WAR AND DIPLOMACY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AJALAND

by

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WAR AND DIPLOMACY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AJALAND:

THE WARS BETWEEN OYO AND DAHOMEY AND THEIR RELATION TO THE SLAVE TRADE

by

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A B S T R A C T.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the two West African states of Oyo and Dahomey fought a series of wars. One of the issues at stake was control of the slave trade, which was then centred in southern Ajaland, an area conquered by Dahomey about this time. Control of the slave trade was not the only issue involved, however, and may not even have been the major one. Another important factor in provoking the wars was Oyo's determination to extend its empire westward, across Ajaland, to the Mono River.

The wars resulted in a stalemate, and a compromise peace agreement was reached which allowed both states to emerge from the war period with their national honour intact. Dahomey, a much smaller state than Oyo, was able to fight Oyo to a standstill because the latter, due to a continuing series of constitutional crises, was never able to bring its full strength to bear on Dahomey.

A B S T R A I T

Pendant la première partie du dix-huitième siècle, Oyo et Dahomey, deux états de l'Ouest Africain, ont entrepris une série de guerres l'un contre l'autre. Le contrôle de la traite des esclaves se révèle être une des causes possibles de ces guerres. Cette traite était centralisée au pays des Adjas, pays qui sera d'ailleurs conquis à cette époque par le Dahomey. Il est possible, néanmoins, que ce contrôle ait eu une importance moindre que la détermination de l'état d'Oyo d'étendre les bords de son empire à l'ouest, à travers le pays des Adjas, jusqu'au fleuve Mono.

On a mis un terme à ces guerres qui ne donnaient la victoire ni à l'un ni à l'autre en 1748. Le traité qui conclût cette crise était en quelque sorte un compromis qui permettait aux deux états de garder intact leur honneur national. Dahomey, état beaucoup plus petit qu'Oyo, fut capable de contenir les assauts des Oyos parce que ceux-ci, gênés par des conflits internes, ne pouvaient jamais montrer aux Dahoméens leur réelle force.

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INTRODUCTION

It has long been accepted that Oyo, reaching the peak of its power in the first half of the eighteenth century, rounded out its empire and proved its strength by the conquest and subjugation of Dahomey. This theory was first put forth by Samuel Johnson[1] and has never since been challenged.

The modern literature on this subject is full of references to the Oyo conquest. Dr. I.A. Akinjogbin said of the Oyo-Dahomey relationship that in 1748 Dahomey decided to seek peace with Oyo because "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."[2] Dr. Akinjogbin is implying a total surrender on the part of Dahomey.

Robert Smith remarked: "During the first half of the eighteenth century...the Oyo succeeded in imposing their authority over the emergent Fon kingdom of Dahomey."[3] J.D. Fage's view was that Oyo continued its invasions of Dahomey until in 1748 "...there was no question but that Tegbesu (the king of Dahomey) had accepted that Dahomey was tributary to Oyo."[4] Basil Davidson observed that by 1726

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1. Samuel Johnson, The History of the Yorubas, ed. by O. Johnson, C.M.S. (Nigeria) Bookshops, Lagos, 1957.

2. I.A. Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, 1708-1818, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, p. 123.

3. Robert Smith, Kingdoms of the Yoruba, Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, 1969, pp. 42-43.

4. J.D. Fage, A History of West Africa, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, p. 104.

the Alafin of Oyo was the overlord of Dahomey.[5] In Owu in Yoruba History, Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper state that after 1748 "...the rulers (of Dahomey) recognised an obligation to carry out the instructions of the Alafin."[6]

However, Mabogunje and Cooper also describe the peace of 1748 as a 'compromise', the exact word an eighteenth-century English traveller to West Africa used to describe this peace.[7]

This thesis will attempt to show that the peace of 1748 was indeed a compromise, and not the outright Oyo victory that has so often been claimed. It will be demonstrated that, although Dahomey agreed to pay tribute and agreed to acknowledge the overlordship of Oyo, it did not give up any of its real independence.

Any attempt to analyse the results of the Oyo-Dahomean wars must necessarily take into account the background and causes of the war. The history, the ambitions and priorities of both states must be understood. During the course of the eighteenth century, the two states of Oyo and Dahomey, both of them deeply involved in the slave trade, fought a series of wars with each other. A question that has often arisen is whether or not these wars resulted directly from the presence of the slave trade in this area. A perfectly viable alternate answer is that the wars between Oyo and Dahomey could have come about as a result of the historical ambitions of Oyo, although the presence of the slave trade may have hastened

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5. Basil Davidson, A History of West Africa to the Nineteenth Century, Anchor Books: Doubleday & Company Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1966, p. 236.

6. A.L. Mabogunje and J. Omer-Cooper, Owu in Yoruba History, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1971, p. 15.

7. Robert Norris, Memoirs of the Reign of Bosoa Ahadee, King of King of Dahomey, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London, 1968 (re-print of 1789 edition), p. 16.

their advent and intensified the feeling between the two states.

This thesis will attempt to analyse the role the slave trade played in the context of the Oyo-Dahomean wars. Although no final answer can be arrived at, it can be shown that, while the slave trade played a part in bringing about these wars, so too did the ambitions of Oyo.

One of the problems involved in doing a study of this type is a lack of documentary evidence. Compared to other West African states of this period, Dahomey has been well served so far as travel accounts, trade reports and the like are concerned. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with Oyo, where the historian has to rely far too heavily on Dr. Johnson's The History of the Yoruba which is basically a compilation of Yoruba traditions. It is an invaluable source of information, but not always an accurate one. In addition to Dr. Johnson's account, there are available other traditional accounts which can be used to supplement The History of the Yoruba. Apart from the occasional reference, this is all there is from the literature of the period to help an understanding of the old Oyo empire.

On the other hand, there is some excellent work on Oyo that has been done within the last fifteen years, including Smith's Kingdoms of the Yoruba, along with many articles appearing in the various African History reviews.

The sources for a study of Oyo diplomacy are thus limited. Nevertheless, much useful information regarding Oyo can be had from

a study of known economic trends, cultural changes or other related fields. Much of the work that has been produced recently has been influenced by such studies.

If Oyo is scarcely mentioned in the literature of the period, the case of Dahomey is different. During the eighteenth century different English merchants left accounts of their visits to Dahomey. Among these were William Snelgrave,[8] William Smith,[9] and Robert Norris.[10] Archibald Dalzel's work on Dahomey, first published in 1793, was an amalgamation of selections from the work of previous authors.[11] Although all these accounts are valuable sources of information, the opinions expressed in some of them, particularly the accounts of mass killings and the like, cannot always be taken literally. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, many people in England began to demand the abolition of the slave trade. The fight that ensued between these people, called the abolitionists, and the defenders of the slave trade was often bitter. Both Norris and Dalzel belonged to the latter party and became directly involved in the battle. Their works were meant to be apologies for the slave trade and, as such, must be studied cautiously. Snelgrave's account, written and published in calmer times, is more objective.

Despite the seeming wealth of material available, however, there are periods which are not covered by the English travellers. These

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8. William Snelgrave, A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade, James, John and Paul Knapton, London, 1734.

9. William Smith, A New Voyage to Guinea, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London, 1967 (re-print of 1744 edition).

10. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit.

11. Archibald Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, An Inland Kingdom of Africa, Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., London, 1967 (re-print of 1793 edition).

are the periods when the English were not doing much trade in Dahomey. After 1730, for example, the English trade in Dahomey fell off quite considerably, but the Portuguese trade or, more accurately, the Brazilian trade continued unabated. The Brazilian records do not contain a great deal of new information, however, as the major part of the Bahian records concerning the slave trade were burnt in 1891 at the order of the Minister of Finance. The documents relating to the trade that were housed in the provincial archives were burnt in the same year.[12] Accordingly, there is less information available on the subject of Dahomey during this period. A valuable source which I was not able to consult is Le Herissé's L'Ancien Royaume du Dahomey. No copy of this book is available in North America, but since his work has been extensively used by other Africanists, particularly Cornevin, I have been able to familiarise myself, indirectly, with Le Herissé's ideas.

The traveller's accounts from this period have been listed as primary sources because they represent original material from the period under study. Inasmuch as all other primary sources are contained in European, African or South American libraries, to which I do not have access, these are the only primary sources listed.

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12. Pierre Verger, Flux et Reflux de la Traite des Nègres Entre Le Golfe de Bénin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du XVIIe au XIXe Siècle, Mouton & Cie., Paris, 1968.

CHAPTER I - THE BACKGROUND BEHIND THE WARS OF 1726-1730

1. The Geography of Yoruba-Ajaland

Oyo as a Yoruba nation and Dahomey as an Aja, both lay within the boundaries of Yoruba-Ajaland which extended from the mouth of the Niger to longitude one degree east and from the sea coast to latitude nine degrees north.[1] The whole area was populated by Yoruba and Aja people who are so closely related, culturally and ethnically, that their eighteenth century homeland might justifiably have been called Yoruba-Ajaland.

The area is a land of contrasts. The north and west is savannah land, while most of the south-east is covered by rain-forest. The savannahs are open, well-watered prairies and grasslands. They are fertile and suited to the raising of herds of animals. Trade across the length and breadth of the savannah has generally been active and, throughout history, cities and empires have flourished in the savannahs, for the open land lent itself better to empire building than did the forestlands further south.

In the forest belt, urban cultures did not generally emerge. Here small villages built in an open space in the forest were more common. More often than not, the village authority meant more to the people than any faraway governor or king. Trade between villages and even with faraway states was fairly common, but this trade was usually in luxury or non-essential goods. Certainly some states of imperial size and ambitions did appear within the confines of the forest belt, but this was the exception, not the rule.

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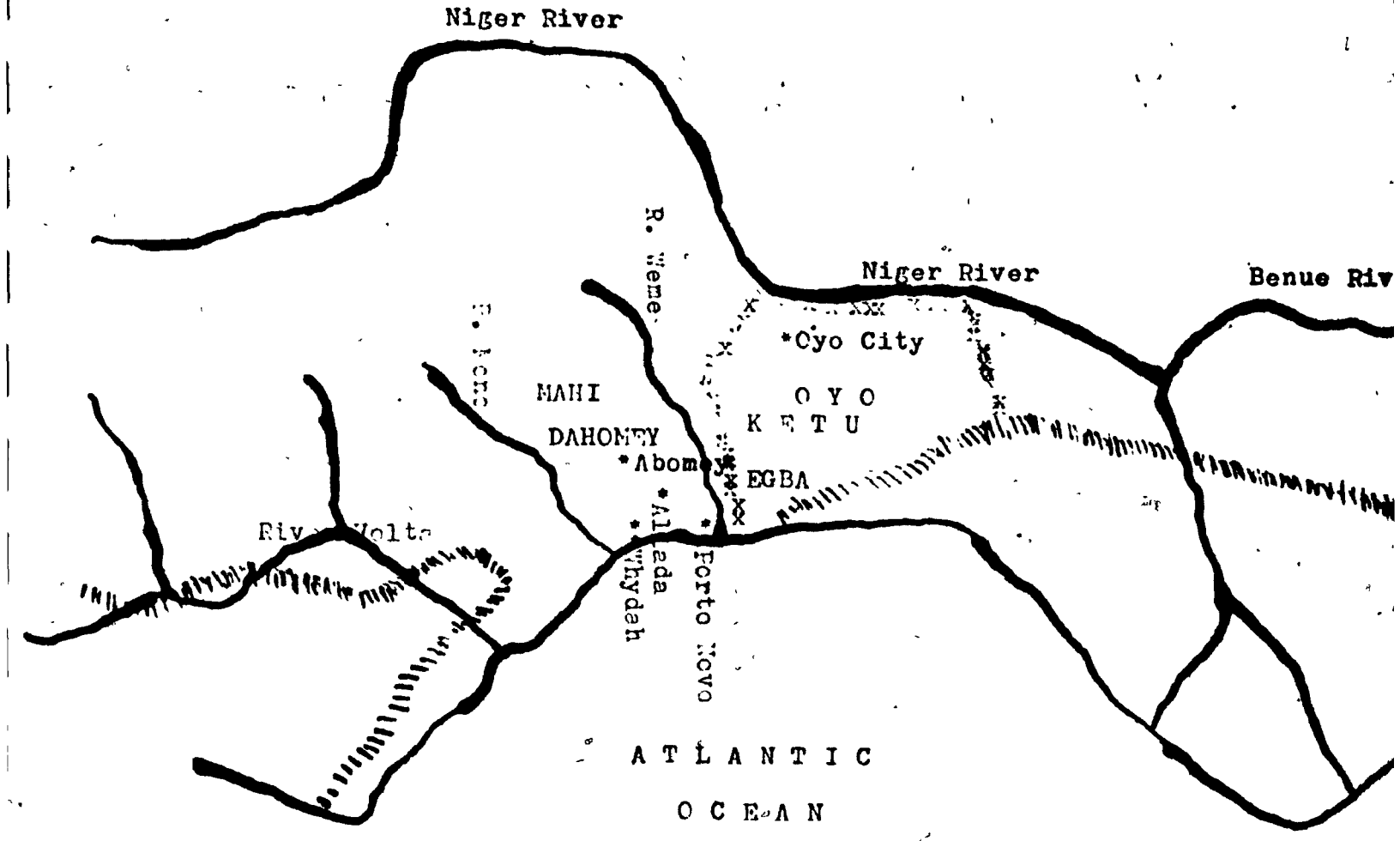
1. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 8.



Limits of Rain Forest

Limits of Oyo Empire

ALL DISTANCES AND LIMITS SHOWN ARE APPROXIMATE

The Yoruba state, Oyo, extended from the River Niger in the north to the Weme in the west, and on the east and south, to the borders of the rain forest. There Oyo's influence was replaced by Benin's which was itself a rain-forest state. The whole area controlled by Oyo was savannah land, probably because Oyo's army, dominated by its cavalry, could not function effectively in the rain-forest. The point to note here is that on three sides, in the south and east by the rain-forest and in the north by the Niger, Oyo had reached its natural frontiers and expansion in these directions would be difficult. Therefore, it was reasonable, given Oyo's geographical situation, for Oyo to look south-west, towards Ajaland, for future fields of expansion. For the rest, Oyo's land was rich and well-watered, capable of supporting an extremely large population, as it did.

Dahomey, like Oyo, lay outside the rain-forest belt, but unlike Oyo, it was placed relatively close to the coast, where a break in the rain-forest normally growing inland from the coast occurred.[2] At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Dahomey did not extend to the coast, but it had long been pressing in that direction. Dahomey had no natural boundaries and so its future fields of expansion were not limited by this consideration.

The lands of Dahomey were thinly wooded and very dry, and water was scarce. The state had been founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century by a group of Aja moving north from Allada. The political community thus founded was small and weak, without natural borders of any kind. The Dahomeans spent the next century securing it and enlarging it when the occasion presented itself. By the beginning of

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2. R. Smith, Kingdoms, p. 46.

the eighteenth century, it was small, but strong and compact. Still it was poor, and it was natural that such a state should look to enrich itself by expansion.

A look at the map on page seven will show the approximate size and positions of Dahomey and Oyo in relation to each other.

2. Oyo and Dahomey at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century

The Yoruba are one of the oldest established nations in this area of Africa. The Yoruba themselves believe that they come from the east, from the land of Kush, but there is apparently little evidence to suggest that the Yoruba ever lived in any part of Africa other than the western area where they still live.[3] Ife was the first Yoruba kingdom, and throughout the whole of this period, indeed even to modern times, it has maintained its position as the cultural and religious head of all Yorubaland. It has been suggested that, in fact, Ife's religious supremacy was so strong that it continued to exercise real authority over Oyo, even at the height of the latter's power.[4] This, however, remains open to doubt, for it seems probable that by the eighteenth century Oyo exercised a certain amount of political control over Ife.[5]

Oyo was founded by settlers from Ife sometime during the thirteenth century. Until the end of the sixteenth century, it was only a small state existing on the edge of the *savannah*, and barely holding its own against hostile invaders. In the late sixteenth century, however, or early in the seventeenth, the Oyo moved back

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3. Mabogunje and Cooper, Owu, op.cit., pp. 3-4.
4. I.A. Akinjogbin, "The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the Nineteenth Century," Odu, I, 2 (January, 1965), pp. 31-34, 38.
5. R. Smith, Kingdoms, p. 15.

to Oyo city from their exile in Igboho, where they had been driven by the Nupe a century earlier.[6]

The newly refounded city of Oyo quickly became the southern terminus of the trans-Saharan trade. This trade had only reached Hausaland during the fifteenth century[7] and presumably it took another century to reach Yorubaland. The new trade with the north meant that Oyo now had a fairly reliable supply of horses. Horses can be bred only with great difficulty in Yorubaland and the stock, in any case, has to be constantly replenished. A steady source of horses allowed Oyo to develop the formidable cavalry for which it later became famous. In addition, Oyo developed an effective corps of archers which ably abetted its cavalry.[8]

Oyo soon adapted its military tactics to suit its new wing and, by the end of the seventeenth century, it controlled all the northern and middle Yoruba kingdoms, and probably small parts of Borgu and Nupe. The expansion of the empire stopped at the edge of the rain-forest belt; beyond this natural boundary the nature of the terrain did not encourage the use of cavalry, Oyo's most trusted wing. Instead, Oyo turned to the open land to the south-east. A late seventeenth century report gave information about slaves brought from the great inland kingdom of Ulkami or Ulkamu "...a name which may have referred to Oyo or to the Yoruba states collectively."[9] The Oyo traded for luxury goods, and possibly even small amounts

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6. Robert Smith, "The Alafin in Exile," Journal of African History, VI, 1 (1965), p. 59.

7. A. Adu Boahen, Topics in West African History, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London and Harlow, 1966, pp. 40-41.

8. Nabogunje and Cooper, Owu, op.cit., p. 11.

9. A.F.C. Ryder, "Dutch Trade on the Nigerian Coast During the Seventeenth Century," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, 2 (December, 1965), p. 196.

of guns. About this time the Oyo began a south-eastern drive to establish dependant trading posts in this area.[10]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, then, Oyo had expanded in the north-east as far as its natural frontier, the Niger. The possibilities of further expansion in these areas were, in any case, limited by the prior existence of the kingdoms of Borgu and Nupe which were Oyo's suppliers of cavalry horses and with which Oyo was naturally anxious to maintain friendly relations.

