however all the European directors realised that the problem was more deep-rooted and that the supply of the slaves had declined generally in Dahomey. Between June and October 1774, they all, individually and collectively, complained to Kpengla that slaves were too few in Dahomey and asked him to do something about it,² though they did not specify what. Olivier Montaguere, who succeeded Guestard said there was hardly any trade at Igelefe in 1776,³ and the attempt by Norris, made towards the end of 1777, to collect some long standing debts, shows that the trade had not yet revived by then.⁴

Norris arrived at Igelefe about the middle of September 1777, the first English trader to be seen in Whydah port since the beginning of that year. By the end of December, he

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1. Guestard to Ministere de Colonies, 7th June 1774 (AN.C.6/25).
 2. De Warel to Messrs de la Chambre du Commerce de la Rochelle, 15th Nov. 1774 (CCR.Cartoon XIX); "An Account of the forts belonging to the British and foreign nations in these parts of Africa called Guinea", 1774 (T70/1532); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 14th oct. 1774 (T70/1161).
 3. O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 6th Oct. 1777 (AN.C.6/26)
 4. R. Norris to Richard Miles, 4th Sept. 10th, 17th, 18th Sep. and 29th Dec. 1777 (T70/1534).

had been able to collect only seventy slaves out of the one hundred due to him. At the same time he had managed to buy four hundred and forty slaves from various other ports near Whydah.

That Norris's experience at Igelefe was neither peculiar nor caused by the unwillingness of the Dahomans to repay their debts is shown by the account of a young French slave trader, Proa, who was on board a slaving ship that reached Whydah at the end of July 1777. On their plans and prospects he wrote: "We had hoped to make a quick trade and to complete our cargo in a couple of months, but the slaves were not very abundant at Whydah market".¹

In 1783 and 1784, both Abson, the English director, and Montaguere, warned their nationals that if too many of their ships came to Whydah, they would make ruinous voyages.² The Portuguese director, confirming the same impression, said that the slaves in Dahomey were too few even for the Portuguese ships alone.³ In 1788, Paget Bayley, an English Naval officer

1. "Memoire de Proa, le Navigateur" 1777 (unpublished). I am grateful to M. Jean Marchand for kindly allowing me to consult this account when I was in Paris. M. Marchand is a descendant of Proa and is preparing for publication this very interesting account of a young French sailor in the slave trade in the 18th century. Proa was about 18 years old when he wrote the Journal.

2. O. Montaguere: "Extraits.." 2nd Mar. 1783 (AN.C.6/26); L. Abson to R. Miles, 1st Oct. 1783, 30th Dec. 1783 (T70/1545); L. Abson to J. Fayrer, 30th Sep. 1784; L. Abson to R. Savage, 30th Sep. 1784 (T70/1551).

3. F. Antonio da Fonseca e Arago, director of the Portuguese fort, to King of Portugal, 25th June 1784 (AHU.S. Tome Caixa 10).

who visited the Whydah port, reported that "the trade is by no means abundant."¹

While the Europeans were thus complaining of the paucity of the slaves in Dahomey, the Dahoman authorities were also justifiably complaining that the Europeans did not send their ships to Whydah. There are, of course, no complete figures showing the number of the ships that called at Whydah port during this period, nor have we any means of comparing the annual fluctuations. Such figures as are available and the complaints of the Dahoman authorities show however that many fewer ships came to trade in Whydah port between 1767 and 1781 than, say, in 1750.

No English ship came to trade in Whydah between 1764 and 1767,² and only one came between 1767 and 1770.³ No French ones were seen in Cape Coast harbour to pick up boats and canoemen for the Whydah trade between June 1778 and October 1779.⁴ Gaston Martin's figures tend to show that the Nantes trade to Whydah between 1767 and 1775 was relatively on the decline.⁵

1. Paget Bayley and L. Abson: "Observation on the state and conditions of William's fort and the trade thereof", 27th Mar. 1788 (ADM. I/1506 part II).

2. A. Dalzel to African Committee, 27th Sep. 1768 (T70/31).

3. A. Dalzel to Andrew Dalzel, 13th Ap. 1771 (E.U.L. DK.7/52).

4. R. Miles to African Committee, 21st Oct. 1779 (T70/1537).

5. Gaston-Martin L'Ere des Negriers, 1714-1774 (Paris 1931) p. 289; S. Berbain: Le Comptoir Francais de Juda pp. 42-46 is not very clear on this as she does not break down her figures.

In May 1768, April 1777, November 1778, October 1785 and July 1786,¹ Tegbesu and Kpengla sent messengers to the European directors to find out why the European ships no longer came to trade in the Whydah port as they were wont to do. These messages signify that the lack of European ships was beyond argument. They were not formal exchanges of politeness, but expressions of serious concern on the part of the Dahoman authorities. The fewer the ships, the more pressing the demand and the higher the status of the messenger sent. In November 1778, the Mehu himself came down and stayed at Igelefe for six days,² although he was at that time a very old man and as the holder of the second highest office in the kingdom would not normally have absented himself from Abomey except on the most urgent business. In October 1785, Kpengla was prepared to make the lack of ships in Whydah an international issue. He threatened to report Abson to the king of England for preventing English ships from coming to trade in Whydah.²

The fact that both the Europeans and the Dahomans complained means that often between 1767 and 1783, there were neither ships nor slaves in Dahomey and that at times when the one was available the other was not. Tegbesu had unreservedly tied the fortune of Dahomey to the slave trade economy and had struggled

1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 18th May 1768 (T70/1160); 30th Ap. 1777, 1st & 12th Nov. 1778 (T70/1161); 2nd Oct. 1785 20th July, 1786 (T70/1162).

2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah," 1st, 6th and 12th Nov. 1778 (T70/1161), 20yth. July 1786 (T70/1162).

with a measure of success, from 1740, to have a constant supply of slaves and ships. How then did this situation arise?

When the European directors and traders had to account officially for this decline in the slave trade of Dahomey, they often gave uncomplimentary stock reasons to prove that the fault lay with the Dahomans. In the late 1760's and the 1770's, their general excuse was "the villany" of the Yovogan and the "thievish inclinations" of the Dahomans.¹ In the 1780's it was that the Dahoman authorities were either unwilling or too slow to pay their debts to certain European captains.²

Although these excuses were not entirely unfounded, none of them was ever a strong cause for the European desertion of the Whydah port. Villany and thievish inclinations were common features with both the African and the European slave traders. Guestard, twice director of the French fort at Whydah, and altogether thirty four years in the African slave trade, said that often what the Europeans called stealing on the part of the Africans was the dishonesty which they had learnt from the Europeans themselves. He affirmed that the European traders diluted their brandy with large quantities of water, sometimes _____/as much as half. They would cut away

1. A. Dalzel to African Committee, 27th Sep. 1768 (T70/31).

2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 2nd Oct. 1785 (T70/1162).

large slices inside a piece of cloth, tuck in a piece of wood or other material and wrap the rest well round to conceal the trick.¹

Indeed, the kings of Dahomey maintained that their subjects learnt dishonesty from the Europeans. Tegbesu kept a huge pot of watery brandy, which he had bought from the Europeans, constantly by himself. Whenever a director complained to him that his subjects stole, he gave that director a glassful of the liquor and assured him that if he could stop his fellow Europeans indulging in such bad practices, stealing would stop entirely at Igelefe.¹

Generally, where theft occurred, it appears to have been resorted to by the Dahomans as an extra-legal means of redress against offending Europeans. An example of this was the case of two English captains, Copeland and Jenkinson, who came to trade at Igelefe in 1762. Jenkinson related the half amusing, half pathetic story:-

"When I came on shore, I found Captain Copeland was gone up to the king of Dahomey to seek redress for some goods which the blacks have stole (sic) from him... Since his return, I have lost no goods, but him they keep taking from more or less everyday; poor man, I am really sorry for him." ²

1. Guestard to Ministre de Colonies, 16th June 1770 (AN.C.6/25); Writing of the character of the French captains who came to trade at Whydah, Guestard said, "Ou ils excellent la plus-part, c'est en mauvaise foi. Ils mettent beaucoup d'eau dans leur eau de vie, ils ont de marchandise dont ils coupent de morceau et les reploient de facon que ne paroisse pas... par ces ruses grossieres, ils perdent entirement la confiance de commerce."

2. Captain Jenkins to African Committee, 28th July 1762 (T70/31)

Usually, stealing was a capital crime in Dahomey and its penalty was death. Jenkinson however did not say whether anyone was punished for this crime against Copeland.

Equally weak was the excuse that the Dahomans did not willingly repay their debts. Both the Dahoman and the European traders freely gave one another credit and some Europeans were as remiss in paying back as some Dahomans. In October 1785, Kpengla explained at length to Abson that he had sold slaves on credit to certain English captains and that one captain Fayrer was still owing him.¹

There were however, other, more probable reasons, which arose out of Tegbesu's policy and from the international conditions which governed the slave trade.

Tegbesu following his policy of "peaceful slave trade" had relied largely on the slaves brought in from outside Dahomey and particularly on those supplied by the Oyo traders. That the Oyo supply would not always be available to the Igelefe market was shown by the change in Oyo policy from about 1774 onwards.

In May of that year, Abiodun overthrew his Basorun, Gaha,²

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 2nd Oct. 1786 (T70/1162).
 2. S. Johnson (Ed. O Johnson); History pp.182-186; A. Dalzel: History p.157. Dalzel's story of a king of Oyo fighting against his "Ochenoo" (Osorun, another name for Basorun) makes it plain that the incident was the same one as Abiodun fighting against Gaha. This has made it possible to date this incident at May 1744.

who had been the de facto ruler of the Oyo Empire since 1754.¹ Abiodun was a trader by profession before he became the Alafin,² and as soon as he was secure on the throne he threw all his energy into encouraging the slave trade. By 1776, his exertion had led to the foundation or extension of a flourishing slave market at Abomey-Calavi, which was wholly stocked and controlled by the Oyo. At that date, the slaves were supplied from that market to Igelefe, Epe, Porto Novo and Badagry.³

Soon Abiodun decided to make Porto Novo, the port of Ajase Ipo, the main Oyo port. He called it his own "callabash" out of which no one but himself would be permitted to eat.⁴ Abiodun's choice of port may have partly been dictated, and was certainly helped, by the traditional trade regulations at Porto Novo, which were more generous than those obtaining at Whydah.

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1. The date of Basorun's seizure of power has also been fixed by a comparison of Johnson's tradition and documentary evidence. Johnson in History p.178 relates that two Alafin were executed in quick succession when Gaha rose to power. In a letter dated 22nd October 1754, written at Igelefe in Dahomey to Thomas Melvil, Governor of Cape Coast Castle, Devaynes said: "the king of Io [i.e. Oyo] is dead and they are fighting who shall have the stool. Two that have been seated on it within these two months are both killed." T. Melvil to African Committee, 30th Nov. 1754. (T70/1523)
 2. S. Johnson History: p.187 "Long before his accession, he was a trader in potash".
 3. Chenevert et Abbe Bullet: "Reflections.." 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis) Abomey-Calavi is still existing, north of Godomey.
 4. A. Dalzel: History pp.196. & 195.

Any Oyo trader at Igelefe would have to sell his slaves to the king's traders who alone could resell to the European exporters. At Igelefe also, certain imported articles like firearms, iron and corals were allowed to be bought only by the king of Dahomey. At Porto Novo, on the other hand, an Oyo trader could sell direct to the Europeans and thus earn a greater profit, and he could buy any kind of European manufactures he wanted.¹

The adoption of Porto Novo as the main Oyo port meant that Dahomey was deprived of the most important source of its slave supply. It is significant that the European complaints became loud just when the change in Oyo policy was taking place. The only way by which Dahomey could make up the shortage^{was}/to get its own slaves by its own raiding, but that proved impossible, again as a result of Tegbesu's policy.

For another implication of the policy of "trade before war" was that the army had been neglected and therefore weakened. When Tegbesu died in 1774, the whole of the Dahoman infantry numbered three thousand, out of which an inadequate three hundred were posted to Igelefe to guard the beach and protect the forts. There were, in addition, sixteen horses but not a single cavalryman. The infantry was badly trained and the only tactics it knew was to go in great secrecy and

1. Market regulations were part of the internal affairs of each kingdom. They varied from place to place, and each trader, even if he was from the imperial capital, was requested to abide by the local market laws.

surprise unsuspecting villages.¹ The army had, both in number and training, greatly deteriorated from the great days of Agaja.

The Dahoman army, even at its most efficient, depended on the arms supplied by the Europeans, who entirely controlled the quantity and the quality. From about 1764 onwards, these European suppliers brought only firearms of very poor quality.

In March 1765, Tegbesu complained that a parcel of guns which he had bought from the English burst whenever fired and hurt several of his soldiers,² instead of killing the enemy. Between 1764 and 1770, when the English captains avoided trading at Whydah, the French traders, "finding they have no competitors", gradually introduced "worse manufactures."³ In August and again in November 1773, Tegbesu complained about the French arms. Guestard admitted that the guns were badly welded together and wrote to the French traders at Nantes to send better ones.⁴

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1. Chenevert et Abbe Bullet: "Reflections sur Juda" 1776 (AN.C. 6/27 bis); O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 6th Oct. 1777 (AN.C.6/26). The garrison at Igelefe alone around 1750 was estimated at about eight thousand men. The number of horses was an improvement. In 1727 there were only two. ~~market regulations were part of the internal affairs of each kingdom. They varied from place to place and each trader, even if he was from the imperial capital, was requested to abide by the local market laws.~~
2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 10th Mar. 1765 (T70/1160).
3. A. Dalzel to African Committee, 27th Sep. 1768 (T70/31).
4. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 10th Aug. 1773 (T70/1163) Guestard to MM. le Chambre de Commerce a Nantes, 16th Nov. 1773 (ADN.C.727).

When the Nantes Chamber of Commerce replied in June 1775, they showed no intention of trying to remedy the fault. They irrelevantly maintained that their guns ought to be more acceptable to the Dahomans than the English guns, and implausibly suggested incompetent handling as the reason for frequent accidents.¹ There was therefore no immediate probability that the badly trained and shrunken Dahoman army would get good weapons, even if they were driven to fight.

The first result was that Dahomey could not increase its own supply of slaves. Tegbesu, pursuing his peaceful trade policy to the end, sent out no raiding parties in the last five years of his reign. The first three expeditions which Kpengla sent out at the beginning of his reign in 1775 and 1776² were heavily defeated. The others sent out between 1776 and 1781 did not succeed in bringing many captives back. More often than not they were defeated.³

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1. MM. de la Chambre du Commerce a Nantes to M. de Warel. 3rd June 1775 (AdN.C.604).
 2. Chenevert et Abbe Bullet: "Reflections" 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis); O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 6th Oct. 1777 (AN.C6/26); A. Dalzel: History pp.163-164.
 3. L. Abson to R. Norris, 21st June 1778 (T70/1551); A. Dalzel: History pp.165-166; "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 2nd January 1779 (T70/1162). These expeditions will be dealt with more fully later. Their general purpose was to increase the Dahoman stock of slaves. They were indeed raids rather than wars and were certainly not motivated by the "insatiable thirst after blood, the barbarous vanity of being considered the scourge of mankind and the savage pomp of dwelling in a house garnished with skulls ..." as Dalzel so damagingly affirms.

Another consequence of the weakness of the army was much more serious. It made it impossible for Dahomey to guard the Whydah beach effectively, thus rendering Dahomey a prey to enemy invasions and preventing the Dahomans from effectively protecting the lives and property of the Europeans who resorted thither. This problem became acute from 1767 onwards when the old Whydah resumed their predatory raids on Igelefe and the Whydah beach.

Between April 1767 and August 1781, the raiders came at least eleven times. Of these, seven were between April 1767 and October 1770, one each in March 1772, June 1775, June 1780 and from June to August 1781.^I Their disastrous defeat of July 1763 had taught them to limit their aims and change their tactics. Instead of seeking to occupy Whydah by defeating Dahomey in war as they had attempted before 1763, they now adopted the policy of rendering the Whydah port and the beach unsafe for European goods and captains. In that way they expected to injure the economy of Dahomey and perhaps force the Dahomans to abandon Whydah when they no longer

I. Dalzel to African Committee, 1767, Mar. 1768 (T70/31); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 29th Feb. 1768 (T70/1160); L. Abson to African Committee, 24th Oct. 1770 (T70/31); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", Aug. - Oct. 1770 (T70/1160); Guestard to Ministre de Colonies, 15th Oct. 1770 (AN.C.6/26); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah," 10th Mar. 1772, June 1775 (T70/1161); 17th June 1780, 6th 20th, 27th June 7th July and 29th Aug. 1781 (T70/1162).

gained anything from its occupation. This was the same kind of scorched earth policy which Huffon had adopted in 1731.

For this kind of operation, they needed, not a large army, which since 1763 they probably had not got, but small bands of men who could rob, kill and flee in their boats before the Dahomans or anyone else could catch them. The pattern of the new attacks was set in April 1767. On the very day that Archibald Dalzel arrived to take over the directorship of the English fort, a party of the raiders visited the beach, beyond which "they advanced no further but contented themselves with the plunder they found at the waterside consisting of brandy just landed from a French vessel and a box of silk belonging to a Portuguese captain".¹

It was these same tactics that they adopted during the four raids which they made between August and October 1770. In the first, they carried away goods belonging to a French captain. During the second, they took away a few slaves belonging to a Portuguese captain and either burnt, broke or carried away every boat they found on the landing. On the third occasion, they roamed the beach, completely unopposed, from 16th to 20th September and killed two Dahomans in a skirmish, but they got no European plunder. On the fourth occasion, they carried away three European tent-keepers, whom they

¹ I. A. Dalzel to African Committee, 1767, (T70/31).

presumably killed later.^I

The complete inability of the Dehomans to check this danger sometimes forced the Europeans to take their own measures. Once in 1780, the Europeans hired "free people for bringing the canoes on this side of the river, in consequence of a report that the Popoes intend coming to the beach with a hostile intention".^I

In 1781, the Dahomans tried unsuccessfully to check the invaders. The Agou set out against them about 27th June, but within two weeks, he was back without having accomplished anything. A week later, the old Whydah and their allies again invaded the Whydah beach and put the Agou on the defensive. They maintained their pressure until August.^I Kpengla borrowed iron bars from the directors to be made into shots and used against the invaders, but he was unable to deal effectively with them.

Even if the slaves had been abundant in Dahomey and the port had been safe, it is still almost certain that the number of ships that came to Whydah during these years would still have diminished greatly, since European conditions too were adverse.

I.L. Abson to African Committee, 24th Oct. 1770 (T70/31); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", Aug-Oct. 1770 (T70/1160); Guestard to Ministere de Colonies, 15th Oct. 1770 (AN/C.6/26) Guestard said that the raiders came five times in the series, but Abson gave the details of only four raids; "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 17th June 1780, 6th, 20th, 7th, and 29th Aug. 1781 (T70/1162).

The English deserted Whydah after 1764 for two main reasons. The first was that generally they did not like Whydah port "as it is equally open to us the French and the Portuguese". They preferred places like some^{of} their forts on the Gold Coast where they had absolute monopoly. Moreover, in the competition which resulted from "open port" conditions, "the French have the knack of pleasing the negroes better and underselling the English",^I and the tobacco which the Portuguese imported from Brazil had secured the monopoly of African favour which neither the French nor the English could break.

The second and immediate reason for the English desertion was that in 1764, certain Liverpool merchants sent a few ships to Whydah. Those ships found others in the harbour and keen competition drove up the price of the slaves. Consequently the Liverpool ships made ruinous voyages, the report of which effectively discouraged any English captain until 1770 from coming to trade at Whydah.^I

A much more protracted reason for the paucity of all European Shipping at Whydah was the American war of Independence. As early as 1776, one James Charles was already complaining that the unhappy dispute had entirely spoilt the African trade.

I. Archibald Dalzel to Andrew Dalzel, 1st April 1769, 13th April 1771 (EUL.DK.7/52).

"All our African ships are laid up as fast as they get home, they that's so lucky to 'scape the American privateers. We have Guinea captains, mates and doctors strolling the streets eighteen to the dozen". I

As the war progressed, its direct and indirect effects discouraged more and more ships from going out to trade. By September 1777, West Indian credit was running low, and the planters were asking for up to four years before paying for a cargo of slaves.² By the middle of 1779, the insurance rates had become almost prohibitively high, the cost of fitting out slave ships had risen sharply and at the same time the prices of slaves in the West Indies had fallen,³ a trend that continued into 1780.⁴

These disadvantages were strong enough to discourage even the veteran English slave traders and to convince them that other jobs would be more profitable while the war lasted. Archibald Dalziel, the erstwhile director of the English fort at Whydah, who had set up his own slave trading business, left London, the centre of his activities, for his native Scotland and was preparing to go to Mississippi whether as a permanent or temporary immigrant is uncertain. Norris started a tools factory⁵ and the other traders continued to be discouraged

1. James Charles to R. Miles. 14th Nov. 1776 (T70/1534).

2. R. Norris to R. Miles, 4th Sept. 1777 (T70/1534).

3. R. Norris to R. Miles, 29th June 1779 (T70/1538).

4. John Coghlan to J. Roberts, 18th Nov. 1780 (T70/1542 (I))

5. R. Norris to R. Miles, 29th June 1779 (T70/1538).

from going to sea up to the beginning of 1782,¹ though some ventured out in 1781.

