INTRODUCTION

The first edition of this work was published through the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1992. I have taken the opportunity of this republication to correct a number of minor errors in the original text, mainly typographical but in a few cases substantive; to incorporate into the footnotes some references to more recently published secondary literature; to substitute, in the case of the single text extract from a Danish source (No.20), a more authoritative English translation which has recently been published, in place of my own earlier re-translation from a French translation of the original; and also to include one additional document (the second letter, dated 7 March 1789, in No.48), which was overlooked in preparing the original version of the collection.1

This publication comprises a collection of documents relating to the pre-colonial history of the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo (in south-western Nigeria); more specifically, to the period when the capital of the kingdom was at ‘Old Oyo’ (or in Yoruba, Oyo Ile), prior to the collapse of the kingdom’s power and the transfer of the capital south to the modern city of Oyo in the 1830s. Although Oyo was heavily involved in trade with the Europeans (principally in slaves) already during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was not until shortly before the fall of Old Oyo that any Europeans (or at least any who wrote some account of their experiences) visited the Oyo heartland in the interior. The only contemporary accounts of Old Oyo based on first-hand observation which we possess are thus those of the British explorers Hugh Clapperton, Richard Lander and John Lander, relating to the period 1825-30 (Clapperton 1829; Lander 1830; Lander & Lander 1832). The documents presented here, however, relate to the period before 1825.

The purpose of collecting and publishing these documents is to facilitate the study of Old Oyo history at advanced undergraduate and postgraduate level. Although this publication is primarily intended as an aid to the study of specifically Oyo history, however, it is hoped that it will also prove of more general interest, as an illustration of the problems involved in the interpretation and evaluation of contemporary European source material relating to pre-colonial West Africa.

This collection includes all sources traced which refer to Oyo by name, together with a couple (nos 6 and 15b) which, although they do not name Oyo, can reasonably be assumed to relate to it. It also includes sources which refer to ‘Yoruba’, which at this period was normally used with specific reference to Oyo rather than in the generic sense, to designate the linguistic group to which Oyo belongs, more familiar in recent times; and also some which refer to Olukumi (or Lukumi), a now obsolete generic name for the Yoruba-speaking peoples, where there are grounds for supposing that these relate to Oyo. The collection is, in intention, comprehensive rather than selective, aiming to include all such material directly relevant to Oyo history, even (to avoid imposing my own judgement of

1 This republication is made possible by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, through its Major Collaborative Research Initiatives Program, and its funding of the York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project.
what might be valuable, as well as for the sake of completeness) one or two passages which are of doubtful reliability or apparently trivial interest. Some very minor references to Oyo, and several accounts which simply reproduce material in other sources, however, are only cited in footnotes, rather than being presented in their full texts.

The scope of the collection is in principle restricted to contemporary sources of European origin, and does not include indigenous African (Islamic/Arabic) written sources. This does not reflect a dismissal of the potential value for Old Oyo history of such sources, which has indeed been demonstrated in a recent study (Smith 1983), but rather the fact that these Islamic sources constitute a distinct category, whose study requires specialist skills which I do not claim to possess. A sole exception to this exclusion of African written sources is the inclusion of a passage from a work of Muhammad Bello, the renowned scholar of Sokoto (in northern Nigeria) (No.62), which seemed appropriate partly because it was published in English translation already in the 1820s, and thus became part of the European (and, by derivation therefrom, of the Yoruba-Christian) tradition of study of Yoruba history; but also and more critically because it itself refers to Oyo’s involvement in trade with the Europeans, and is therefore complementary to the documentation of European origin.

Although it aims at comprehensiveness, it is not certain that this collection does, in fact, achieve it. While I believe I have made an exhaustive search of relevant published items, my own research in unpublished archives has been restricted to those in England and France. For Dutch archives, I have depended upon the collection of documents published by Albert Van Dantzig (1978), which unfortunately covers only the period to the 1740s; and for Portuguese and Brazilian records, upon the extensive verbatim citations in the work of Pierre Verger (1976), which does not pretend to comprehensiveness. The archives of the other European nation active in the West African trade at this period, Denmark, have not been explored even indirectly. There remains, therefore, some possibility that further significant material relating to Oyo remains yet to be discovered, perhaps especially in Dutch records of the second half of the eighteenth century.