To the south-east of Oyo lay powerful Benin; although it appears that Benin was badly disorganized at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and was having trouble with rebellious vassals, it recovered quickly and entered into one of its many periods of growth, turning to the slave trade to restore its ancient prosperity.[11] Well-disciplined, well-organised, supplied with European arms, and fighting in the rain-forest terrain with which it was familiar, the army of Benin was strong enough to protect most of the Bini empire. Only around the edges of the empire, where the rain-forest began to give way to savannah, did Oyo attempt to challenge Benin's suzerainty. Clearly expansion in this area was also limited. The Bini empire extended along the coast as far as the rain-forest, so expansion in a straight southerly direction was also unpromising for Oyo, both because of the political situation in this area and because of the terrain.

None of these factors absolutely prevented Oyo from expanding in these directions, and exceptions did occur, but all these factors combined to place Oyo's natural field of expansion first in northern

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10. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 46.

11. Jacob Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1960, p. 39.

and central Yorubaland itself, and then to the west and southwest, into country where the terrain was flat enough and solid enough to allow Oyo's cavalry to operate and where the absence of any strong state urged its operation.

The newly blossoming slave trade on the coast only gave Oyo an additional reason for expanding in this direction. Because of its growing interest in the slave trade, Oyo was looking for a coastal outlet. It finally reached the sea in 1698, when its armies overran the kingdom of Allada;[12] by the terms of the peace that followed the invasion, Allada was allowed to retain its territorial integrity and much foreign and domestic autonomy, but Allada's king was probably forced to acknowledge the Alafin of Oyo his overlord and to pay him tribute. Certainly from this time on, Oyo regarded Allada as a vassal and the Alladeans also seemed to consider themselves citizens of the larger Oyo empire, for they assiduously applied themselves to the task of learning the language of Oyo, to the extent that they never practiced their own.[13]

The state of Allada was then much larger than its successor state in the eighteenth century was to be, for it extended all the way to Benin, thus blocking Dahomey's route to the sea; or rather, Oyo, through its possession, Allada, was blocking Dahomey's route to the sea. This came at a time when Dahomey was determined to secure a seaport under its control for its own use.

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12. William Bosman, A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., London, 1967 (reprint of 1705 English edition), p. 397.

13. Verger, Flux et Reflux, op. cit., p. 128.

Oyo was governed by its Alafin, or king, whose power was in theory unlimited, but in practice was restricted by the authority of his government. He had no direct contact with either his people or his governing officers, but communicated with them through the medium of his Basorun or prime minister. The Basorun was at least the second most powerful man in the kingdom and often the first. He was head of the Oyo Mesi, or council of state, and its mouthpiece. The Basorun could demand the death of the old king, and he was ultimately responsible for the selection of the new one.

A second Oyo governing council was the Ogboni society, which limited somewhat the power of the Basorun. The Basorun, along with all the members of the Oyo Mesi, was a member of the Ogboni, but not a controlling member, for the Ogboni reached its decisions by majority votes. Once the Ogboni had decided on a law, however, its provisions were binding on all the Ogboni members. In this way, the Oyo Mesi were often sworn to uphold measures they did not themselves approve of.[14] As the Ogboni was primarily a religious society, however, it is doubtful that it had any major limiting effect on the political power of the Oyo Mesi. There is also evidence to indicate that either the Alafin or the Oyo Mesi could attempt to manipulate the Ogboni.[15]

To offset the power of the Oyo Mesi, the Alafin could rely on the royal line and the palace organisation. The development of this palace organisation was unique in Oyo among the other Yoruba states. Its development allowed the Alafin, who was palace-bound by the mid-seventeenth century, to increase his power at the expense of Oyo's nobility.[16]

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14. R.C.C. Law, "The Constitutional Troubles of Oyo in the Eighteenth Century," Journal of African History, XII, 1 (1971), p. 31.

15. P.C. Lloyd, The Political Development of Yoruba Kingdoms in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Royal Anthropological Institute, Paper No. 31, London, 1971.

16. Ibid., pp. 11-15.

Three titled eunuchs of iwefa were at the head of the palace organisation.[17] The ajele and the ilari, or half-heads as the Europeans called them because of their half-shaven heads, were also particularly important. The ilari, whose movements were not restricted, served as the eyes and ears of the Alafin. They also collected his tribute for him. The ajele were his personal representatives in the different parts of the empire.[18]

For a long time, this constitutional balance of power worked well and gave Oyo a government strong enough to conquer an empire, yet lenient enough to hold the loyalty of its citizens. It would seem probable, however, that at the beginning of the eighteenth century, some sort of power struggle was going on between the Basorun line of Oyo and the royal line, as a result of which this constitutional balance was upset. The power of the Alafins, which had long been expanding, was checked when the nobility won a major victory at the death of the Alafin Ojigi, around 1735, by changing the law governing the succession. Previously the Aremo or crown prince and prospective heir to the throne had been chosen as successor long before his father's death and had had time to become familiar with the government, and to gather a body of supporters. Now it was decreed that the Aremo was to die with his father.[19] The new Alafin would be chosen from among the eligible males of the royal line by the Basorun.[20] The Alafins did not recover from this blow before their power was overthrown by Gaha, the Basorun, in 1754.

Not enough is known of the internal history of Oyo during this period to say with any certainty what caused the struggle between the

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17. Lloyd, Political Development, op.cit., p. 11.
18. Law, "Constitutional Troubles," op.cit., p. 30.
19. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 45.
20. Johnson, History, op.cit., p. 42.

Alafins and the nobility of Oyo. Akinjogbin states that the ultimate reason behind the clash of the Alafins and the Basoruns was divided interests.[21] The Basoruns, military men, wanted to continue military expansion while the Alafins, to whom most of the profits came, wanted to exploit the slave trade. Open conflict did not result because a compromise was reached. Military expansion continued in the south-east, towards the coast and the slave trade.

Lloyd argues that although a struggle for supremacy was being waged in eighteenth-century Oyo between the Alafins and the Basoruns, it took the form of a competition for control of the new resources derived from the territorial expansion of the Oyo kingdom and from its involvement in the slave trade. According to Lloyd, the Basorun only represented the Oyo Mesi and their descent groups, so that the struggle was actually between the Alafin and the nobility of Oyo.[22]

The two parties were well matched, for the Alafin controlled the powerful and ubiquitous palace organisation while the Oyo Mesi was ably supported by their descent groups and by their many clients and slaves. The two groups were competing for control of two new sources of revenue which had opened up in the seventeenth century--the revenue from conquered states and the revenue from the slave trade.

The Alafin did not control the slave trade in Oyo; he made his money by engaging directly or through his agents in the trade, and from the tolls the ilari collected from caravans travelling to the coast. Yet the slave trade enriched the Alafins at the expense of the nobles because the Alafin's wealth passed directly to his heir, while the wealth of the nobles had to be distributed among the more important

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21. I.A. Akinjogbin, "The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century: A Reassessment," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, 3 (1966), pp. 449-460.

22. Lloyd, Political Development, op.cit., pp. 9-15.

members of their descent groups.[23]

The Alafin and the nobles also received an equal amount of booty from the wars, but the same principle as above held true, and this booty tended to enrich the Alafin at the expense of the nobles. Newly conquered and subject towns were governed by Oyo overlords who were usually agents of the Alafin. Tribute from the subject towns was paid to the Alafin directly by his agents and not through the Oyo Mesi.[24]

Despite this evidence of an increase in the power of the Alafin, the Oyo Mesi remained very strong for the Alafin could not alienate the loyalty of their descent groups. Basically the situation was a stalemate with the Alafin's power being held in check by the continued hostility of the nobles, while the Oyo Mesi was checked by the palace organisation.

This pattern was repeated again and again during the decades of the wars with Dahomey. The conflict is relevant to an examination of Oyo-Dahomean relations during this period, for it partly explains why Oyo's attempts to conquer Dahomey were so often half-hearted. Many of the Oyo invasions of Dahomey during this period, particularly towards the middle of the century, were of a stop-and-go nature which were not sufficient to conquer Dahomey.

The state of Dahomey was founded early in the seventeenth century by Do-Aklin (sometimes called Dako), an Aja prince who had lost his bid to obtain the throne of Allada. After his defeat he gathered his followers and led them north from Allada into what was later to become the heartland of Dahomey. Here they were met by the local Fon

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23. The Alafin's wealth was divided into fewer parts because most of his important officers were eunuchs, who had originally been slaves. Lloyd, Political Development, op.cit., p. 11.

24. Ibid., p. 13.

people who helped the new arrivals establish themselves.[25] Do-Aklin and his followers were allowed to settle there but in return they had to acknowledge the overlordship of the local king by paying an annual tribute or rent for the land. Dakodonou, who succeeded Do-Aklin, refused to pay this tribute and repaid the Fon people for their hospitality by killing their king and conquering them.[26]

From the beginning, Dahomey differed from Oyo in that its organisation was highly centralised. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the Alafin's attempts to centralise government in Oyo were frustrated by the nobility, causing Oyo to verge constantly on political collapse. In Dahomey the king was the supreme ruler responsible only to the gods and his ancestors. According to the Dahomean view of things, the state was a pot perforated all over and the king was water which could be kept in the pot only if everyone put a finger in the hole, so that all the holes were blocked. On the arid plateau of Abomey there was no commodity more precious than water. The meaning of the parallel is that there is no one more precious than the king, and all must be sacrificed to preserve him and his power.[27]

Because of the difference in their political philosophies, Oyo was often divided and indecisive while Dahomey was able to pursue its goals with a single-mindedness that could be devastating.

Wegbaja, who succeeded Dakodonou, was the first of Dahomey's great conqueror-kings. He came to the throne around 1650, or about a half-century after the initial migration north of Do-Aklin and his followers. At that time, the Aja had probably freed their small base from

25. William J. Argyle, The Fon of Dahomey: A History and Ethnography of the Old Kingdom, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966, p. 6.

26. C.W. Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, Oxford University Press, Oxford and London, 1961., p. 10.

27. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 25.

any but nominal subordination to the surrounding peoples; but they had not, as yet, started on any career of expansion and domination of their neighbours.

Using his small state as a base of operations, Wegbaja soon changed that. Even before he had succeeded to the throne, Wegbaja had demonstrated his abilities by taking Agrigomey and re-founding it as a Dahomean city.[28] After he became king, Wegbaja concentrated his efforts on developing a well-trained and disciplined army. This army he equipped with the best arms available to him. In particular, he imported firearms from the coast for the use of his army; he adjusted quickly to the new military tactics these involved and consequently he gained an even greater military advantage over his neighbours.

Guns were at least as important to Dahomey as cavalry horses were to Oyo. It may not seem that these early European arms made any essential difference to African armies, and that before the nineteenth century the various firearms were essentially toys, often more dangerous to the user than to his enemy. Certainly muskets given out as presents by European traders to favoured individuals or to a rabble contributed little to the defence of a state, but European weapons in the hands of trained soldiers were very effective even at this early date. They were particularly efficient in the hands of soldiers such as the Dahomeans, who were trained to get the maximum advantage out of their firearms.

It should be evident that the firearms were effective from the attitude of the Africans themselves to European guns. They were in

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28. Edouard Dunglas, Contribution à l'Histoire du Moyen-Dahomey (Royaumes d'Abomey, de Kétou et de Ouidah), Etudes Dahoméennes, Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, Porto Novo, Dahomey, 1957, p. 86.

a better position, after all, than any one else to judge the utility of the guns to their armies. Late in the seventeenth century, Bosman reported:

> Perhaps you wonder how the Negroes come to be furnished with Fire-arms, but you will have no Reason when you know we sell them incredible quantities, thereby obliging them with a knife to cut our own throats. But we are forced to it.... And since that (i.e. the firearms) and Gun powder for sometime hath been the chief vendible merchandise here, we should have found an indifferent Trade without our share in it.[29]

Snelgrave reported a story circulating on the coast in 1727 concerning the 1726 Oyo invasion of Dahomey. According to this story, the Dahomean army had held off the Oyo army for four days because the guns of the Dahomean soldiers had frightened the horses of the Oyo cavalry so that "...their Riders could never make a home-Charge on the Enemies Foot (i.e. the Dahomean infantry)."[30] Robert Smith considers the failure of the Oyo to adapt in time to the new European weapons one of the three major causes of the decline of the Oyo empire.[31]

At the height of the eighteenth century slave trade, the English alone were selling more than one hundred thousand muskets a year to Africans in return for their slaves.[32]

As anxious as the Africans were to obtain guns, so were the Europeans to keep them away from the Africans. On the Slave Coast, the Africans were able to demand and to obtain firearms from the Europeans, even though the Europeans who sold the guns to the Africans were obliging the latter with a knife to cut European throats, as

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29. Bosman, A New and Accurate Description, op.cit., p. 184.
30. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 56-57.
31. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 137.
32. Davidson, History of West Africa, op.cit., p. 217.

Bosman said. Moreover, they had to sell good guns, because if the established trading companies had started selling inferior-quality guns, interlopers would have sold reliable ones and taken their trade away. In short, the Europeans had to supply good guns because they could never form a common policy. In areas, however, such as Angola where the Europeans encountered no other competing Europeans, sale of firearms to Africans was usually prohibited by the European authorities. In Angola, for example, Portuguese authorities early in the eighteenth century forbade the sale of firearms to Africans. "This was because the Portuguese had territorial and military stakes in Angola and did not want to increase the resistance which their opponents could put up."[33]

From the evidence offered, it is obvious that both eighteenth century Africans and eighteenth century Europeans considered that European firearms could make a considerable difference to the fighting ability of native armies. Yet it might be argued that these arms were too primitive to make a substantial difference, regardless of what the people of the eighteenth century thought. That is not the case.

Europeans had been using canons in warfare since the first decades of the fourteenth century. By the eighteenth century both ordnance and guns had much improved. Before the middle of the seventeenth century, the Europeans had developed effective mobile artillery and by the eighteenth century they had achieved so high a degree of technical expertise that they were able to produce highly effective weapons of all kinds.[34] It is significant, for example, that after

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33. David Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and Their Neighbours Under the Influence of the Portuguese, 1483-1790, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966, p. 139.

34. Carlo M. Cipolla, Guns, Sails and Empires: Technical Innovation and the Early Phases of European Expansion: 1400-1700, Minerva Press, n.p., 1965, pp. 112-65.

1700, the Russians and other Europeans finally began a counter-offensive against the Turks in Europe after having allowed the Turks to remain there unchallenged since Lepanto, more than two hundred years before. It is also significant that Europeans began to conquer large areas of land outside Europe, in India, for example, in the eighteenth century. European expansion in Africa was limited after 1700 more by the African climate and by African diseases than by the resistance of the Africans themselves.

The smooth-bore flintlock musket of the 'Brown Bess' type, the type commonly used in Europe throughout this period, and the one most often sold in Africa, had reached a high degree of efficiency. This gun could be fired at top speed five times a minute, although for deliberate shooting a rate of three times a minute was normal. It is true, however, that this flintlock was not particularly accurate beyond a range of fifty yards.[35] For guerilla fighting, this deficiency might have presented a problem, but for head-on battles it made little difference. If the soldier did not hit the man he aimed for, he would probably hit the one next to his target. Either way, one enemy soldier would be put out of commission.

Wegbaja was among the first West African kings to appreciate the efficiency of European arms in the hands of trained soldiers. He adapted his small Dahomean army so successfully to the new weapons that he conquered all the independent states around Dahomey. When he died in 1680, he handed over a small but compact kingdom to his son and successor, Akaba; the kingdom Akaba inherited had both a well-trained army and an efficient administration; in

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35. J.N. George, English Guns and Rifles, Small-Arms Technical Publishing Company, Plantersville, South Carolina, 1947, p. 83.

addition, it had no obvious security problems for Wegbaja had made his state supreme in its immediate environs.

Despite these advantages, or perhaps because of them, trouble was gathering on the horizon. The emergence of Dahomey, a compact and aggressive state in an area where previously there had been none, made Dahomey a factor to be reckoned with in the politics and economies of the outside world. Three different parties suddenly became interested in Dahomey; Allada and Whydah[36] to the south and Oyo to the north-east.

Dahomey, for its part, could not afford to isolate itself and fall back on its own resources for it was a state without natural defences of any kind.[37] From the beginning of its existence, it was evident that Dahomey's geographical position made it an easy and natural target for its neighbours. A state such as Dahomey was particularly vulnerable to a military power of the type of Oyo, that is, a power whose main military strength lay in its cavalry. Had Dahomey been protected by marshes, dense forests or even a river wide and deep enough to make it difficult to forde, it would have had a better chance militarily against Oyo.

As it was, however, whenever the Oyo army invaded Dahomey, its cavalry set to work unimpeded unless by human factors. Dahomey had no cavalry of its own, nor could it develop one, for it lay outside the limits of the trans-Saharan trade, and so did not have open to it any trade centres from which to procure horses and develop a

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36. To be precise, no state of Whydah actually existed. Whydah was the port of the kingdom of Sabe, whose capital lay in the interior. Nevertheless, because the name of the port, Whydah, was so much better known than the name of the state in which it was located, it has become customary to refer to both state and city by the same name, Whydah. That custom has been followed in this thesis.

37. Karl Polanyi, Dahomey and the Slave Trade, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1966, p. 5.

cavalry of its own. Cut off from the trade to the north, the slave trade opening up to its south became that much more important to it; during the reign of Wegbaja, Dahomey, by committing itself to an army trained in the use of European arms, committed itself to the slave trade, without knowing that it did so.

In 1708 the Dahomean king Akaba became involved in a war with Weme, the state which separated Dahomey from Oyo; as a result of the Weme war, Dahomey was forced in 1712 into a war with Oyo from which it emerged relatively unscathed.[38]

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38. Dunglas, Contribution, op.cit., pp. 144-146. It has been claimed, particularly by Dr. I.A. Akinjogbin in Dahomey and Its Neighbours, p. 82, note 2, that this 1712 war between Oyo and Dahomey in fact never took place.

> Dunglas argues powerfully without any evidence but the words 'ancient treaty' that this invasion (Akinjogbin is referring to the Oyo invasion of Dahomey in 1726) 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.

The fact that a reliable eyewitness to one event exists, however, does not preclude a second and totally unrelated event from having taken place.

Moreover, Dunglas does not base his position on the words 'ancient treaty'. "L'auteur a proposé comme date probable de la première invasion des Ayonou l'année 1712, suivant les traditions d'Abomey qui prétendent qu'elle a eu lieu peu après l'avènement d'Agadja." (Dunglas, p. 147.) Since Agaja became king in 1708, the 1712 date is reasonable.

Dunglas spent many years in Dahomey collecting the traditions of the different peoples of Dahomey; later he arranged and organised them. So far as Dunglas was concerned, he was just recording the history of Dahomey, as told to him by the Dahomeans. Such outside pieces of information as, for example, the term 'ancient treaty' only served to confirm, so far as Dunglas was concerned, Dahomean oral tradition.