The American war must have had a similar effect on the French slave trading activities.²

Two conclusions can therefore be drawn from the decline of the trade of Dahomey and the causes leading to it. The first is that "peaceful slave trade" was impossible. Only wars could provide an ample supply of slaves. The second is that the slave trade itself was not a reliable basis for the economy because the factors governing it were beyond the control of any one power.

The rulers of Dahomey did not reach this radical conclusion. Either willingly or by force of circumstances, they held to the slave-trade economy and did all they could to revive and make it prosper once again at Igelefe.

Tegbesu believed, in part correctly, that the cure for the trouble lay in bringing more European ships to Whydah port and he thought that that could be achieved simply by making the port safe for them. Following his peaceful policy to the end, he sought to put an end to the Whydah and Popo raids by methods of diplomacy.

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1. J.T. Hodgson to R. Miles, 19th Jan. 1782 (T70/1545).
 2. S. Berbain: Le Comptoir Francais pp.42-46. Though Berbain did not break down here figures, a close examination would suggest a decline in the French slave trading activities between 1777 and 1782; Gaston Martin: L'Ere des Negriers p.1!

About the 10th of August 1769, he created a king for the old Whydah and gave him the title "Agbangla"¹ after one of the greatest of the kings of ancient Whydah who reigned from about 1670-1703. He then sent him to the European forts where many of the old Whydah could see him and where the European directors gave him presents.¹ This move was meant to appease the old Whydah and show them that any of them who wanted to return to their ancient homes as Dahoman citizens under their own king, were free to do so.

Tegbesu then tried to conclude a peace treaty with the Popo. As it would have been impolitic to declare his intentions he worked through Dalzel, then the English director at Whydah, who between 15th and 23rd July 1769 agreed to help in the task.² On 24th July 1769, Dalzel sent a messenger to Popo to ask the king "to open a communication with the Gold Coast". Negotiations then followed and on the 17th of August the king of Popo sent a messenger to the forts agreeing to open communication between Igelefe and Popo "for the conveniency of sending letters to the Gold Coast by land."²

A week later, "Tegbesu publicly announced his "intention to open all the paths and for the future live in amity with all his neighbours."³ The king of Popo did not spurn these feelers, and throughout September and October 1769, messengers

1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", Aug-Dec. 1769 (T70/1161).
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", Aug-Dec. 1769 (T70/1161).
 3. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", Aug-Dec. 1769 (T70/1161).

went backwards and forwards between Abomey and Little Popo. On 23rd November, 1769, Tegbesu announced that he was at peace with the Popo. Three weeks later, for the benefit of those who may not have heard it the first time, or to confirm what he had said earlier, he again announced that the peace treaty with the Popo had been concluded.¹

The terms of this treaty are not known, but the peace itself was shortlived. The old Whydah and the Popo were up in arms again in August 1770 and they continued their deprivations intermittently until the beginning of 1772, as has already been noticed.

In October 1770, soon after the raids were renewed, two French captains went to Tegbesu at Abomey and offered to land the artillery of their ships on the beach to be used against the invaders. Tegbesu gladly accepted their offer, but Guestaré, the director of the French fort, prevented the step being taken. He warned the captains that he believed that after the guns had been used successfully against the old Whydah, they would be turned against the European forts.²

Tegbesu therefore decided on another peace treaty with the raiders. This time he did not try to divide their forces. On the 29th of April, 1772, he bluntly asked Lionel Abson who had become the director of the English fort in 1770, to help him to make a peace with the Popo.

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", Aug.-Dec.1769 (T70/1161).
 2. Guestaré to Ministre de Colonies, 15th Oct. 1770 (AN.C.6/26).

Abson tried to adopt the 1769 plan, and, as if on his own initiative, asked the king of Popo to open the road between Igelefe and his territory. The trick was however quickly discovered and his messenger returned with those of the king of Popo and together they all went to Tegbesu at Abomey to negotiate. No fast conclusions were reached at the first meeting. On 13th July 1772, the Mehu was sent down to Igelefe, accompanied by the Agau and invested with full powers "to settle all differences with the Popo".¹ At Igelefe, the two state officers from Abomey were joined by the Yovogan and all his under officers. Soon after that date a peace treaty was again concluded.

Again the terms of this treaty are unknown. Considering Tegbesu's purpose, it is probable that he asked, and the old Whydah and the Popo agreed, that the raids on Whydah beach and on the shipping be stopped. In return he may have granted permission to any Whydah who wanted to resettle at Igelefe and freedom of the Igelefe market to any Popo traders who wanted to come and trade. Between 1772 and 1775, the raids on the Whydah beach completely stopped, though they were resumed actively from 1777 onwards.

The peace was therefore still being observed when Kpengla ascended the throne of Dahomey in May 1774. Kpengla was not a younger brother of Tegbesu, as the Dahoman oral

1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 29th Ap.-13th July 1772 (T.70/1161); R. Norris: Memoirs p.60; A. Dalzel: History pp.104-105.

traditions would have it.¹ He was in fact the son of Tegbesu, and the same prince who had been designated his successor since 1751 and he was about thirty nine years old at his accession; He seems to have ascended under the name of Adamusu¹ and was very popular with all the sections of the community, both African and European. Guestard who had known him for about twenty five years thought that he had an engaging character and real ability.¹ Everyone expected that with his youthful vigour Kpengla would be able to arrest the decline in the fortune of Dahomey.

His first actions did not disappoint his admirers. Immediately on accession, he asked all sections to forget all past differences and close ranks.² At the final act of his coronation ceremony, which occurred in June 1775, when he ceremonially took the throne of Allada, he made a very stirring policy speech. The text has not survived, but two points remained vivid in the minds of his hearers. First he promised that he would revive the declining slave trade and see to it

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1. Guestard to Ministre de Colonies, 7th June 1774 (AN.C.6/26); Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p.17; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX pp.3-5. Guestard's evidence seems conclusive that Kpengla was the son and not the brother of Tegbesu. Guestard had known the prince since 1751 when he was first designated successor, and had once been falsely told that the young man had succeeded his father. If the prince had lost his title Guestard would surely have commented on it. The story related at length by Dunglas that Tegbesu did not have a legitimate heir and that Gnansoumou (Yansumu?) his brother succeeded him, seems designed to show that cases of brother succession in Dahomey was common and so legitimise Gezo's otherwise unconstitutional seizure of power in 1818. Kpengla's first assumed name was probably Adamusu. The English called it "Adahoonzou" the French called it "Adamouzou". The name is still remembered in his praise names but only by a few Dahomans.
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 19th Aug. and 18th Sep.

that the slaves exported through the Whydah port were provided entirely from the captives made by the Dahoman soldiers, the expedition of which would therefore be made more effective. No slaves would be bought from the inland countries. Secondly, he promised that he would shake off the Oyo yoke and secure independence for Dahomey.¹

Kpengla's militant speech was in complete contrast to Tegbesu's peaceful policy. It shows that Kpengla had grasped another aspect of the problem confronting Dahomey. It was necessary to fight to secure captives and provide one of the conditions that would encourage the ships to come to Whydah. Kpengla also realised that so long as Dahomey was under Oyo, it would be impossible to deal effectively with Porto Novo, which was rapidly becoming the greatest rival of Whydah port.

Keen European observers however thought that these two political objectives were impracticable for many years to come. The Dahoman army was still too weak to enforce the first and it was so much hot air at that time for Dahomey to talk of declaring independence of Oyo. Indeed, for the rest of Kpengla's reign, nothing more was publicly heard of this policy, and no move, as far as is known, was taken to realise it.

However, Kpengla vigorously pursued his declared

1. Chenevert et Abbe Bullet: "Reflections .." 1776 (A.N.C.6/27 bis) "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", June 1775 (T70/1161); The Dahoman traditions recorded by Dunglas in E.D. Vol XX pp.31-34 attribute the adoption of independence policy to Agonglo, but in view of this documentary evidence firmly attributing it to Kpengla, the traditional story must have got confused.

policy of increasing the supply of slaves from Dahoman raids.

————— Soon after his accession he declared the paths between Porto Novo and Igelefe closed and sent raiders to make them unsafe. His excuse was that he had a misunderstanding with certain chiefs between Igelefe and Porto Novo,¹ but in fact the measure appears designed to force the Dahomans to make their own captives. However in March 1777, when he found that this measure did not produce as many slaves as he had expected, he re-opened the roads.¹

Between 1775 and 1781, he regularly sent out raiding parties, which, as has been noticed, were almost regularly defeated, sometimes disastrously. Early in 1775, he sent a raiding party to the country of the Seretchi,² but his army was defeated.³ Between 1775 and 1776, he sent two more expeditions out to some undisclosed destination both of which ended in utter defeat.⁴ In the second of these, the Dahoman party of about eight hundred was completely wiped out. The raiding party sent out at the end of July 1777 only avoided being taken captives themselves.⁵ An expedition against the Mahi between March and June 1778 brought back a few slaves,⁶ but that

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1. O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 6th Oct. 1777 (T70/26).
 2. The Seretchi lived between Great Popo and Lake Aheme.
 3. A. Dalzel: History pp.163-164; Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume p.306.
 4. Chenevert et Abbe Bullet: "Reflection ..." 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis).
 5. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 2nd Aug. 1777 (T70/1161); A. Dalzel: History pp.165-166; Dalzel mixes up the Dahoman raids at this point. The Mahi campaign took place in 1778 and was not successful as he would seem to imply. The expeditions were slave raids, not wars with any political motives.
 6. L. Abson to R. Norris, 21st June 1778 (T.70/1551).

against Aguna towards the end of 1778 came back defeated early in January 1779. Kpengla then begged for arms from the Europeans and was later able to announce a "complete" victory. The raid sent out at the end of 1779 ended disastrously on 3rd January 1780.¹

Some of these raids failed mainly because the soldiers did not have sufficient powder and bullets which could only be obtained from the European traders. Kpengla was therefore forced back to Tegbesu's earlier conclusion that the first pre-requisite for an economic revival was a constant supply of European ships.

He accepted a proposition suggested to him early in his reign by Sessu, an exiled Badagrian chief then in Abomey, that one way of procuring the European ships and therefore arms, was to establish another Dahoman port at Jakin, east of Whydah, nearer the area which had become the favourite of the European captains. Sessu promised that he would personally see to it that the new port had a sufficient supply of slaves. In that way some of the ships that went to Porto Novo and Badagry might be drawn away.²

Sessu's suggestion, though useful to Kengla, was not altruistic. Before 1776, he had been a contender for the throne of the Akran of Badagry against another prince "Guinguin" (Gangan); had lost and had then withdrawn to Porto Novo. Between

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 2nd and 24th Jan. 1779, 3rd Jan. 1780 (T.70/1162).
 2. De Warel to Ministre de Colonies, 1st Nov. 1776 (AN.C.6/26).

June and October 1776, he had attacked Badagry in a bid to gain the throne, but had been defeated again and forced to withdraw to Abomey.¹ His suggestion that Kpengla should consider establishing a new port at Jakin was made in the hope that such a port would somehow decrease the trade of Badagry to the advantage of himself who would become Kpengla's representative in the new port. Kpengla however saw it as a way of attracting the ships and the arms he so much needed.

On 30th October, he sought the opinion of the European directors on whether the venture would be advantageous to trade and asked for their co-operation. Although the directors realised that the port was too near Whydah, had no independent source of slaves and would generally be disadvantageous to their own interests, so great was their suspicion of each other's intentions that they all replied in the affirmative, and offered to co-operate.²

A year passed, however, and no ships called at Jakin. In April, July and September, Kpengla sent messages to the directors urging them to use their influence to direct ships there,³ but his messages bore no fruit. At the end of September, he asked the European forts to contribute to the cost of maintaining the port because they had agreed to its re-establishment

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1. "Report of the Captain of 'Duc de Bougonne' of Nantes", 24th Sep. 1775 (ADN.B.4595). Chenevert et Abbe Bulet: "Relection ..." 1776 (AN.C.6/27 bis).
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 30th Oct. 1776 (T.70/1161); De Warel to Ministre de Colonies, 1st Nov. 1776 (AN.C6/26).
 3. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 30th Ap., 10th July and 1st Oct. 1777 (T.70/1161).

but had refused to send their ships there, and because he alone could not continue to shoulder the expense.¹

As a result of this demand, the directors were forced to tell Kpengla of their real objections to his new port, undoubtedly to his great disappointment.² After that, nothing more was heard of the Jakin port and it was presumably closed.

Nothing remained to Kpengla but to maintain moral pressure on the European directors. The Mehu himself, as we have seen, spent six days at Igelefe in November 1778 and his successor in office came down again in December 1780.³

To give confidence to the Europeans that their property would be safe in Dahomey, Kpengla tightened the laws on stealing. On 8th November 1777, he made a proclamation at Igelefe that "whoever stole the value of a single cowrie, the king was determined to punish with death."⁴ On 8th September 1781, he made the law still more stringent. If any persons were detected "stealing whitemen's property, they should be killed,"⁴ presumably without any trial.

For many years during this depressing period, the Dahoman authorities appear to have been most interested in having English ships and they tried to woo the English traders more than any others. This was surely because the English had

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 30th Ap., 10th July and 1st Oct. 1777 (T.70/1161).
 2. O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 6th Oct. 1777 (AN.C. 6/26).
 3. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", Dec. 1780 (T70/1162).
 4. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 18th Nov. 1777 (T70/1161); 8th Sep. 1781 (T.70/1162).

played a very active role on the Dahoman side in their quarrel with the old Whydah since the 1750's. Moreover, Abson's reputation was very high in the 1770's as a result of his part in the peace of 1772.

In September 1779, the king called Majerican, the Dahoman interpreter of the English fort,¹ to Abomey for consultation on the best means to attract English ships.

At his own suggestion Majerican was ~~then~~ despatched on an embassy to Cape Coast Castle "to lay the state of [Kpengla's] wants before the governor," but the visit had no practical result.

In 1781, when it had become quite apparent that the English were not greatly interested in his port, Kpengla asked the French and the Portuguese directors to write to their countries and their governments and to ask them to send more ships to his port.²

When none of these measures brought more European ships and the coffers of the monarchy continued to run low, Kpengla decided to seek greater advantages from the internal slave trade. First he ordered out of Igelefe all the non-Dahoman traders, except the Oyo, whom he could not properly regard as foreigners, on the pretext that they had disclosed his secret war preparations to his enemies. He then fixed the price of

1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 11th, 15th, 16th, 20th 31st (sic!) Sep., and 9th Dec. 1779 (T.70/1162).

2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 8th Sept. 1781 (T70/1162).

slaves for Dahoman traders at thirty two cabesses (64,000 cowries) for a male and twenty six (52,000 cowries) for a female slave, and set his agents to buy at those prices to be resold to the European exporters at higher prices.¹

Not satisfied that his subjects were disposing of their slaves fast enough at those prices, he made another law that anyone who had two slaves must sell one to the king. If anyone had three, he must sell two to the king.

It was bad enough for prices to be fixed when the demand was much greater than the supply and a higher one could easily be obtained, it was worse to be forced to part with one's property at such an unsatisfactory price. So the Dahoman traders were discouraged from venturing out to buy slaves. Since Kpengla had earlier driven out the non-Dahoman traders, the result of his measures was to cause even a greater decrease in the number of slaves available in Dahomey.

The Dahoman traders, who were all king's officers, appreciated this situation and complained in a body to the king. They were however accused of conspiracy and had to purge themselves with heavy fines, after protracted litigation, on 1st May 1779. After that all the chiefs at Igelefe gathered at the house of the Yovogan and swore fealty to the king.²

Having now tried almost every method to attract the European ships and failed, Kpengla, completely at the end of

1. A. Dalzel: History pp.213-215.

2. A. Dalzel: History pp.213-215; "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 1st May 1779 (T.70/1162).

his wits, accused the directors in his kingdom of having declared a war on him and by implication asked them to show why he should not regard them as his enemies from then on.¹ But even this threat did not produce an improvement.

The result of Kpengla's failure was a deep depression which continued from 1767 to 1782 and caused widespread hardship. From 1776 onwards, by far the greatest number of the European and the Brazilian ships which resorted to the "slave coast" went to trade at Porto Novo.² Figures are not available to show this, particularly because no European forts were ever built there, but the documents give an unmistakable impression of a thriving commerce at Porto Novo. Dalzel records that in 1786, there were at one time eleven French ships in Porto Novo while there was only one brig in Whydah port.³ John Adams, who made ten voyages to the area between 1786 and 1800, also conveys the impression that Porto Novo was, for a long time during this period, the leading port in the Yoruba-Aja country.⁴

The fact that Porto Novo, formerly a weaker neighbour of Dahomey, continued to flourish under the protection and

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 14th Ap.1780 (T.70/1162).
 2. R. Miles to R. Norris, 15th Jan. 1778 (T70/1483). Miles wrote "The Portuguese begin to find their way to the coast again now as much as ever." These ships could only trade at Porto Novo since at this time there was no trade in Whydah port and Lagos port was considered too small.
 3. A. Dalzel: History p.194.
 4. Captain John Adams: Sketches taken during ten voyages to Africa between 1786 and 1800 (Edinburgh n.d.)pp.17-18.

encouragement of Oyo, while Dahomey was so depressed, was both humiliating and dangerous.

Because the national energy had been directed towards the promotion of the slave trade, industry and agriculture were sadly neglected. Abson, sending a locally manufactured cloth to Miles at Cape Coast Castle in 1783, was apologetic for the decline in quality.

"I send you a good Whydah cloth which I hope you will find to your liking; they are both scarce and inferior to what they used to be. The king when we goe (sic) to visit him always apologises when he is about giving us our cloths, knowing they are not so good as formerly." 1

Much more serious however was the neglect of agriculture. In 1780, for the first recorded time in the 18th century, a serious famine broke out in Dahomey and the Dahomans took to eating unfamiliar wild fruits. As a result, an epidemic of an unknown disease broke out in the following year and killed a great many Dahomans.²

By 1777, burglary had again become a serious problem at Igelefe,³ a sign that the casual labourers employed by the ships's captains no longer had enough work. In January 1779, Kpengla himself asked the directors to supply him with guns and gunpowder either free of charge or on credit.⁴ The Anubomey, politically the most important annual ceremony in Dahomey, was

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1. L. Abson to R. Miles, 30th Dec. 1783 (T.70/1545).
 2. A. Dalzel: History p.178; "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 12th Sept. 1780 (T.70/1162). Dalzel's dating of this famine is inaccurate.
 3. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 18th Nov.1777 (T70=/1161).
 4. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 2nd Jan. 1779 (T.70/1162).

twice fixed and twice postponed in 1780¹, obviously because Kpengla had no money to finance the heavy expenses involved.

The clearest indication of the impoverishment of the Dahomans is shown by the affairs of Lionel Abson, the English director since 1770, whose fortune was completely ruined by the help he had given, over a period of years, to needy Dahomans. At the end of 1782, several chiefs from the Migan downwards and several Dahoman traders, owed Abson alone one hundred and twenty slaves, three hundred and fifteen "ounces" of choice goods, five hundred and thirty nine "ounces" six "ackies" of cowries, three ounces of gold and two hundred and twenty eight pounds of ivory. That excluded the debt owed by the king who "Commands from you what he knows you have by you with that impudence not to be borne".² It is impossible to calculate accurately how much the known debts owed to Abson would be worth in 18th century money, but it could hardly be much less than sixteen thousand pounds (£16,000).

Abson was not the richest European director then at Igelefe. Ollivier Montaguere appears to have been much richer and he could hardly have given less than Abson did to the Dahomans of all classes. He probably gave more as he ^{was} seriously competing with Abson to gain the favour of the Dahoman authorities.³ In November 1781, he himself declared that for some

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 7th, 14th, 19th, 20th, 21st and 26th Jan., 6th and 28th Feb. 1780 (T70/1162).
 2. L. Abson to R. Miles, 14th Dec. 1782 (T.70/1545).
 3. L. Abson to R. Miles, 31st Dec. 1783 (T70/1545).

time past, the king and all the chiefs of Dahomey had been well disposed towards him because he had continuously and increasingly given them presents and goods on credit, "which is the only way to maintain their friendship at a time when they are always in urgent need".¹

A large amount must also have been borrowed from the Portuguese director and traders in Dahomey, but the details are not known.