The study of the early history of coastal West Africa taxes the linguistic competence of even the most multilingual scholar. The material presented here includes items originally written not only in English, but also in French, Dutch, Portuguese, and even one item each in Spanish (No.1) and Danish (No.20). To facilitate accessibility, however, all non-English sources are given here in English translation. The Dutch and Portuguese documents published by Van Dantzig and Verger were, fortunately, translated by them into English; and I have used the published English translation rather than the Dutch original of one eighteenth-century book (No.6), and (in this revised edition) a recently published English translation of the item originally in Danish. All other translations are my own, including all the material originally in French, the one source in Spanish, and one published work each in Dutch (No.2) and Portuguese (Nos 14c and 54).

This source material is subject to a number of limitations, which should be

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2 An English translation of it was included as Appendix XII in Denham & Clapperton 1826, 163-5; for its impact on Yoruba historiography (especially with regard to the question of Yoruba origins), cf. Law 1984, 202-5.
borne in mind when assessing its value for the reconstruction of Oyo history. First, as already made clear, very little of it is based on first-hand observation. Although one French slave trader is alleged to have visited the Oyo capital towards the end of the eighteenth century, his account of it is preserved only at second hand (No.55e below). Virtually all of the available contemporary material on Oyo, therefore, is based on hearsay, through informants in African societies nearer the coast. Much the greater part of this information was heard by Europeans in the coastal societies of the ‘Slave Coast’ (between the Gold Coast and Benin), through which the Oyo exported their slaves - Allada and Whydah in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Dahomey (which conquered and incorporated these kingdoms) from the 1720s, and Porto-Novo and Badagry, which emerged as rivals to Dahomey in the Atlantic trade in the second half of the eighteenth century. Europeans sometimes allude to the difficulties they experienced in obtaining accurate information on Oyo, partly because of the commercial jealousy of the coastal communities who wished to maintain their position as middlemen between them and the Oyo. In Dahomey in the 1760s, Europeans were even prevented by the local authorities from talking to ambassadors from Oyo who visited the kingdom (see Nos 23 and 25); although in Porto-Novo later, where commercial policy was more liberal, Europeans were able to talk directly to Oyo traders (No.61f).

This second-hand character of European knowledge potentially compromises its reliability, the process of collection and recording presumably involving translation (and therefore possibilities of misunderstanding) not only from Yoruba into one or more European languages (sometimes more than one, because often Europeans would use a language other than their own, such as Portuguese, to communicate with their African informants), but also between Yoruba and other African languages such as Fon or Gun, the languages respectively of Dahomey and Porto-Novo. It also means that the material presents a view of Oyo essentially from the perspective of the coastal societies. The consequence of this is not only that it documents primarily the involvement (commercial and political) of the Oyo in the affairs of the coast, but also that it may be assumed to reproduce conventional (and often negative) stereotypes of them current among these societies: the recurrent stress on the brutality of the Oyo in warfare, for example (e.g. Nos 6 and 23), may reflect the hostility of the coastal communities who were the victims of Oyo expansion, rather than an accurate picture of how the Oyo soldiery actually behaved.

Although overwhelmingly of Slave Coast origin, however, a little of the available contemporary information on Oyo reached Europeans by other routes, giving this material a greater diversity of perspective and interest than might at first be assumed. Some accounts of Oyo were thus recorded in Asante to the west (Nos 64-5), or on the Gold Coast presumably on the basis of information from Asante (No.24), and one in the 1780s in Benin to the east (No.43). In the 1820s, the penetration of European explorers into the interior also enabled the collection of information about Oyo in Hausaland and Borno to the north (No.68).