Moreover, when the term 'ancient treaty' is put into its proper context, Dunglas's reference to it cannot be so easily dismissed.

> The Eyoes (Oyo) continued for several years to harrass Dahomy with an annual visit.... The King (Agaja) used all his efforts to obtain an accommodation and offered them any reasonable compensation to refrain from their hostilities; but it was difficult to satisfy their demands. They claimed in consequence of an old treaty (presumably Akinjogbin did not re-translate Dunglas's translation of old to ancien) an annual tribute; the payment of

Neither Oyo nor Dahomey seems to have taken the Weme issue to heart, however; the war was limited to a single campaign and no battles. The two states were disinterested because there were then no outstanding issues dividing them and neither one was ready for a long war. According to the terms of the agreement that followed, so far as they are known, Dahomey acknowledged the Alafin of Oyo as overlord and agreed to pay him tribute, including an annual tribute of forty-one cases of forty-one guns each, forty-one being the royal number.[39] This tribute was not, however, very often paid, if it was paid at all. Oyo had no need of the tribute and apparently no particular reason to enforce its payment.

3. The Slave Trade in Oyo and Dahomey at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century

"The modern slave trade can be regarded as having started in 1672," wrote Dr. Karl Polanyi,[40] who was, before his death, a prominent economic historian. By this, he meant that only by that time had the right circumstances combined to make either possible or profitable the

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39. Dunglas, Contribution, op.cit., p. 146. Polanyi, Dahomey, op. cit., p. 41.

40. Polanyi, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 18.

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38. (cont'd from p. 23)

> which had been omitted in the prosperous days of Trudo (Agaja). These arrears were considerable; and fresh demands were also added, on account of the conquest of Whydah...." (Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., p. 16.)

In no way does Norris indicate that the treaty may have been with any party except Dahomey. Moreover, his reference to 'the prosperous days of Trudo' is significant. Agaja came to the throne in 1708, and promptly embarked on a career of conquest that was not checked until the Oyo invasions of the twenties. Agaja, riding the crest of his triumphs, may very well have ignored his promise to pay tribute.

transport of millions of unwilling negroes. By 1672, the sugar plantation system had been thoroughly established in the new world; this system could operate only where a large supply of cheap labour existed. By 1672, it had been established that, for different reasons, neither the native Indian population nor the immigrant Europeans could supply this need. Accordingly, plantation owners, looking for new sources of labour, turned to Africa which could supply the labour demands of the plantations.

Until recently it has been believed that the slave trade involved far greater numbers than it actually did. Many Africanists have described estimates of fifteen to twenty million slaves shipped as 'conservative'. Some estimates have gone as high as forty million.[41] Professor Curtin's detailed analysis of the slave trade data, however, reveals that a figure of nine and a half million slaves landed in the new world would be more realistic.[42] The number of slaves that actually left Africa was substantially higher because the mortality rate on the 'middle passage'[43] was of the order of sixteen per cent.[44] None of these figures are definite; Curtin says of his estimates that they are intended only as approximations, and that a plus-minus variance factor of twenty per cent must be allowed.

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41. Philip D. Curtin, The African Slave Trade: A Census, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, p. 8.

42. Ibid., p. 268.

43. The middle passage was the trip from the African port of embarkation to the American port. It was so called because the slave trade was one part of a three-sided trade. The first passage was the shipment of manufactured goods to Africa from Europe; these goods paid for the slaves which were then shipped to America in the middle passage; the Americans paid for the slaves with their raw materials, which were then shipped back to Europe, thus completing the triangle.

44. Curtin, Census, op.cit., from data, pp. 275 ff.

The eighteenth century was the heyday of the slave trade. Sixty per cent of all slaves delivered to the new world, or some six million human beings, were shipped during the century 1721-1820.[45] Of these six million, sixty per cent came from West Africa.[46] This area was then, as it is now, the most densely populated in Africa. The introduction of new food crops from America at the beginning of the slave trade period caused a natural increase in the population so that, despite the losses to the slave trade, the overall population of West Africa grew during the four-century period that the trade lasted.[47] In 1500, the population of West Africa may have been twenty million; by 1700, it was "...of the order of twenty-five million"[48] with an annual rate of growth in the first half of the century somewhat less than 0.16 per cent.[49] Given this situation, slavers could have exported around forty-one thousand slaves per annum and still not have effected a decline in the population.[50]

The European traders had begun by trading for slaves with those parts of West Africa where trade contacts had already been established with the local inhabitants, especially on the Gold Coast; but as demand began to outstrip supply, the slavers turned east

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45. Curtin, Census, op.cit., p. 265.

46. Ibid., p. 211. Although sixty per cent of all slaves shipped during this period came from West Africa, the number of slaves who originated from there over the whole period of the slave trade may have been considerably lower. (From Curtin's data, pp. 234, 239, 240 and 268.)

47. Curtin, Census, op.cit., p. 270.

48. Fage, West Africa, op.cit., p. 86.

49. This represents a rate of increase somewhat less than sixteen per ten thousand people.

50. Fage, West Africa, op.cit., pp. 86-87.

to the 'Slave Coast', an area extending from the mouth of the Volta River to Lagos. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the 'Slave Coast' was the area of West Africa most actively involved in the trade. A visitor to the coast in 1687-88, the Sieur du Casse, informs us that Whydah alone was shipping fourteen to sixteen thousand slaves annually at that time.[51] In Jakin, four to five thousand were shipped by the Dutch alone.[52] To the east and west of the Slave Coast, there was little or no trade being done.[53] The European traders had established factories on the Slave Coast to aid their trade, and had organised trade companies to exploit the new trade. In 1672, the year in which Dr. Polanyi said the slave trade began, the Royal African Company was formed "...to deal chiefly in negroes for which there appeared to be an expanding demand in the British Colonies."[54] By the beginning of the eighteenth century, French, English, Dutch and Portuguese companies had all established factories along the Slave Coast, often several at different places.

The trade being established on the coast was already of some importance to both Oyo and Dahomey as has been noted. Dahomey, having predicated its defence on the availability of European weapons had committed itself to the slave trade. Oyo had committed itself less deeply, for although the south-east represented its natural field of expansion, and although Oyo did send its slaves to the sea ports, its

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51. From Dunglas, Contribution, op.cit., p. 129.
52. Ibid., p. 129.
53. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., Introduction, n.p.
54. Polanyi, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 18.

trade was in luxury goods, not essentials. Accordingly, it was far more important to Dahomey than it was to Oyo that trade on the Slave Coast not be interrupted. Dahomey, even this early in its history, needed the slave trade; Oyo did not.[55] It made little difference to Dahomey who controlled the slave trade, so long as it was well run; but Dahomey would have to interfere if its supply of European arms were threatened. Otherwise Dahomey could have continued its expansion away from the coast which was in any case taboo.[56] Since Oyo was expanding in the direction of the coast, Dahomey, if forced to interfere, would have to interfere with Oyo territory. This was the real dilemma that confronted Dahomey. It had no wish to offend Oyo, for its ambitions and Oyo's did not have to conflict, and Dahomey would gladly have left the Slave Coast alone if the Slave Coast states had been capable of managing their own affairs.

A direct confrontation between Oyo and Dahomey would thus have been delayed had it not been for the slave trade, but that confrontation might only have been delayed. The state of Dahomey lay in the savannah. Once Oyo had conquered all the smaller states to the south of Dahomey, it would probably have turned to Dahomey as its next victim. The slave trade certainly influenced the timing of the Oyo-Dahomey wars; whether or not it, by itself, caused them remains an open question.

Oyo and Dahomean interests came into conflict first over the question of Allada. In 1698 Oyo conquered Allada, a hitherto

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55. Oyo did not need the slave trade, but if the power struggle in Oyo revolved around this issue, it would give the slave trade an importance in Oyo out of proportion to the amount of trade Oyo actually did.

56. Polanyi, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 107.

independent Aja kingdom and the oldest of the Aja states. Oyo did not fully incorporate Allada into its empire, but made it a vassal under its own king who thereafter acknowledged the Alafin of Oyo as his overlord. In 1724, Dahomey also conquered Allada, but unlike Oyo, it pillaged the city, dispersed or slaughtered the population and sent the Alladean king fleeing to the court of Oyo. Not unnaturally, the Oyo regarded this as an unfriendly action, and retaliated by invading Dahomey. This was the first of many invasions which did not finally stop until 1748 when Dahomey accepted, within limits, Oyo as its overlord. The question that is most relevant at this stage is why Dahomey invaded Oyo's vassal without having first reached some agreement with Oyo.

The compelling reasons it had for invading Allada are obvious. From the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, around 1670, to the loss of their independence to Dahomey in the 1720's, Allada and Whydah, Dahomey's two outlets, were intermittently at war with one another, sometimes for long periods. At such times, Allada always attempted to block the trade routes to Whydah. As a result, trade was disrupted and many slaves remained unsold in the interior. Often military equipment badly needed by the inland states remained on the coast. Yet the coastal states, which commanded European credit, could obtain arms as their needs dictated. This gave the coastal states an unfair military advantage which they were not slow to exploit.

The simple fact that Allada lay between Dahomey and Whydah may have been enough to cause the Alladean invasion. Dahomey had to trade mostly with Whydah, where most of the slaving ships came.

Whydah was in a position to exert considerable pressure on the governments of inland states by threatening to close or by actually closing Whydah port to their traders; at least once, Whydah used Dahomey this way. It can be seen from Snelgrave's account that Dahomey had at one time been allowed free passage to Whydah, but that this privilege had since been withdrawn.[57] Moreover, the quality of the arms Dahomey received depended on its supplier's good will. One time Dahomey paid for and received a shipment of totally useless guns from Whydah.[58]

If it is easy to understand why Dahomey invaded Allada, it is not so easy to understand why it did not protect itself against Oyo's immediate retaliation by reaching a prior agreement with Oyo. Dahomey might, for example, have agreed to split the proceeds of the war; it might have agreed to hold Allada indirectly, by assignment, from Oyo. Thus Dahomey would have done allegiance to Oyo for Allada, but not for Dahomey itself.

Since Dahomey took none of these precautions, it presumably did not think them necessary. One reason is that Dahomey almost certainly misjudged the relationship that existed between Oyo and Allada, thinking it to be far less important than it was. Moreover, Dahomey feared Oyo less than it should have because it had already, in 1712, dealt successfully with an invading Oyo army by retreating before it; Dahomey had come out none the worse for the brief sojourn of the Oyo army in its land and, by the terms of the peace that followed, the Dahomeans had given up nothing except a verbal promise to pay tribute, a promise that was, moreover, never honoured. That was possibly

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57. Rosemary Arnold, "A Port of Trade: Whydah on the Guinea Coast," in Trade and Markets in the Early Empires, ed. by Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1957, pp. 158-59.

58. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 5-6, 61.

the tribute referred to in the 'old treaty' that Norris talked about, the payment of which "...had been omitted in the prosperous days of Trudo (Agaja)."[59]

Presumably, however, Dahomey's overwhelming reason for refusing to placate Oyo was that it recognised that a decisive war with Oyo was inevitable sooner or later, since Oyo was expanding in the general direction of Dahomey and would turn to Dahomey as soon as all the smaller, weaker states had been defeated. Not only had Allada already been taken, but Oyo had also taken enough territory in this area to establish Ifonyin and other subject cities in Egbado country.[60] It seems that Oyo was following a policy of slowly but surely sweeping this whole area under its control.

Dahomey's attack on Allada can now be seen as defensive in nature. Accepting the fact that a war with Oyo was inevitable, Dahomey must have realised that its army would have more chance of success if that war were fought before Oyo had had time to subjugate and pacify the area around Dahomey. In fact, Oyo was not, at this time, ready to absorb Dahomey and would have waited before attacking, had Dahomey given Oyo any option. Oyo reacted to Dahomey's attack because of its implied threat to Oyo trade and because Dahomey was threatening Oyo's imperial schemes.

It was Dahomey's misfortune that, having correctly judged the situation and having decided to take preventitive action against Oyo before the latter could have established itself near Dahomey, it should choose to do so by attempting to conquer Ajaland rather than by spear-heading a defensive alliance of all Ajaland against the

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59. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., p. 16.

60. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 46.

giant that threatened the independence of all the Aja states. For a dwarf to be conquered by a giant is no shame and the dwarf may settle peaceably under its yoke until events give it a chance to regain its freedom. But if a state is conquered by another state that is more or less its equal, it will continue the struggle to regain its freedom much longer. Oyo might have conquered and pacified Ajaland. Dahomey could only conquer it. Once conquered, Ajaland never fully accepted Dahomey as its master, and many of the Aja were glad to help Oyo against the Dahomeans when Oyo invaded their country. Apparently the Aja preferred to trifle with the more remote and more exciting Oyo than with the nearer menace of their own brother-state.

By the 1720's the lines between Oyo and Dahomey were clearly drawn. Dahomey would pit its strength, which relied ultimately on European weapons, against the more traditional strength of the Oyo cavalry. Ajaland would go to the winner, and, along with it, control of the slave trade. That is not to suggest that the slave trade was the ultimate or the only cause of the Oyo-Dahomean wars. The effect of the slave trade on African societies has always been difficult to judge, and it is no less so in the case of Dahomey. The slave trade was only one of the factors involved. If the Oyo empire had not reached its natural borders on all sides except in the direction of Ajaland, if the slave trade, under non-Dahomean control, had been able to supply Dahomey's needs, if Dahomey and Oyo had not been so evenly matched in the struggle for Ajaland, if any of these factors had been different, the Oyo-Dahomean wars might not have taken place.

CHAPTER II - THE WARS OF 1726 - 1730

1. The Events of 1724-30

On the eve of the outbreak of the wars between Oyo and Dahomey, the situation in Yoruba-Ajaland was tense. Oyo had committed itself to a policy of south-eastern expansion and some dealing in the slave trade. Dahomey, whose security depended upon a free and constant access to European arms, was forced to turn its attention south to secure its arms supply. In doing so, it offended Oyo by attacking Oyo's vassal, Allada, and so opened this series of wars which lasted until 1730.

Four times during the decade of the twenties the Oyo army descended upon Dahomey, until in 1730 a peace agreement was reached between the two powers. It has normally been assumed that this agreement was a punitive one, imposed by Oyo, and that Dahomey meekly agreed to terms dictated by Oyo.

Careful analysis of the agreement, however, reveals that this is not a realistic assessment. The agreement seems to have been more of a stop-gap measure agreed to by both parties because neither one was prepared to go on with the war much longer. Dahomey desperately wanted a chance to restore order in Ajaland which it conquered completely during this period; to do so, Agaja realised he had to have a respite from the Oyo invasions. Oyo, on the other hand, was unwilling to continue the war because of its recurrent internal problems which became particularly grave at this time.

In 1724, Agaja, king of Dahomey, taking advantage of a succession dispute in Allada, took and pillaged Allada. Oyo, when it had taken Allada four decades earlier, had done so for purposes of aggrandisement-

to add more territory to the empire, to collect tribute, to have another king acknowledge the Alafin of Oyo as his lord. This being the case, it had been to Oyo an advantage to preserve the little state in a healthy and vigourous condition, and it had accordingly done so. By 1724, Allada had recovered completely from the Oyo invasions and was a prosperous city.

Nowhere can Dahomey's differing motives in attacking Allada be seen more clearly than through its different policies toward the conquered state. Dahomey razed the capital city, Allada, to the ground and killed as many of the people as it could; the rest, the Dahomeans scattered far and wide, but away from Dahomey. There was originally no attempt made to integrate the newly conquered territory into Dahomey itself; indeed, it was several years before the Alladeans who had escaped the Dahomean army and who had returned to their home were secure in their right to stay there.[1]

In Oyo, the news of the defeat of Allada was not well received. It is not known what contact or negotiations, if any, took place between Oyo and Dahomey after the defeat of Allada in 1724 and the arrival of the first of Oyo's invading armies in 1726. That some discussions did take place seems likely; otherwise it would be difficult to explain why Oyo did not attack Dahomey in 1725. Nevertheless, these discussions must have proved unsatisfactory and been broken off. The failure of these negotiations prepared the way for the first Oyo invasion of the twenties.

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1. Snelgrave makes reference to a slaughter, ordered by Agaja, of all the Alladeans who had returned home. This incident took place in 1730, or just earlier. (Snelgrave, p. 189.)

The invasion of 1726 seems to have been a token invasion, lasting only a short time and resulting in a Dahomean victory.[2]

It can be seem from Oyo's hesitant actions that it did not quite know what to do. Oyo waited an extra year before retaliating against Dahomey's aggressive actions; even then its retaliation was weak and lacking in purpose. When Agaja sent tribute to the Alafin after the 1726 invasion, Oyo accepted it, along with the slight recognition of the authority of Oyo which the tribute implied.

From Oyo's actions at this time, it seems reasonable to suppose that Oyo would have been glad to leave Dahomey alone for the immediate future. The fact that Oyo and Dahomey clashed again was the fault of Dahomey, not Oyo. Just nine months after the Oyo invasion, Agaja again turned his forces south, this time directing them towards Whydah, which was taken by the Dahomeans without a battle. The Whydasians, like the Alladoans, were either massacred or driven out.

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2. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 56-58; Argyle, The Fon, op. cit., p. 25. Akinjogbin (Dahomey, p. 82) claims that, in fact, the exact reverse took place and that the Oyo inflicted a terrible defeat on the Dahomeans. Unfortunately, he gives no sources for this information, although his source may be a letter from Francisco Pereyra Mendes who, in a letter to the vice-roy of Brazil, states that the Oyo had killed many Dahomeans and had taken many more prisoners. He ends: "Le dit révolté" (i.e. Agaja) s'enfuit à l'intérieur du pays, dans une brousse, avec les femmes et quelques guerriers, et lorsque le Ayo (i.e. the Oyo) se fut retiré, le révolté revint sur son territoire, où il se mit au travail. Mais on dit qu'il n'aura plus le pouvoir qu'il avait pour faire ses insultes comme auparavant." (Quoted in Verger, p. 144.) Mendes seems, however, to have been guilty of wishful thinking. It is well known that Agaja suffered no major inconvenience as a result of this Oyo attack, because just nine months later, he conquered Whydah. Thus Mendes' information was wrong on that point, and may easily have been wrong about the battle that had taken place between Oyo and Dahomey as well. In any case, Snelgrave's account, containing a detailed account of the effect of musket fire on the Oyo cavalry, is more convincing, especially as it is difficult to understand where Agaja would have found the resources to invade the rest of independent Ajaland in 1727 had he suffered a major defeat only nine months previously.