This decline in fortune came at a very awkward time for Dahomey. For just then political changes in Oyo increased the burden of the tribute paid by Dahomey to Oyo. Abiodun who ascended the Oyo throne in 1774, saw clearly the economic advantages which Oyo could derive from its tributaries and he decided to extract those advantages much more fully than any of his predecessors are known to have done. There were therefore many occasions during this period when the impoverished Kpengla was forced to satisfy the Oyo demands under threats of invasion. Two examples, which are probably typical of many more, have been recorded.

When the death of the Mehu of Dahomey was announced on 27th January 1779,² Abiodun's representative at Abomey demanded his movable property and one hundred of his wives.

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1. O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 24th Nov. 1781 (AN. C.6/26).
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 27th Jan. 1779 (T70/1162); A. Dalzel: History pp. 173-174; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX Dalzel is in error about the date of the death of the Mehu. Dunglas worsens the error by rationalising without any further evidence whatsoever.

Though the Mehu had lived to a ripe old age, he, like most Dahomans at this time, probably left a heavy debt rather than wealth behind, and it fell to Kpengla to find the means of satisfying the Oyo. Kpengla therefore sent a few items. About the following April, Abiodun sent to demand the rest of the Mehu's property, with a threat that if they were not sent promptly, he would send his Basorun to fetch them. So well did the Dahomans remember and dread the power of Gaha, that five years after his death, anyone holding his office still made them tremble. Kpengla not only sent what he called the rest of the Mehu's property, but also some of the captives brought back from the Aguna campaign, undertaken just before the death of the Mehu.¹

The second occasion arose out of the non-payment of corals which were normally payable to Oyo. During these years of depression (it is not known exactly when) Kpengla withheld this payment with the excuse that coral was no longer available.² Abiodun, discovering that the Oyo merchants were in fact still able to purchase corals from Igefe, was greatly incensed at

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 2nd and 24th Jan. 1779 (T70/1162); A. Dalzel: History pp.174-177. Dalzel was completely mixed up about the sequence of the events here. Kpengla sent a raiding expedition against Aguna towards the end of 1778. By 2nd January 1779, the army had been beaten. He then borrowed gunpowder and brandy from the forts, supplied his army afresh and sent them again to Aguna. On 24th January, they came back to report victory. Three days after the Mehu died. The raid was therefore not undertaken to satisfy the Oyo demands.
 2. A. Dalzel: History p.209.

Kpengla's deception and sent immediately to remind Kpengla that he "held his dominions no longer than whilst he regularly paid his tributes, and when he neglected it Dahomey belonged to Eyeo."¹ Kpengla was forced to pacify the Alafin with heavy presents.

In the last nine years of Kpengla's reign, several of the factors that had caused the trade depression in Dahomey disappeared, making conditions appear favourable to the revival of the slave trade in Dahomey. In October, 1781, British ships emboldened by the growing preponderance of the British Navy in the Atlantic, started to come to Whydah.² The flow was increased by the end of the American war in 1783. In fact the peace seems to have produced a new enthusiasm throughout Europe for the pursuit of the slave trade. From then on until 1789, ships came in large numbers to all parts of West Africa.

Once again, there are no complete figures, though the few available illustrate the trend well enough. Between January and August 1783, Liverpool alone sent fifty-nine ships to all parts of West Africa and were fitting out twenty-five more.³ In September, Abson who had been at Whydah for the past sixteen years wrote: "since I have been on the coast, I have never seen the quantity of Frenchmen arrive that has

1. A. Dalzel: History p.209.

2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 5th & 7th Feb. 1782 (T.70/1162); L. Abson—?? 10th March 1782.
John and Thomas Hodgson to R. Miles, 19th Jan. 1782 (T70/1545).

3. "An Account of vessels from Liverpool to the Coast of Africa since 1st January 1783", Oct. 1783 (T.70/1549 (2)).

lately in so short a space of time, and more daily expected."¹ In mid October sixty French ships were reported to be at Angola alone.² In July 1783, Ollivier Montaguere complained that all the Yoruba-Aja ports were swarming with Portuguese ships which continued to come in still larger numbers.³ So many in fact did they become that the Portuguese director later complained that the captain no longer obeyed the Portuguese law that enjoined them to trade one after another.⁴

This trend continued between 1784 and 1785, when many ships departed from the Cape Coast road for Whydah, Badagry, Lagos and other ports. Between January 1785 and January 1786, sixty five ships were recorded as calling at Cape coast castle,⁵ from where most of them took canoes and canoemen before departing to their different ports of trade. Between May 1786 and April 1787, fifty ships were recorded as calling at Cape Coast road.⁵

The fact that so many ships came out only signifies that the European conditions were once again favourable to the free movement of the ships from Europe. Before Dahomey could benefit from the situation, its rulers would have to draw these ships to the Whydah port. In this, developments in Oyó

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1. L. Abson to R. Miles, 2nd Sep. 1783 (T.70/1545).
 2. L. Abson to R. Miles, 18th Oct. 1783 (T.70/1545).
 3. O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 12th July 1783 (AN.C6/26).
 4. F. Antonio de Fonseca e Aragao to King of Portugal, 25th June 1784 (AHU.S.Tome Caixa 10).
 5. "Arrivals and Departures" May 1784 - Sep. 1785 (T.70/1553); 16th Jan. 1785 - 31st Jan. 1786 (T70/1554); May 1786 - Apr. 1787 (T70/1555).

politics were helpful to Dahomey.

By 1781, the power of Oyo was on the wane. Abiodun's neglect of the army and his subordination of the other economic activities to the needs of the slave trade, must have been among the important factors in this decline. In 1783, the Bariba revolted against their tributary status and defeated an Oyo army sent against them to bring them back to their allegiance.¹

Between 1781 and 1788, a series of quarrels broke out among the coastal kingdoms of the Oyo Empire which Abiodun could not effectively compose.² From August to November 1781, Gangan, the Akran of Badagry, in alliance with certain unspecified chiefs between Badagry and Lagos, attacked Porto Novo, the port of Ajase Ipo.³ The cause of the quarrel is completely obscure, but may have been that Gangan had not yet forgiven the king of Ajase Ipo for allowing Sessu to attack Badagry from his territory in 1776 and perhaps aiding him in the venture.

Because Porto Novo was regarded as vital to the economy of Oyo, an attack on it was sure to displease the Oyo authorities. Probably on Abiodun's orders, therefore, Gangan

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1. L. Abson to R. Miles, 26th Sep. 1783 (T70/1545); Abson who had been commenting on the arbitrary way in which Kpengla raised the prices of the slaves wrote: "To this pitch is Whydah already arrived and the reason is simple: the Ihos (i.e. Oyo), the nation he pays tribute to have received two months ago a total overthrow from a country by name Barrabas (i.e. Bariba) having lost in the battle II umbrellas and the generals under them..."; S. Johnson: History p.187. Contrary to Johnson, Bariba was lost in Abiodun's time.
 2. S. Johnson: History p.187 gives the impression that Abiodun's wars in the Popo country were wars of conquest. This is far from being so.
 3. L. Abson to R. Miles, 9th July (T70/1545): O. Montaguere to Ministre de Colonies, 24th Nov. 1781 (AN C 6/26)

was deposed and deported to Brazil early in 1782, and Dovi, another Badagrian prince installed as Akran.¹ The disagreement between Ajase Ipo and Badagry however remained unresolved and about November 1782, Dovi the new Akran again attacked Porto Novo,² apparently without caring whether Oyo's interests were injured or not.

Abiodun therefore asked Kpengla to aid Ajase Ipo against Badagry, and Kpengla gladly accepted the duty because he knew that the ruin of the port of Badagry would be of some advantage to the trade of Whydah. Early in August 1783 the Dahoman army led by the Agau, the Ajase Ipo army and Sessu, the Badagrian pretender marched together against Badagry.³ The allied army was however defeated and Kpengla had to confess that Badagry was too strong for the Dahomans to attack.

This continued defiance and the recent failure of the Oyo army against the Bariba seem to have exacerbated Abiodun's anger, and led him to order the complete destruction of Badagry. To carry out Abiodun's order, a powerful army consisting of the Dahomans, the Ketu, the Mahi and the Ajase, all under Oyo generals, started to assemble in April 1784.⁴ The king of Lagos, hitherto an ally of Badagry, did not join the enemy forces, but agreed to prevent Badagry from getting any aid

1. A. Dalzel: History p.181.

2. L. Abson to R. Miles, 14th Dec. 1782 (T70/1545); O. Montaguere: "Extrait du lettres", ? Jan - & Feb. 1783 (A.N.C. 6/26).

3. L. Abson to R. Miles, 11th Aug. 1783, 4th Dec. 1783 (T70/1545); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah," 24th Aug., 28th Nov., 11th Dec. 1783 (T70/1162); A. Dalzell: History pp. 181-182.

4. A. Dalzel: History pp.183-187; "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah," 23rd Aug. 1784 (T70/1162); 23rd Sept. 1784 (T70/1162). Dalzel notes Kpengla's actions without understanding, or at

from the people of Lagos.

Responsible opinion appears to have regarded Abiodun's order as excessively harsh and the army generals adopted delaying tactics. The army which started to assemble in April was not ready until 23rd August when the Dahoman contingent borrowed European boats to convey themselves.¹ Encamped before Badagry, they continued to delay the opening of hostilities. This delay ought to have given the Badagry a chance to sue for peace, but they chose rather to precipitate matters by themselves making the first attack, and were thoroughly worsted.

Dovi the Akran and some of his generals died fighting, the other leaders fled and their forces were dispersed. Badagry was completely razed to the ground. Some allied captains pitying the fleeing Badagrians, prevented them from being taken captives. The king of Lagos, probably Kutere, refused to enslave the refugees who came into his power and offered them a neutral place to settle near Lagos. The Dahoman contingent unceremoniously took their leave of their Oyo commanders on 23rd September 1784.² The kingdom of Badagry, which had been founded or enlarged by the Allada and Whydah refugees and guaranteed by Ojigi in 1730, was no more.³

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 23rd Aug. 1784 (T70/1162).
 2. Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 23rd Sep. 1784 (T70/116).
 3. This is worth noticing in view of the general opinion now current (for example in C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast p. 30), that modern Badagry is the same ancient one founded in the 1730's by the dispersed Aja.

Although Abiodun's order was carried out, and Badagry destroyed, calm conditions did not return. For Abiodun took no measures to settle who should have authority over the abandoned territory or where the remnants of the Badagry people should live. Sessu, still determined to reign over the ruins, gathered the remnants of the Badagry people together under his own authority. Between 1784 and 1787, he established another Badagry, the origin of the present town, very near the coast. By January 1788, he had built two ports, one at his new Badagry and the other at a place called "Cap Blanc",¹ and was determined to attract as many slaving ships as possible to his ports.

In August 1787, a son of Gangan who had accompanied his deported father to Brazil in 1782, returned and immediately sought to recover his patrimony. He asked the kings of Ajase Ipo and of Lagos to help him.² Whether the king of Ajase Ipo offered any help is unknown. The king of Lagos however took the opportunity to further his own expansionist ambition towards the west.

In March 1788, the Lagos Naval army consisting of about forty thousand men sent in two thousand boats, attacked a place called "Peumeul", four miles east of the new Badagry. Sessu's brother who had been installed chief of the town fled and Sessu himself admitted that he had no forces with which

1. Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 24th Jan. 1788 (AN.C6/26).

2. Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 31st Aug. 1787 (AN.C.6/26).

to defend it.¹ The following month, Sessu rejected a Lagos demand for an annual tribute. Lagos thereupon again attacked the rest of Badagry, captured many of its citizens, but was still unable to enforce tribute.

Abiodun's action against Badagry had thus led to prolonged confusion and was therefore a sign of weakness rather than strength.

The same weakness was again demonstrated in Oyo's handling of an obscure quarrel which broke out between the kings of Weme and Ajase Ipo in 1786. Dalzel alleges that it was Kpengla who sowed dissension between them,² without saying how he did it. Oyo could not settle the quarrel peacefully and the king of Weme rashly attacked Ajase Ipo. His army was repulsed by the swivel guns of one Antonio Vaz, a Portuguese slave trader settled at Ajase Ipo.

Once again Abiodun was roused to action in defence of his "callash" and this time he decreed the destruction of Weme. In asking Kpengla to undertake the work, he said Weme was "too far to send an army for that purpose".² This was a frank admission of the weakness of the Oyo army. Kpengla set out against Weme on 31st April 1786 and was there until November when the capital was finally taken and a large part of the population massacred.²

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1. A deposition by the "Officers, Majors et mariners du Navire 'le Solid' de La Rochelle...", 3rd Mar. 1788 (CCR. Cartoon XIX). La Lugerne to Gourg, 25th Dec. 1788 (AN.C.6/26). The size of the army seems an exaggeration.
 2. A. Dalzel: History pp.191-192; "Accounts and Daybooks for whydah", 3rd Apr. 3rd and 14th Dec. 1786 (T70/1162).

The king of Ajase Ipo, in defence of whose port the different campaigns had been undertaken must have noticed that in the two destructive wars, the Dahoman army played the leading part. He must have reasoned also that if Weme was too far for the Oyo army, so surely was Ajase Ipo. He therefore concluded that the Oyo army was no longer a sufficient protection for his kingdom against any attack by his neighbours, and he started to look around for some other source of protection.

In June 1786, he talked to Senat, a French trader and the son-in-law of Ollivier Montaguere, about the possibility of the French establishing forts in his kingdom.¹ In July, he formally invited "the king of France to build three forts in my port, to guarantee commerce to his subjects and to fortify my own kingdom".²

One of the forts was to be at Epe, to serve as a defence against any attack by Weme, the second was to be at Cotonou, to defend his kingdom against Dahomey and the third was to be at the beach at Porto Novo to serve as a general place of refuge for the king.³

For the privilege of building these forts, the French were to pay annually, one hundred 'Ounces' worth of goods in guns, gunpowder, brandy, cowries, hats and cloths of different

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1. Senat to Minitre de Marine, 25th June 1786 (AN.C.6/27).
 2. "Copie (fidelle) de la permission qu'accorde le Roi d'Ardres aux Francais de s'etablir dans ses etats, "July 1786 (AN.C.6/26).
 3. See note 1. next page.

types. French activities in Ajase Ipo were not to be centred in these forts, but would remain in "Ardra", that is, the town of Ajase, twenty five miles north of Porto Novo.¹

The disposition of these forts, the annual tributes demanded by the king of Ajase Ipo and the arrangement proposed for the French trade showed that security, not trade was uppermost in the mind of the king of Ajase Ipo. The French traders, of course, saw this as a chance to extend the French commerce in a port which seemed to them to promise an inexhaustible slave supply. For the next two years, until July 1788, French directors, traders, Naval officers as well as the king of Ajase Ipo through his French-trained Hausa secretary, L. Pierre or Tamata,² continued to advocate the erection of, at least, one French fort in Ajase Ipo.³

1. "Copie (fidelle de la permission qu'accorde le Roi d'Ardras aux Francais de s'etablir dans ses etats" July 1786 (AN.C. 6/26); Le Cte. de Flotte: "Extrait du Journal ...", 12th March 1787 (AN.C.6/26). The mention of Cotonou here is interesting as it shows that the town was already in existence in the 18th century and was not founded in the 1830's as is generally supposed. See C.W. Newbury: The Western Slave Coast p.41; The paraphrase from de Flotte's account on this reads: "Le Roi d'Ardra a envoye un ministre a ce Commander pour le complimenter. Ce Noir a ouvert l'avis d'elever une redoute pres du village de Cotony qui est le point ou le Roi Dahomet pourvoit penetrer dans le Royaume". The difference between Porto Novo and Ardra was also clearly made by John Adams the British slave trader in J. Adams: Sketches p.16.
2. This L. Pierre must not be confused with Pierre Hardy, as has been done by Akindele and Aguessy in L'Ancien Royaume de Porto Novo p.164. L. Pierre was a Hausa by birth, who was trained in Nantes and came back to Ajase Ipo as Secretary of the king in the 1780's. How he got to Nantes and back is not known. Pierre Hardy was a French slave trader from La Rochelle, who frequently traded at Porto Novo and has written many rude things about Ajase Ipo people in his private letters now kept in the Chambre du Commerce de La Rochelle. He was a fervent advocate of the erection of a French fort at Porto Novo.
3. Only a few examples of the voluminous correspondence on this

Footnote 3. cont...

subject can be quoted here: O. Montaguere: "Projet d'etablissement à la Côté d'Afrique", 25th June 1786 (AN.C6/26); P. Hardie to Chambre du Commerce de La Rochelle, 16th, 24th July, and 5th Sep. 1786 (CCR. Cartoon XIX); Champagny: Memoire ... de la Cote de Guinée", 6th Sept. 1786 (AN.C.6/26); "Avis et certificat ... a M. de Castries ...", 25th Sept. 1787 (AN.C.6/26). Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 6th July 1787 (AN.C.6/26).

The success of this plan would assure Porto Novo's lead in the export of slaves and its immunity from external attack. Dahomey would be deprived of any benefit accruing from the slow decline of Oyo and might in fact later be threatened by a powerful Ajase Ipo. The king of Ajase Ipo had no doubt that Kpengla would resent these implications and he therefore enjoined the greatest secrecy on all those who took part in the plans.

The weakening grasp of Oyo however ultimately made the execution of the project impossible. About the middle of 1787, Montaguere, recalled to France in disgrace, divulged the secret to Kpengla, who became incensed against all the European traders, particularly against the French, for what he regarded as a deliberate attempt to make war on him. He decided to prevent the erection of any fort at Porto Novo. Fully conscious that the Alafin would bluff and do nothing, he instructed the Yovogan to raid the Porto Novo beach whenever there was any large concentration of ships in that harbour, which the Yovogan successfully did at the beginning of July 1787 capturing fourteen French officers and crew, sixty nine canoe-men and thirty Ajase citizens.¹

The attack naturally provoked widespread reactions. The king of Ajase Ipo complained to Abiodun and sent to Kpengla to find out why his army had behaved in such an unfriendly way. As expected Abiodun sent a threatening message to Kpengla

1. "Avis et Certificat ...", 25th Sep. 1787 (AN.C.6/26);
A. Dalzel: History pp.195-196.

but was placated with large presents as well as by the kind gestures made to Ajase Ipo. Kpengla denied having sent the Yovogan on such an errand, told the king of Ajase that he had no quarrel with him and released all the Ajase captives. The king of Ajase Ipo and the French traders also took the opportunity to impress on the French government the urgent need to build a French fort at Porto Novo to prevent a recurrence of this raid.

However, on 8th July 1788, Kpengla sent a peremptory order to the king of Ajase Ipo and to Sessu of Badagry to forbid them any longer to allow ships to moor in their ports to trade. How Kpengla came to occupy such a strong position as to be able to order a virtual closure of Porto Novo without any protest from Oyo, is unknown. The king of Ajase Ipo did not think it worthwhile to appeal to Abiodun who would not have easily agreed that his "callabash" should thus be rendered useless if he had had the power to prevent it. Instead, he wrote to the French traders advising them very strongly not to come to his port or to Badagry any longer. He made it clear to them that if they did, their goods would be raided and he would not be able to give them any protection.¹ The project was therefore dropped.

The result of Oyo's weakness was to make Porto Novo, Whydah's chief rival, less attractive to the European traders.²

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1. L. Pierre to French Companies and to M. Gourg, 22nd July 1788 (ADN. C.738).
 2. Gourg to Chambre du Commerce de La Rochelle, 30th Sept. 1788 (CCR. Cartoon XIX).

From 1781 to the beginning of 1785, the trade of Dahomey therefore revived a little. In January 1783, all the ships which had moored in Porto Novo before its troubles started, left there and came to Whydah harbour.¹ Around the end of November 1783, competition was so keen there that the six Portuguese ships then in harbour started trading together instead of one after another as their law had enjoined upon them.²

Kpengla immediately set about deriving as much advantage as possible from this boom. He asked Abopa, a Dahomachief whose duty was apparently connected with trade, to make a comprehensive survey of the situation. The Abopa came to Igelefe on 20th April 1783³ and soon after his return to Abomey two steps were taken, probably as a result of his recommendation.