The value of the documentation is also limited by the perspectives of the Europeans, since they evidently recorded only what was of interest to themselves. This means that, overwhelmingly, the material relates to Oyo involvement in the supply of slaves for the European trans-Atlantic trade. Considerable material is also provided on Oyo military campaigns, primarily towards the coast but
occasionally also in the interior, against Oyo’s northern neighbours Nupe and Borgu (see Nos 38 and 52). Such military operations were of interest to Europeans partly because they affected the supply of slaves to the coast; but in at least some cases also (most obviously that of Norris 1789), because they could be used to support a view of the essentially militaristic character of African societies, which in turn was cited to defend the morality of the slave trade.\(^3\) There are also occasional references to internal political events in Oyo, which again attracted notice in part because of their influence on slave supplies (cf. No.22). Beyond this, Europeans evidently found some reported features of Oyo society of intrinsic interest, because they were considered exotically bizarre or of interest from the point of view of comparative anthropology: most notably, the repeated deposition by enforced suicide of Oyo kings in this period (see Nos 27 and 30).\(^4\) Only in the early nineteenth century, with the legal abolition of the slave trade and the growth of European interest in the more general commercial development of Africa, did a more comprehensive concern emerge to situate Oyo within its local regional commercial and political networks (e.g. Nos 61 and 64-5).

In presenting this material, the dilemma has posed itself of whether to arrange it by authorship and provenance of the sources (grouping together, for example, all the material from a single publication, author, or archival deposit) or by reference to the events to which they refer. Since my main purpose has been to facilitate study of Oyo history, it seemed appropriate to adopt the latter strategy. The various excerpts are therefore presented here in the chronological order of the events or situations described. Where several sources refer to the same event (as, for example, the Oyo invasions of Dahomey in 1726, 1728 and 1729) they have been grouped together in a single section. This mode of presentation, it is hoped, will facilitate comparison and appraisal of the source material. The disadvantage is evidently that it involves breaking up the material in a small number of important sources which refer to events over a long period (especially Snelgrave 1734, Norris 1789, and Dalzel 1793), and thus perhaps tends to obscure perceptions of the more general character of these works. Reference can, however, be made to secondary studies of these authors, cited in the bibliography, which clarify the character and reliability of their evidence.\(^5\)

In addition to the texts themselves, extensive annotation is also provided in the footnotes, which is intended not only to clarify potentially obscure references, but also to assist evaluation by indicating how far their evidence is supported or contradicted by other available sources. In this, comparison is made not only among different contemporary sources, but also with accounts based on Oyo oral traditions, including especially the classic history by the Rev. Samuel Johnson (1921). For the more general historical context, the reader can refer to the relevant secondary literature, including especially my own book on Oyo (Law 1986a, 247-54).\(^6\)

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\(^3\) For the influence of apologetics for the slave trade on the representation of African societies (though with reference to Dahomey rather than Oyo), see further Law 1986a, 247-54.

\(^4\) Cf. the discussion of this practice in Dalzel 1793, ix-x (by the Editor James Fergusson rather than by Dalzel himself), citing comparative material from ancient Meroë - perhaps the earliest instance of a geographically and chronologically generalized model of ‘African kingship’.

\(^5\) For Snelgrave, see Law 1990a; for Norris, Law 1989a; for Dalzel, Waldman 1965 and Akinjogbin 1966a.
1977); though it may be noted that I have taken the opportunity here to correct some errors and imprecisions in that work. In addition, reference may be made to Professor Akinjogbin’s study of eighteenth-century Dahomey (Akinjogbin 1967) and my own more recent study of the ‘Slave Coast’ in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Law 1991b), both of which refer extensively to the involvement of Oyo in the commerce and politics of the Dahomey area.