With the fall of Whydah, Agaja's conquest of Ajaland was virtually complete and he would now have turned his attention to pacifying the area had Oyo allowed him to do so. In Oyo, the government finally awoke to the possibility that Dahomey, not content with Allada, might further successfully pre-empt all Oyo interests in Ajaland. Why Oyo did not realise this possibility sooner is unknown, but may be due to a misunderstanding on Oyo's part; Oyo considered that along with the tribute Dahomey offered in 1726 came an acknowledgement of Dahomey's tributary status in relation to Oyo, while Agaja only considered it a peace offering. It is possible, of course, that Agaja encouraged Oyo's misunderstanding in order to buy himself enough time to complete the conquest and pacification of Ajaland. By 1728, however, Oyo had re-evaluated the situation and was ready to take some decisive action.

Unlike that of 1726, the Oyo invasion of 1728 was a serious affair. In fact, the invading Oyo army was so overwhelming that the Dahomeans uncharacteristically decided not to stand and face it. Instead, they retreated into the thickly wooded country to the west of Dahomey across the Mono River. Here they waited in comparative safety until the beginning of the rainy season and a lack of provision forced the invaders to withdraw.[3]

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3. Argyle, The Fon, op.cit., p. 25. In a letter dated 5 April, 1728, the director of the Portuguese Factory at Whydah, who resided on the beach rather than in Whydah itself, states that Agaja had fled to Whydah before the invading Oyo army. He is by no means certain of his facts, however, and admits that he had also heard a report that a certain 'Polega' had stopped Agaja from entering the city "...ce dont je doute, en raison de l'inconstance et de l'esprit changeant des nègres de ce lort, et aussi à cause de la très grande force avec laquelle le roi 'Daomé' avait coutume de se déplacer." (Quoted in Verger, p. 146.) Since no other reports indicate that Agaja took refuge at Whydah in 1728; this report must be discounted. Whydah would have proved at best a doubtful haven and Agaja had no need to risk it so long as his tried retreat across the Mono River was still secure.

In 1729 the Oyo again invaded Dahomey; this time the Yoruba invaders came armed with a plan to settle their own colonists on Dahomean land. Agaja, however, burnt their crops and they were forced to retire. Nevertheless, Agaja's supplies of arms and ammunition were by this time running low, and Dahomean ability to continue the resistance against the enemy was lessening.

When the Oyo invaded again in 1730, they came in alliance with the Mahi, Dahomey's rugged northern neighbours. The Mahi agreed not only to support the Oyo militarily but, what was more important, to supply them with food. This time Agaja offered to pay the Oyo regular tribute if they would withdraw; the Oyo agreed, but they returned when their Mahi allies attacked alone; the combined Oyo-Mahi army dispersed Agaja's forces and prevented him from rebuilding his capital; undoubtedly, they also caused the harvest to be lost.

Agaja was forced to sue for peace, and in 1730 an agreement was reached between Dahomey on the one side and Oyo on the other; Mahi was not included in this peace settlement. In view of Dahomey's straitened circumstances, Agaja's ambassadors to Oyo obtained for their country a very reasonable peace.

Dahomean tradition claims that they were able to achieve this by bribing some important Oyo court officials.[5] It is possible, however, that the peace was achieved by more orthodox means, such as Oyo's re-assessment of its own and Dahomey's position within the context of the international situation in Yoruba-Ajaland at that time.

Dahomey did have to make some real concessions, however. Among these was the agreement to pay the heavy tribute imposed.[6] The tribute was particularly heavy because the amount had been partly determined by the considersation that Dahomey was bound to make large profits from the slave trade at Whydah.[7]

Another disadvantage of the treaty was the establishment of the new kingdom of Ajase Ipo, with its port of Porto Novo, which was later to become Whydah's most serious rival. At this time, however, its trade was unimportant and it is possible that neither Oyo nor Dahomey recognised the significance of this point. The ajele, who were the traditional symbols of an Oyo-conquered state, were not allowed into Dahomey.[8]

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5. Dalzel, History, op.cit., p. 59.

6. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., pp. 91-92.

7. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., p. 16.

8. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 125. R. Smith (Kingdoms, p. 43) states that the ajele were rooted in various parts of Dahomey, but this is unlikely for two reasons. The annual tribute, or Agban, was brought each year by special Dahomean messengers to Kana, on the Dahomean-Oyo border where it was handed over to the Oyo representatives. (Polanyi, p. 59.) If the Ajele had been stationed inside Dahomey, it is not likely that so great an attempt would have been made to keep the Ilari out. Moreover, the ajele were used to govern conquered territories but it is well known that Dahomey continued to be governed by Dahomeans.

Akinjogbin claims that another condition of the treaty was that Agaja had to move his capital south to Allada and that he was not allowed to return to Abomey.[9] Unfortunately, Akinjogbin does not give any direct reference to support this statement. Moreover, what references do exist from this period indicate that Agaja did spend some time in Abomey after 1730.[10] Certainly he was often at Allada, but he was usually there, not in deference to his treaty agreement with Oyo, which he disregarded as it suited him, but rather in order to wage war on some southern enemy.

In any case, it is difficult to understand why Oyo should have insisted on Agaja's moving his capital south. There was no question of Abomey's being in such a good geographical position that the Dahomean armies could menace Oyo city from there; on the other hand, the frontiers of the Oyo empire were as exposed to attacks launched from Allada as they were to attacks launched from Abomey. For these reasons, it seems likely that Agaja continued to occupy Abomey after 1730 as he had before that date, and that he was not forced to accept this final insult.[11] Nevertheless, the concessions that Dahomey did make were real ones, and ones that cost and were to cost Dahomey dearly.

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9. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 91. According to Akinjogbin, the Dahomean capital was transferred to Allada until 1743 when Tegbesu was able to transfer it back to Abomey.

10. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., p. 114. Dalzel, History, op. cit., p. 72; pp. 135-36.

11. Agaja's successor, Tegbesu, changed the custom whereby a newly-chosen Dahomean king, once tattooed with the insignia of his office, had to remain in retirement. Agaja obviously did not observe this rule, but Tegbesu rationalised the situation by having a man who represented the king tattooed; this man then had to remain in seclusion at Allada. (Argyle, p. 118.) It is possible that Akinjogbin has misinterpreted this event, and views it as evidence that Agaja was forced to leave Abomey.

Dahomey was not alone in making concessions, however. Mahi, Oyo's ally, was not included in the peace settlement. It seems that about this time Oyo relinquished its claim to the overlordship of Mahi country, abandoning it in favour of Dahomey, although Mahi had been Oyo's ally in the war against Dahomey.[12]

From the results of the treaty of 1730, it can be guessed that another term of the agreement was that Dahomey would confine its activities to the west of the Weme River, except possibly along the coastline, while Oyo would confine itself to the east; thus the interests of the two powers would not conflict and each would be left in peace to pursue its own policies in its respective sphere of influence.[13]

In accordance with this agreement, Dahomey abandoned all claim to Porto Novo and to other ports further east along the coast; Oyo in turn abandoned Mahi, which lay to the east of the Weme, along with its claims in southern Ajaland. Since the slave trade in this area was centered in southern Ajaland, this meant that Oyo virtually abandoned any design it may have had to interfere directly in the slave trade. By this treaty, Oyo accepted Dahomey as its 'middle-man' while remaining itself only a supplier. This was Oyo's major concession and the heavy tribute imposed on Dahomey was presumably meant to compensate Oyo for the profits it would lose through this arrangement.

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12. Peter Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo", in West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century, ed. by Daryll Forde and P.M. Kaberry, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, p. 40.

13. This is Akinjogbin's theory. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., pp. 91-92.

As an earnest of his good faith, Agaja sent some hostages to Oyo, including his son Tegbesu who was to become Agaja's heir.[14] An exchange of royal wives, with Agaja sending his daughter to Ojigi as a wife, and Ojigi returning the compliment, sealed the contract.[15] Since both Oyo and Dahomey regularly used royal daughters as spies, however, the implied harmonious ending of this dispute cannot be taken too seriously.

2. The Condition of Oyo in 1730

Inasmuch as Oyo seemed to hold Dahomey within its grasp in 1730, it seems strange that the Alafin did not follow up his military triumphs and use the opportunity to eliminate a state that was fast becoming a serious rival. Had Oyo left its army in Abomey and prevented Agaja's rebuilding, Dahomey must ultimately have disintegrated.

The Oyo army could not, of course, have stayed indefinitely in Dahomey. Johnson states that it was the custom of the Oyo army never to stay away from home for more than three months. Of the Kakanfo, or commander-in-chief, he says: "By virtue of his office he is to go to war once in 3 years to whatever place the king names, and, dead or alive, to return home...within three months."[16] He also says that since sieges were always of short duration and always took place during the dry season, the army was never put to the necessity of providing itself against the elements.[17] Since Johnson also says, however, that Oyo never had a standing army,[18] the reliability of

14. Agaja's heir in 1730 was later disinherited by his father, thus clearing the way for Tegbesu to succeed.

15. Dalzel, History, op.cit., p. 59. Dunglas, Contribution, op.cit., pp. 146-47.

16. Johnson, History, op.cit., p. 74.

17. Ibid., p. 132.

18. Ibid., p. 131.

his information regarding the army is questionable. Ajayi states clearly that Oyo, alone among the Yoruba states, did possess a standing army.[19] It is probable that the custom of the army's going out for only short periods of time grew up as a result of problems of provisioning the army. A custom is not unbreakable, however, and the Oyo may have made their alliance with the Mahi in 1730 expressly in order to overcome this problem, realising that three months was not a long enough time to allow them to conquer Agaja thoroughly. The Mahi, who are not a very numerous people, could not, however, have supplied a large Oyo army over any great period of time. Accordingly, the Oyo army probably withdrew when its supplies ran low and the Mahi were no longer able to provision them. The Oyo invaders would have had to leave before any final subjugation of Agaja was made.

The retiring Oyo army took with it Agaja's for once sincerely meant offers of peace. To understand why Oyo, from its seemingly commanding position, so readily agreed to a compromise peace with Dahomey, the internal conditions then prevalent in Oyo must be examined.

Ojigi, the great warrior king of the Oyo, died around 1735 or 1736.[20] Although his reign had been long and glorious, Johnson's account indicates that towards the end of his reign he was having trouble with his government. In fact, when Ojigi died in 1735, it was as the result of a rejection by the people, forcing him to

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19. J.F.A. Ajayi, "Professional Warriors in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Politics," Tarikh, I, 1 (Nov., 1965), pp. 72-74.

20. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 43. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 220.

commit suicide.[21]

There are many other indications that during the last years of Ojigi's reign a power struggle over policy was developing. Here the slave trade comes into the question. The slave trade did not enrich any society as a whole, but it did enrich, as a general rule, the governing class of any society that engaged in it. This was true in Oyo as elsewhere, with the consequence that the power of the Alafins had been growing out of proportion to the other balancing elements in the Oyo government.

The man who led the attempt to re-establish the old balance was Ojigi's Basorun, Yamba, who is remembered in Oyo tradition as a powerful figure. The Oyo Mesi succeeded in changing the laws of succession to the throne in Oyo. The new law stated that the Aremo had to die with his father.[22]

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21. This was a peculiarity of Yoruba government which allowed for the king to be treated as divine and all-powerful, and yet remain answerable to the people, or at least to a part of the populace. Johnson says that in Oyo "...although the King as supreme is vested with absolute power, yet that power must be exercised within the limit of the unwritten constitution, but if he is ultra-tyrannical and withal unconstitutional and unacceptable to the nation, it is the Basorun's prerogative as the mouth-piece of the people to move his rejection as a King, in which case His Majesty has no alternative but to take poison and die." (Johnson, p. 70.) Johnson also explains why the Alafins so seldom defied this rejection. He says: "Such deaths are honourable, public and decent funerals are accorded them." (Johnson, p. 173.) If, however, a faint-hearted Alafin decided not to obey the summons to die, then he "...would be despatched by his nearest relatives to save themselves from indelible disgrace." (Johnson, p. 173.) In Ife, the first of the Yoruba cities, an Oni, or king, who refused to commit suicide after having been rejected by the people was killed at night by members of the Ogo cult. (William Bascom, The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, Montreal, 1969, p. 31.

22. Johnson, History, op.cit., p. 174. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 45.

The new Alafin was chosen by the Oyo Mesi from among the various eligible princes of the royal family; the candidate selected seldom or never had any previous knowledge of what was about to happen to him. Thus he came to the throne totally without experience and without supporters. He was, in fact, the creation of the Oyo Mesi and more particularly of the Basorun. Previously, the Basorun had had little to do with the selection of the new Alafin who was always expected to be the Aremo; now the Basorun actually chose the next Alafin.

Smith suggests that the new law was established to protect "...the oba and his officers against the possible ambitions of a prince who was usually associated with his father in the government."[23] In Oyo, the obas were the kings of individual Oyo villages or townships, as opposed to the Alafin who was lord of the whole empire.[24] This would indicate that the obas, who, as a class, formed a major power in Oyo, had joined the Basorun in an attempt to limit the growing power of the Alafins before all the noble families of Oyo had lost their independence. The nobles decided to protect their lines by weakening the royal clan. The Basorun, the first noble of the country, forced the new law through.

Yamba had overstepped himself, for the Alafin reacted in the only way he could, by forcing a change in the line of the Basoruns. Ojigi could not change his own Basorun, Yamba, but he must have gathered enough support so that, after his death, his successor was able to change the line that gave Oyo its Basoruns. Ojigi may also have retained enough power to be able to influence the choice of his

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23. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 45.

24. Law, "Constitutional Precedent," op.cit., p. 28.

successor within the royal clan, thus giving his heir at least some influence from the beginning of his reign.

The changing of the line of the Basoruns was a drastic move, unprecedented in the history of Oyo. It represented a desperate attempt on the part of Ojigi to redress the balance of power back in favour of the Alafins. In this endeavour, however, he was unsuccessful and the power of the Alafins continued to wane until late in the century. The fact that he was able to change the Basorun line at all, however, is important, for "...this could only be done when the king was very sure of his support...."[25] The fact that the Alafin's party was strong enough to oust the Basorun line while at the same time, or at about the same time, the Basorun's party was strong enough to change the succession laws indicates how very deep the cleavage in Oyo society was.

Although these events took place five to six years after the agreement of 1730, nevertheless, they do have a direct bearing on the events of that year.

First, the Oyo government did not present a united front to the Dahomean emissaries. Influential Oyo officials and private citizens must already have begun to choose sides in the power struggle that was looming. This, of itself, would have weakened the loyalty of part of the government to the Basorun, who was ultimately responsible for the negotiations.

Second, and more important, the division in the command of the Oyo army made it impossible for Oyo to pursue a long drawn-out

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25. Mabogunje, Owu, op.cit., p. 16.

war when the government was divided. The Alafin commanded the provincial army through the Kakanfo who was directly appointed by him and directly responsible to him.[26] It was this army that normally undertook foreign expeditions. The Basorun, however, commanded the army of the capital. Since the Alafin by law and tradition had to reside in the capital, his position became dangerous in view of his conflict with the Basorun. Once the battle between them had been openly joined, it is unlikely that Ojigi would have ordered his army several hundred miles out of the country where he could no longer immediately call it up to defend his interests.

Agaja must have been aware of this and must have taken full advantage of the necessity Ojigi found himself in to keep his army near Oyo city.

Both the Alafin and the Basorun may have been more willing to make peace with Dahomey, in order to be free to fight each other, because all available evidence indicated that Oyo had only to wait a few years for Dahomey's enemies to weaken the Aja state to a point where Oyo could easily conquer it. In this way, Oyo would save its men and money to use more advantageously elsewhere.

The possibility that Dahomey in 1730 would be torn apart by its enemies was not unreasonable for it was surrounded by them--the Old Whydahians, the Popos, Jakin and the Europeans to the south and the Mahi to the north.

The problem of Whydah was the most serious for Agaja was unable to pacify this area. The Whydahians, who had fled before the Dahomean army in 1727 had gathered on an off-shore island and, under

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26. Law, "Constitutional Troubles," op.cit., pp. 30 and 31.

their king Huffon and aided by their kinsmen, the Popos, had formed a new state. Their sole ambition was to regain their former homeland. After the Oyo-Dahomey peace of 1750, the Whydanians temporarily lost hope of doing this immediately, since it seemed Dahomey would be able to turn its whole strength to the purpose of settling the Whydanian question. Accordingly, in 1751, Huffon opened peace negotiations with Agaja, an action that was favourably received in Abomey.[27] The negotiations either failed or were broken off, however, because a chain of circumstances working against Agaja caused Huffon to reassess his position.

The first of these events was Agaja's campaign in Mahiland. In May of 1751, that is, during the rainy season,[28] Agaja marched his army north against Dahi where the Dah mean soldiers were badly defeated. Disaffection soon broke out in the army and Agaja's heir revolted against his father, bringing part of the army with him.[29]

The second circumstance that caused Huffon to change his plans was an outbreak of rebellion at Jakin.[30] This city was formerly Allada's port, but had now come under the sway of Dahomey. When Jakin had fallen to Dahomey in 1724, the people had at first been content

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27. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 96.

28. African armies in this area usually operated only during the dry season, because the torrential rains that fell during the rainy months not only made travel difficult, if not impossible, but also hampered the activities of the attacking army once it had reached its destination. The dry season extended from November to March. (Daryll Forde, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria, Part IV of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa, ed. by D. Forde, International African Institute, London, 1951, p. 5.)

29. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., p. 148. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., pp. 98-99.

30. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 149-50.

enough under their new rulers, for trade at Jakin flourished in an unprecedented fashion.[31] Jakin's increased trade was due to the unusually large number of slaves Agaja had available for sale. Moreover, Agaja, at this time, was blocking the trade routes to Whydah, Jakin's only rival.

The peace settlement of 1730, however, gave Agaja virtual control of the slave trade in the area of the Slave Coast. He subsequently tried to bring it under his direct control by centralising it in Whydah, the better known of his two ports.[32] The result was an immediate slump in the trade at Jakin and the overthrow of its economy, which was based almost entirely on the slave trade. The people of Jakin decided the situation was intolerable and, in 1731, on their own initiative, invited the European traders to call at their port. Both the Portuguese and the Dutch, anxious to prevent a Dahomean monopoly of the slave trade, began to build fortresses at Jakin.[33]

These Europeans were as anxious as the Jakin merchants to reopen a rival to Whydah which, from their point of view, was not working out. At first they had welcomed Agaja as the new lord of the Slave Coast, especially in the years before the conquest of Whydah. At that time, Jakin, Agaja's port, could be favourably compared to Whydah. During the years 1727-30, when Whydah first operated as a Dahomean port, many European traders reserved their opinions about the new administration, despite its poor showing. The Europeans judged that the war then raging may have been to blame for the slow trade.