On 4th July, 1783, Don Jeronimo, "Fruku", was sent to Igelefe⁴ as the special representative of Kpengla. As a result of his twenty four years in slavery in Brazil, he probably spoke Portuguese and knew something of the slave trade in Brazil. His duty would be to attract mainly the

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1. O. Montaguere: "Extrait des Lettres", ? Jan-Feb. 1783 (AN.C6/26); L. Abson to R. Miles, 3rd Apr; 1783 (T.70/1545); O. Montaguere to Ministre de Marine, 12th July 1783 (AN.C 6/26).
 2. L. Abson to R. Miles, 30th July, 26th Sep., 1st Oct., 20th Nov. 1783 (T.70/1545).
 3. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 20th Apr. 1783 (T.70/1162).
 4. L. Abson to R. Miles, 26th Sept. 1783 (T.70/1545).

Portuguese ships to Whydah and advise Kpengla on their activities. There is however no record that he was able to do much. It was this post that Da Souza later occupied and made more memorable during the reign of Gezo.

Then on 30th August, the Abopa again came to Igelefe accompanied by the Ajau, the first counsellor. In the name of the king he fixed new prices. He ~~fixed~~ laid down the sizes, volumes and quantities of the European articles that would officially constitute the "ounce" and be used in the Whydah trade. No Dahoman trader must take anything different on pain of death.¹ Some of these increases meant that the Europeans must henceforth pay double the price they used to pay for a single slave, but they could not protest because the competition was very keen.

It might thus appear that Dahomey's difficulties were over, but there remained the problem of finding sufficient slaves to meet the new increase in demand. Abson, Montaguere and the Portuguese director continued to complain that the slaves were too few in Dahomey.² In October 1783, Kpengla himself noticed that the ships in his harbour were taking very long to get their cargo and he sent a public crier to Igelefe to urge all the traders to exert themselves to see that the

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1. L. Abson to R. Miles, 26th Sept. 1783 (T.70/1545).
 2. O. Montaguere, "Extraits ..." 2nd Mar. 1783 (AN.C.6/26); L. Abson to R. Miles, 1st Oct. 1783 (T.70/1545); F. Antonio da Fonseca e Arragao to King of Portugal, 25th June 1784 (AMU. S. Tome Caixa 10).

ships in the harbour got their complete cargo as quickly as possible,¹ but the appeal produced no increase.

To get more slaves, Kpengla had to raid and that he soon planned to do on grand scale. His success however depended on the strength of his intended victims, but the fact that the ships then came in large numbers and brought munition gave him an initial advantage. In April 1788, he asked all the European forts to supply him with all the guns and gunpowder in their forts.² Between the beginning of May and the end of November, he sent out three raiding parties.

The first which consisted of a fairly large number of soldiers departed in May and went against a Yoruba town called "Crootochoontoo" in Ketu kingdom.³ It successfully surprised the town and made many captives, but on its return it was waylaid by the main Ketu army and almost all its soldiers were killed or captured. The second was dispatched against the old Whydah in July but it achieved no greater success as the Whydah had fled. The Dahoman party returned with only "A pitiful acquisition of a few baskets of salt"⁴.

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1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 12th Oct. 1783 (T70/1162).
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 17th Sep. 1788 (T70/1163).
 3. A. Dalzel: History p.199; Gourge to Ministre de Marine, 16th July 1788 (AN.C6/26); E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX p.21. Dunglas calls the town "Kroukrouhounto" but the place cannot now be identified. For the Ketu version of these attacks see E.G. Parrinder: The Story of Ketu Ibadan 1956 p.35 et seq.
 4. A. Dalzel: History p.197; "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 27th July 1788 (T70/1163).

The kingdom of Ketu in particular seems to have been marked down by Kpengla as the principal field for his raiding operations. Perhaps Aguna and Mahi, the ancient raiding grounds had been almost denuded of their virile populations. The Ketu had followed up their success by sending a delegation to Abomey to seek a firm peace. Kpengla entertained it with insincere professions, and in October, soon after it had left, he sent another raid into Ketu territory, but his army was again unsuccessful.¹

Undaunted by his failures, Kpengla again prepared for a major attack on Ketu. During the Anubomey celebrations in December 1788, he announced that he would soon make an important war. In January 1789, he spread a false alarm that the Popo were coming to invade his kingdom,² and demanded guns and gunpowder on credit from the Europeans.

Early in February, the expedition against Ketu set out, and returned towards the end of the month.³ The details of this war are unknown. It is probable that Ketu city itself was not attacked and that the Dahoman success, if any, was limited. In fact the Dahomans later discovered that the Ifa oracle had forecast that whenever they attacked Ketu, their

1. A. Dalzel: History p.201.

2. Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 27th Jan. 1789 (AN.C.6/26).

3. Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 2nd Feb. & 28th Feb. 1789 (AN.C.6/26); J.N. Inglefield to Philip Stephens, 20th June 1789 (AdmI/1988). The differences in the length of this campaign as given by the English and French sources could be due to the efficiency of the sources of information available to each of them.

king would die,¹ a convenient way of saying that for many years Ketu would remain too strong for Dahomey to attack.

It is impossible to say whether Kpengla would have been able finally to procure slaves, now that he had resumed the military initiative with a regular supply of firearms. For on the 13th April 1789, he died of the small pox at about the age of fifty-four, rather young for the kings of Dahomey.² Soon after, the internal conditions of Dahomey and the international conditions governing the slave trade deteriorated, plunging Dahomey back into depression and undoing whatever had been achieved in the last two decades.

For, in spite of the persisting depression, some advance had been made. In 1767, the Dahoman army had been weak and unable to protect the port or procure slaves for export. The trade of Dahomey continued to diminish. The Dahomans had been impoverished and had found it hard to pay the Oyo demands. There was a real possibility that the security of Dahomey might be jeopardised by the growing trade of the neighbouring ports.

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1. A. Dalzel: History pp.201-203; E.G. Parrinder: The story of Ketu pp.35 et seq.; F.E. Forbes: Dahomey and the Dahomans (Lond.1851) p.20.
 2. Gourg to Ministre de Marine. 25th Apr.1789 (A.N.C.6/26); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 3rd, 5th and 20th May 1789 (T70/1163). A.Dalzel: History p.203; E. Dunglas in E.D. p.25. Dalzel, followed by Dunglas, gives the date of Kpengla's death as 17th April 1789. Gourg the French director who was on the spot when it happened gives 13th April when he wrote less than two weeks after the event. He wrote: J'ai l'honneur de vous prevenir que le Roy Dahomet est mort le 13 de ce mois a 5 heures du matin de la petit verole ..."

In 1789, most of these dangers had disappeared. The Popo raids had stopped, Dahomey had resumed military initiative and there were hopeful signs that its trade might revive. No fundamental progress had, however, been made towards a solution of Dahomey's basic problem which was the kingdom's utter dependence upon an international economic system which Dahomey could not foster by itself. Tegbesu tried the peaceful method of an amicable settlement with the Popo and the old Whydah raiders, and Kpengla revived militarism, created a new port made stringent laws, sent missions to the European directors and even threatened the Europeans in his kingdom, without achieving any substantial result. What finally helped Dahomey was the renewed enthusiasm for the slave trade that followed the end of the American war of independence, and the gradual decline of the power of Oyo.

Chapter SixThe Weakness Threatens the system 1789-1818

When Agonglo ascended the throne in 1789, Dahomey had still not achieved its political independence or revived its declining economy. The successful solution of the economic problem was the more urgent task. The depression of the last twenty years affected all the citizens of Dahomey and was therefore potentially dangerous to the stability of the kingdom. Until conditions improved, projects for political independence would not evoke any general enthusiasm.

In one very important respect, local political conditions within the Oyo Empire, of which Dahomey was a part, appeared favourable to the solution of both the economic and the political problems of Dahomey. The weakness of Oyo, which was first apparent in 1783, continued and intensified. Abiodun the Alafin of Oyo since 1774, died in April 1789¹, and was succeeded by Awole, who not only inherited the weakness left by Abiodun but also created new and insoluble problems for himself and the Oyo Empire.

About the middle of 1790, a year after his accession, the Nupe (Tapa), hitherto a tributary people to Oyo, rebelled.

1. Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 8th June 1789 (AN.C6/26). This is a very important date hitherto unknown. Gourg's exact words are: J'ai l'honneur de vous prevenir que le Roy des Alllots est mort presqu'en meme tems (sic) que le roy Dahomet et meme quelque tems avant, c'est a dire en Avril dernier." I have taken into consideration all the events of this period, and have concluded that the "Roy des Alllots" referred to here could be no other than the redoubtable Abiodun.

The army which Awole dispatched against them was defeated late in 1790 or early in 1791.¹ Nupe, like Bariba, eight years earlier, thus achieved its independence from Oyo.

Soon after this, the decline of Oyo took a sudden and precipitate turn for the worse. A number of political mistakes brought the whole of its administration completely down within five years. The expedition which Awole ordered out about 1793 against Apomu did not leave Oyo.² Another which he ordered against Iwere, a town not very far from Oyo, mutinied at the camp. All the king's supporters were massacred and the siege was raised without any attack having been made. Back at Oyo the rebel leaders demanded that Awole himself should abdicate, which he did by committing suicide about 1796.²

Before his death, the king's authority had vanished and Oyo was being deserted. The next two Alafin immediately after Awole reigned for less than eight months between them and were both forced to commit suicide. In fact it would appear that

1. About the middle of 1790, the Europeans were complaining that the slaves were getting scarce at Porto Novo and Badagry, which was always an indication that the Oyo, who wholly supplied those two ports were experiencing some difficulties in making captives. In March 1791, around the same time that the defeat of Oyo was announced, there were no slaves at all to be had from Porto Novo. The Oyo were not at that time under the Nupe as Dalzel thought. Europeans on the coast were generally and quite understandably prone to believe that one power in Africa was subject to yet another further inland. Deniau de la Garenne to Ministre de Marine, 3rd July 1790 (AN C.6/27) Hogg to T.Miles, 19th Mar.1791 (T70/1560); S.Johnson: History p.187; Al Dalzel: History p.229.
2. S.Johnson: History pp. 189-192. Johnson says that Awole reigned for about seven years. Experience has shown that where he has been able to give a precise period, he is usually not far wrong.

that they had no authority whatever. Perhaps for more than twenty years after 1797, Oyo had no Alafin.

A detailed enquiry into the causes of such a quick and calamitous collapse of the mighty Oyo Empire is beyond the scope of this work. The date of the death of Awole, which happened eight years before the first outbreak of the Fulani Jihad in far off Gobir, makes it unlikely that that event played any significant part in its collapse in the earlier stages. Since the rapid disintegration started immediately after Awole's order to attack Apomu, a partial explanation may be provided by a closer examination of that order and its implications for the Yoruba political system.

// Apomu was a market town within the kingdom of Ife, to which the Oyo, the Ife, the Owu, the Ijebu and the Egba resorted for trade. To order the market to be destroyed merely out of a personal vengeance,¹ was to jeopardise the economic interest of all the other kingdoms concerned and incur their ill will.

More, however, was involved. As has already been noticed, the organisation of the Yoruba was based on the Ebi social theory, in which the Ooni (the king of Ife) was the "father" who through various symbols sanctioned the appointment of every other important Yoruba oba (king). The symbol given by the Ooni to every Alafin elect was the Ida Oranyan, otherwise called the Ida Ajase (the sword of Oranyan or the sword of Victory), without which no Alafin had any authority. Before obtaining it, every Alafin elect must promise on oath, through his accredited representatives,

1. Awole's grievance against Apomu was that, before he ascended the throne, he had been ordered to be severely flogged by the Bale of Apomu for man stealing and slave trading. See S. Johnson: History pp. 189-192.

that he would never attack the kingdom of Ife¹. It was on the sanctity of this oath, which rested on the analogy that a son must never strike his father, that the safety of the Ife kingdom and the tranquility of the Yoruba country as a whole had depended for centuries. It was this same principle which the rulers of Oyo had defended between 1726 and 1730 when Agaja had broken it by invading Allada in 1724. By ordering an army against Apomu therefore, Awole had broken his oath and the fundamental principles of the Yoruba "constitution." In doing so, he rendered himself and the Oyo generally odious in the whole Yoruba country and he automatically absolved all his subjects from their oaths to himself.

The result was an immediate and complete evaporation of the authority of the Alafin and an amazingly rapid collapse of the Oyo internal administration. Almost immediately, "the king's messengers and Ilaris no longer carried that dread as before." The Basorun refused to trace the theft of a koran when the Alafin ordered it. The army generals including Afonja at Ilorin and Edun at Gbodo, as well as Owota, the chief of the king's bodyguard, immediately renounced their allegiance.²

The only way by which authority could be restored in Oyo was by fresh rites being performed at Ile Ife. For some unknown reason, this proved immediately impossible. The powerful army leaders therefore started to assert their independence of the central authority and to create little

1. This ceremony still goes on at the accession of every Alafin and was observed in great detail at the accession of the present one, though the oath is now politically meaningless.
2. S. Johnson: History: pp. 189-194. Johnson's interpretation of these events is quite different but erroneous because he proceeded from the false premise that the whole of the Yoruba country was under the rule of Alafin.

kingdoms for themselves out of their local jurisdictions leaving Oyo itself to be ruled by a self appointed junta. These rulers were not sufficiently well established until about 1805.

These Oyo troubles might have eased Dahomey's attempts to solve its problems. If Agonglo had declared independence, the chances were that Oyo would be too divided to bring Dahomey back to allegiance. If he had occupied Porto Novo permanently, prevented any trade from being carried on there and diverted its trade to Whydah, Oyo could hardly have offered any effective protest.

That Agonglo did not act effectively¹ can be accounted for by two main reasons. Firstly his own position at home was weak and secondly the European conditions and opinions were, by and large, increasingly unfavourable to the revival of trade in Whydah port.

The economic depression which had been going on for twenty years when Kpengla died in 1789, had started to cause a wide-spread discontent, particularly against the

1. E.Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX. p.32.
Dunglas's colourful description of how Agonglo adopted the policy of independence from Oyo seems to be seriously confused. Considering Oyo's and Dahomey's conditions during these years it is unlikely that Agonglo refused to pay the annual tributes to Oyo at the opening of his reign, or that Oyo invaded Dahomey anew in the 1790's.

Tegbesu ruling line, under whose regime the misfortune had occurred. In 1787, Gourg noticed a general restlessness among the Dahomans and predicted a revolution.¹ In this atmosphere, the relatively mild succession contest which followed the death of Kpengla was significant and very ominous.

Four princes submitted their claims to the throne of Dahomey in April 1789. One was a son of Kpengla, a youth of about twenty three. Two were Kpengla's brothers and therefore uncles of the youth, and the fourth was Don Jeronimo, otherwise known as Fruku.² Fruku's claim signifies that the descendants of the older sons of Agaja who had been excluded from the succession by Tegbesu now felt strong enough to challenge the Tegbesu line. Here indeed the danger lay, for the discontented elements in Dahomey now had a strong claimant to the throne who did not belong to the present ruling line.

The Migan and the Mehu, whose duty it was to elect a successor, backed Kpengla's young son, who took the name Agonglo. It would seem however, that public opinion, not least among the influential chiefs, largely supported Fruku. For not only were the losers not effectively silenced, Agonglo himself was not crowned for a whole year, ostensibly

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1. Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 1st Aug. 1787 (AN C6/26).
"De plus monseigneur, il ne tardera pas a y avoir une revolution....Il paroît qu'il y a un mecontentement general, et je crains bien que les forts ne soient obliges de se mettre en defense...."
 2. A.Dalzel: History p.223: Gourg to Ministre de Marine, 25th Ap. 1789 (AN.C.6/26); E.Dunglas in E.D. Vol.XX. p.27.

because the Migan was alleged to have been too ill to perform the traditional rites,¹ but more probably because he was waiting for more public support for his choice of candidate.

For a long time after Agonglo's election, no general support was discernible. There was so much disagreement among the chiefs, who were by no means unanimously happy at the election, that for a whole year, state business was almost completely held up. Abson, in disgust complained on 20th April 1790 that he was

"at a loss to know what she shall doe (sic) if things are here to be decided by the king, for messengers sent to Dahomey never come back. I have one there ever since the 5th February, the Portuguese governor has one since January... and Deniau has a messenger ever since Januazy too with the king....We hear they are in pallavers among themselves." 1.

The situation must have been fairly serious before the European directors could become aware of internal disagreements at Abomey.

Agonglo only gained acceptance by his own very conciliatory attitude. He made it a practice personally to visit the Migan in his house, "a mark of royal respect and condescension unknown in former reigns."² He promised publicly to "indulge his subjects with many privileges"² as a result of which he abolished the use of the gag. "He redressed the grievances of the traders by removing the oppressive restriction which had been laid upon them

1. L. Abson to Governor of Cape Coast Castle, 15th Ap. 1790; L. Abson to T. Miles, 20th Ap. 1790. (T70/1560).
2. A. Dalzel: History p.223; Governor and Council, C.C.C., 20th Aug. 1789 (T70/33 & T70/1559).

by his father"¹ Particularly he reduced taxes and incorporated into the army many of the tax collectors who must have been a source of great and constant irritation to the impoverished Dahomans.

These actions and promises served to calm down the ruling classes and to drive underground any manifestations of discontent by the general populace. In the middle of 1791, the Migan and the Mehu, the two aged highest officers of the state, died within a week of each other.² This gave Agonglo the chance to nominate younger and more dynamic leaders to the state council and to bring that body fully over to his side.

Despite this, Agonglo's position was never really strong. Although he realised that the only effective way by which popular discontent and opposition to himself could be completely removed was by an improvement in economic conditions of his people, to which problems he promptly addressed himself, all his efforts to improve the economy of Dahomey were rendered abortive largely by the lack of co-operation from his own subjects.

Immediately after his accession, he promised to follow the policies of his late father,³ which meant procuring both slaves and ships for Whydah port. He was no sooner elected than he declared open all the trade routes leading to Whydah port, and reduced all the import duties

1. A. Dalzel: History p.223; E. Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX. pp. 27-28.
2. Deniau de la Garenne to Ministre de Marine, 15th July 1791 (AN C.6/27).
3. J.N. Inglefield to Philip Stephens, 30th May 1790 (Adm. I/1988); A. Dalzel: History p.224.

to attract the non-Dahoman traders to Igelefe market.¹ It is not known whether this step met with any better success than Kpengla's method of driving away all the non-Dahoman traders, but the supply of slaves from outside was at best unreliable and the surest source continued to be raiding by the Dahomans themselves.

On this method, Agonglo concentrated a great deal of his energy. Unfortunately owing to the prevailing disagreement among the chiefs, the first two raids, one against the old Whydah in 1789 and the other against an unnamed victim, probably the Mahi, in 1790,² were unsuccessful. Nor did the raids against the Mahi between 1791 and 1795 achieve much better result.

Only once during his short reign did Agonglo appear to have achieved any notable success against the Mahi. In May 1795, he dispatched his army against the same Mahi province which had been continuously but unsuccessfully attacked since 1791.³ This time however the army marched with a renewed enthusiasm, infused, according to the Dahoman oral traditions, by Agonglo bestowing wives on the common soldiers. In the four engagements which took place between May and August, Agonglo's army was victorious and was confident of eventual success within the next month. It was probably on this

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1. J.N. Inglefield to Philip Stephens, 30th May 1790 (Adm. 1/1988).
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah," 27th Oct. 1789, 15th Feb. 1790 (T70/1163); L. Abson to R. Miles, 20th Ap. 1790 (T70/1560); A. Dalzel: History p.224.
 3. S. Mackenzie to Sec. of Admiralty, 15th Aug. 1795 (Adm. I/2131).

occasion that they came back with "upwards of one thousand prisoners." Such a success was not repeated in Agonglo's reign, and the supply of slaves in Dahomey remained precarious and diminishing.

The only other way of bringing slaves to Whydah was by preventing trade in the nearby ports, which Agonglo also tried without much success. Towards the end of 1791, he sent raiding parties to Porto Novo and Badagry ports. In the former place, the crew and the canoe-men of the three ships then in harbour were seized.¹ In the latter the Dahomans were opposed by a Lagos army and they presumably withdrew.² In 1793, Agonglo again sent raiding parties against Badagry in the east and Little Popo in the West.² As in 1791, the party sent to Badagry came back empty handed and that sent against Little Popo found its victim too well prepared and had to divert its energy against Aguna, the old favourite slave raiding ground north west of Abomey.

Finally at the beginning of 1795, the Dahoman army, in alliance with the Great Popo, came back against Little Popo.³ A pitched battle ensued and went on for five days. At the end Agonglo's army was completely victorious. Three of Little Popo generals were killed, the king and the chief next in rank to him, who was also the most important

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1. Deniau de la Garenne to Ministre de Marine, 30th Sept. 1791, 4th Mar. 1792 (AN.C.6/27); T.Miles to A.Dalzel, 10th Oct. 1793 (T70/1484).
 2. T.Miles to A.Dalzel, 10th Oct. 1793 (T70/1484)
 3. T.Miles to A.Dalzel, 29th May 1795 (T70/1571)

slave trader, were captured and presumably killed. The trade of Little Popo was disrupted for a short while, but it was already recovering towards the end of the year.