It should be noted that name Oyo occurs in various forms in the European accounts below, which may not be always obviously recognisable to the uninitiated. The earliest European accounts to mention Oyo, in the 1670s and ’80s (Nos 3 and 4 below), employ a spelling of the name close to modern conventions (Oyeo). Later, however, Europeans more commonly represented the initial syllable of the name as ‘e’ (as Eyo, Eyoe, Eyeo, Eyeoo), or ‘a’ (as Ayo, Aio, Ayoh, Ayou; and in French plurals, Ayaux, Ayeaux, Ayois); these forms are not mere errors, the former probably representing the archaic (or dialect) form Eyo, which still occurs in Yoruba; while the latter reflects the usual Fon or Gun form of the name, Ayo. Sometimes, however, Europeans omitted the initial syllable altogether, turning the name into a monosyllable (Io, Joe, Iah). Other versions are less immediately recognisable, because of the distorting effects of different European national spelling conventions. English sources thus frequently employ forms in which the letter ‘h’ has to be read as silent (as Hio, Iho; and even Yahoe, Yahoo); Dutch sources regularly employ the ‘j’ pronounced as ‘y’, a usage which also occurs in some English sources (as Ojo, Eijo, Ajo, Aijo, Ujo, Joe, Joo); and French spelling conventions yield forms with a silent terminal ‘t’ (Ayots, Aiots, Ayeots, Ayauts) and also with the letters ‘ill’ for the sound ‘y’ (Ailleaux, Ailliots). Miscopying, moreover, can produce versions which have lost any immediately discernible connection with the original pronunciation, with for example French sources often giving Ailliots for Ayois, Oyeo becoming Oyko (and, at a further remove, by phonetic equivalence to this mistaken form, even Oyko), and Eijo appearing as Etjo (No.16 below). The name can also be obscured by being given a European ending (as in Dutch: Ujose, Eijose); or indeed a non-Yoruba African one (as Aiono, Ayono, which incorporate the Fon suffix -nu, ‘people of’).

A word of warning is also in order with regard to the dating of these documents (and the dates for events given in them). Until 1751 England was still employing the Julian (or Old Style) calendar, which in the eighteenth century was eleven days behind the Gregorian (or New Style) calendar used by most other European nations, including all of those most prominent in the West African trade. While for many purposes this discrepancy is unimportant, it needs to be borne in mind in seeking to correlate information from sources of different European nationalities, as for example in seeking to trace the detailed course of events in the Oyo-Dahomey wars of 1726-32 (Nos.8-15); the date of the Oyo invasion of Dahomey in 1728, for example, given by the French as 22 March (No.10c), would have been 11 March according to contemporary English reckoning; and that of the outbreak of war in 1731, given as 20 May by the English (No.15b), would have been 31 May by the New Style calendar. The English civil year in this period also began officially on 25 March rather than 1

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6For the miscopying ‘Oyco’, see Labat 1730, II 340 (No.3b below); another source which in turn summarizes Labat renders this as ‘Oyko’ (Astley 1746, III 74).
January, creating a potential ambiguity over the intervening period, which it was customary to resolve by citing the year according to both conventions: hence the otherwise mysterious date of ‘February 1729/30’ (i.e. by modern usage, 1730) which appears in one of the sources cited (No.13d).

Stirling,
December 1991
& July 2001
SANDOVAL 1627:7

[f.7] At one side of the Ardas [Allada] is the hinterland country, the Lucumies [Lukumi],8 a people no smaller in numbers than in importance. Next lies the kingdom of Bini [Benin] ...

[f.51v] On one side of these Ardas, in the interior, are situated the Lucumies, a people of great fidelity, both in their wars (when their neighbours ask them for help)9 and in the service of their masters [i.e. when taken as slaves], if they look after them ...

[ff.65v-66] The breeds [of Blacks] which normally come from those parts are Minas, Popoos, Ardas or Araraes, ... Lucumies or Terranovos,10 Barba,11 ... [etc.] ... these Lucumies commonly differ from each other, and do not understand each other, being born in very far-flung countries.12 You recognise these nations normally by the marks on the face and body ... The lines of the Lucumies very much resemble those of the Ardas: ignoring the other marks, one is three wide and deep lines, one which crosses the whole face from the side to the very bridge of the nose and two by the temples, and on each side of the face two in an arc from the temples to the bridge of the nose.13 The Lucumies Barbas14 cut their left...