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31. A.F.C. Ryder, "The Re-establishment of Portuguese Factories on the Costa da Mina to the Mid-Eighteenth Century," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, I, 3 (Dec., 1958), p. 164.

32. Ibid., p. 164. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 20-21.

33. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 149-50. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 98.

By 1731, however, a year after peace with Oyo, most traders had arrived at the opinion that the new order was not as satisfactory as the old, and many were anxious to help restore the former regime. Agaja had determined that he alone would decide the terms of the slave trade. The prices of slaves rose drastically and there were fewer available than usual. The Europeans considered that Agaja was able to bring these conditions about because he enjoyed a monopoly.[34] Consequently, they were ready to support bids not only to restore the old order but also, as in the case of Jakin, the attempt of a well-known port to break free from Agaja's grasp.

By the end of 1731, therefore, Huffon's situation had radically changed. From being alone in the south in the fight against Agaja, he now had both the Europeans and Jakin as allies. Some Europeans may have directly informed Huffon that they would support his attempts to re-take Whydah. Although it is not known, it is presumably for these reasons that Huffon called off his negotiations with Agaja. Akinjogbin states that Huffon called off the negotiations because Dutch agents assured him they would supply him with arms and would bring Oyo and Fanti support to his cause, but he gives no source.[35]

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34. Agaja's monopoly, so long as he could hold Whydah and Jakin, was real. Snelgrave's account describes the situation very clearly. "From Acra...to Jaquoen...there are no Factories but of two places, namely at Whidaw, and Jaquoen.... From Jaquoen to the Bay of Bonnin... there is no settlement of any European Nation." (Snelgrave, Introduction, n.p.) According to Snelgrave, then, from Accra on the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) to the Bay of Benin, Agaja controlled the only two ports where trade was done on a scale large enough to warrant ships being sent out especially from Europe to collect the slaves. Agaja apparently did not believe that the Europeans would look for new markets if trade at Jakin and Whydah became too unsatisfactory. For this reason, he felt safe in setting the terms of the trade to suit himself.

35. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 96. The Fanti lived on the Gold Coast.

From this point, an overview of the events to 1731 reveals some interesting facts about Oyo's policy regarding Dahomey. Oyo may have attacked Dahomey during the twenties partly because Dahomey had threatened Oyo's trade interests, but it is unlikely that this was the sole reason for the Oyo attacks because Oyo virtually gave up any control of the slave trade, at least temporarily, to Dahomey by the treaty of 1730. Neither does it seem reasonable to suppose that Oyo went to war with Dahomey in support of the Ebi social system as has been claimed.[36]

If Oyo's reasons for attacking Dahomey were neither economic nor socio-religious, then it seems reasonable to suppose they were military or imperial. Despite the powerful section of the Oyo government that may have supported the war with Dahomey because of the threat to Oyo's southern trade routes, and granting that this consideration may have influenced Oyo's original thinking, it

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36. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., pp. 81, 83. The Ebi social system is an unwritten convention prevailing in Yoruba-Ajaland among different states related by consanguinity. Each state looks upon itself as being related to the other states within the group, being either a brother state, or, in the case of the oldest, a father state. It was inherent in this social compact that a father state did not attack its 'son' or vice versa. Both Dahomey and Oyo belonged to Ebi commonwealths; Oyo belonged to the Yoruba group and Dahomey, along with Whydah and Allada, to the Aja commonwealth. Dahomey violated its Ebi obligations when it conquered these two related states.

Akinjogbin claims that Oyo invaded Dahomey in 1726 and again in 1728-30 to punish Dahomey for breaking one of the basic tenets of the Ebi social system, in which Oyo itself was still a firm believer. This is unreasonable if for no other reason than that, in the final peace settlement, Oyo made no insistence on this point and no provision for Allada or Whydah. Moreover, it is unlikely that Oyo would punish Dahomey for breaking the Ebi laws by taking action against Dahomey on behalf of Allada and Whydah, two states which had been notorious for breaking the Ebi compact during the previous fifty years. (Akinjogbin, Dahomey, pp. 33 ff. See also I.A. Akinjogbin, "Agaja and the Conquest of the Coastal Aja States: 1724-1730," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, II, 4 (Dec., 1963), p. 547.

would seem that Oyo warred primarily against what it considered a military rival. Realising that it would be costly to defeat that rival in 1730, Oyo agreed to a compromise peace, fully expecting that Dahomey's enemies would weaken Dahomey to the point where Oyo could easily take it a few years later. In the meantime, Oyo had Dahomey's promise to pay the Alafin tribute, from which the Yoruba state could claim that Dahomey had already become an Oyo vassal.

The treaty of 1730, far from being oppressive in any way, was a compromise reached by two states anxious to forget, at least temporarily, their mutual hostility in order to turn their attention to more pressing matters at home. As such, it was never regarded by either as more than a temporary measure.

The role of the slave trade in causing the wars is questionable. Oyo was continually the aggressor, yet, by the terms of the treaty, it acknowledged Dahomey's claim to the former Oyo outlet of Allada, thus leaving Oyo with no recognised slave port under its control. It cannot, therefore, be assumed that Oyo attacked Dahomey only because the latter threatened Oyo's slave trade interests.

On the other hand, it could be argued that Dahomey attacked southern Ajaland, thus inevitably inviting a war with Oyo, because of its determination to control the slave trade.

Thus Dahomey may have been motivated by the slave trade, but certainly not Oyo. Since Oyo was the aggressor, it would be simplistic to equate the slave trade with the war that broke out. The situation was complex, and it would be difficult to determine with any precision just how important a role the slave trade played in causing the Oyo-Dahomean wars of the twenties.

CHAPTER III - THE YEARS OF PEACE (1730 - 1739)

1. Dahomey and the Slave Trade

If the wars of the late 1720's between Oyo and Dahomey were meant to settle the issue between them, it soon became obvious that this was not the case. Since neither Oyo nor Dahomey ever seriously considered the compromise of 1730 to be a final answer, the years of peace between the two series of wars were used by both states to settle their outstanding affairs.

Dahomey's most pressing problem, after Oyo, was the 'Slave Coast' which it had conquered but not pacified during the twenties. Since the late 1660's Allada and its port, Jakin, along with Whydah had been regular distributors of slaves.[1] At first Allada had controlled the trade for all Ajaland but, because it refused to share its profits, competitors, the chief among them being Whydah, soon sprang up. Whydah was soon the favourite European port; by the end of the century, Whydah was shipping an average of one thousand slaves a month, unless there were ships at Jakin, in which case, "...the King of Great Ardra (Allada), through whose territories most of the slaves are obliged to pass, when the ships are there, (i.e. in Jakin) to favour his own Subjects, very commonly shuts up all the Passes to Fida (Whydah) by a very strict Prohibition...."[2]

The very factors that allowed Allada and Whydah to emerge as the two premier trading ports in West Africa were the factors that, at least in part, contributed to their downfall. Devoting themselves

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1. Great and Little Popo, also in this general area, shipped some slaves as well, but never on a scale to compete with either of the two big ports. Trade in these two places died, in any case, early in the eighteenth century, and after 1720 little mention of them is made in the literature of the period.

2. Bosman, A New and Accurate Description, op.cit., p. 343.

exclusively to trade, they neglected defence. By the end of the seventeenth century, both Allada and Whydah were relying heavily on foreign mercenaries to fight their wars.[3] The evidence indicates that this trend continued into the eighteenth century.[4] Nor did these two states do their own slave raiding; instead they bought most of their slaves from the interior, paying for them with European weapons.[5] When Agaja, leading his trained army, burst out of the interior in the twenties, neither Allada nor Whydah was able to defend itself. Indeed, the trade rivalry between them had become so bitter that, even in the face of this common danger, they could not sink their differences temporarily and fight together.

The importance of Allada and especially Whydah to the early eighteenth century European trade was immense, for by now few Europeans were willing to trade with Africans unless slaves formed some part of the exchange.[6] The economy of the new world plantations had become dependent on African labour and would collapse if the supply of slaves were seriously disrupted. Yet in all Africa at this time, until the 1730's, the French had only four sources of supply, while the English had only five, all of them in West Africa.[7] The Portuguese, who were the last of the three major buyers, had other sources available to them, in Central and South-East Africa; in the early part of the century, however, this area was not as

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3. Bosman, A New and Accurate Description, op.cit., pp. 335-6. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 33.

4. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 34.

5. Polanyi, Dahomey, op.cit., pp. 107, 108, 119.

6. Walter Rodney, West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Historical Association of Tanzania Paper No. 2, East Africa Publishing House, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 1967, p. 20.

7. Curtin, Census, op.cit., pp. 150, 170.

important a source as West Africa. Portugal's alternate areas of supply were of no importance at all to the English and French who simply did not use them.

The five West African slave-supplying areas were Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin. Of these, the only two of any major importance were the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin, where the Slave Coast was situated.

Senegambia never became a major supplier for a variety of reasons. Of these, the two most important were a low population density and the competition of the gum trade. Because Senegal had an alternative product to sell the Europeans, it was never forced into the position of having to trade on European terms or not at all. In these circumstances, the independent states of Senegambia were able to limit the scope of the slave trade. Senegambia's ability to participate in the slave trade was, in any case, limited by its population density which, in comparison to that of the Slave Coast, is, even today, low.[8]

The Windward Coast,[9] the second of West Africa's slave centers, never developed into a major slaving area because it lacked natural harbours. Moreover, the strong off-shore current and frequent storms of the area made it unsafe for sailing ships to venture too close to shore.[10] Sierra Leone included not only modern Sierra Leone, but also the whole area from the Casamance in the north to Cape Mount in the south. This area never developed into a major source because the eighteenth century was the era of the established trading companies, and Sierra Leone was controlled by free-lancers whose authority was backed by the families of the native

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8. John D. Hargreaves, West Africa: The Former French States, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1967, pp. 64-66. J.C. Pugh and A.E. Perry, A Short Geography of West Africa, University of London Press, London, 1960, p. 50.

9. The term 'Windward Coast' is understood to include modern Ivory Coast and Liberia. (Curtin, p. 128.) In the nineteenth century, the term referred to an area on either side of Sierra Leone.

10. Curtin, Census, op.cit., p. 128. Fage, West Africa, op.cit., p. 58.

women they had married.[11] In addition, the nature of the terrain, which was characterised by a heavy rain-forest may have discouraged trade.

Thus at the beginning of the eighteenth century, two of the major European slaving countries relied on only two major sources for their slaves; the third of the 'Big Three' powers also drew heavily on those two sources.[12]

Of the two, the Slave Coast was, as its name implied, the more important in the early 1700's.[13] Since Whydah and Allada were the two premier trading ports on the Slave Coast, their importance both to the European traders and to the indigenous African population is obvious.

Traditionally it has been believed that Agaja's motives for conquering Ajaland was to dominate the slave trade. It is known that, since the reign of Wegbaja, the Dahomean army had been trained to use European arms. At least once during the twenties, European arms had allowed a small Dahomean army to face and hold against a large Oyo army.[14] Accounts from Europeans who saw the Dahomean army drill at this time indicate that it was very efficient.[15] Taken together, all this evidence indicate that by the 1720's Dahomey had became completely reliant on European weapons for its defence. The very fact that the Dahomean soldiers were so proficient in the use of European arms and drill patterns indicates that little time was spent drilling the use of traditional weapons and means of defence. Given

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11. Fage, West Africa, op.cit., p. 52.

12. Dutch trade was also important, but it too was conducted mainly on the Slave and Gold Coasts.

13. Curtin, Census, op.cit., pp. 150, 170 and 208.

14. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 56-57. This was the Oyo invasion when the Dahomeans fired their guns to frighten the horses of the Oyo cavalry.

15. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., p. 78.

this situation, it is not strange that Agaja took some measures to protect his source of supply which had become dangerously inconsistent due to the intermittent Whydah-Allada wars which so often interrupted trade.[16]

If it is accepted that Agaja conquered the Slave Coast in order to secure his supply of European weapons much of his subsequent actions become understandable.

This idea has been challenged by Dr. Akinjogbin who claims that Agaja conquered the Slave Coast to stop the slave trade, of which he was a determined opponent.

He dismisses as slave-trading propaganda Snelgrave's statement that, "He (Agaja) sent an Ambassador to the King of Whidaw, requesting to have an open Traffick to the Sea side, and offering to pay him his usual customs on Negroes exported; which being refused, he from that time resolved to resent it, when Opportunity offered."[17]

Akinjogbin also dismissed Dahomean tradition which claims that Agaja conquered the Southern states in order to secure his share of the European trade. Akinjogbin claims that Dahomean tradition is unreliable in this instance because "...the oral traditions must be regarded as

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16. Even when Dahomey could get consignments from Whydah, they did not always do Dahomey much good. Once Whydah accepted payment for a shipment of guns from which the Whydasians had already removed the firing pins.

17. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 5-6. Akinjogbin's opinion regarding this statement of Snelgrave's is found in Dahomey, p. 73. His dismissal of Snelgrave's statement as slave-trading propaganda is not acceptable because the controversy over slavery had not yet blown up. In the early part of the eighteenth century few people had yet begun to challenge the slave trade. Snelgrave was a reporter, not a propagandist.

propaganda spread by the Agbadjigbeto[18] and probably generally widely believed."[19] Why the Agbadjigbeto, under Agaja's orders, should spread such propaganda is not, however, easily understood; they could just as easily have reported that Agaja wanted to conquer the southern states in order to stop Dahomean villages from being raided by slavers; this would have been a very popular reason for the war. Nevertheless, according to Dr. Akinjogbin, the oral traditions are unreliable in this instance and therefore the clue which will explain the motives behind Agaja's southern expansion must be sought elsewhere.

"The safest evidence to go on therefore would be Agaja's actions immediately after his victory."[20] From these, Akinjogbin concludes that Agaja had two prime motives for his conquests. The first was "...to sweep away the traditional political system, which had completely broken down..." and the second was "...to restrict and eventually stop the slave trade...."[21]

When Akinjogbin talks about the 'traditional political system', he is referring to the Ebi social system which had certainly broken down. This contention is granted.

The claim that Agaja meant to restrict and ultimately to stop the slave trade is doubtful, however, especially as the evidence to support this theory is supposed to come from a study of Agaja's actions immediately after his victory. By 1730, says Dr. Akinjogbin, Agaja had

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18. The Agbadjigbeto were groups of spies set up by Agaja and used by him to reconnoitre any town or village he intended to attack. Back in Dahomey, they were expected to invent reasons why the towns they had inspected should be attacked.

19. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 72.

20. Ibid., p. 77.

21. Ibid.

reconciled himself to the slave trade and had given up his attempts to destroy it.[22] If the Akinjogbin theory is correct, a study of Agaja's policies between the years 1727 to 1730 should demonstrate that Agaja actually tried to put a term to the slave trade.

In fact, Agaja did nothing of the sort. The first European slave dealer with whom Agaja had the opportunity to deal directly was an Englishman, Captain William Snelgrave, who docked at Whydah harbour just three weeks after Agaja's conquest of Whydah. Snelgrave, at Agaja's personal request, made the journey inland to Allada to meet Agaja.[23] Agaja assured the British Captain that: "He designed to make Trade flourish..."[24] and, in order to prove his words, he agreed to lower by one-half the customs Snelgrave had to pay before he could start trading. This was a special concession to Snelgrave, however, and generosity on a parallel scale did not mark Agaja's later policy. Nevertheless, Agaja assured Snelgrave that all trading ships "...should be used kindly in that matter...."[25] Another European, Bullfinch Isaac, reported that Agaja had told him that "...he wants ships to come to such a place only for his slaves, and bring such things as are only fit for such a King as he...."[26] This, in fact, was Agaja's desire--to control the slave trade himself and to prevent others from using it to enrich themselves.

An indication that Agaja had no wish to kill the slave trade is the fact that immediately after the conquest, slaves were to be had

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22. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 77.
23. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., p. 22.
24. Ibid., p. 64.
25. Ibid., p. 72.
26. In W. Smith, A New Voyage, op.cit., p. 174.

at Allada in greater abundance than ever before.[27] This was due to the great number of prisoners taken by the Dahomeans during the war with Allada. Had Agaja been unalterably opposed to the slave trade, however, he could have disposed of these prisoners otherwise.

In the years 1728 and 1729, however, the slave trade at Whydah went into a decline; according to Akinjogbin, the decline was due to Agaja's policies towards the trade. According to contemporary traders, however, the decline was due to the unsettled condition of the country.[28] In 1728 and 1729, large Oyo armies invaded Dahomey, laying waste its villages and forcing its people into hiding. Under such circumstances, the conclusion reached by contemporary traders was not marvellous.[29] In 1730, a peace was agreed upon between Oyo and Dahomey, and at the same time, says Dr. Akinjogbin, now convinced that it was an exercise in futility, Agaja finally gave up his attempt to kill the slave trade. The coincidence of dates is too marked to be credited.

That is not to say that Agaja was a supporter of the slave trade. The Dahomean king was, however, too much of a realist to even attempt the destruction of the trade. He may not have liked it, and there is evidence to indicate that he did not like it, but he needed the

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27. Ryder, "Re-Establishment," op.cit., p. 134.

28. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., pp. 130 and 136.

29. It has generally been accepted among Africanists that the slave trade bred wars among African states. (Curtin, p. 271.) A good example of this viewpoint is contained in Rodney's account of the slave trade. (Rodney, pp. 8-9.) Recently Curtin has questioned this truism, suggesting that "African adaptation to the demand for slaves might (have been) to change the military tactics and strategy to maximize the number of prisoners, without actually increasing the incidence or destructiveness of warfare." (Curtin, p. 272.) Snelgrave's observations would seem to support Curtin. Certainly they indicate that outright warfare, as opposed to slave raids, disrupted the trade.

slave trade in order to obtain European arms. Accordingly, once he controlled the two major outlets, he attempted to dominate the trade on the Slave Coast, getting for himself the weapons he needed while giving back to the European traders as few slaves as he could. Under these circumstances, trade at Whydah declined, disastrously from the Europeans' point of view and from the point of view of some Aja traders. There is nothing to indicate that Agaja was overly perturbed about this turn of events until later, when it became obvious that the Europeans would find another market at which to buy slaves, so long as trade at Whydah continued as it was going.