Whatever successes attended the raids on the nearby ports were therefore temporary and limited. They probably served to drive European slavers farther down the coast, well beyond the reach of Dahoman deprivations, rather than to attract them back to Whydah.

In any case, European opinions and conditions were quite as unhelpful to Agonglo in the solution of his kingdom's economy as his own position at home. In the last decade of the 18th century there seems to have been a growing conviction among the English traders that forts were indeed a hindrance rather than help to trade. Many of them therefore established their own private factories at Little Popo, Badagry and Lagos as well as farther away in Bonny and Calabar, to which places they preferred to send their ships.¹

In addition to this, Abson's management of the Whydah fort had become so inept as to undermine whatever little confidence was still placed in its usefulness. He had for long been inconveniently slow in sending his accounts to the headquarters at Cape Coast Castle, for which offence the Governor unsuccessfully recommended in January 1789 that Whydah fort be abandoned.⁴ Worse was to come.

1. R. Macaulay to T. Miles, 8th Mar. 1791 (T70/1560);
L. Abson to Mann, 13th Aug. 1791 (T70/1560).

As from 1790, Abson stopped all repair works on the fort which therefore started to fall down and to leak badly.⁵ Moreover he became increasingly subservient to the Dahoman authorities and less able to stand up for the rights of English traders.

For these reasons, Whydah port was unable to benefit from the steady flow of the English ships which had continued since the end of the American war in 1783. Although the English captains continued to come to West Africa, unhindered by fears of French seizure, and unperturbed by arguments about the abolition of the slave trade,¹ only a few of them called at Whydah to trade. Indeed by 1789, they had almost completely deserted Whydah.² Of the ninety two ships which cleared in 1797 from Liverpool for Africa, only two went to Whydah as compared with thirty six that went to Angola, thirty that went to Benin, Bonny Old and New Calabar and four that went to Lagos.³

Much more serious than the effects of English attitude for the Whydah trade were those of the French Revolution, because they affected not only the French but also the Portu-

4. Governor and Council, Cape Coast Castle to African Committee, 26th Jan, 1789 (T70/33).
1. "Arrivals and Departures of Ships", Jan-Mar.1789 (T70/1559); Sep. 1789-Oct.1790 (T70/1561); Jan-June 1791 (T70/1564(1)); July-Oct. 1791 (T70/1564(2)); Oct.1791-Dec.1792 (T70/1565(2)); Jan-Mar. 1793, Jan-Nov. 1794 (T70/1568); Nov.1794-Apr.1795 (T70/1570). "Africa and the West India trade", 1805(T70/1585).
2. J.N.Inglefield to Philip Stephens, 20th June 1789 (Adm. I/1988).
3. "Liverpool ships to Africa", 1797 (T70/1575).
5. E.William White to African Committee, 5th Mar.1809(T70/35); "Remarks on Whydah fort" 1st Jan.1804 (T70/1163); Edmund Dodd and John Marshall; "Observations on the state and condition of the fort and the trade thereof" 15th Mar. 1793 (Adm. I/1714)

guese trade at Whydah. In 1794, the French, in a moment of Revolutionary fervour, abolished the slave trade as being incompatible with the principles of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity,"¹ and although they later legalised it again on 20th May 1802,² French trade at Whydah did not revive during this period.

Soon the French decided to wage a war on the slave trade itself. In November 1794, a French squadron, falsely flying English colours, attacked and captured all the Portuguese ships trading in Whydah harbour. The Dahomans protested very strongly, seized all the forts and confined all the directors and other tenants within the fort walls,³ but none of these things discouraged the French.

In 1797, their squadron again seized the only two ships in Whydah harbour.⁴ These French attacks on the slave trade went on intensively up to 1800 though they were not all directed at Whydah port.⁵ Their general effect was nonetheless disadvantageous to its trade.

One byproduct of these raids was the abandonment of the French fort at Whydah. Deniau de la Garenne, the director of the French fort, fearing the reaction of the Dahoman

1. E.Dunglas: E.D. Vol.XX.p.33; Gaston-Martin: Historie de l'Esclavage dans les Colonies Francaises (Paris 1948) p.228.
2. "Comptoir d'Amoukou et de Whydah", 25th Prairial, An 10 (i.e. 14th June 1802) (AN.C.6/27)
3. L.Abson to A.Dalzel, 14th-22nd Dec. 1794 (T70/1570).
4. L.Abson to A.Dalzel, 27th Aug. 1797 (T70/1574); Citoyen Deniau to Pierre Bonon, 20th Aug. 1797 (AN.C6/27); P.Bonon to Cn. Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies. 10 Vendenaire, An 10 (AN.C6/27).
5. Zachary Macaulay, Governor of Sierra Leone to Captain Cornwallis, 2nd May 1798 (Adm. 1/1625); G.Nicholls to African Committee, 22nd May 1798 (T70/1575); James Digby to A.Dalzel, 8th Jan 1800 (T70/1576).

authorities after the French attack of 1797, the second in three years, escaped into one of the French ships, 'la Vengeur', and left Igelefe, leaving the fort in charge of a caretaker. Although he promised to come back, he never did, and the French fort was thus unceremoniously abandoned.

Another byproduct of the French deprecation was to dissipate Whydah's reputation as a safe anchorage. When the African Committee asked from their West African headquarters at Cape Coast in 1791 about which ports would be safe to trade in whatever the French decided to do, they were told that Whydah port was safe because

"the king of Dahomey is so absolute a monarch there as never to suffer Europeans settled in his dominions to have controversies of any hostile nature whatsoever." 1.

The continued French attacks which the Dahoman authorities could not effectively prevent proved that assertion to be false. The Portuguese captains, the most constant traders at Whydah and therefore the greatest losers from those attacks, finding themselves defenceless against repeated French depredations, came only in small numbers in the 1790's.²

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1. Governor and Council, Cape Coast Castle, to African Committee, 1st Mar. 1791 (T70/1563).
 2. L. Abson to J. Ashley, 6th Sep. 1793 (T70/1563).

Agonglo was gravely concerned at the decreasing number of ships that visited his port, particularly as he must have realised that the supply of ships and arms formed part of the vicious chain that bound the economy of his kingdom, and he tried all he could to procure more. He, like his predecessor, held Abson responsible for the paucity of the English ships that called at Whydah, and he tried unsuccessfully to bully him to writing to England for more ships. For his failure, Abson was generally unpopular in Dahomey towards the end of his life. In May 1790, Agonglo sent two letters to the French government urging it to increase its trade to Whydah port, but he got no reply to either of them.¹

In 1795, the year which saw his army victorious both at the Mahi campaign and at Little Popo, he again made an effort to procure more Portuguese ships for Whydah. In March of that year, he sent to the Queen of Portugal, three ambassadors who carried a letter² in which Agonglo, after recalling the friendly relations that had existed between his ancestors and the kings of Portugal, talked about the sad state of the Portuguese trade in his kingdom, which he attributed to the then Portuguese director. He asked the Portuguese authorities to take steps to increase their trade to Whydah to which port only he would like them to send all their ships. He also wanted them to send tobacco

1. "Colonies", 18th May 1790 (AN.C6/27).

2. King of Dahomey to Queen Maria I of Portugal. 20th Mar. 1795 (ABNJ) doc. 563); King of Dahomey to Governor of Bahia, 20th Mar. 1795 (AHU.Bahia 16.143).

of the correct weight, as well as gold and silver to purchase slaves of better quality than those obtained for tobacco.

The ambassadors went to Lisbon by way of Brazil and returned to Dahomey in 1797, having been away for more than two years. Queen Maria sent two priests with them to convert Agonglo, but said nothing on the trade except that she would recall the Portuguese director against whom Agonglo had complained.¹

The arrival of Agonglo's emissaries, bringing only the means of spiritual consolation brought to the surface the latent discontent in Dahomey. The Portuguese priests carried their altar pieces and their images with pomp from the beach to Igelefe,² a demonstration that impressed but did not please the Dahomans. Agonglo's own misjudgment of the temper of his subjects cost him his life.

On the 23rd April, 1797, Agonglo received in audience the Portuguese priests who outlined to him their mission. It would appear that he had been prepared for their message by his own ambassadors and that he had made up mind, at least, not to reject outright the invitation to embrace Christianity, probably because Queen Maria had stipulated that unless he did, arms would not be forthcoming.

1. Governor of Bahia to Secretary of State at Lisbon, 21st Oct. 1795 (AHU. Bahia 16.143); Queen Maria to King of Dahomey 16th Jan. 1796, 19th Feb. 1796; Queen Maria to Gov. of Bahia, 7th Ap. 1796 (ABNJ doc.563).

2. Dawson to Fitzgerald, 17th Nov. 1862 (CA.2/016).

He told the priests that he had been waiting for them and was ready to be instructed and baptised in the Catholic faith.¹ Whether he would in fact have gone through with it, we shall never know.

His apparent willingness to change the Dahoman religion immediately raised an urgent state emergency in which the defeated candidates or their descendants made themselves the defenders of the Dahoman "Constitution". A prince called Dogan immediately put himself at the head of the disaffected. When the priests returned the second time to start to give instruction to the king, they were told that Agonglo was indisposed, suffering from the small pox.¹ This was merely to send the priests away and keep them out of the intensive, but completely obscure, political activities that must have been going on inside the palace walls. We shall never know whether a peaceful solution would have been reached if the arguments had gone on long enough.

On 1st May, 1797, one of the women resident in the palace called "Nai-Wangerie" (Na Wanjile) shot and killed Agonglo. There can hardly be any doubt that the persistent economic depression was already leading the kingdom to the verge of civil disobedience, and that the religious issue was no more than "the last straw". A dynastic war

1. Padre V.F. Pirez: Viagem de Africa, pp.59-76; Cn Deniau to Cn. Bruix, 25 Novembro An 7 (AN C.6/27). The name of Dogan here should not be mixed up with another name "Dekkon" (Dekan) whose pretension to the throne of Jena (Ijana) is said to have led to Adandozan's deposition in F.E.Forbes: DAHOMEY and the Dahomans (Lond. 1851) Vol II. pp. 24-25.

immediately ensued within the palace walls, in which Dogan and his faction were defeated and the supporters of Agonglo triumphed.¹

Agonglo's second son, "Ariconu", who must have been very young, was installed king of Dahomey under the title of Adandozan, in preference to his elder brother who had a defect in one foot.¹

On 5th May, Adandozan entered the Abomey palace and started to punish all those who had participated in, or in any way supported, his father's murder. Dogan and Na Wanfile were buried alive. Many princes, chiefs and war leaders who had supported the losing side must have been either executed or sold into slavery. It is probable that the mother of the future Gezo was among those sold at this time.²

Now that the dynastic rivalries had broken out into open violence, the chances of any peaceful succession in future became very dim. There were now two recognisable warring camps among the princes of Dahomey and the first step had been taken in what could become a prolonged civil conflict unless improved economic conditions rendered the king very popular and the claims of his descendants unassailable.

The accession of Adandozan meant that the Tegbesu line was once again triumphant and had a renewed opportunity to make good its claim to retain the throne of Dahomey. The

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1. Padre V.F. Pirez: Viagem de Africa pp.59-76; M.J.Herskovits: Dahomey Vol. 1. p. 14. records that certain Dahoman princes who had been sold into slavery during the crisis were still remembered in the 1930's during the celebration of the royal ancestral cult. J.Macleod: Voyage to Africa, p.39.
 2. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume pp. 311-312. E.Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX p. 35; M.J. Herskovits: Dahomey Vol.1. p.12.

circumstances of his accession however ensured that there could not immediately be a national united action to tackle the main economic problem. More than that, there was a lack of vigorous leadership as can be inferred from the installation of a minor. Adandozan had regents chosen for him for the first seven years of his reign and it was not until 1804 that he was old enough to rule on his own authority.¹ In fact for some time after that, European residents did not think he was entirely responsible for his actions. In 1806, nine years after his accession, a Frenchman, stranded in the French fort since 1803, said in a series of complaints, that "the present king is very young and his word cannot be relied upon"² presumably because he changed his mind often according to the advice given to him by different elderly statesmen.

The composition of the regency which governed Dahomey during Adandozan's minority has not been preserved nor is it known how smoothly they worked. There is evidence that the regency council did not get on well with the Portuguese directors, four of whom were expelled in quick succession between 1797 and 1804. In addition, the lack of vigorous leadership meant that for many years the gallant attempts being made to improve the economy of Dahomey was slowed down or stopped. By the time Adandozan grew up, conditions were so changed for the worse that none of his measures brought any significant relief to Dahomey. Indeed it was during his reign that all the European forts were closed, which, to the ordinary Dahoman, was *one*

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1. Cn Deniau to Cn Bouix, 25 Noviose An. 7 (AN C6/27) Deniau said Adandozan was about twenty on his accession, but the chances are that Adandozan was not as old; King of Dahomey to King of Portugal, 20th Nov. 1804 (ABNJ doc.846).
 2. S.M. Goupil to 1806 (AN C6/27). Goupil was probably exaggerating because he was disgruntled.

more, ^{proof} if any more were needed, of the extraordinary "bad luck" which the Teguésu lías had brought on Dahomey.

Nevertheless, when Adandozan took up the personal direction of his kingdom's affairs, he acted very vigorously to solve its economic problem. It was always his misfortune rather than his incompetence that all his measures were vitiated by unfavourable external circumstances which he could not control.

Dahoman traditions, which are credible, relate that he conducted slave raiding expeditions to the Mahi country which were probably unsuccessful, and that later he turned towards the Yoruba towns of Pita, Jaluku-Jalumo and Govie.¹ The difficulties confronting Oyo would completely isolate these towns and render them defenceless. In spite of that, the same Dahoman oral traditions relate that he was not any more successful than at Mahi.

When that method failed, he tried disturbing the trade of the neighbouring ports. Partly as a result of the breakdown of authority in Oyo, the slave supply at Porto Novo had increased by 1803, and was soon to be further augmented by the outbreak of the Fulani Jihad in 1804.² In 1803 and again

1. E. Douglas in E.D. Vol. XX. pp.36-37 would imply that Adandozan's wars against the Mahi were successful, but he almost certainly has re-edited the traditions which he collected because of his conviction that Adandozan's achievements have been unnecessarily diminished. Considering the times and the circumstances, the army of Dahomey could not have had many successes.
2. King of Ardra to King of Portugal, Ardra 18th Nov. 1804 (ABNJ doc.846). The king said the trade of his port had been augmented by the Male, which means the Mohammedans.

in 1805, Adandozan therefore sent raiders there to disturb its trading activities.¹ On the first occasion, all the Portuguese traders found there were seized and their boats and tents were burnt. On the second occasion, the Dahoman army met and defeated the main army of Ajase Ipo. This was, however, a hollow and indeed an embarrassing success, for by 1805, the rulers of Oyo had sufficiently recovered at home to take up again a firm attitude. Adandozan received a stern warning to leave Porto Novo alone² which he never again dared to challenge.

To demonstrate still further the change in the local political atmosphere and Adandozan's utter helplessness, the rulers of Oyo sent to Adandozan in 1808 for the annual tributes which Adandozan was forced to pay in spite of his extreme poverty.³ It is probable that the tributes were sent annually to Oyo until the deposition of Adandozan in 1818.

If Adandozan's local efforts to secure more slaves failed, still less successful were his diplomatic ones to secure an increase in the number of European ships that came to his port. In November 1804, soon after he was old enough to rule for himself, he sent two ambassadors to Portugal, accompanied by a Portuguese captured at Porto Novo

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1. King of Dahomey to Governor of Bahia, 14th Mar. 1804 (AHU. doc. Bahia 27.100); King of Dahomey to King of Portugal, 20th Nov. 1804 (ABNJ doc. 846); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 21st Mar. 1805. (T70/1163).
 2. S.M.Goupil to ?? 1806 (AN.C6/27).
 3. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 10th Mar. 1808. (T70/1163).

the previous year.¹ His demands are of considerable interest as showing that he had learnt from the abortive mission of 1797 and wanted to make Dahomey less dependent on European arms in future.

He emphasised that his own God was Elegbara² and by implication told the king of Portugal not to send missionaries to convert him. He wanted the Portuguese to send, not just ships and munitions, but persons who knew how to manufacture guns and gunpowder and who would be prepared to establish an arms factory in his kingdom. Moreover, he said he had gold mines in his kingdom which he would allow the Portuguese to work if they sent competent technicians. This was probably added merely to invite the Portuguese to prospect for gold in Dahomey.³

Like its immediate predecessor, the mission, although well received in Lisbon⁴ achieved no success. The Portuguese secretary of state decided that because the

1. King of Dahomey to Governor of Bahia, 14th Nov. 1804 (AHU Bahia 27.100); King of Dahomey to King of Portugal, 20th Nov. 1804 (ABNJ doc.846).
2. Elegabra is one of the Yoruba-Aja deities.
3. Why both Agonglo and Adandozan should so much want a supply of gold is unknown, unless they needed it for trade with Ashanti or Dahomey's northern neighbours, for which there is no evidence.
4. Governor of Bahia to King of Dahomey, 8th May 1805 (APB. Correspondence Vol. 15. f. 152); Secretary of State to Governor of Bahia, 30th July 1805 (ABNJ doc. 846); Secretary of State for Portugal to King of Dahomey, 30th July 1805 (ABNJ doc.846).

supply of slaves was greatly diminished in Dahomey, no friendship should be encouraged with Adandozan. He instructed the Governor of Brazil only to flatter or bully Adandozan into freeing the Portuguese prisoners in his court. He himself also wrote to Adandozan that the king of Portugal could not consider his request until those prisoners had been freed. The only benefit which Adandozan derived from his mission was six pieces of cloth sent to him by the Portuguese authorities. The attitudes of the Portuguese government indicate that Dahomey had no hope of regular supply of ships from Portugal.

Behind this message lay Portugal's own internal difficulties as a result of increasing pressure by Napoleonic France. In 1805, the same year that saw the return of Dahoman ambassadors from Portugal, the Portuguese authorities were unable to send a successor to Jacinto Jose de Souza, the director of their fort, who died in that year. The storekeeper took over the direction, but for some unknown reasons, the fort soon passed into private hands. The final blow was struck in 1807, when the Portuguese court itself was driven from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro by Napoleon's invasion of Portugal.

From then on, all official contacts between the Portuguese court and their Whydah fort ceased for the rest of this period. Although Portugal continued stoutly to maintain its right of trade in "Costa da Mina", in fact all Portuguese trade at Whydah appears to have stopped completely for a few years between 1807 and 1811. Officially

or unofficially therefore, both the French and the Portuguese forts in Whydah were closed by 1807 and their trade there remained negligible or non-existent.

Meanwhile, the English trade in Whydah was also drying up. It had been expected that the death of Abson would end all the obstacles to the flow of the English ships to Whydah, but that did not occur after Abson's death on 27th June 1803¹. Although Adandozan instructed the Yovogan to put the English fort in as good a state of repair as possible and wrote to the governor of Cape Coast Castle suggesting that James, Abson's assistant, be made director,² his letter was never replied and misunderstandings and mutual suspicions quickly arose.

Some time after 1783, Abson seems to have assumed Dahoman citizenship. Moreover, he, like other directors of the forts, had the status of a chief under the Yovogan. After his death, therefore, Adandozan, in accordance with the Dahoman practices, seized Abson's property and four children from his marriage with a Dahoman woman,³ as he would have done with any Dahoman chief after his death.

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1. J.E. James to Jacob Mould, 28th June 1803 (T70/1580); J. Macleod: Voyage to Africa p.79.
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 19th July, 1st 2nd and 24th Aug. 1803 (T70/1163).
 3. J.E. James to J. Mould, 15th July and 2nd Aug. 1803 (T70/1580); J. Macleod: Voyage to Africa pp. 79-80. Macleod gives the impression that Sally's seizure was due to the king wanting to marry her contrary to her wishes. His explanation is probably wrong since that would not dispose of the seizure of Sally's elder brother George and her two younger brothers.