7 Alonso de Sandoval was a missionary in Spanish America, who worked among slaves of African origin, from whom he is presumed to have obtained his information on West Africa.
8 For the use of the term Lukumi (or Olukumi) for Yoruba-speakers, either generically or with reference to particular sub-groups, see further Law 1997.
9 This may allude to Oyo intervention in the wars of states nearer the coast, as is known to have occurred on later occasions (cf. below, Nos 6, 8, 10-13).
10 The term ‘Terra Nova’ is recorded as a designation of the origin of West African slaves already in the sixteenth century (cf. Curtin 1969, 97-8); but as it is simply the Portuguese for ‘New Land’, it is doubtful whether it should then be taken to refer specifically to the Yoruba.
11 Presumably the Bariba (of Borgu), the north-western neighbours of Oyo. Cf. the later reference to the export of Bariba slaves via Oyo (in the 1780s), in No.45a below; and see further Law & Lovejoy 1999.
12 This makes clear that the term Lukumi is used here in a general sense, rather than with specific reference to any single Yoruba state, such as Oyo.
13 The marks described do not appear to correspond either with those described for the Oyo in eighteenth-century sources (cf. Nos 7a and 55e below) or in more recent works (e.g. Johnson 1921, 104-7).
14 The Bariba, although here included among the Lukumi, in fact speak a language distinct from Yoruba.
The Lucumies Chabas\textsuperscript{15} have the whole breast tattooed, and in the middle of the forehead they generally have an oval accompanied by squares at the sides; and they have lines from the corners of the mouth to the ears, and another six lines on each side, three crossing the neck and ending by the ears, and three more which cross the jaws and end at the temples ...

\textbf{-2-}

DAPPER 1668:\textsuperscript{16}

[p.491] [on Arder, or Allada] Their own mother tongue or language is not esteemed by them, and they seldom speak it; but mostly in that land they regard the Alkomish [i.e. Olukumi] as a noble language.\textsuperscript{17}

[p.492] In the town of Ba,\textsuperscript{18} every four days a free market is held, but mostly of salt, which is conveyed in great quantities in canoes from Jojo,\textsuperscript{19} and from there to Ulkuma [Olukumi] to trade.\textsuperscript{20}

[pp.494-5] The kingdom of Ulkami or Ulkuma, a powerful state, extends eastward of Arder, and adjoins the kingdoms of Arder and Benin, on the north-east, but does not reach to the seashore.\textsuperscript{21}

From this kingdom many slaves, partly taken captive in battle, partly made slaves for their crimes, are brought to Little Arder,\textsuperscript{22} and there sold to the Dutch and Portuguese, to be transported to the West Indies.

The children, that is the boys, are circumcised there after the Mohammedan manner. Likewise the girls have their peculiar manner of...

\textsuperscript{15}Possibly Sabe, one of the western Yoruba groups.
\textsuperscript{16}Although published in 1668, Dapper’s material on this section of the coast probably dates from some years earlier: his material on Warri, to the east, is said to relate to the specific year 1644 (1668, 507).
\textsuperscript{17}This is interesting evidence for Yoruba (though perhaps not specifically Oyo) influence in Allada. Another account of the same period reports that the ‘Licomin’ language was also used in Benin (Ryder 1969, 100).
\textsuperscript{18}Probably Apa (near modern Badagry).
\textsuperscript{19}Unidentified, but described by Dapper elsewhere as near to Ba on the west. The name, in Dutch pronunciation, would resemble that of Oyo (cf. the form ‘loyo’ in Sanson 1656), and this identification has been sometimes proposed (Pazzi 1979, 200), but the location indicated is clearly incompatible with this.
\textsuperscript{20}Cf. Oyo traditions, recalling the introduction of real salt (to replace the potash, or vegetable ash, used earlier) in the reign of Alafin [King] Obalokun (probably in the early seventeenth century), who is also credited with establishing contact with the Europeans trading at the coast (Johnson 1921, 168).
\textsuperscript{21}Dapper’s Olukumi, unlike Sandoval’s (No.1 above), appears to be a single state, and therefore perhaps to be identified specifically with Oyo.
\textsuperscript{22}The village on the sea-shore in Allada where the Europeans traded (corresponding to modern Godomey-Plage)
circumcision, because these people, after they have reached their eleventh or tenth year, place a small stick, fetched out of the field, and containing ants, in their vaginas to bite out the flesh, and from time to time, to make the biting more powerful, insert fresh ants.\textsuperscript{23}

-3-

[1670]

a) \[\text{DELBÉE} 1671, 557-8:\textsuperscript{24}\]

[The kingdom of Ardres, i.e. Allada] .... Its extent is great in the interior, having on its North the kingdom of Oyeo, which is at fifteen degrees North,\textsuperscript{25} according to what it has been possible to ascertain ...