2. Reconstruction in Ajaland

Once peace with Oyo was secured in 1730, Agaja turned to affairs in Ajaland. He had three principal enemies in the vicinity of Ajaland that he set himself to reduce, in order to ensure the security of his state. These were Jakin, Allada's old port, Whydah and the Mahi who had never been conquered by the Dahomeans. In the cases of Whydah and Jakin, Agaja was successful in eliminating the threat posed by them. In the case of Mahi, he was not.

After the defeat of Jakin in 1731 by Agaja's troops, Jakin gave Agaja little further trouble. Nevertheless, some rebellious elements must have remained in the city, for in 1734 Agaja again took and sacked Jakin for reasons unknown. Agaja cannot, however, have regarded the offence as being either very serious or very widespread among the inhabitants of the city for, as in 1731, he left the populace alone--there was no dispersal of the people as there had been in the cases of Whydah and Allada. In fact, Agaja seems to have encouraged the

recovery of Jakin, so that by the end of the decade it was an object of some envy to other trading cities in this area. After 1734 Jakin never again revolted against Agaja.

In dealing with the dual problem of Whydah, Agaja was equally, although not as permanently, successful. Whydah presented Agaja with two distinct problems. His first concern was to hold Whydah now that he had conquered it, and to provide it with some sort of government. His second problem at Whydah concerned the Whydasians whom Agaja had driven from their home in 1727. These people had set up a state on an off-shore island. These two problems were really two facets of a single problem, and Agaja tried to deal with it accordingly.

After the failure of the peace negotiations of 1731, the Dahomean monarch ceased trying to come to an agreement with the Old Whydasians[30] who had, since the time of the capture of Whydah, never ceased their unfriendly actions against Dahomey.

After the conquest of 1727, Agaja had paid little attention to Whydah. Trade there was conducted by the few Old Whydasians whom Agaja allowed to remain, and by Agaja's agents. Possibly there were a few additional independent traders who also worked at Whydah. For the rest, Whydah was so neglected that the land was left uncultivated and allowed to go to wasteland.[31] Possibly it was this evidence of neglect that encouraged the Old Whydasians to continue their attempts to recover their lost city.

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30. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., pp. 96-97.

31. W. Smith , A New Voyage, pp. 198-99.

By 1733, however, Agaja had made up his mind. A contemporary document states that the king of the Old Whydasians "...a fait proposer plusieurs fois à Dada (Agaja) de lui être tributaire, sans que celui-ci ait voulu l'accepter...."[32] Agaja's continued rejection of the Old Whydasian proposal indicates that he had never intended Whydah to be other than under his direct control. By 1733 Agaja realised that if he meant to secure Whydah for himself and away from the troublesome Old Whydasians, he would have to take some measures to upset their plans and to frustrate their constant raids on Whydah beach.

He first decided to strengthen Whydah's defences by moving settlers into Whydah to re-populate the area.[33] Also in 1733, Agaja replaced the sketchy administration he had previously set up in Whydah with a more centralised one which placed all responsibility for the government of the city in the hands of one official, called the Yovogan. This was a post especially created by Agaja at this time to deal with the problem of administering Whydah.[34]

Having taken measures to safeguard Whydah, Agaja now turned his attention to the Old Whydasians. This was the root of the problem and Agaja realised that he could not hope to normalise the situation at Whydah as long as the Old Whydasians continued to exist, strong and independent, just a few miles away. In dealing with the Old Whydasians, Agaja was extremely lucky. In 1733 the old king died and a succession dispute broke out among the Old Whydasians,

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32. Instructions to Julien Dubelloy, Director of the French Installations in Guinea, quoted in Verger, Flux et Reflux, op.cit., p. 165.

33. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 97.

34. Ibid., pp. 102-03.

led by their most important general. Most of the people supported the general's candidate, so Agaja immediately took the part of the minority contender. Through the influence of his protegé, Agaja was able to catch the majority party in a trap and eliminate them. Since this included most of Old Whydah's available fighting men, the military power of the Old Whydasians was reduced for years to come.[35] The Old Whydasians were now no longer in a position to challenge Agaja's policies in Ajaland.

Agaja was not as successful in dealing with the Mahi as he had been in Jakin and Whydah. His attempt of 1731 to punish the Mahi for their alliance against him in 1730 already been described. After that, other considerations forced Agaja's attention away from the Mahi until 1737. In that year, Agaja once again invaded Mahi. He invested Boagry, a southern section of Mahi, but met with no particular success.[36]

Nevertheless, Agaja had good reason to be satisfied with his condition, for the south had been completely reduced and Mahi was not a major security problem. The Mahi had been able to resist Dahomey for so long because they fought in their mountain homelands in positions from which it was hard to dislodge them. This served them only defensively, however, and Dahomey had little to fear from them offensively.

This was the situation in the middle thirties, and Agaja considered it peaceful enough to allow him to turn his attention to Oyo again. He presumably wanted to force Oyo into a settlement of

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35. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, 26 Aug., 1733, quoted in Verger, Flux et Reflux, op.cit., pp. 166-167.

36. Dalzel, History, op.cit., p. 77. Verger, Flux et Reflux, op. cit., p. 167.

the issues between them before Oyo was ready. When Ojigi died in 1735, the split between the two major Oyo parties became particularly marked and Agaja took advantage of the opportunity to stop his payments of tribute to Oyo. After Ojigi's death, Agaja also began raiding Oyo-controlled territory, particularly the Oyo-controlled port of Badagry, although he alleged that he acted only in retaliation for a Badagrian attack on Jakin in 1736.[37]

Agaja was probably additionally anxious to renew the conflict with Oyo at this time, rather than allow Oyo to choose the time, because Dahomey was going through a period of severe internal dissension. If allowed to go too far, this internal dissension might weaken Dahomey as much as it had Oyo.

During the war against the Mahi in 1731, part of the army, led by Agaja's son and heir, revolted and may have deserted to Agaja's enemies.[38] In 1737 an English visitor in Whydah reported that "...the power of the King of Dahomey...is at present at so low an ebb that it has lately been employed, and often without success, upon his own tributary subjects."[39]

This dissension in Dahomey was quickly dissipated by the threat of a renewed war with Oyo. Agaja had never challenged Oyo outright, so that when the invasion came it was seen by the Dahomeans as outright aggression on the part of Oyo. They rallied to their king, and Agaja, although worried by the Oyo problem, must have breathed a sigh of relief to have his country once more united behind him.

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37. Ryder, "Re-Establishment," op.cit., p. 170. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 106.

38. Snelgrave, A New Account, op.cit., p. 148. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 99.

39. From A Description of the Castles and Forts Belonging to the Royal Africa Company, 1737, quoted in Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 107.

3. Readjustment in Oyo

The battle that had been developing between the Alafin Ojigi and his Basorun was not settled with the death of Ojigi around 1735. Agaja evidently considered that the death of Ojigi weakened Oyo still further; Oyo's failure to react to Agaja's breach of his tributary obligations probably convinced the Dahomean king that he was right, and that Oyo would continue to weaken. Oyo was so disorganised during this period, that it did not engage in foreign ventures of any kind, except in relation to Badagry.

Badagry was a new port first peopled by refugees from Allada and Whydah whom Agaja would not allow to return to their homes. It lay east of the Weme River, and so outside Dahomey's sphere of influence. Porto Novo, later to be Oyo's most important trade outlet, existed at this time, but, like Badagry, was a new and relatively unimportant port. At this time, Badagry was the more promising of the two, for it was situated in an ideal location to carry on the slave trade. The very advantages that Badagry possessed had already made it an object of envy to its neighbours,[40] so that the protection of Oyo was particularly welcome.

The Oyo, for their part, were anxious to develop trade in Badagry as quickly as possible, both because of the decline in the trade being done in Ajaland and because Agaja's efforts to bring the trade under his control meant that the Oyo were shut off from their normal outlet. During the years that Oyo had had Allada as its outlet, it had established a slave-gathering system which could not now be easily turned off. Slaves continued to be brought into Oyo, despite the fact that Oyo now had no way of ridding itself of these

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40. B.W. Hodder, "Badagri I: Slave Port and Mission Centre," Nigerian Geographic Journal, V, 2 (Dec., 1962), pp. 78-80.

unwanted aliens. Besides constituting a dangerous element in the empire, they represented a heavy charge on the treasury. For these reasons, Oyo was anxious to foster the growth of Badagry. Apart from this involvement in Badagry, however, Oyo concerned itself strictly with its own affairs during these years.

The reasons for Oyo's continued embarrassment are to be found in a study of Oyo's domestic situation. In 1735 Ojigi was succeeded by Gberu and by a new line of Basoruns. The Basorun was a personal friend of the new Alafin's,[41] and this rapprochement between the two highest officers in Oyo allowed that state, at least temporarily, to take more interest in external affairs. Badagry's attack on Jakin in 1736, for example, was probably instigated by Oyo, although this is by no means certain.

There are also indications that about this time Oyo recovered enough to start interfering in the internal affairs of Dahomey. Cornevin, giving Le Herissé as his source,[42] states that one of Agaja's wives wanted her son to succeed; when Agaja chose Tegbesu as his successor, this woman, who was the Guardian of the Royal Treasury, sent a huge coral to the Alafin, promising that he would continue to receive such magnificent corals if her son were chosen to succeed Agaja. The Alafin then informed Agaja that he wished to have this boy succeed to the crown of Dahomey. He probably felt particularly

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41. Johnson, History, op.cit., p. 175.

42. Robert Cornevin, Histoire du Dahomey, Editions Berger-Levrault, Paris, 1962, p. 107. Since no copy of Le Herissé's book is available in any North American library, it was not possible to go back to the original source to check this story.

confident of influencing the issue because he still held Tegbesu prisoner somehwere in Oyo. The Alafin's attempt to influence the succession in Dahomey was unsuccessful, however, because Agaja imprisoned the woman as soon as he heard of the plot.[43]

Oyo's recovery was, in any case, only temporary and very brief. The changing of the Basorun line did not greatly alter the basic clash of interests which lay behind the quarrel between Ojigi and Yamba. The new Basorun, Jambu, was a noble and the representative of a noble house. His earlier friendship with Gberu did not alter the fact that, in his new position, he had to defend the interests of his house. Since these were not compatible with the Alafin's, it was not long before Gberu and Jambu fell out. Although no details are known, it is assumed that their failure to form a united government was due to the Basorun's refusal to accept as permanent the too powerful position the Alafins had obtained during the previous half-century. Gberu, for his part, may have attempted to rescind the new law regarding the succession.

Whatever the cause of the quarrel, it was not long in developing and Gberu was forced to commit suicide after a short reign.[44] After his death, there was a short inter-regnum of possibly up to three years during which time Jambu ruled.[45] He was able to do so because

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43. Cornevin, Histoire, op.cit., p. 107.

44. Johnson, History, op.cit., p. 175.

45. Law, "Constitutional Troubles," op.cit., p. 32. Johnson's account does not contain any reference to this inter-regnum, but other Oyo and Yoruba traditional accounts do. Law's information regarding the inter-regnum that followed Gberu's suicide is taken from independent traditional accounts.

Oyo custom demanded that the new Alafin's coronation ceremonies last up to three months, during which time he was to have nothing to do with the government. During this period, the Basorun ruled for him. Accordingly, when Gberu died, Jambu had three months in which to consolidate his power.[46] The new Alafin, realising this and out of fear of Jambu, refused to become Alafin.[47]

This inter-regnum, more than anything else, explains why Dahomey so determinedly defied Oyo during this period, for Oyo literally could not go to war so long as there was no Alafin. It will be recalled that the Basorun commanded only the army of the capital, not the provincial army which was the army sent out on foreign expeditions. In any case, under the Oyo constitution, only the Alafin could order out a military expedition.[48]

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46. Johnson, History, op.cit., pp. 43 and 46. It is not clear from Johnson's account whether the Basorun of the old reign or the new Basorun exercised this privilege. Although Law also refers to this custom, he does not clarify it any further. It seems, in the case of Jambu, that he would have remained in office for the next Alafin refused to take the throne out of fear of Jambu. The procedure may have varied, however; later in the century, the Basorun Gaha, ruling through puppet Alafins, made himself the sole ruler of Oyo. He became Basorun under Lasibi and seventeen days later forced the young Alafin to commit suicide. (Johnson, p. 178.) The very speed with which he eliminated the first of his puppet Alafins suggests that Gaha may have had these three months to plan his coup.

47. Amuniwaiye, who should have become Alafin, presumably refused to complete the coronation ceremonies; until these had been completed, no Alafin had the right to rule. Why the Oyo did not choose a more compliant Alafin to put in Amuniwaiye's place is not clear.

48. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 47.

The inter-regnum ended somewhere around 1738 or possibly earlier when Jambu, in his turn, was rejected for being as great a tyrant as the Alafin had been.[49] This rejection of Jambu suggests that the Basorun may have attempted to take the place of the Alafin, thus perpetuating the imbalance in Oyo and causing the rejection of the Basorun by the same elements that had caused the rejection of the Alafins.

Amuniwaiye now agreed to become Alafin and a new Basorun was appointed to serve him. Once again, the powers that governed Oyo had covered up the deep divisions that permeated the government and presented a united front to their neighbours. Relying on this newly-reestablished unity, Oyo was ready to face Dahomey.

4. The Road to War

By the end of the thirties both Oyo and Dahomey had settled their domestic affairs to a point where each began looking further afield. The surest indication that exists that neither had accepted the decision of 1730 as final is the immediate renewal of their wars. Since both parties were looking for a re-engagement with each other to settle the issue between them, it was not hard to find a cause over which to fight. In 1739, Oyo decided to challenge Dahomey over two issues; Badagry and Dahomey's refusal to pay tribute.[50] Dahomey

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49. Law, "Constitutional Troubles," op.cit., p. 32.

50. Dahomey's attitude towards the slave trade may also have been a factor. Because of Dahomey's trade policies, Oyo's trade had been almost completely dislocated. If Onisile was Alafin of Oyo by 1739, he, in particular, would have resented this situation. His nickname refers to a man with clanging chains for prisoners--slaves. (Johnson, p. 176.) To have merited such a nickname, his involvement in the slave trade must have existed over a long period of time and have been on a large scale. Although Porto Novo and Badagry, both under Oyo control

immediately accepted the challenge. This immediate, almost eager acceptance of the Oyo challenge may seem in retrospect to have been precipitant unless Dahomey's situation in 1739 is recalled. Dahomey was convinced, correctly, that Oyo wished to bring it far more completely under its dominion; it was to Dahomey's advantage to fight Oyo at this time when Oyo was still internally divided, rather than later, when either the Basorun or, worse, the Alafin had emerged with a clear victory, and when Dahomey's own internal problems would make an Oyo victory easier.

It was as well for Dahomey that it was ready to engage Oyo at this time, for Oyo's renewed tribute demands would have caused war between the two states in any case. By the end of the thirties, Dahomey was in no position to meet these demands, due to the decline of the slave trade. The demand of the Alafin not only for back-payment of all tribute due, but for an increased yearly payment as well, was impossible to meet, even had Dahomey tried to meet these payments with the best will in the world.

There is a question about which Alafin was reigning in 1739 when the war broke out again. Akinjogbin estimates that Onisile may have come to the throne in 1746[51] but he is by no means certain, and he gives no reason why he assigns this date is preference to another. It cannot be ascertained when Amuniwaiye left the

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51. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 220.

50. (cont'd from p. 69.) were by this time doing a fairly regular trade, Onisile may have considered that the existence of Jakin and Whydah, under Dahomean control, drained his trade and so cost him money. It is unlikely, however, that Onisile ruled this early.

throne and Onisile ascended it, due to lack of evidence, so that Onisile may already have been on the throne by 1739, or just slightly later. Amuniwaiye came to the throne around 1738. Like Gberu, he seems to have had a short reign, and Johnson does not mention any wars undertaken by either of these Alafins, an indication that few, if any, took place, for Johnson usually makes careful mention of them. It may be, however, that Amuniwaiye was Alafin at the time of the Oyo invasion of 1739. This invasion was, from Oyo's point of view, a near disaster. This would explain Johnson's failure to mention it, as the memory of it was probably obliterated from Johnson's source, Oyo traditional accounts.

It was during the reigns of Gberu and Amuniwaiye that Dahomey started ignoring completely its treaty obligations and was allowed to do so with impunity. It is unlikely that Dahomey paid Oyo tribute more than once or twice during the thirties, during the time when Ojigi was still Alafin, and when Dahomey was still recovering from Oyo's earlier invasions. As Dahomey continued to disregard the terms of the treaty, and as Oyo continued to turn a blind eye to Dahomey's activities, the Dahomeans came to believe that Oyo's power to affect their destiny was past.

The Dahomeans seem to have been considerably surprised by Oyo's demands for tribute when they came, and they refused to obey them. Amuniwaiye (or Onisile) pressed his demands because he was determined to force Dah mey to acknowledge the suzerainty of Oyo, and when Dahomey continued in its refusal, Oyo attacked.

This question of suzerainty was the crux of the matter. Dahomey, although not beaten in 1730 had been badly shaken. In its anxiety to gain a breathing spell, Dahomey may have given Oyo a hazy

acknowledgement of its suzerainty. As the decade progressed and Oyo seemed to grow weaker and more divided, Dahomey came to regret this pledge and determined to revoke it. It has been said that more than for any other reason, Dahomey fought the wars of 1739-48 to throw off all vestiges of its dependence on Oyo.[52]

The peace that prevailed between Oyo and Dahomey during the thirties had proved, by the end of the decade, to be ephemeral. As soon as circumstances allowed of a resumption of the war, both Oyo and Dahomey proved ready to dispute once again the issue of which of them would dominate Ajaland and, along with Ajaland, the slave trade.

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52. I.A. Akinjogbin, "Dahomey and Yoruba in the Nineteenth Century," in A Thousand Years of West African History, ed. by J.F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Espie, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1969, p. 313.

CHAPTER IV - THE WARS OF 1739 - 1748

1. The Events of the War Years

By 1739 both Oyo and Dahomey were more than ready to have the issue of Oyo's suzerainty decided. The wars of 1739-48 were fought to decide this issue, but like their predecessors of the 1720's they failed to give a clear verdict. No solution was reached because Oyo was still racked with internal problems which prevented it from focussing its attention on Dahomey.

The peace agreement of 1748 turned out to be a definitive one, although neither party to it could have foreseen this at the time, and the fact that it remained unchanged was an accident of history.

An examination of these years and of the treaty that followed will reveal that the agreement of 1748 was nearly a total compromise, allowing both states, but Oyo in particular, to extricate themselves from a situation which had become expensive and unrewarding, and allowing them, moreover, to do so with dignity.