James, the acting director, who did not fully understand the situation, reported Adandozan's "tyrannical" measures to his superiors at the Cape Coast Castle, and all the officers qualified to take the directorship at Whydah fort were frightened away. It was not until March 1804 that Hamilton, who had refused it in 1803, agreed to become director at Whydah.¹

The governor of the Cape Coast Castle sent the report of Adandozan's action to the African Committee in London which in turn informed all the English traders to West Africa and communicated the information to the Board of Trade.²

The result of this unfavourable publicity was that Dahomey began to be very unpopular with the English who were therefore henceforth very cautious in their dealings with Dahomey. Hamilton left Whydah in March 1805 under the pretext that he was going to welcome a new governor at Cape Coast Castle, but he did not return until January 1806, having been posted to another fort in the meanwhile. In November 1805, while he was still away, James, his assistant, died.³ For a short while, the English fort had no officer. More than that, the fort contained absolutely nothing of

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1. J.Mould to J.E. James, 18th Aug. 1803 (T70/1580); Minutes of the Council of Cape Coast Castle, 23rd Dec. 1803 (T70/1580); Minutes of the Council, 15th Mar.1804 (T70/1581).
 2. J.Mould to African Committee, 8th Sep.1803 (T70/34); Secretary African Committee to Master of the Merchants Hall, Bristol, 23rd Jan 1804 (T70/72); Sec. African Committee to W.Fawkener, 25th Jan.1804 (T70/72).
 3. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 1st July and 12th Nov. 1805 (T70/1163).

value, the most valuable item in it being the flagstaff.¹

This condition of the English fort aroused Adandozan's suspicion that the English might be planning to abandon their fort and he decided to prevent them. The only way open to him was to ensure that there was at least one Englishman left in the fort at any one time. Henceforth, no Englishman in Dahomey, whether he was an employee of the fort or not, was allowed to leave the country without a substitute.²

This desperate attempt to retain the English connection was interpreted by the English as a tyrannical measure taken by the king of Dahomey to restrict their freedom of movement and they became openly hostile. In May 1804, George Torrane, formerly an employee of the African committee, and later Governor of the Cape Coast Castle, visited Whydah as a Naval officer and gratuitously gave a most unfavourable impression of the fort and of Adandozan.

".....it certainly is an object much to be desired that the fort at Whydah may be abandoned. What is your governor there? A mere cypher to the king of Dahomey, who dare not leave the beach without his permission. Your list of slaves is said to be numerous ... they are slaves only to the king and were you desirous of removing them or employing them, the event of the attempt would fully prove my assertion." 3.

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1. Diggles Bayley to Cap. Malbon, 5th Jan. 1806 (Adm.1/2151).
 2. H. Hamilton to G. Torrane, 22nd Feb. 1806 (T70/1584); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 10th Feb., 12th, 20th and 25th Mar 1807, 10th Aug. 15th Oct. 29th Oct. 1807, 15th Jan. 1818 (T70/1163). This policy was not given up throughout Adandozan's reign. In 1815, one Suett who came to trade at Whydah was detained though he was later released after good treatment. African Committee to Gov. and Council C.C.C., 15th Nov. 1815 (T70/1599); The Policy may have been behind the detention of every British explorer or agent sent to Dahomey later in the 19th century.
 3. George Torrane to African Committee, May 1804 (T70/34).

When Bayley, the first victim of Adandozan's policy, was asked in 1806 by Captain Malbon of the Royal Navy ship then in Whydah harbour, to give the state and condition of Whydah fort, he replied:

"with regard to the country, had you asked me the state of the worst country on earth, I could not give you a more vile description of it....." 1.

This was the state of the English opinion on Dahomey when in 1807, the British Government abolished the slave trade. The question then was whether any form of British connection should be maintained with Dahomey. In November 1810, a Commission of Enquiry was appointed to recommend which of the British forts in West Africa should be retained and which abandoned.² The members of the commission visited West Africa, but because of Adandozan's notoriety, refused to visit Whydah fort.² They therefore collected all their information from the British officers in the Cape Coast Castle.

When the commission reported, it was quite emphatic that the British fort at Whydah

"ought unquestionably to be given up; it is totally useless being without any trade and the ferocious king of Dahomey in whose territories it is situated so tyrannizes over the governor and the few people about him as to render such a subjection utterly disgraceful to the British flag."²

Almost everyone who commented on this report agreed with this recommendation.³

Only the African Committee, the body which had been entrusted with the care of all the English forts in West Africa, opposed its abandonment. They argued that the

1. Diggle, Bayley to Capt. Malbon, 5th Jan. 1806 (Adm.1/2151).
2. "State and Condition of West African settlement", 15th Nov. 1810 (CO.267/29).
3. E.W.White to African committee, 12th Oct. 1811 (T70/1593); T.Norris to George Barnes, 20th Jan. 1812 (T70/1594); Brown to Simon Cock, 10th Mar. 1812 (T70/1594).

country was populous and that the inhabitants showed "a strong evidence of an advance in civilisation beyond what is apparent in other parts of the coast", that the land was fertile and produced indigo. They warned that its abandonment would only give advantage to the French and the Portuguese who had not officially given up their forts, and would not mean a great deal of saving, since the cost of maintenance was not more than six hundred pounds a year.¹ Even the African Committee did not realise however that Adandozan very much wanted to retain the English connection.

Faced with the conflicting recommendations of two authoratative bodies, the Board of Trade took no decision and the fate of the English fort at Whydah was finally decided at Cape Coast Castle. On 26th July 1812, the Council there decided not to send any officer or provisions to the fort pending the decision of the government, a decision which the African Committee later approved.² William's fort at Whydah was closed. This closure completed the process of abandonment of all the European forts at Whydah which had started in 1797. Indeed between 1807, when the Portuguese abandoned their fort and the English abolished the slave trade, and 1809, there seems to be practically no trade at all in Whydah port.

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1. Secretary, African Committee to the Treasury, 9th Ap. 1812 (T70/73).
 2. Governor and Council, C.C.C. to African Committee, 26th Feb. 1812 (T70/35); Sec. African Committee, to Governor and Council, Cape Coast Castle, 11th May 1813 (T70/73).

This terrible situation may have forced Adandozan and his advisers to think of an alternative basis of economy. In 1808, Adandozan actually tried to lead his people back to a love of agriculture, by inaugurating, in October of that year, the "corn customs" or raising it from a private royal ceremony into a public celebration open to the masses.¹ He must no doubt have heard that the British had abolished the slave trade and were encouraging the people of the Gold Coast to take to agriculture and he probably hoped for some encouragement from them. Certainly without the help and cooperation of Dahomey's former European associates in the slave trade, such a project could not succeed. For the Dahomans had been brought up for more than two centuries to extol the virtues of slave raiding. It would need an extraordinary effort, and a continuous demonstration of practical necessity, to retrain them to have the same respect for agriculture as they had come to have for war.

Unfortunately, neither the co-operation nor the practical necessity was forthcoming, for Dahomey was soon internationally recognised as, or rather condemned to be, a slave trading kingdom. After the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, diplomatic negotiations were immediately opened to induce the other European powers to stop it likewise. In the note sent to the Portuguese government, the British government hoped that Portugal would not take the advantage

1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 23rd Oct. 1808. (T70/1163).

of the British abolition to extend its own slave trading operations, and specifically asked that Portuguese activities be limited "to the territories in Africa which the Portuguese had till then been accustomed to frequent."¹ The negotiations continued in 1808 after the court of Lisbon had removed to Rio de Janeiro. Finally in 1810, an Anglo-Portuguese treaty was signed, which permitted the continuation of the slave trade in Whydah port,¹ while denying such rights to any of the other neighbouring ports.

The first result was that the British squadron henceforth vigorously seized all the slaving ships found in the nearby ports of Porto Novo, Badagry, Little Popo and Lagos, the ports which had hitherto shared the trade with Whydah,² while leaving alone the ships found in Whydah harbour. This confirmed the

1. "Abstract of Papers (selected for Lord Castlereagh in August 1814) on the subject of the steps which have successively been taken by the British Government... for abolishing the African slave trade, 1806-1814" (FO.95/9). The relevant clause reads: "It is however to be distinctly understood that the stipulations of the present article are not to be considered as invalidating or otherwise affecting the rights of the crown of Portugal to the territories of Cabinda and Molebo.... nor as limiting or restraining the commerce of Ajuda and other ports in Africa (situated upon the coast commonly called in the Portuguese language the Costa da Mina), belonging to or claimed by the crown of Portugal."
2. Comd. F.P. Irby to E.W.White. 5th Jan. 1812 (T70/1594), to J.W.Croker, 9th Jan and 4th Mar. 1812 and 10th Mar. 1812. (Adm.1/1966).

Dahomans in their belief that all they needed was, not agriculture, but increased raiding to procure more slaves. In this way, Adandozan's efforts to encourage agriculture was killed before it had any chance, and Adandozan's judgment may have been greatly discredited. In the long term, this British attitude towards the slave trade in Whydah after ~~xxxx~~ the 1810 treaty, which was in force throughout this period, and its later actions in sending missions to Abomey to persuade the king to abolish the slave trade, must have been difficult for the Dahomans to reconcile.

The second result of the 1810 treaty was that from about 1811 onwards, the slave trade started to revive in Dahomey. The report on the slave trade in 1811 recorded that the "great scene of the slave trade is on the coast of Whydah, the Bight of Benin, Gaboon and the Portuguese settlements in the Congo and Angola."¹ In 1812, it was reckoned that forty-five ships from Bahia traded at Whydah.² To these must be added the American privateers trading under Spanish flag, who seem to have become predominant by 1816.³ Even in the mid 18th century, when the slave trade in Dahomey was at its peak, it is doubtful whether as many as forty-five ships called at Whydah port in any one year.

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1. J.Higgins and Columbine: "Report on the slave trade, 1811" (CO 267/29).
 2. Comd. F.P.Irby to E.W.White, 5th Jan 1812 (T70/1594), to J.W.Crcker, 9th Jan and 4th Mar. 10th Mar, 1812 (Adm.I/1996).
 3. J.Dawson to African Committee, 5th Nov.1816 (T70/1601); S.Cock to Viscount Castlereagh, 22nd Dec. 1817 (FO 95/9); J.Reid, J.Nicholls and others to African Committee, 27th Ap. 1818 (T70/1603 (1)).

The revival however came too late to help Adandozan's position on the throne. In fact he could not take any credit for the revival after his recent advocacy of agriculture, and his opponents were likely to point out that he was not the best person to take the utmost advantage from the situation.

Moreover, by 1810, Dahomey had remained continuously in the grip of a depression that started about 1767. Forty years was an extremely long time, and the Dahomans, who were proverbially loyal to their king, must have complained, however much in a muffled voice. Unfortunately for the historian, Dahomey is much more poorly served with documents in the first two decades of the 19th century than at any time since 1724, and we have no means of knowing exactly what happened and how the citizens reacted. There can be no doubt however that the first result of the commercial decline must have been widespread poverty.

The condition of the ordinary Dahoman was still further depressed by three years of natural disaster which started in 1809. In that year, a widespread famine occurred in Dahomey, followed in 1810 by an outbreak of an unfamiliar disease and an unusually heavy rains which carried away half of the houses at Igelefe. In spite of this rain however, the famine was still intense in December 1810. ¹

1. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 10th July 1809, 5th June 22nd Oct. and 31st Dec. 1810. (T70/1163)

Like the bulk of the general populace, the monarchy was also impoverished. The Anubomey ceremonies in 1803, 1804 and 1805 were deferred late into the year instead of being held between December and March, and they were unimpressive when held.¹ In 1803, they were still on in June. In 1804, they did not start until August and in 1805 they started in April and went on for only a short time. The ceremonies may have been dispensed with altogether when conditions worsened, to the great discredit of Adandozan and the Tegbesu line.

In the same way, Adandozan found it increasingly difficult to pay the annual tributes to Oyo. The last recorded one sent in 1808 was obviously a heavy strain on the resources of the monarchy, and Adandozan did not hide his relief when at last the tributes proved acceptable.²

Because of the difficulties confronting Oyo, Dahomey stood in no real danger of Oyo invasion for non-payment of the annual tributes. Much more threatening was the dangers of civil disturbance. As has been noticed, the Dahomans blamed their misfortune, not on the slave trade, but on the incompetence of Tegbesu line in managing it. With an active hostile camp among the princes who opposed Adandozan, the situation would undoubtedly be exploited to Adandozan's disadvantage.

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1. J.E. James to J. Mould, 28th June 1803 (T70/1580); "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah" 27th Aug. 27th Sep. and 15th Nov. 1804, 1st, 4th and 5th Ap. 1805 (T70/1163).
 2. "Accounts and Daybooks for Whydah", 10th Mar. 1808 (T70/1163).

The events of the last six years of Adandozan's reign are shrouded in complete obscurity. There can be no doubt however that the failure of his policies and measures continued to be a source of widespread discontent, and that his opponents easily spread disaffection and planned rebellion without being detected. The Dahoman traditions recall the names of two princes, Tometin and Madogungun, who took the leading part in planning his overthrow.¹

Perhaps the one man who gave the insurrection its greatest chance of success and who later supplied the means of bolstering up the new regime was Francisco Felix de Souza. His role in the history of Dahomey in the second and third decades of the 19th century must have been of decisive importance. Gezo himself never stopped saying that it was de Souza who made him king of Dahomey and he "obeyed him on every point so far that he was considered the second king of Dahomey." When he died on 8th May 1849, Gezo arranged his burial as he would that of a dead king, and only Isidore, de Souza's eldest son, prevented human sacrifice being made at the funeral.²

Unfortunately however, nothing much is known of this great man. Scraps of biographical information exist, from the hilariously funny account of Theodore Canot in 1836,³ to

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1. E.Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX, pp.43-44.
 2. Dawson to Fitzgerald, Whydah 17th Nov. 1862 (C.M.S. CA2/016).
 3. The passage relevant to de Souza in Canot has been quoted extensively by Dunglas in E.D. Vol. XX. pp. 39-41.

the charitable ones of Thomas Birch Freeman in 1856 and the supercilious ones of Dawson in 1862. A pious attempt has also been made by Noberto, a descendant of de Souza, to record a life story of his great ancestor.¹ None of these is however completely reliable, mingling, as they do, much popular fantasy with little genuine reminiscences from de Souza's own mouth.

This is not suprising for de Souza was a legendary figure even in his own lifetime. He was such a charming gentleman to all who came into contact with him, friends and foes alike that he won their instinctive respect. A convinced opponent of the slave trade like Freeman wrote of him:

"Whatever may have been his unhappy propensity as a slave dealer and however much that grave circumstance may have unhappily doomed his name and memory to censure and reprobation, yet as a man he was worthy of his position as a leading character among his fellow men and those who come in contact with him under circumstances calculated to draw out and bring into play his better feelings, as was my case, could not help cherishing towards him kindly and respectful feelings." 2

It is probable that de Souza was a brother of Jacinto Jose de Souza, who succeeded to the directorship of the Portuguese fort at Whydah in 1804 and died in 1805. It is unknown exactly when he came to Dahomey, but it is extremely unlikely that he was already there in 1788 as director of

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1. Noberto Francisco de Souza in E.D. Vol. XI1 (1955)pp 17-21
 2. T.B. Freeman, "Typescript of a Book" p.236.
(MMA.B.West Africa, box 4).

the Portuguese fort,¹ since Francisco Antonio de Fonseca e Arragao was the Portuguese director between 1782 and 1793.² De Souza told Freeman that he came to Whydah as a poor man who:

"used to watch the natives as they made certain offerings to fetish and notice where they threw the cowries offered on such occasions and watch his opportunity to gather them up to aid in furnishing the means for his daily subsistence." 3.

By 1803, he was a personal assistant to the storekeeper of the Portuguese fort because in that year he signed a document by which an army officer at Whydah arranged to have his salary paid in Portugal.⁴ In 1806, he was the book keeper of the Portuguese fort. When de Silva died or departed about 1807 de Souza probably became the director of the fort. By that time internal difficulties in Portugal prevented the Portuguese authorities from sending any provisions.

De Souza seems then to have withdrawn either to Badagry or to Little Popo (Anecho) where the slave trade was brisker than at Whydah only to be forced back to Igelefe when the British Naval squadron made the slave trade impossible anywhere else near Whydah. By 1810, he had probably become pre-eminently the richest Portuguese trader at Igelefe. His position would naturally have made him a creditor to Adandozan as all the directors of the forts had always been to the kings of Dahomey.

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1. N.F. de Souza in E.D. Vol.XII pp.17-21.
 2. See Appendix II: "Directors of the Portuguese fort".
 3. T.B.Freeman: "Typescript..." p.251 (MMA.BWA/4).
 4. Carlos Eugeni o Correa da Silva: Uma Viagem ao estabelecimento Portugues de Sao Joao Baptista de Ajuda (1865) p.77. This would tend to disprove Canot's assertion that de Souza was illiterate.

What brought him in on the side of the plotters was Adandozan's inability to pay his debts. De Souza made an excessive demand to which Adandozan responded with public insult and an honourable confinement.¹ Annoyed and afraid for his personal safety, he fled to Little Popo where he remained until 1818.

The fact that de Souza, the richest resident Portuguese trader in the whole of the "slave coast", joined the ranks of the dissident Dahoman princes, became the decisive factor in the Dahoman dynastic struggle. Before he left Whydah he had already befriended Madogungun and from Little Popo he "continued to send presents to Madogungun, advising him to win the heart of the people from the king."¹ It was with these presents that the future Gezo secured enough support for his coup.

When the plan was ripe, Adandozan was deposed, during the Anubomey ceremony in 1818. The process was simple. The Mehu took off his shoes of office and the Migan told him that the ancient kings, Wegbaja and Agaja, rejected him. Without the support of these two officers, there was nothing that Adandozan could do. His supporters who tried to resist were easily overcome and a large number of them executed or exported.²

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1. Dawson to Fitzgerald, 17th Nov. 1862 (CMS CA2/016).
 2. E. Douglas in E.D. Vol. XX. pp. 35-47. M.J. Herskovits: Dahomey, Vol. 1, p.14; E. Foa: Le Dahomey (Paris 1895) pp. 18 - 21. As Herskovits had pointed out, the historical section of this book is absolutely untrustworthy. Great care must be taken not to believe every story told about the accession of Gezo.

Both the accession of Adandozan in 1797 and his deposition in 1818 have generally been explained without any references to the times. In the process, the facts have been completely forgotten and the character of Adandozan and his right to the throne have suffered unnecessarily. The Dahoman oral traditions, which everyone has hitherto believed, represent Agonglo as dying at a good old age. No one seems to remember that in fact he was shot at about the age of thirty-one. Adandozan and Gezo are now represented as half brothers, while in fact they belonged to different families contending for the throne,¹ distant cousins who were both directly descended from Agaja.

Briefly the generally known story is that Adandozan and Gezo were brothers, the sons of Agonglo, and that Adandozan was the much older prince. Agonglo is said to have designated Gezo as his successor but because of his age, Adandozan refused to abdicate and had to be forcibly deposed.²

Another version current in the middle of the 19th century was that Adandozan was in fact king but had to be deposed because of his excessive cruelties.³ Sometimes these two versions have been mixed together to produce the picture of Adandozan as a wicked regent, who loved power so much that

1. Le Herisse: L'Ancien Royaume pp. 211-312; E. Douglas in E.D. Vol. XX. pp. 35-36.
2. This will be quite clear when the dynastic quarrels of 1789, the murder of Agonglo in 1797 and subsequent deportations of Gezo's mother are taken into account.
3. Dawson to Fitzgerald, 17th Nov. 1862. (CMS.C.A. 2/016).

he sold the mother of the rightful heir into slavery and who had to be forced to abdicate.¹

These stories are totally misleading. Foremost in the minds of Gezo's descendants who disseminated them was the desire to legitimize their line to the throne and preserve the appearance of continuity. Adandozan could not have been a regent for Gezo since he himself was too young to reign and had to have regents chosen for himself. The indications are that both Gezo and Adandozan were about the same age and that Adandozan outlived Gezo.²

The little that is known of Adandozan's personal character would imply that he was an imaginative and progressive young monarch, far ahead of his times.

Early in his reign, he had tried to procure European education for Dahoman princes. In 1801, he sent two of them to be educated in England. The plan however miscarried, and the children were sold into slavery instead in the West Indies. As soon as Adandozan heard it, he took vigorous steps to have them released and they were brought back to Dahomey in June 1803, after spending only a few days in England on their way back from the West Indies.³ Adandozan's equally unsuccessful attempt in 1805 to have an ammunition factory built in Dahomey and to have the mining industry

1. M.J. Herskovits: Dahomey Vol. 1. p.12.
2. Sir Richard Burton (Ed. Isabella Burton): A Mission to Gelele King of Dahomey (Lond. 1893, first published 1894) p. 293.
3. J.Macleod: Voyage to Africa pp. 103-106; Secretary, African Committee to Governor and Council, C.C.C., 6th Ap. 1803 (T70/72); J.Mould to African Committee, 8th Sep 1803 (T70/34).

established by the Portuguese have been noted, as has his equally abortive attempt to lead Dahomey away from the slave trade to agriculture.

His deposition in 1818 was therefore not entirely as a result of his bad character. Rather it was the culmination of the dynastic struggle that had been going on in Dahomey since 1789 and which was brought about by the incurable economic depression of Dahomey. It was a proof that even Dahomey which was built to defeat the corrosive influences of the slave trade, was now helplessly trapped in the vicious circle imposed by the trade. Nothing that Agonglo and Adandozan had done between 1789 and 1818 had been able to prevent this threat to the stability of Dahomey.