  The King of this country [Allada] is often at war with his neighbours, and especially with the Kings of Benin and of Oyeo.\textsuperscript{26}

b) \[\text{LABAT 1730, II 34:\textsuperscript{27}}\]

[on Mattéo Lopes, Allada ambassador to France in 1670] It was also learnt from him that he had several times been on embassies to the Kingdoms of Benin and Oyco [sic: miscopied for Oyeo].\textsuperscript{28}

-4-

[1682]

\textsuperscript{23}This seems to be a confusion; although female circumcision (or rather excision, or clitoridectomy) has been practised among the Yoruba, the reference here to the insertion of ants seems to reflect a quite different practice, reported elsewhere in West Africa, whereby girls who were not virgins induced bleeding to simulate virginity on their wedding nights (cf. Herskovits 1938, I 284 n.1).

\textsuperscript{24}This account, which is a ‘Continuation’ of Delbée's journal (of a voyage to Allada in 1670) apparently not written by Delbée himself, recounts an embassy from Allada to France in 1670; the general information on Allada which it offers, including the material quoted here, was probably obtained from the head of this mission, a Portuguese-speaking interpreter to the King of Allada called Mattéo Lopes.

\textsuperscript{25}A gross exaggeration of Oyo’s distance inland, which is in fact around 8 degrees North.

\textsuperscript{26}For a subsequent military clash between Oyo and Allada, in c.1698, cf. No.6 below.

\textsuperscript{27}This material is also reproduced in Astley 1746, III 74 (miscopying ‘Oyco’ as ‘Oyko’). Labat’s book is mainly a revised (and expanded) version of the manuscript of Des Marchais, cited below (No.7); but the section of it from which this passage is taken is a summary of [Delbée] 1671.

\textsuperscript{28}No such statement is made anywhere in [Delbée] 1671, which is Labat’s source here; it must be doubtful whether he really had any additional information, and this may be no more than embroidery or speculation by Labat himself.
BARBOT 1992, II.  

[p.622] Ardres, although it is of small extent on the coast ... occupies much space in the interior, extending in the north to the kingdom of Oyeo, which is at 15° North, and very powerful in numbers of people, as I will tell you elsewhere.  

[p.639] ... all the slaves from these places [i.e. Allada and Whydah], especially those whom we transport to the Islands of America, including those from Oyeo and Benin - irreconcilable enemies of those of Ardra - firmly believe when they are embarked that we have bought them to have them fattened in our own country, so that we will be better able to sell them when they are more suitable to be eaten.  

[p.637] The states of the King of Ardres are not very extensive towards the sea ... but they go very far into the interior of the country, widening towards the North, where they border upon the kingdom of Oyeo, and in the East upon the kingdoms of Ulkami and Benin.  

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DEBIEN & HOUDAILLE 1964, 173:  

Alexandre called Apacy and by the blacks called Doon, aged 37 years, is from the kingdom of Ayo in Guinea, which is further inland than that of Foin [Fon, i.e. Dahomey] and behind that said kingdom. This black came in La Perle ...  