In 1739 an Oyo army invaded Dahomey. In the late twenties, the Dahomeans had fled before all invading Oyo armies; this time the Aja troops decided to stand and fight; they were defeated but not routed, and they managed to retire in good order after having assured the safety of the king and of the royal family, and after the evacuation of the wounded and of the women and children had been completed.[1] Dahomey then sued for peace. Agaja offered to start paying tribute again, but these terms were no longer acceptable to the Alafin, who still insisted on back-payment of tribute and,

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1. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., pp. 13-15.

in addition, on an increase of the already heavy tribute Dahomey had agreed to pay in 1730.[2] Moreover, the Oyo may by now have realised that Agaja's promises of tribute were not always kept. Therefore, the Oyo refused Agaja's offer of peace and continued the war.

There can be no doubt that the invasion of 1739 was a very costly one from the point of view of Oyo. Norris reported that the Dahomeans killed more than twice as many Oyo soldiers as there were in the whole Dahomean army;[3] he also says that the Dahomeans were forced to give up the attack only because of the fresh reinforcements the Oyo commander brought up time and again. Nor did the Oyo, even then, gain a complete victory, for Agaja and the Dahomean army both escaped them. Agaja was safely hidden in a remote part of Dahomey and the Dahomean army was intact, ready to take the field again upon command, and to dispute once more the possession of Abomey.

Although the Oyo were in temporary possession of Abomey, and of much of the surrounding countryside, they were not in secure possession, both because of the Dahomean army and because of conditions in Dahomey. Before escaping, Agaja had ordered the land laid waste and the crops burnt, so that soon after their victory over the Dahomeans, the Oyo found themselves in difficult straits; their soldiers had no food and their cavalry had no forage; they had to retreat. In Oyo, the results of this campaign were considered so unsatisfactory that the commander of the Oyo army was disgraced.[4]

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2. Dunglas, Contributions, op.cit., p. 171.

3. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., p. 13. Norris may exaggerate, but as most exaggerations contain some truth, the number of Oyo soldiers killed must have been very large. Undoubtedly Dahomean proficiency in the use of European weapons was partly responsible for turning back the Oyo attackers.

Another indication of the futility of this invasion is the fact that Oyo did not invade in 1740, when the internal condition of Dahomey was chaotic, due to the death of Agaja. It will be recalled that Agaja had disinherited his heir-apparent and nominated Tegbesu in his stead. Tegbesu may still have been a prisoner in Oyo at the time of his father's death.[5]

A succession dispute broke out following Agaja's death, and Tegbesu had to fight his way to the throne over the claims of two other of Agaja's sons, one of them the original heir. Tegbesu was aided in his fight by the Migan, who was the highest officer in the country.[6]

Oyo's failure to take advantage of the embarrassment of its most formidable enemy can only be taken as evidence of its inability to do so. The discord in Oyo that had been temporarily healed to allow for the 1739 invasion was breaking out again and Amuniwaiye, who was presumably Alafin, was soon to be rejected. The failure of the expedition of 1739 may have hastened his rejection.

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5. Dunglas, Contributions, op.cit., p. 166. How Tegbesu managed to escape from Oyo in order to return home and claim his inheritance is a mystery. It is unlikely that the Oyo, who had watched Agaja frustrate the claims of their favourite candidate, would aid Agaja's chosen heir in his return home. This whole story of Tegbesu's internment in Oyo is, however, only hazily recalled in Dahomean tradition, and it is possibly not accurate. A contemporary document that mentions the circumstances of Tegbesu's succession makes no reference to his having been a prisoner in Oyo. The document describes the situation in Ajaland quite clearly, saying that Tegbesu "...n'étant que le second fils, il ne prétendait pas pour lors à la royauté...." (Letter from the Director of the French Fort at Whydah to the Compagnie des Indes; quoted in Verger, p. 172.) It seems that the Director would have mentioned as strange a situation as that of an heir still held prisoner in enemy territory.

6. Dalzel, History, op.cit., p. 67.

The Oyo did not again invade Dahomey until 1742 or 1743.[7] Little is known about this invasion, except that Tegbesu followed his father's old policy of retreating before the invading Oyo army across the Mono River, where the Oyo cavalry could not follow. He burnt the crops before withdrawing, which meant that soon the Oyo army ran short of provisions. The Oyo do not seem to have invaded Dahomey again, although they may have threatened to do so in 1748.[8]

This, so far as is known, is the extent of the renewed wars between Oyo and Dahomey, which, it has been claimed,[9] finally brought Dahomey to its knees. Two invasions, one of them disastrous and the other basically ineffective, and a threat, could not possibly have been enough to convince Dahomey, a military nation from its inception, to give up its independence.

The condition of Dahomey during the 1740's was far from desperate. In fact, the Aja state was probably as flourishing as it had ever been. The slave trade was certainly not being conducted at Whydah on the scale that it had been under the Whydahians. Nevertheless, six thousand slaves were being exported to Bahia alone each year.[10] Akinjogbin states that this did not enrich the Dahomean monarchy because the Portuguese Director did not allow gold to be sold to Dahomey. As it happened, however, there was no modern banking system in Dahomey, so Tegbesu did not need to obtain gold from the slave trade, since gold

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7. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 111. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., pp. 15-16 and Dalzel, History, op.cit., p. 74, who based this part of his work on Norris's, claim that Oyo invaded Dahomey every year during the 1740's, but they are wrong.

8. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 111.

9. Ibid., pp. 123-124.

10. Ryder, "Re-Establishment," op.cit., p. 180.

could only serve as ostentation; he needed European guns, as his father had before him. It is doubtful if the Brazilian trade brought Tegbesu any great number of guns, however, as the Brazilians traded mostly in tobacco.[11] It was, however, customary in this area for some guns and ammunition always to be included in any deal for slaves, so that the Brazilian trade represented a sure, if not a generous, source of arms.

Trade with the French and particularly with the English had declined,[12] but the Europeans' trade continued on a sufficient scale so that both countries maintained factories at Whydah.[13]

Another reason for the decline in trade in Ajaland was actually an indication of Dahomean vigour, not of Dahomean weakness. Agaja, during the thirties, had attempted to bring the trade under

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11. Verger, Flux et Reflux, op.cit., pp. 10 ff.

12. This was true all over the Slave Coast, and was due to the war that had broken out in Europe, not to any particular fault at Whydah. The vice-roy of Brazil, writing to Lisbon in October of 1747, made this clear: "...les Francais et les Anglais, depuis que l'Europe est dans cet état de trouble, n'ont que de rares bateaux qui viennent traiter à cette côte...." (Quoted in Verger, p. 188.)

13. The Europeans' anxiety to keep trading at Whydah can be seen from their refusal to help the Old Whydasians at the time of their attack on Whydah in 1743. (Dalzel, p. 90.) During the thirties, the Europeans would have responded enthusiastically to the Old Whydasians' appeal, but by 1743 they had come to realise the futility of continued opposition to Dahomey's presence along the Slave Coast.

The Whydasian attack came at the time of the Oyo invasion of 1743. The Europeans by now understood that the Dahomeans would only retire until the Oyo forces had to retreat; then the Dahomean army would re-appear to punish anybody who had acted against their country's interests. Accordingly, the Europeans swallowed their dislike of Dahomey and remained neutral.

his direction by controlling all the African outlets in his area. Tegbesu seems to have gone a step further. He tried to bring the European traders and directors under his control. Contemporary documents contain many references to the battle that was waged between Tegbesu and the Europeans, fighting to maintain their old privileges.

It was actually Agaja who started the process, with the arrest of the Portuguese director, Bazilio, in 1739. Agaja accused him of selling arms to his enemies and of succouring the Old Whydasians at the time of their attack on Whydah earlier in the year.[14] He was later released and allowed to resume his duties, but apparently Bazilio had lost the confidence of the Dahomean government. In 1743 Tegbesu again arrested him and charged him with having relations with and helping his enemies; the king claimed, more particularly, that Bazilio had helped the Whydanians during their 1743 invasion. The Portuguese director was also accused of attempting to regulate the terms of the trade in Whydah to the disadvantage of the Dahomeans.[15]

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14. Verger, Flux et Reflux, op.cit., p. 167.

15. Ibid., pp. 173-74. Tegbesu complained that: "...M. Bezile, d'une autorité qui ne lui appartenait point, avait défendu aux capitaines portugais qui faisaient ici leur traite de n'en faire aucune en or avec d'autres que lui. Cette défense avait opéré un si mauvais effet, que le commerce était entièrement tombé, cause de la rareté de l'or, qui en faisait la majeure partie du temps tout le mobile." (Letter to La Compagnie des Indes, 20 August, 1743. Quoted in Verger, p. 174.) In point of fact, the regulation against trading gold did not greatly affect the Dahomean trade, and it must be assumed that Tegbesu resented Bazilio's making a law that was to be applied in Tegbesu's territory.

Finally Bazilio was released, but he was deported from Dahomey. Tegbesu also deported the next Portuguese director and nominated one himself.[16]

The Portuguese were not the only Europeans whose affairs Tegbesu decided to regulate. In 1748 the vice-roy of Brazil informed Lisbon of the deportation of the French director. He concluded with some satisfaction: "De là on peut voir que ce ne sont pas seulement les Portugais qu'on insulte."[17]

Tegbesu had this amount of time to devote to the Europeans and their affairs because, apart from the Oyo menace, his relations with his neighbours were satisfactory. Dahomean forces seem to have inflicted a heavy defeat on the Old Whydanians at the time of their invasion of 1743.[18] The Dahomean army that re-took Whydah was estimated to be fifty thousand strong.[19] Norris reported that the Dahomeans continued to prosecute their war against the Mahi, and that they considered this war to be more important than dealing with the Old Whydanians.[20] Hodder reports that Badagry continued to grow during the 1740's, peopled by refugees from Whydah and Porto Novo, who must have been driven there by the Dahomeans.[21]

Overall, the picture Dahomey presented in the forties was that of a healthy, vigorous state that was taking only normal precautions against as powerful an enemy as Oyo. The image of a defeated, struggling Dahomey is not a fair one.

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16. Verger, Flux et Reflux, op.cit., pp. 176-77 and 181-85.

17. Vice-roy of Brazil to Lisbon, 8 March 1748. Quoted in Verger, p. 185.

18. Levet to La Compagnie des Indes, 20 August, 1743. Quoted in Verger, p. 173.

19. Dalzel, History, op.cit., p. 96.

20. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., p. 24.

21. Hodder, "Badagri," op.cit., p. 78.

2. Division in Oyo

Information regarding the events of these years in Oyo is particularly scarce. The literature of the period mentions Oyo only in connection with its two raids on Dahomey; nothing definite is known about the continuing constitutional crisis in Oyo.

Oyo's inability to restore the constitutional balance that had been upset in the seventeenth century was the cause of its continuing crises. The constitutional balance in Oyo had been a delicate arrangement to begin with, the authority being almost equally divided between the Alafin and his nobles. The expansion of the empire along with its concomitant of new wealth and authority for the Alafin had first upset this balance.[22] Although the booty of war and much of the following tribute was divided between the Alafin and his nobles, this benefitted the Alafin more than the nobles because the wealth which came to the Alafins passed directly to their heirs, while the wealth of the nobles had to be divided among their close kin.[23]

The advent of the slave trade and Oyo's growing participation in it aggravated the imbalance, for the same principle applied as above. Although the nobles shared in the wealth, it was more easily accumulated by the Alafins. By the mid-eighteenth century the equilibrium could no longer be restored. The attempts of the nobles of Oyo, led by the successive Basorunn, to restore this balance were not only doomed to failure, but prevented another solution, more suitable to the circumstances, from being achieved.

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22. Law, "Constitutional Troubles," op.cit., p. 44.

23. Lloyd, Political Development, op.cit., pp. 9 and 12.

The pattern of advance and retreat which had been established during the reign of Ojigi, if not before, continued during the fortien. The Basorun forced the rejection and suicide of the Alafin Amuniwaiye, but could not break the palace organisation. The palace organisation then encouraged each Alafin, in turn, to rule independently of their nobles. This caused their rejection, and the search for a new puppet began again.[24]

Nevertheless, by this time the power of the Alafins, despite their great wealth and despite the palace organisation, had been considerably diminished. Onisile, determined to restore the royal fortunes, turned to the slave trade as his most potent weapon. He must have remembered that it was originally the profits reaped from the slave trade that had augmented the Alafin's power. Certainly Onisile was known as a slaver.

Onisile, who, from the beginning of his reign, ruled independently, must have exasperated his nobles and hardened their determination to rid themselves of such rulers. Although Onisile may have enjoyed an initial popularity among the Oyo nobles, their attitude had changed and, by 1748, Onisile did not sit very easily on his throne. He too was rejected only six years later when the Alafins lost power in Oyo to the Basorun Gaha.[25]

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24. Lloyd, Political Development, op.cit., p. 14.

25. Gaha was able to rule independently of the Alafins because he succeeded in breaking the palace organisation. He ruled Oyo for twenty years, until the Alafin Abiodun overthrew his regency and re-established the authority of the Alafins. This was a case of the candle always burning brightest before going out, for Abiodun was the last Alafin to exercise real power in Oyo.

The situation in Oyo, then, in 1748 closely paralleled the situation obtaining eighteen years earlier when Dahomean ambassadors also came asking for peace. The government was divided and the Alafin, who was fighting for his life and his throne, was not anxious to send his army out of the country. The Banorun, who was responsible for the negotiations, did not have the complete support of his government or of his ruler. As in 1730, the Dahomean ambassadors must have been aware of this situation and pressed their advantage to secure the favourable treaty that they did.

4. The Treaty of 1748

"In the year 1747, however, the Eyoon (Oyo) consented to an accommodation and compromised the matter for a tribute, which is paid them annually at Calmina...."[26]

In 1748 Oyo threatened to invade Dahomey again because of the 1747 Dahomean attack on Epe; Epe lay to the east of the Weme River, and so in Oyo's sphere of influence, according to the agreement of 1730. Tegbesu reacted by sending ambassadors, heavily laden with gifts, to Oyo. There, another peace agreement between Oyo and Dahomey was decided upon.

The terms of this treaty were basically the same as those of the 1730 agreement. The annual tribute imposed remained the same, and so did the mutual frontier agreed upon.[27] Oyo's earlier demands for back-payment of tribute owing were ignored, possibly in the interests of peace, for there was no way Dahomey could have satisfied them. Akinjogbin states that, by the terms of the treaty,

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26. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., p. 16. His date is wrong.
27. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 123.

Oyo also agreed to protect Dahomey and that, in order to be able to do so, stationed forces at Atakpame, on Dahomey's western border.[28] Akinjogbin claims as his source a letter written by one William Mutter to the African Committee on the twenty-seventh day of May, 1764, which presumably described a battle recently fought between Ashanti and another power. Possibly Mutter even named Oyo, but, if so, he has mistaken Oyo for Dahomey. Dupuis, who was in Ashanti in the early nineteenth century, claims that this engagement took place between Ashanti and Dahomey.[29] Since several modern historians agree with Dupuis,[30] it can be assumed that he was right, and that Ashanti met Dahomean forces, not Oyo forces, advancing from Atakpame in 1764.

Akinjogbin's claim that Oyo stationed forces at Atakpame in order to protect Dahomey is inherently unlikely, in any case, principally because the only enemy Dahomey needed protection against was Oyo. Dahomey would have had to be in more desperate straits than it was in 1748, and Oyo would have had to be much stronger, before Dahomey would have allowed Oyo forces to camp permanently on its western frontier. In the event of a renewed war with Oyo, Dahomey's forces, moving towards the invaders, would have been caught in a crossfire between the Oyo garrison at Atakpame and the Oyo invaders moving into Dahomey from the east. In any case, Dahomey insisted in 1748

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28. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 124.

29. Joseph Dupuis, Journal of a Residence in Ashantee, ed. by W.E. F. Ward, Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., London, 1966 (re-print of 1824 edition). Dupuis claims as his authority Ashanti tradition, which claimed that Ashanti had been beaten by Dahomean troops in 1764.

30. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 71. Kwame Arhin, "The Structure of Greater Ashanti (1700-1824)", Journal of African History, VIII, 1 (1967), p. 74.

on its right to keep its army intact, indicating that it had every intention of defending itself.[31]

The only concession Dahomey made to Oyo by the treaty of 1748 was its agreement to pay tribute; this agreement was not only a humiliation for Dahomey, but a major expense. The tribute consisted of forty-one men, forty-one women, forty-one guns, four hundred bags of cowries and four hundred corals. Both the guns and, to a certain extent, the cowries and the corals had to be obtained from the slave trade. Since the slave trade had declined so drastically at Whydah, the payment of this tribute was likely to represent a heavy burden. The necessity of paying the tribute explains, in part, why Tegbesu, after 1748, did his best to foster the slave trade at Whydah and to frustrate its growth elsewhere.

The issue of the role of the slave trade in the wars between Oyo and Dahomey has often been argued. It will be remembered that in 1730 Oyo gave over control of the trade to Dahomey, indicating that this question was not one of prime importance.

By 1748, the situation had changed somewhat for Oyo had now several ports that lay within territory it controlled. These ports were doing a good trade, so there was no longer any question of Dahomey's dominating the trade. Nevertheless, these ports did have only a secondary importance, and it was not until later in the century that Oyo moved its main trade route further east. At this

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31. AKinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 125. Oyo did not normally allow its vassals to keep their own armies. The fact that it made an exception in the case of Dahomey indicated that it had no choice, and that neither state considered Dahomey an Oyo vassal.

time the Oyo trade routes continued to pass through Ketu country, which lay to the north-west of Dahomey.[32] Akinjogbin[33] estimates that nine thousand slaves were shipped from Whydah in 1750, which meant that it remained the premier trading port in this area. Norris, who wrote in 1773, reported that the Oyo dealt largely in slaves, selling them mainly to the Dahomeans.[34] Although this was, strictly speaking, no longer true by 1773, the Europeans generally continued to believe it because the impression of Oyo trading through Dahomey had been so strongly fixed in their minds earlier in the century, particularly during the forties and fifties, that it remained after the supporting facts had changed. All this indicated that Oyo still had a major interest in the port of Whydah where so many of its slaves eventually embarked for the New World.

Despite this, Oyo allowed Dahomey to monopolise the trade in Ajaland, where most of the trade was done. In 1748, as in 1730, Oyo allowed control of its major slave outlet to remain in unfriendly hands, accepting as compensation a tribute which may have amounted to a tithe of what it would have made from the Aja slave ports.[35]

Oyo's failure to insist on some kind of control over the trade in Ajaland, however, should be seen more as an indication of its inability to do so than as an indication of its indifference.