The succession of a new line in the person of Gezo did not however herald a revolution in the national policy. The line of Tegbesu had been overthrown because it had failed to maintain a prosperous slave trade and to assert Dahomey's independence of Oyo. It was Gezo's declared objective to succeed where his predecessors had failed.

CONCLUSION.

The period covered in this work was one in which the slave trade was the most important economic activity affecting the lives of all Dahomans, as indeed of all West Africans. From the introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, every other productive activity was discouraged in various ways. In the old Aja country, anyone who had the brute force and lack of scruple to seize a fellow man could easily make money. In that way manstealing became the most lucrative occupation. Agriculture and industrial pursuits became most unrewarding.

Because of this and because the Europeans wanted only young and healthy slaves industry was discouraged and agriculture deteriorated. The wealth that was so easily made through the sale of the slaves was put to no productive purpose, and was in fact easily lost. For life was too insecure. "There was no point in expanding production, in planning and building for the future. Tomorrow all might be destroyed and the builders and planners might be enslaved or killed".¹ The whole period was therefore one of general progressive decline, though a few individuals easily amassed momentary wealth.

Politically, the slave trade brought new notions and new means of power. A people who had reached political stability

1. J.D. Fage: Introduction pp.86-87.

based on a set of beliefs, discovered that their practices and beliefs were not the only practicable or even the most efficient ones. A people who had believed that political authority ought to be based on natural allegiances like that between father and son, discovered that authority based on physical force could be quite as effective, or even more so. After all, it was not natural authority that made a man the slave of another. It was physical force obtained from the firearms supplied by the Europeans who imposed no rules or social responsibilities on its use. In this way, ancient precepts were first questioned and then disobeyed without any new ones being substituted in their place. The traditional political systems grew weak and no longer provided adequate security for individuals.

Progressive economic decline and the weakening of political bonds were dominant aspects of the situation in which the slave trade flourished. For the Aja in the early days of the slave trade, this meant the disappearance of their old solid world, and the growth of a new spirit of ruthless brutality and insecurity. There were not a few of them who welcomed this change, fed on it and wholeheartedly became "partners in the trade". However, the more responsible, "the discerning natives", who must have been in a minority, resented the evil and tried, eventually unsuccessfully, to arrest the decline by stopping the slave trade.

Among those who tried to reform society in the Aja country were the founders of the kingdom of Dahomey. A little band of highly principled and far seeing individuals, they withdrew themselves from Allada northwards, beyond the immediate reach of the slave raiders and of the slave trade influences.

In the face of the widespread instability and impermanence, the challenge facing them was to create a politically stable state. In a period when wealth could be easily amassed and equally easily lost, their problem was to make that state also economically viable.

To achieve political stability, they had to establish a state that would remedy the faults of the traditional system and resist the corrosive influences of the slave trade. In this they were largely successful. The state which they founded was not a development of the traditional organisation into feudal tyranny like that of medieval Europe. It was something more like a modern national state. Unlike the traditional system in which a kingdom was regarded as a family written large, and a country as a larger version of many families descended from the same ancestor, the founders of Dahomey saw a state as a power, in which citizenship was open to all and sundry, who were prepared to obey the king and serve him. Instead of authority being based on descent as in the traditional system, the founders of Dahomey based their authority on present force. In place of the decentralisation implied in the

traditional system which weakened the Central authority and rendered breakaways easy under the smallest kind of pressure, the founders of Dahomey concentrated all authority into the hands of the king. Seen in this light, the organisation of Dahomey was not "traditional", in the same way as the old Aja kingdoms or the Yoruba kingdoms were. It was revolutionary, and so was the impact which it later made in the Yoruba-Aja country.

The king was the effective head of both the civil and the military arms of the state. He attended councils, personally reviewed cases from lower courts, and often went at the head of his army into war. All the chiefs were appointed by him and were directly responsible to him. He had power of life and death over everyone in the kingdom except the Nigan whom he could only exile, and during the 18th century he did not hesitate to execute any of his officers for incompetence or disloyalty.

This effective centralisation, which enabled the kings of Dahomey to control all the means of physical force like firearms, cutlasses bows and arrows, was the basis of the strength of Dahomey. This point is worth emphasising for without it, the firearms introduced during the slave trade would have been used for self destruction as they had been used earlier by the Aja and would be used later by the Yoruba who did not possess an equally strong political organisation at the centre. In

other words, it was not the slave trade per se or even Dahoman patronage or strict control of it that strengthened Dahomey. Rather it was the fact that Dahomey was built, as the traditional Aja had not been built, to benefit from the most deadly weapons introduced by the slave trade. This is the fundamental similarity between Dahomey and Ashanti though their organisations were different in detail. It is also the fundamental difference between Dahomey and Oyo which throughout the 18th century continued to base its political organisation on the Ebi social theory, and explains why in the 19th century the Yoruba country broke up while Dahomey remained united and strong.

Ironically, the submission to Oyo helped Dahomey to perfect its internal organisation. This was not simply because Dahomey was able to borrow useful Oyo institutions, which it did to advantage, but more because the submission forced Dahomey to eschew military adventures which might have led to its complete destruction, and to concentrate instead on perfecting its internal administration. In this way the period of Oyo rule over Dahomey was politically useful to the latter and gave it a long experience in internal administration which became invaluable in the 19th century.

Strange as it may sound, Dahomey was not a particularly strong power for the greater part of the 18th century. After the brilliant successes of Agaja between 1724 and 1727, Dahomey almost disappeared under the successive Oyo raids and its own internal revolts.

In the two decades following the death of Agaja in 1740, the Oyo raids from the north and the old Whydah raids from the South-west, kept Dahomey pretty weak. The fate of the kingdom remained uncertain until the confirmation of the 1730 treaty in 1748. Even after that only the guns of the European forts, and particularly of the English fort under Goodson, prevented the old Whydah from regaining their old kingdom. In spite of these guns however, Dahomey remained unable to hold the beach effectively and the old Whydah continued to molest all activities in the coastal belt of the kingdom until Abson helped Dahomey to conclude a treaty with the raiders in 1772.

The war which has generally been represented as having been fought between Ashanti and Dahomey in the mid 18th century was in fact the drubbing which Ashanti received from the Oyo soldiers in 1764 around Atakpame area which appears to have been the boundary of the Oyo Empire, in that direction. In 1776 when Dahomey wore its most prosperous look in the whole of the 18th century, an officer in the French fort said, as a matter of fact, that Dahomey was not a strong power and never had been. After that and until the end of the period covered here, Dahomey did not gain strength to any appreciable extent.

The significance and importance of Dahomey in the 18th century therefore did not lie in its military prowess, although it was a military state. Its greatest achievement and therefore

its entitlement to fame lay in the ability of its rulers to keep its administration intact right through the period, in the face of all the fissiparous tendencies rampant during the age of the slave trade. This was not a small achievement.

The old Aja states had succumbed to the destructive forces of the slave trade. To the west of Dahomey, empires rose and fell. To the east, mighty Oyo crashed in an equally mighty fall, bringing the whole of the Yoruba country down with itself. But little, weak Dahomey kept its administration intact. It was this, rather than its strength, which enabled Dahomey to benefit from the chaos that followed the fall of the Oyo Empire.

The story of how Dahomey was able to keep its administration unimpaired is one of almost unparalleled tenacity and endurance. The concentration of all authority in the hands of the king was not seriously challenged until the period between 1726 and 1730. Then the southern menace against which all the Dahomans were united, appeared to most people as having been removed with the conquest of both Allada and Whydah. The Oyo invasions and the European obstructionist tactics which almost destroyed Dahomey could easily have diminished the authority of the king and weakened the administration. But although Agaja gave up all other policies he did not abandon the principle whereby all authority was retained by the king. Even when he had to dispense his subjects in the face of Oyo invasion, he retained that authority intact by sending an officer to accompany each group.

Whether by accident or by negotiation, the principle was conceded in the 1730 treaty which made Dahomey a tributary state to Oyo. After 1735, Agaja would rather have the state destroyed and himself buried under its ruin than concede an iota of the monarchical authority to those who wanted the slave trade thrown open to all and sundry. He continued to fight those of his subjects who wanted to diminish his authority often without decisive victory. When he died in 1740 the only legacy which he left his son and successor, Tegbesu, was this principle of absolute monarchical authority.

Tegbesu defended the same principle with an almost ferocious rigour, even against his own brothers who sought to impair it. The early part of his reign was notorious for executions and sales into slavery in its defence. The Yovogans of "nydah, who by virtue of their position could easily become dangerous to the king's authority, bore the full force of this policy. The first nine of them were executed, sometimes on the faintest whisper of any allegation which tended to suggest a usurpation of the power of the king.

By 1751, all the Dahomans, princes, nobles, soldiers and peasants had accepted the principle without question. Even the European directors grudgingly came to accept it and prefer it to lawlessness, though they later chafed under it. After that, the power of the king was never again questioned and the stability of the internal administration was assured. Even when discontent started in Dahomey, it was not against

the authority of the monarchy, but against the person and family wielding that authority. In 1789, the Migan had no difficulty in foiling the plans of the Dahoman princes who wanted to seize the throne by force simply by challenging the insurgents to fire, if they dared, on the thrones of the ancient kings of Dahomey. It needed an unusually long economic depression to produce Agonglo's murder and Adandozan's deposition. Even then, Gezo was at pains to preserve the authority of the monarchy after his seizure of power, to the extent of protecting the sacred persons of Adandozan whom he had deposed.

As a result of this administrative stability, two things stand out prominently in the history of Dahomey throughout the 18th century as indeed for the rest of its history until it was conquered by the French. The first was the longevity of its kings. Agaja reigned for at least thirty two years. Tegbesu reigned for thirtyfour, and both were said to be extremely old men before they died. Agonglo, the last king to die naturally during the period under survey, died at about the age of fifty four, comparatively young. Adandozan, deposed in 1818, did not die until 1861, three years after the death of Gezo.

All the Dahoman kings in the 18th century, and later, were exceptionally gifted political leaders. Agaja was truly great, not only as a statesman, but also as a war general. His tremendous mental capacity and clear far-sightedness remained unimpaired almost until his death. Tegbesu was urbane, possessing the smooth manners and the ruthless calculations of

a business executive. Kpengla was high spirited, practical, rough and ready. Agonglo, despite his short and troubled reign, emerged as a clever tactician, and Adandozan, when he grew up, was "progressive". All of them showed themselves capable of sizing up the local political, if not, understandably, the international economic, situations.

The second prominent thing is the religious tenacity with which a policy adopted in one reign was carried on in the next and if necessary in the following one until the end sought was achieved. For example, it took three reigns and something around sixty to eighty years before Dahomey could conquer the whole of the Aja kingdoms and impose its own idea of a state on the Aja peoples. When Agaja finally decided to subscribe to the slave trade, all his successors became ardent slave traders. When Kpengla declared that his policy would be to seek independence from Oyo, all his successors faithfully followed the policy even though they all realised that they were too weak to achieve it. It was Gezo, the representative of the rival faction to the descendants of Kpengla, who finally carried out this policy.

The stability created by the long reigns, and the continuity of policy, gave Dahomey many advantages. Policy makers could take a long term view, knowing fully well that if the end sought was not achieved in their own life times, succeeding generations would work towards its achievement. Kpengla was

expressing the general nature of the Dahoman policy when in 1783 he said that he was "easy in pace but always pursuing". So long as he kept the policy of his ancestors no Dahoman king needed to take any precipitate actions. This made the men at the head of affairs think more of the interest of the kingdom than of their own individual names or memories.

That was a great contrast to the picture one has of contemporary Oyo, where only two kings, Ojigi and Abiodun seem to have had fairly long reigns during the 18th century. Ojigi's reign probably did not exceed twenty years. Abiodun reigned effectively for only fifteen years and possibly for nineteen in all. All the others either died after a few years reign or were required to commit suicide by a usurper after only a few days as king.

When we come to consider the other objective which the founders of Dahomey set themselves, that of making their new state economically viable, it will be seen that the rulers of Dahomey were not as successful in that as in the first objective. The issue itself became dominant in the national life of Dahomey only from 1730 onwards. After the conquest of the coastal states, Agaja discovered that there just was no alternative to the slave trade if he wanted to maintain his country's link with Europe. But although he concluded the 1730 treaty with Brathwaite, he had lived too long to change his dislike of the

trade and he spent the last years of his life containing slaving activities in his kingdom and its immediate environs.

Tegbesu took a less equivocal attitude and decided to base the economy of Dahomey wholly and solely on the slave trade. He seems to have believed that the trade could be peacefully pursued like any other business, and to have placed great confidence in the beneficial effects to be expected from it.

In spite of his exertions however, it soon became clear that the slave trade, much less peaceful slave trade, was not a reliable basis for the economy. The brief period of commercial prosperity ended by 1767 and the last seven years of Tegbesu's reign witnessed the beginning of a depression that did not end until 1818, despite all the efforts of the rulers of Dahomey. In 1775, when peaceful slave trade had become obviously impracticable, Kpengla, Tegbesu's son and successor, started the slave raids, which were to be developed to such devastating extent by Gezo in the 19th century. Between 1775 and 1818, those raids were not spectacularly successful, and the slave trade in Dahomey continued to decline. First the American war of Independence, then the French Revolution and finally the Abolition of the slave trade by the British government in 1807, all ensured that Dahomey did not prosper on the inhuman trade in the 18th century.

The resultant poverty caused widespread discontent which in turn adversely affected the political stability of Dahomey.

Consequently, Agonglo was murdered in 1797 and Adandozan was chased from the throne in 1818. Unless the situation was firmly checked, the stage was set again for the political disorder so often the outcome of the slave trade.

Here then was a great paradox of the effect of the slave trade. At the beginning of the 18th century, Aja politics had become chaotic because of the increase in the trade. At the end of the century, instability was about to set in to the kingdom of Dahomey because the trade was declining. Perhaps the rulers of Dahomey ought therefore to have concluded that once slave exporting became the major economic activity of a people, it was bound eventually to undermine the smooth running of the state whether it flourished or not.

As in the early years of the 18th century, they did not reach that conclusion. They continued to accept the slave trade even when everyone else concerned had started to reject or reconsider it. They laid the blame for their misfortune on the mismanagement of their rulers, particularly the descendants of Tegbesu. These, rather than the slave trade, they were determined to change. After two unsuccessful attempts in 1789 and 1797, they finally succeeded when Adandozan was deposed in 1818.

Two sets of non-Dahomans were intimately connected with the development of events in Dahomey in the 18th century. The

first were the European factors and traders who were mainly guided by their self interest which each pursued in his own way. By and large they can be said to have played no constructive role in either the political or economic development of Dahomey during the 18th century.

The English, the French and the Dutch helped to break up the traditional Aja political system and to encourage Agaja's invasion of the coastal kingdoms in the hope of securing more slaves and greater influence. They discovered however that with Agaja's victory, they had exchanged incompetent allies for a stern taskmaster, who immediately ordered the Dutch out of the country. The English and the French later joined forces with either the Whydah or the Dahomans whenever they thought it was in their interest. When order and regularity returned to Dahomey, they at first welcomed it but later chafed under it. The English, who had other establishments on the Gold Coast progressively grew disinterested in Dahomey and their fort at Igelefe remained an out of the way post, reserved for punishing incompetent or offending officers from the Gold Coast.

The Portuguese pursued their self interest differently. Officially established at Whydah in 1721, they were not greatly involved in all the pre-invasion political manoeuvres. They befriended Agaja immediately after his victory over the Whydah and were ready to mediate between all the contending parties during the troubled years immediately after 1727. Unlike the

French and the English, they encouraged official contacts between the kings of Dahomey, the rulers of Brazil and the kings of Portugal. Nevertheless, they too wished to be regarded as above the law and complained bitterly when made to obey.

During the 18th century, all the European governments seem to have agreed that useful informations should not be allowed to pass into the hands of the Africans. None of the Dahoman embassies to Portugal succeeded nor did they lead to an exchange of diplomatic representatives, though Agaja had proposed it. Throughout the 18th century, not one Dahoman was trained in Europe or even in Sao Tome. When Tegbesu wanted French education for his crown prince in 1751, it was denied him. When Adandozan sent two princes to be educated in England in 1801, they were sold into slavery instead.

Economically, the same self interest governed their behaviour towards the commerce of Dahomey. Their friendship only lasted for as long as there was enough slave supply, and when that failed, they would rather desert Dahomey than stay to help. The English did not really trade much or regularly at Whydah throughout the 18th century. The French and the Portuguese came to prefer Porto Novo towards the end of the century when Dahomey no longer furnished an abundance of slaves.

The other set of non-Dahomans who were intimately connected

with the events in Dahomey were the Oyo. As was to be expected, they played a very positive role both in the political and economic development of Dahomey, though only the unsavoury aspects of their century of imperial rule over Dahomey have usually been remembered by the Dahomans.

Yet the rule of Oyo had its constructive aspects as well. As has already been noticed, the Dahoman submission to Oyo in 1748 and the pax imposed by the iron hands of the Basorun Gaha actually gave Dahomey a period of peace while Tegbesu reconstructed the foundations of the internal administration which stood Dahomey in such a good stead for the rest of its history. Without the administrative machinery, particularly the Ilari system, copied from Oyo by Tegbesu, the government of the enlarged kingdom of Dahomey would undoubtedly have been much less efficient. Economically, it was the Oyo who supplied Dahomey with the slaves which formed the foundation of its wealth and power during the reign of Tegbesu. Oyo's decision to develop its own port at Porto Novo started off the Dahoman depression which continued while Oyo had the power to maintain its port.

It was because Dahomey was largely successful in creating a politically stable state and largely unsuccessful in making it economically viable that it became the incorrigible slave trading kingdom in the 19th century. The incurable decline in

Oyo had been aggravated by the outbreak of the Fulani Jihad and was just starting to engulf the rest of the Yoruba country in fratricidal wars in 1818. Thanks to the internal strength of Dahomey, Gezo had no difficulty in declaring Dahomey's independence of Oyo and benefitting, through the slave raids, from the Yoruba civil wars. Because of the economic depression of the previous reigns, Gezo argued, when asked to give up the slave trade, that he could not do so without losing his throne. By that he meant that it was the widespread economic depression that enabled him to depose Adandozan and unless he was more successful than Adandozan, he might equally be deposed. To retain the throne, he had to make the kingdom economically viable and that he proceeded to do through his unrelenting pursuit of the slave trade, the only economy that Dahomey had practised for almost a century. Even when the slave trade had finally ended, economic viability continued to engross the energy of the Dahoman rulers. It is not surprising that one of the main causes of the dispute between the French and the Dahomans, which led to the French invasion of the kingdom in 1893, was the unwillingness of the Dahoman rulers to allow their sources of revenue to be curtailed.

APPENDIX I.Place Names.

One problem that confronts a student of African history is that of identifying indigenous place names in European documents. European writers not only gave European names to places in West Africa which had their own indigenous names (such as "Slave Coast", "Ivory Coast", Lagos etc.), they also wrote African place names as they sounded to them. Because of the wide phonetic variations between European languages, the number of ways in which an African place name could be spelt was almost infinite. Thus Oyo was "Io", "Eyeo", "Ayo", "Ailleux", "Alliots" etc. and Whydah was written "Widah", "whydah", "Oueda", "Juda", "Fida", etc. Such well known names as these however present little difficulty, particularly as they have continued to exist. When the places concerned have disappeared, identification has remained impossible.

Sometimes, one place might be given two or more names, or two or more places might be given similar names because their original names sounded similar to European ears. In these two cases, the problem of unravelling which place was which can be very difficult.

Then there is the general West African system whereby a town shared the same name with its inhabitants. If, for certain reasons, the inhabitants were forced to abandon the town, they carried the name with themselves and gave it to any new settlement they might later found.

This was the case with modern Badagry. There was a town of the same name situated about twenty four miles north of the present town, founded for, or augmented by, the Aja refugees after Agaja's invasion of the coast between 1724 and 1727. In 1785, it was destroyed and its inhabitants dispersed. Between 1785 and 1787, one Sessu gathered the remnants and settled them on the present site to which he gave the previous name Badagry.

The picture can become more complicated if, after a lapse of time, a group of people later settled in the previously deserted town. They would then revive the old name without depriving the new settlement of the same name. This was how the several places called Ardra, Great Ardra, Little Ardra etc. acquired their names.