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29 Barbott was a French trader who visited Whydah in 1682; his account is based partly on his own observations and enquiries then, and partly on earlier sources (including Dapper 1668 and [Delbée] 1671 cited above, Nos 2-3). The material quoted here is taken from Barbot’s original (1688) French manuscript version of his work (preserved in PRO, ADM.7/830), where these passages occur in Part III, 2nd pagination, 132-3, 136, 139; only the third passage appears in the published English version of the work (1732, 346).  
30 Apart from the reference to Oyo’s populousness, this passage is clearly copied from [Delbée] 1671, 557 (above No.3a).  
31 The allusion here to enmity between Allada and Oyo may be an echo of [Delbée] 1671, 558 (above, No.3a), but there is no reason to doubt that Barbot found slaves from Oyo on sale at Whydah in 1682: cf. no.5 below.  
32 Clearly copied from [Delbée] 1671, 557 (No.3a above), with the reference to ‘Ulkami’ added from Dapper 1668, 494 (No. 2 above).  
33 A list of slaves on an estate in French Guyana in 1690.  
34 The same document elsewhere gives the date of this ship’s arrival as 1682; La Perle was, in fact, part of the squadron of ships in which Barbot (above, No.4) served.
Further in-land are yet more potent kingdoms than this [i.e. Ardra, or Allada]; but I know nothing, or at most but very little of them; except that while I was here one of their ambassadors came to the King of Great Ardra, to advertise him from his master, that several Ardrasian Negroes had been with him, and made complaints to him; and to advise him to take care that his Viceroy treated these poor men more gently; or else much against his will he should be obliged to come to their assistance, and take them into his protection.

The King of Great Ardra instead of making a proper use of this wholesome advice, laughed at it, and in farther despiught to that King, murdered his ambassador; upon which he was so violently as well as justly enraged, that with utmost expedition he caused an army (by the Fidasians [Whydah] augmented to the number of ten hundred thousand men) to fall into their country; and these being all horsed and a warlike nation, in short time mastered half the King of Ardra’s territories, and made such a slaughter amongst his subjects, that the number of the dead being innumerable, was commonly express’d by saying they were like the grains of corn in the field.

The Fidasians reported to me of the mentioned people, that it was customary in their wars, to cut off all the privities of slaughtered enemies, and carry them off with them; as also, that done durst presume to take an enemy prisoner, that was not furnished with one hundred of these trophies.

This looks very fabulous, insumuch that tho’ it is confirmed to me by

Bosman was a factor of the Dutch West India Company who traded at Whydah; his visit is usually dated to 1698, but in fact his own account makes clear that he was at Whydah on three separate occasions, in 1697, 1698 and 1699. A paraphrase of this passage is also included in Barbot 1732, 351-2; and a summary of it also in Dalzel 1793, 13-14.

Although not named by Bosman, the details of his account (especially their use of cavalry) suggests that the hinterland power involved was Oyo. This identification was already made by commentators in the eighteenth century: e.g. Barbot 1732, 352 (‘I suppose [them] to be the Oyeos and Ulkami’); Dalzel 1793, 13 (‘[they] could from his description, be no other than the Eyeos’).

Clearly not a figure to be taken seriously; for a lower (but still implausibly high) figure for the strength of the Oyo army, cf. below Nos.10c, 23 and 55e below. Bosman’s wording here was interpreted by Barbot (1732, 351) to mean that the Oyo were ‘assisted by auxiliaries from Fida’, and this was followed by Law 1977, 156; but in the original Dutch text there is no suggestion of Whydah participation in the campaign, the Whydahs being cited only as the authority for the exaggerated figure (Van Dantzig 1982, 300 n.20).

For another account of Oyo atrocities (and alleged reluctance to take captives), cf. No. 23 below.
oaths, I don’t affirm it for truth. But it is certain that the slaughter was prodigious
great; and that the General of this great army, contenting himself therewith,
returned home, expecting to be very well received by his master, but found
himself mistaken: for the King as a reward of his heroick expedition, caused him
to be hanged on a tree; because according to his order he did not bring the person
of the King of Great Ardra along with him, on whom and not his subjects, he
aimed his revenge.

You may also please to observe what mischiefs this Prince [of Allada]
brought on himself, and also that the Law of Nations is as well observed amongst
these heathens as us Europeans: For this great Monarch did not account himself
satisfied by the death of so many thousand men for the murder of his ambassador,
but would rid the world of the particular occasion of it.

Which whether he afterwards did I have not yet heard: But I believe he
will content himself with the blood already shed.

This nation strikes such a terror into all the circumjacent Negroes, that
they can scarce hear them mentioned without trembling. And they tell a thousand
strange things of them.40

-7-
[1704-25]

DES MARCHAIS [1724-6]:41

a) [ff.34-34v] I now speak for those who have never traded at Juda
[Whydah] so that they will learn how to know the selection that must be made of
the Blacks because there are good and bad among them according to the different
countries they are from, for you must not believe that all the slaves are from Juda
or Ardre. Here are the names of the countries which furnish them and the quality
of the slaves and their marks ... [among others] ...