It will be recalled that at this time the slave trade was slow in the whole of this area, due mainly to the war in Europe. Oyo's

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32. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 46.
33. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 139.
34. Norris, Memoirs, op.cit., p. 138.
35. Lloyd, Political Development, op.cit., p. 13.

ports of Porto Novo and Badagry were also affected, possibly to a greater extent than Whydah, although this is unknown. Oyo undoubtedly would have liked to secure some sort of control over Whydah which would ensure that at least part of its supply of slaves would be absorbed at this port. Agaja had determined to control the trade in his country and Tegbesu continued this policy, however, so that the treaty of 1748 did not obligate Dahomey to absorb any Oyo slaves.

Oyo would have forced some guarantee from Dahomey had it been able to, and its failure to do so caused it, in the second half of the century, to develop its own more easterly ports and to move its trade routes further east to the new ports. From Oyo's point of view, this can be seen as an alternative to gaining control of Whydah, and constitutes a fairly certain indication that Oyo fought its wars of the forties with Dahomey at least partly because of its trade in slaves.

CONCLUSION

The slave trade, which first began to make its impact felt in West Africa around 1672, had, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, established itself in southern Ajaland, along what came to be called the 'Slave Coast'. The situation along the Slave Coast was chaotic and the two major states in this area, Allada and Whydah, seemed to be continually at war with each other. This situation affected adversely all the inland states, and caused Dahomey to conquer the coast.

In retaliation Oyo, which held a vague overlordship of this area, and a definite claim to Allada, attacked Dahomey several times before a peace was agreed upon in 1730.

Dahomey seized the opportunity offered by the death of the Alafin Ojigi in 1735 and by the weakening of the Oyo power structure to renege on its obligations. When Oyo recovered a little later in the decade, it determined to settle the issue of Dahomey in its favour. Twice more it invaded Dahomey, but met with no great military success.

In 1748 Oyo finally abandoned its attempts to incorporate Dahomey into its empire. The wars between the two states were now at an end and Dahomey retained control of Ajaland, the conquest of which had precipitated the wars. It also kept its territory free from the Oyo ajele who represented Oyo authority in those parts of the empire that lay outside the metropolitan province. The Dahomean army remained intact, and the Oyo demands for additional

tribute were ignored. In no sense had Dahomey become a dependent of Oyo's. Dr. Bascom's description of the situation was very apt: "...as a result, the King of Dahomey began to pay an annual tribute to the Alafin, King of Oyo."[1] Although Dr. Bascom is talking of the agreement of 1730, the words apply as easily to the 1748 treaty.

For that is all Dahomey had agreed to do. It agreed to pay Oyo tribute in order to stop the periodic invasions of the Oyo army. By 1748 it had realised that the Oyo would continue to invade Dahomey during the former's periods of recovery, no long as tribute was not paid. Dahomey considered that it cost less overall to pay the tribute than to fight the Oyo; even so, the history of the rest of the century is full of incidents where Dahomey failed to pay Oyo its tribute, usually because Oyo's problems had become particularly acute. In this sense, Fage's statement that by 1748 "...there was no question but that Tegbesu had accepted that Dahomey was tributary to Oyo"[2] is perfectly correct. All other claims regarding Dahomean subordination are not.

There can be no question of Dahomey's, in 1748, offering the Oyo terms "...that they would be ready to accept, and to observe such conditions as they might impose."[3] Neither had the rulers of Dahomey "...recognized an obligation to carry out the instructions of the Alafin."[4]

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1. William Bascom, The Yoruba of South Western Nigeria, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, Chicago, etc., 1969, p. 12.
2. Fage, West Africa, op.cit., p. 104.
3. Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 123.
4. Mabogunje and Cooper, Owu, op.cit., p. 15.

Neither is the customary habit of showing Dahomey as a part of the Oyo empire in the eighteenth century correct.[5] Dahomey, with its own army and administration, and without any Oyo officials, remained independent as the other parts of the Oyo empire did not. Egba, for example, which had no army and which was governed by Oyo officials, was definitely a part of the Oyo empire.[6]

Dahomey, during the rest of the century, continued to demonstrate its independence of action by several times attacking Oyo ports and even parts of the Oyo empire.

The years 1724-1748 that are covered in this thesis were ones in which the slave trade played a tremendous role in the economies of all the states in the area. Its influence was correspondingly great, especially in Ajaland where the trade was particularly active. Understandably, the slave trade played its role in causing the wars between Oyo and Dahomey that marked this period.

Dahomey, under Wegbaja, had committed itself to the slave trade by committing its army and its defence to the use of European weapons. From that time on, it was a Dahomean priority to secure its supply of arms. Agaja, the second of Wegbaja's sons to rule Dahomey, conquered southern Ajaland and so rationalised the situation by bringing the source of his supply of European arms under his control.

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5. An example of this practice can be seen in Lloyd, Political Development, op.cit., p. 10.

6. S.O. Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours: 1842-1872, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1965 (re-print of 1957 edition), pp. 8-9.

The conquest of Ajaland, including as it did the conquest of one Oyo vassal, and of much territory that Oyo coveted, caused Oyo to take punitive action against Dahomey. In this sense, the slave trade was at least as important a factor in causing the Oyo-Dahomean wars as any other.

In another sense, however, it seems that the slave trade was a superfluous agent. Since Oyo twice, in 1730 and again in 1748, gave up control of the slave trade to its rival, a re-assessment of Oyo's motives for its invasions of Dahomey is needed. Oyo had no pressing need of the slave trade as Dahomey had. Oyo never imported large numbers of European weapons, feeling perhaps that an efficient cavalry and archer corps were all it needed. Neither the defence of Oyo nor its economy relied on the slave trade.

Oyo's expansion in Ajaland can be explained in terms other than those of the slave trade. Oyo had been an expansionist state for well over a century, ever since its return from Igboho[7] and its strength and authority resulted originally from this expansion, and only secondarily from the slave trade which came later, and which benefitted primarily the Alafin. Since, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, Oyo had reached its natural borders in three directions, expansion, if it were to continue would be easiest towards the south-east, into Ajaland, which was a geographical complement of Yorubaland and where the flat, level land and the

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7. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 41. During the sixteenth century, the Nupe had forced the Oyo to leave Oyo city and, after various migrations, the remainder settled at Igboho. Here several administrative and military reforms were undertaken, so that by 1610 or thereabouts the Oyo were able to return to Oyo city. Smith's article about this period gives a good detailed account of the Igboho period.

absence of natural defences would allow the formidable Oyo cavalry to operate at peak efficiency.

It would seem that Oyo appreciated this situation; a look at the map will indicate that the Oyo conquest of Allada, late in the seventeenth century, and its simultaneous expansion into Ketu country were the two parts of a pincer movement designed to bring eastern, central and southern Ajaland into the Oyo empire. This would have been only a preliminary to bringing the whole of Ajaland into the Oyo orbit, and Oyo must have seen Dahomey's activities in southern Ajaland as an attempt to usurp Oyo's plans for Ajaland.

This theory is as viable as the more generally accepted theory that Oyo's conquest of Allada was an indication of its growing interest in the slave trade, and that its activities in Ketu were operations designed to strengthen the Oyo trade route, which ran from Oyo through Ketu and down to Allada. Dahomey's conquest of Ajaland and the resulting threat to Oyo trade caused the powers that governed the empire to undertake the conquest of Dahomey.

At present, it is impossible to decide which is the true interpretation of these events, or if Oyo's motive for the invasion of Ajaland was a judicious mixture of the two considerations. The fact, however, that Oyo twice ended the wars without having secured control of the slave trade would indicate that the slave trade may have played a lesser role in the overall Oyo plan than has hitherto been believed.

Even this evidence is not conclusive, however, for Oyo could not have secured control of the slave trade in any case. To do so, it would first have had to conquer Dahomey, but the widening

breach among the powers that governed Oyo prevented the empire from taking decisive and sustained action against Dahomey. It was probably this factor, more than any other, that allowed Dahomey to emerge from the Oyo wars, if not victorious, at least intact and independent.

Oyo's inability to heal the schism in its government cost this state far more than the loss of Dahomey and Ajaland. The collapse of the Oyo empire in the nineteenth century came about ultimately as a result of its continuing domestic crises. Throughout the rest of the century, Oyo was to have only brief periods of recovery. For the most part, its role in international affairs was passive--at times even defensive. On several of the rare occasions that it resumed an aggressive role, it was soundly beaten.

In fact, Oyo's failure to subdue Dahomey marks the crest of the Oyo wave of expansion which had started a century before. Because Oyo did not win the wars, it, to a certain extent, lost them. Dahomey's demonstration that the might of Oyo was not unbeatable encouraged other Oyo vassals to rebel. The total collapse of the empire a century later can be linked to Oyo's failure to subdue Dahomey.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Old Oyo City had been abandoned and its successor-namesake never became more than a shadow of what great Oyo had been. The real power among the Yoruba lay in Ibadan

and Ijaye. Although the collapse of the empire was triggered from the north--by the loss of its northern trade routes and by military pressure from northern islamic states--Oyo's quasi-defeat at the hands of Dahomey in 1748 caused Oyo to retreat before foreign aggressors for the rest of the century. This so weakened Oyo during the eighteenth century that it became an easy prey to the jihad-waging north in the nineteenth.

This aspect of Oyo history has not always been appreciated, and failure to do so has led to misinterpretations of the political and external condition of Oyo during the rest of the eighteenth century. It has, for example, been argued that Oyo reached the summit of its strength much later, and that the collapse of the empire was the matter of a few decades.[8] So far from being true, it is possible that Oyo's failure to recognise that its compromise with Dahomey constituted a defeat may be one of the causes of the empire's disintegration. Had Oyo, in 1748, realised that a major overhaul of its military forces and of all that appertained thereto was necessary, and that a society, such as itself, geared to expansion, could not suddenly brake without causing grave dislocation, the breakdown of the empire in the nineteenth century might have been avoided. A century later, Ibadan, Oyo's principa

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8. R. Smith, Kingdoms, op.cit., p. 136. According to Smith, the decline in the power of Oyo did not set in until late in the eighteenth century, towards the end of Abiodun's reign. Akinjogbin (Prelude, pp. 27-29) states that Oyo's collapse can be directly linked to Abiodun's policy of weakening the army and that, prior to 1774, Oyo was as strong, militarily, as it had ever been. It was in 1774 exactly, however, that Oyo suffered the first of its major defeats at the hands of a vassal state.

successor, set up a state which rivalled Dahomey in militarism, but left aside the delicately balanced constitutionalism of Old Oyo, indicating that the Yoruba had learned a century late the lessons they should have learned on the plains of Dahomey.

The seeds of Dahomey's strength in the nineteenth century, as of Oyo's collapse, were sown in the first half of the eighteenth century. Unlike Oyo, Dahomey remained relatively free from European influence until late in the nineteenth century. This was not just a stroke of good luck, but was due to the insistence of the eighteenth-century Dahomean monarchs on maintaining their independence free and clear of all foreign influence, including European influence. Generally, the Europeans disliked dealing with native states that were particularly strong and they often worked, subtly or otherwise, to weaken the political communities they had to deal with. Dahomey resisted these attempts with all its strength. During the period of the Oyo-Dahomey wars, Dahomey battled not only against Oyo but also against the interfering European traders.

The fact that Agaja and Tegbesu several times expelled the governors of European forts taught both white and black inhabitants of Dahomey that the Aja monarchs would brook no interference in Dahomean affairs.

A century later this policy paid handsome dividends. At that time many European states began a cautious move, in the persons of missionaries, traders and governors of forts, into sovereign African states. Dahomey remained almost entirely free of this influence.

Therefore Dahomey was able to remain truly independent of European imperialism and proto-imperialism longer than most African states, and this is particularly remarkable in view of the strategic geographical position of the Aja state.

As the struggle against the influence of the slave traders in the eighteenth century resulted in a minimal nineteenth-century European influence in Dahomey, so the successful 1726-1748 resistance against Oyo allowed Dahomey to develop its strength to a point where it became the terror of its neighbours a century later. In both the declared war against Oyo domination, and in the undeclared war against the European traders, Dahomey was led by its almost all-powerful kings. Like Oyo, Dahomey went through a period of severe internal dislocation in the second half of the eighteenth century; unlike Oyo, it was able to deal with this problem and to emerge from its period of troubles relatively stronger. It was able to do so because Dahomey had developed a strong central authority. The quasi-absolutist monarchy that Dahomey, in its response to the threat of the slave trade, had developed, allowed the Aja state to emerge unscathed from a series of disputed successions and abbreviated reigns.

In the last analysis, the popular philosophy that not only allowed for, but actively supported the existence of an

absolutist and, at times, oppressive monarchy proved stronger than all Dahomey's dynastic disputes, although some of these altercations might have destroyed a weaker state.

In other ways, also, Dahomey's intelligent adaption to its environment allowed it to thrive during a time of great stress. Dahomey's refusal to integrate Whydah into the greater Dahomean state[9] allowed a more heterogeneous society to develop here than would have been possible in conservative Dahomey. The freedom at Whydah proved conducive to the development of the powerful mulatto society which was to provide later Dahomean kings with many of their ablest advisors. The mulattoes also supplied the Dahomean government with an entry into the European world, an entry which could be more easily provided by mulattoes than by native Africans. Dahomean society, which adapted to the slave trade by becoming more conservative and rigid, compensated for this rigidity by allowing and encouraging the development of a safety valve at Whydah. By doing so, it managed to survive and thrive. Oyo, on the other hand, attempted to exploit the slave trade without making any concessions to this extremely unsettling factor. The result was that the slave trade became, indirectly, one of the major causes of the fall of the Oyo empire.

A study of war and diplomacy among African states is important, if only in order to challenge the somewhat simplistic solutions to major questions that have so often been offered. Major events, such as the slave trade, have too often been cited as the sole cause of wars or various other social or political happenings.

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9. Polanyi, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 29.

This thesis has demonstrated that, at least in the well-known instance, the role of the slave trade cannot be accurately gauged. To cite the slave trade as the cause of the wars between Oyo and Dahomey would be both unrealistic and untenable. The slave trade was an important variable in the context of eighteenth century West African history but, however important, it was only one of many. In Oyo, for example, either the changing of the rules governing the succession of the Alafin, or the changing of the line of the Basorun may, in the long run, have had greater repercussions. Thus far, an insufficient amount of research on these two important events has been done. Once reliable analyses of the effects these and similar events produced are available, a more realistic view of the role the slave trade played in African societies can be arrived at.

In the meantime, it is fair to say that, like so many of the simplistic explanations that have been tendered to explain African historical problems, it fails to take cognisance of all the facts.

A P P E N D I X I

Contemporary King List of Dahomey*

Wogbaja	?	-	?1680	
Akaba	1680?	-	?1708	
Agaja	1708?	-	1740	
Tegbesu	1740	-	1774	
Kpengla	1774	-	1789	
Agonglo	1789	-	1797	(murdered)
Adandozan	1797	-	1818	(deposed)

Contemporary King List of Oyo*

Ojigi	?	-	?1736	(was definitely reigning between 1724-30)
Gberu) Amuniwaiye)	1736?	-	?1746	
Onisile	1746?	-	August, 1754	
Labisi) Awonbioju)	August	-	Nov., 1754	(The usurption of the Banorun, Gaha
Agboluaje) Maheogbe)	Nov., 54	-	?1770	
Abiodun	1770? (1774)	-	1789	

* From Akinjogbin, Dahomey, op.cit., p. 220.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

- A -

Agbadjigbeto — The Agbadjigbeto were groups of spies set up by Agaja and used by him to reconnoitre any town or village he intended to attack. Back in Dahomey, the Agbadjigbeto were expected to invent reasons why the towns they had inspected should be attacked.

Agban — The annual tribute that Dahomey paid to Oyo. It was brought each year by special Dahomean messengers to Kana where it was handed over to the Ilari.

Aja — The people living in the general area of the southern half of modern Dahomey.

ajelo — These were the personal representatives of the Alafin in the different parts of the empire, and ruled in his stead. Their office was vaguely similar to that of vice-roy.

Alafin — The king of the Oyo empire.

Aremo — The oldest son of the Alafin and, before 1735, his heir.

- B -

Basorun — The head of the Oyo Mesi and, next to the Alafin, the most powerful man in Oyo. His office could be compared to that of Prime Minister.

- E -

Ebi — The Ebi social system is an unwritten convention prevailing in Yoruba-Ajaland among different states related by consanguinity. Each state looks upon itself as being related to the other states within the group, being either a brother state, or, in the case of the oldest, a father state. The states so related were expected to respect each other's independence, and to come to the assistance of brother states as need demanded.

Glossary (cont'd)

- I -

ilari — Sometimes called half-heads, the ilari were a part of the Alafin's palace organisation. They served as the eyes and ears of their royal master, and also collected tribute for him.

iwefa — The iewfa were the three titled eunuchs who were at the head of the Alafin's palace organisation.

- K -

Kakanfo — The commander-in-chief of the army of the Alafin. This office came into prominence during the seventeenth century, when the practice of the Alafin leading his troops into battle lapsed.

- M -

Middle Passage — The middle passage was the trip from the African port of embarkation to the American port. It was so called because the slave trade was one part of a three-sided trade. The first passage was the shipment of manufactured goods to Africa from Europe; these goods paid for the slaves which were then shipped to America in the middle passage; the Americans paid for the slaves with their raw materials, which were then shipped to Europe, thus completing the triangle.

Migan — A Dahomean officer who was, next to the king, the most powerful man in the country.

Glossary (cont'd)

- O -	
oba	In Oyo, the kings of individual towns or villages, as opposed to the Alafin who was lord of the whole empire.
Ogboni Society	One of the two major governing councils of Oyo, and intended to deal with religious affairs. In practice, it acted as a brake on the power of the Oyo Mesi.
Oni	The title given to the king of Ife.
Oro cult	In Ife, a religious cult entrusted with the power of eliminating unsatisfactory Onis.
Oyo Mesi	The major governing council of Oyo, composed of seven members who represented the seven most powerful houses in Oyo.
- S -	
Slave Coast	An area extending from the mouth of the Volta River to Lagos. It earned this sobriquet as a result of the immense trade in slaves done there.
- W -	
Windward Coast	In the eighteenth century, the term 'Windward Coast' included modern Ivory Coast and Liberia. In the nineteenth century, this name referred to an area on either side of Sierra Leone.

Glossary (cont'd)

- Y -

Yoruba — The people living in the general area of the western province of modern Nigeria.

Yovogan — The Dahomean official who was entrusted with the governing of Whydah. This position was created by Agaja in 1733, and was usually entrusted to a eunuch.

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