Henri Labouret and Paul Rivet have concluded that modern Allada was the place which the Europeans called Great Ardra, and modern Godomey the place they called Little Ardra. or Offra.¹ This is correct if it is meant to identify the places called Great Ardra and Little Ardra before 1730. After 1730 and particularly from about 1760 onwards, the Europeans applied the names Great Ardra and Little Ardra to two other different places. Little Ardra was applied to modern Porto Novo, and Great Ardra to the town of Ajase, twenty four miles north of Porto Novo.²

Again the situation developed as a result of Agaja's

1. H. Labouret et P. Rivet: Le Royaume d'Ardra p.10.

2. See Fig. 4.

invasion of the coastal kingdoms. After the destruction of the old Allada kingdom, its rulers appealed to Oyo for help. In the 1730 settlement, the remnants of the conquered Allada people were resettled in another area which the Oyo called Ajase Ipo, and its capital, Ajase. The Aja people who settled there however continued to call their new capital Allada, which the Europeans continued to spell Ardra or Ardres. The new Allada (Ajase) was situated east of the old one and was about twenty four miles inland. In the meanwhile, Dahomey had taken over the capital of the old kingdom and continued to call it Allada.

The new kingdom later developed its own port which was called Porto Novo by the Portuguese "because it is the newest one known".¹ This port became very popular from about mid-1770's onwards and remained so until about the end of the slave trade. But it remained simply a port of disembarkation where a little town had grown up to offer facilities for the incoming ships or the outgoing slaves. The main trade itself continued to be transacted at the new Ardra (Ajase). For this reason, the port, Porto Novo, was sometimes called "Little Ardra" (the place of debarkation) to distinguish it from "Great Ardra" (the place of trade). So that towards the end of the 18th century, Great Ardra was the new Ardra (Ajase) which the remnants of the Aja people from Allada had settled in 1730 and Little Ardra was Porto Novo, its port. Porto Novo however remained a far more popular name than Little Ardra.

1. Governor of Bahia to King of Portugal, 1775 (AHU.8941 and 8942).

As could be seen from the map which Norris drew (fig. 4) the distinction was quite clear to contemporaries, who continued to write the old capital as "Allada" and the new one as "Great Ardra". Porto Novo however increased in importance with the resumption of French contact with it in the fifth decade of the 19th century, and it subsequently gave its name to the whole kingdom of Ajase Ipo, at least in European literature.

APPENDIX II.

Directors of St. Louis Fort, Whydah (French) *

Derigouyn	?1707-1710
Chamois	1710 - 1712
du Coulombier	1712 - Nov. 1715 (ejected).
Bouchel	Nov. 1715 - 1722
Levesque	? 1722 - ? 1727
Houdye Dupetitval	1727 -1729 (killed)
Gallot	1730 (usurped the post)
Mallet de la Mine	1730 - 1731
Lavigne	1732 (died)
Dubelay	1733 - 1734 (died, suspected of poison by his fort doctor).
Delisle	1734 - 1737 (died)
Laurent	1737 - 1742
Levens	1742 (ejected)
Levet	1742 - 21st Aug. 1747 (ejected)
Druno de la Court	Sep. 1747 - March 1751
Guestard	Mar. 1751 - 1755
Dubordieu	1755 - ??
Pruneau de Pomegorge	1763 - 1764
Remillat	? 1764 - July 1764 (ejected)
Cuillie (Ag)	July 1764 - Sept. 1765.
Guestard	1765 - 1774 (died)

* This list ammends those given by Berbain and Dunglas whenever there is documentary evidence for so doing.

Governors of St. Louis Fort Whydah (French).

De Warel	1774- 1775 (ejected)
Olivier de Montaguere*	1775 - 1786
Gourg	1786 - 1789 (ejected)
Deniau de la Garenne	1789 - 1797 (absconded)
Pierre Bonon (ag)	1797 - ??

* Dunglas wrongly says Montaguere^{was} obliged to leave.

Fort of St. John the Baptist (Portuguese).

Francisco Pereyra Mendes	1721 - July 1724
F.P.R.	July 1724 - 1728
Joao Bazilio	1728 - 1743 (ejected)
R.P. Martinho da Cunha Barboza	1743 - 1746 (died)
R.P. Francisco de Esperito Santo	1746 (expelled)
Francisco Nunes Pereira (by usurpation)	1746.
Felix Jose da Gouvea	1747 - 1749.
? ?	1749-1751
Luiz Coelho Brito	1751 (died)
Theodozio Rodrigues da Costa	1751 - 1757 (ejecteã)
Antonio Nunes de Gouvea (ag)	(1757- 1759 (ejected)
Felix Jose de Gouvea	1759 - 1762 (died)

Francisco Xavier da
Silveira 1762 - 1764 (died)

Jose Gomes Gomzaga 1764 - 1765

John Reveiro 1765 - ? ?

Information on Portuguese activities ceased until 1778.

Bernado Azevedo Coutinho 1778 - 1782.

Francisco Antonio Fonseca
e Aragao 1782 - 1793 (expelled)

Manoel Lellis el Almeida 1793
(ag)

Francisco Xavier Alves 1793 - 1796

Manoel de Bastos Varella
Pinto Pacheco 1796- 1799 (ejected)

Jose Ferreira de Araujo 1799 - 1800 (ejected)

Jose Joaquim Marques da Graca
1800 - 1804 (ejected)

Jacinto Jose de Souza 1804 - 1805 (died)

Francisco Xavier
Rodrigues de Silva 1805 - ??

Directors of William's Fort (English).

Captain Wilburne ? ? 1700 - ??

Peter Duffield ? ? - Feb. 1704

Richard Willis Feb. 1704 - 1709 (died)

William Hicks June 1709 - Ap. 1712 (died)

Hilliard and Green (ag) Ap. 1712 - May 1713.

Joseph Blaney May 1713 - Mar. 1715 (ejected)

J. Errington and
L. Green (ag.) Mar - Aug. 1715

R. Mason, D. Welsh and
W. Bramston Aug. 1715 - Apr. 1716.

Directors of William's fort (English).

Henry Turner	Jan. 1746 - Dec. 1746 (died)
William Devaynes (ag)	1747 - July 1750
Andrew Johnson	July 1750 - Jan. 1751 (died)
Robert Livingstone	Jan. - Sep. 1751
William Devaynes	Sep. 1751 - Nov. 1752.
William Withers	Nov. 1752 - Nov. 1753.
William Devaynes	Nov. 1753 - Aug. 1762
William Goodson	Aug. 1762 - Feb. 1767 (died)
Richard Burgiss	Feb. - Ap. 1767
Archibald Dalzel	Ap.1767 - 1770
Erasmus Williams	Aug. - Sept. 1770 (died)
*Lionel Abson	Oct. 1770 - June 1803 (died)
Henry Edward James (ag)	June 1803 - Mar. 1804
Henry Hamilton	Mar. 1804 - June 1807
Frederick James	July 1807 - Feb. 1812.

* Contrary to Dunglas assertion there was no English director called Sally in 1793. Sally was Abson's daughter.

APPENDIX III
CONTEMPORARY KINGS

WHYDAH

Agbangla 1670?- 1703
Aisan or Amat 1703 - 1708
Houffon 1708 - 1727 (died
1733).

DAHOMY

Wegbaja ? ? - ? 1680
Akaba ? 1680 - ? 1708
Agaja ? 1708 - 1740
Tegbesu 1740 - 1774
Kpengla 1774 - 1789
Agonglo 1789 - 1797 (murdered)
Adandozan 1797 - 1818 (deposed)

OYO

Ojigi ? ? - 1736 ?

Gberu ?1736 - ? 1746
Amuniwaiye

Onisile ? 1746 - Aug. 1754.

Labisi] Aug. - Nov. 1754]
Awonbioju

Agboluaje] Nov. 1754 - ? 1770]
Majeogbe

The usurpation of
Basorun Gaha 1754 - 1774

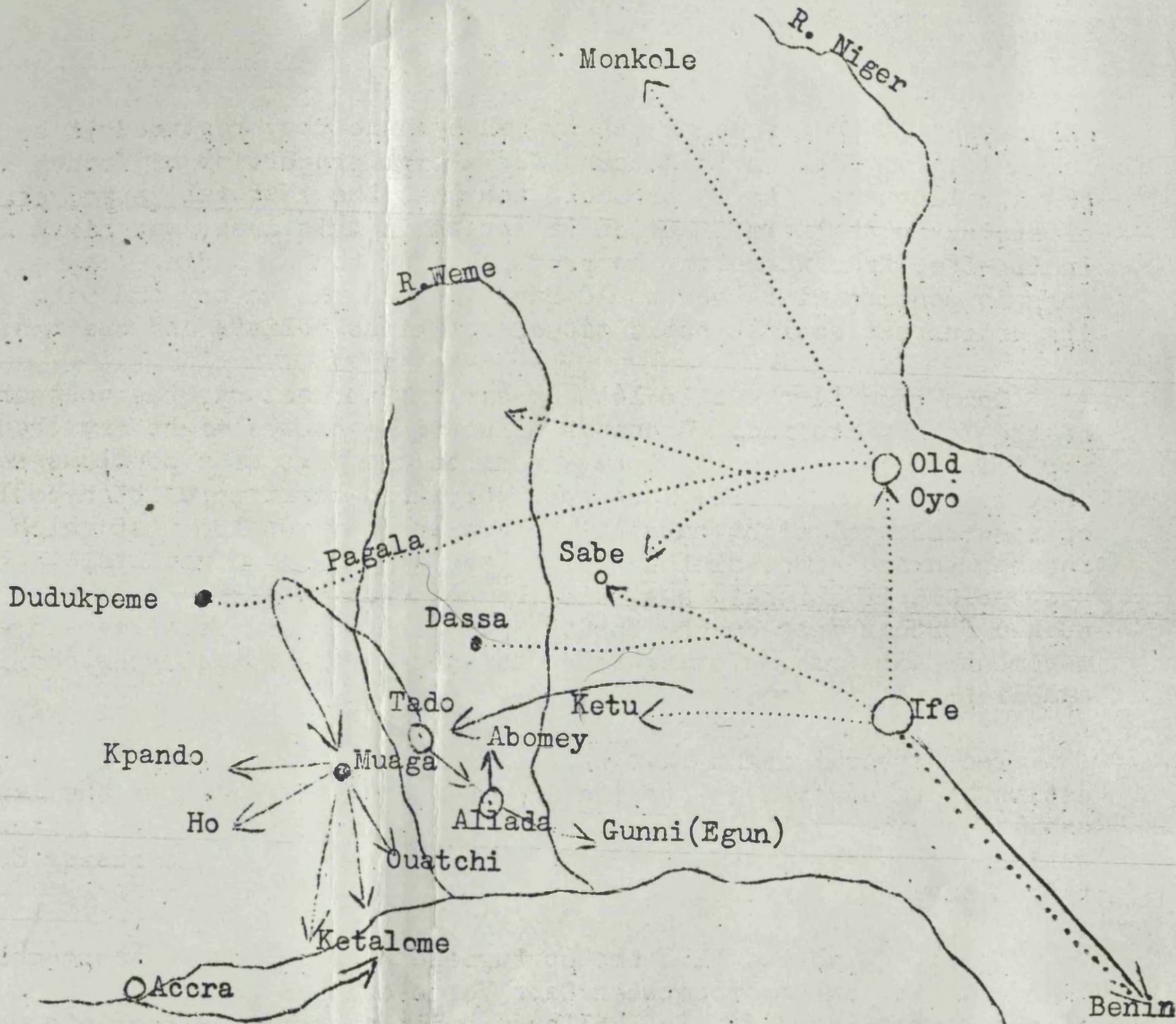
Abiodun ? 1770 (1774) - 1789

Awole 1789 - 1796 ?

Adebo] 1796 ? - 1797 ?]
Maku

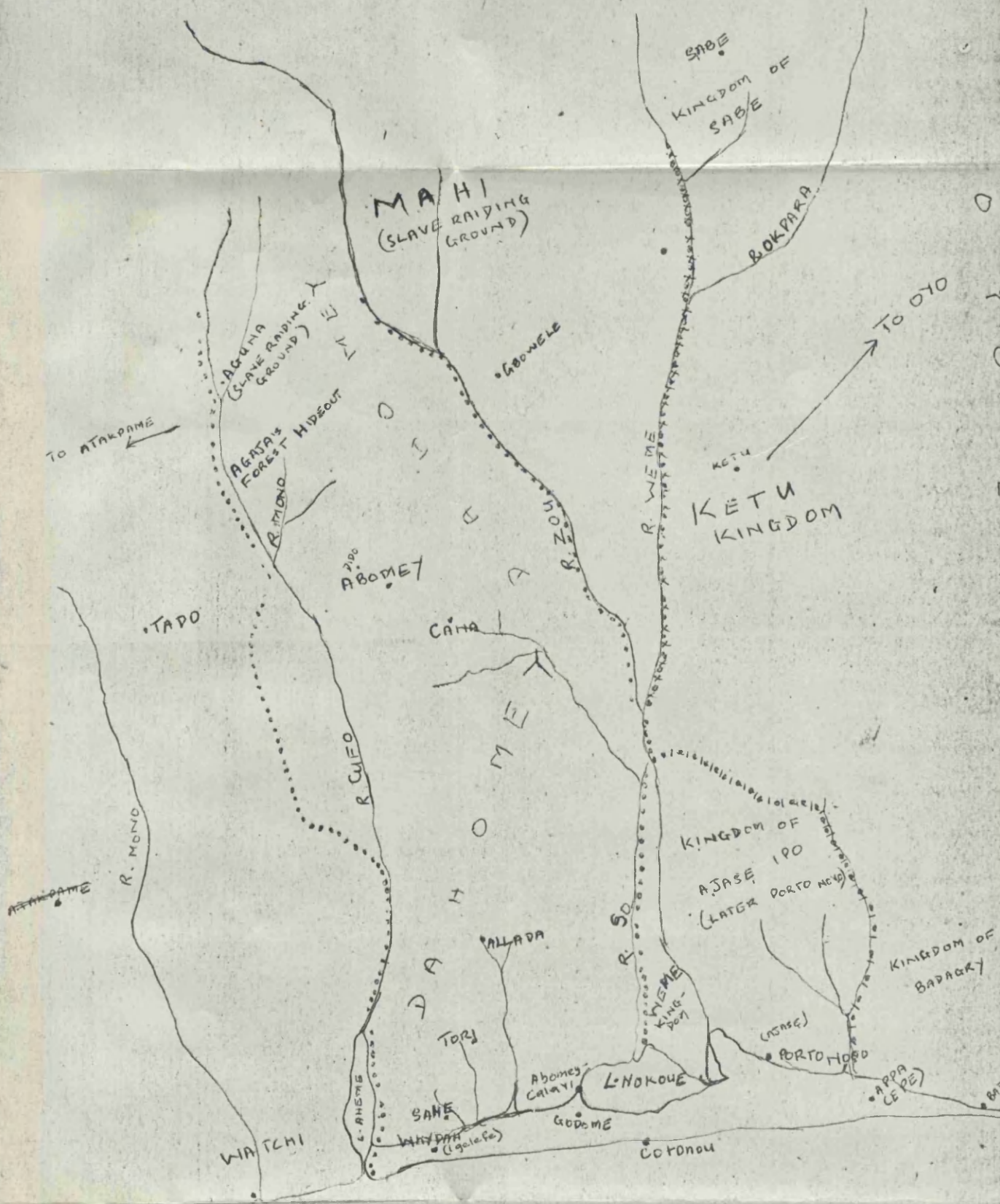
Interregnum ? 1797 - 1819 ?

MAP II MIGRATION OF YORUBA AND AJA PEOPLES



———— Aja Migration
..... Yoruba Migration

(after J. Bertho: Africa. 1949, pp.121-132.)



DAHOMEY KINGDOM AND ITS NEIGHBOURS
AFTER THE 1730 SETTLEMENT

- Approximate limits of DAHOMEY KINGDOM.
- " " " AJASE IPO (PORTO NOVO)
- o x o x o x " " " MAHI REPUBLICS

4

TAPPA'S supposed to be the **IN-TAS**
a formidable people *Crocothochontoo*

MAHIES

KINGDOM OF DAHOMY

Whose King Guadjia Trudo, Conquered the Kingdoms of Idrak and Whydah in 1727.

Zassa the Capital of Dahomy
Abomey the Capital of Foy
Foin or Foy the ancient Country
of the Dahomians then called Foy's



AYOES

or **EYOES** perhaps **GAGOES**
a warlike people to the Northward of this

JABOO

ARDRAH
a town

WHYDAH
a town

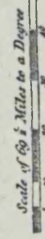
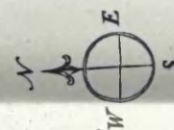
POPOE

BIGHT of BENIN

Rio da Volta commonly **River Volta**
so called by the Portuguese
from the Velocity of its Stream

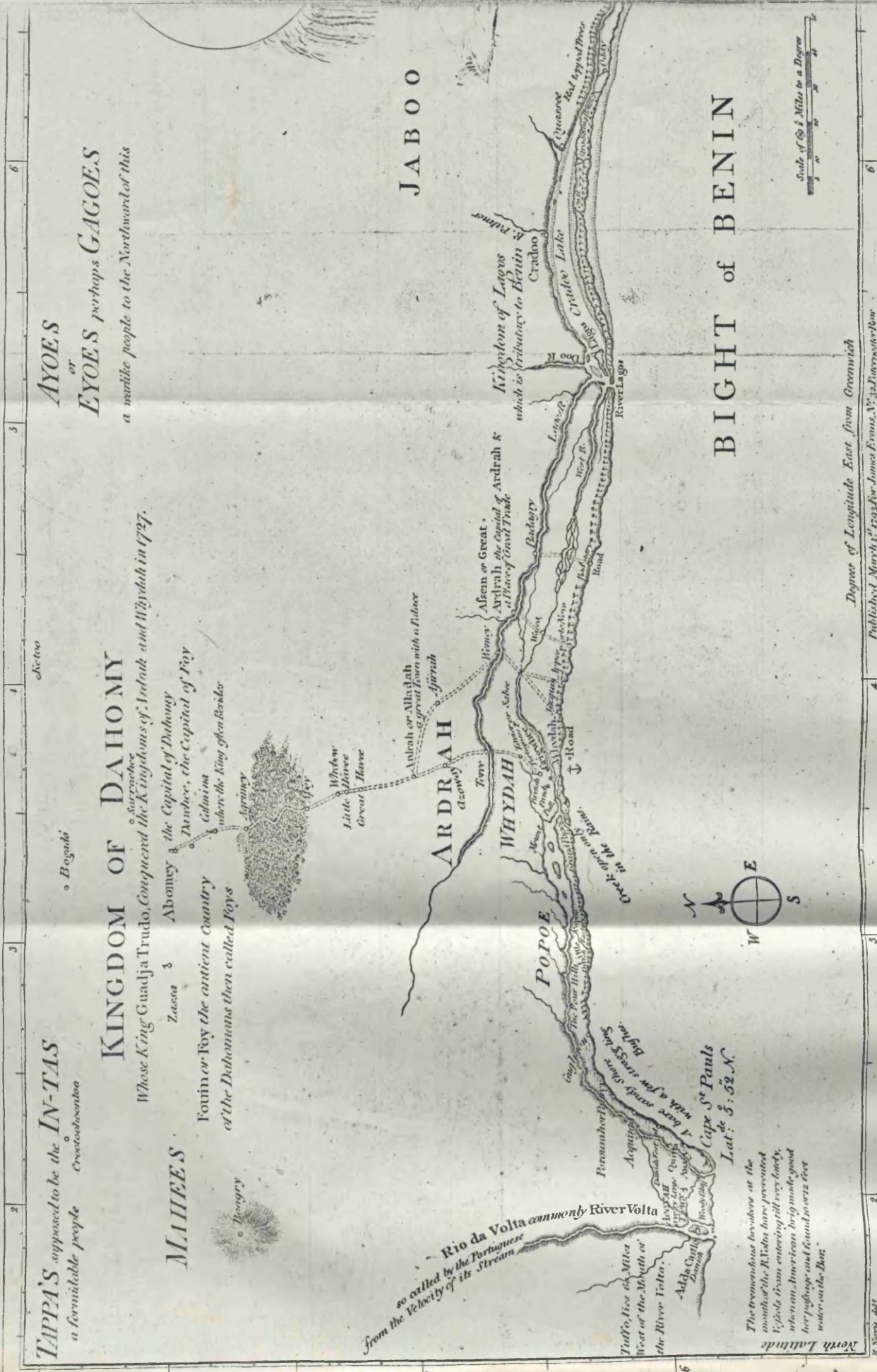
Cape S^t Pauls
Lat. $8^{\circ} 52' N$

The tremendous breakers at the mouth of the Rio Volta have prevented vessels from entering till very lately, when an American brig made good her passage and found to her feet water on the bar.



Degree of Longitude East from Greenwich

Published March 1793 for James Frowe, N^o 32, Pall-mall



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