Nago.42 Those of this nation have the same qualities as those from Ardre
[viz. good, docile, and hard-working], they are recognised by long lines which
they have on their forehead in the shape of animals ...

Ayois. Those of this nation are warriors, hardy and very daring, they are
bad for work, they are recognised by lines crossing their cheeks which begin in a

40The paraphrase of this passage by Barbot 1732, 351-2, gives the impression that Oyo
invasions of Allada were already going on when Barbot visited the area in 1682 (and this
inference is made e.g. by Akinjogbin 1967, 36); but no such reference occurs in the
original (1688) manuscript of Barbot (cf. above No.4).
41Des Marchais’ account also exists in a published version (Labat 1730) in which the
first passage cited here occurs at II 125-9. His account purports to describe conditions as
observed on a voyage to Whydah in 1725, but in fact seems to incorporate material
derived from earlier visits there, back to 1704.
42Nago (or Anago) was commonly used by the Fon of Dahomey as a generic term for all
Yoruba-speakers, including the Oyo; but since they are here distinguished from the Oyo
the reference is presumably to some western Yoruba group or groups. For discussion of
the meaning and application of the term, see also Law 1997.
point from the eyes and finish at the ears, these marks make them frightful, a single one of these people in a cargo is enough to cause a revolt in it. The Blacks of every other nation are afraid of them.

b) [f.129v] Trade is the sole pleasure of the Blacks of Juda, they carry the goods which they buy from the Whites more than 80 leagues [240 miles] into the interior to buy captives which they bring back to Juda to sell to us. The farthest they go is to the country of Foin [Fon, i.e. Dahomey] to the north of Juda, returning from whence they bring slaves from Loucomy [Lukumi], Dhaome [Dahomey] and Aquerates ...

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1726

a) Letter of Francisco Pereyra Mendes, Director of the Portuguese fort at Whydah, 22 May 1726 (in VERGER 1976, 121):

On the 14th of this month, the Ayo invaded the territory of the rebel [i.e. the king of Dahomey], who up until that time had been going out to capture other countries; they killed most of his soldiers, and took many prisoners. This rebel fled with the women and a few warriors into the bush in the interior of the country, and when the Ayo withdrew, the rebel returned to his territory and there he started to work. But it is said that he no longer has the power to insult that he used to hold. The pretender to the Ardra [Allada] throne has already left the beach at Ajuda [Whydah] and is camped in the middle of the road, waiting for a war with [the support of] the Minas [i.e. Gold Coast people] who passed by this beach to take Jaquin [Jakin]. They say here that the 23rd or 24th of this month this war will take place, and once Jaquin is taken, they will move on to Ardra to install this pretender there. There they will join forces and together will go on to complete the destruction of the rebel so as to stop him from recuperating

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43 As with Sandoval (above, No.1) these marks do not seem to correspond with those associated with the Oyo more recently (cf. also No.55e below).
44 Cf. the remarks of Bosman (above No.6).
45 An exaggeration; Dahomey, which is mentioned as the ‘farthest’ place to which Whydah merchants went, is in fact only about 80 miles from the coast.
46 For the supply of Lukumi (i.e. Yoruba) slaves to the coast, cf. No.2 above, and also No.9 below; the term may, of course, be used here of Yoruba-speakers generically, rather than with specific reference to the Oyo. The ‘Aquerates’ are unidentified.
47 The king of Dahomey was regarded as a rebel, because he had attacked and conquered Allada (in 1724), to which he himself had earlier been tributary.
48 Cf. No.10c below, which says that the king of Dahomey on this occasion took refuge in ‘a high mountain near the River Volta’.
49 i.e. the Allada prince (called ‘Hussar’ or ‘Cossa’ in other contemporary sources) in support of whose claims Oyo had invaded Dahomey (cf. No.14a below).
50 The port of Allada (modern Godomey), now subject to Dahomey. The term ‘Minas’ here probably refers to Little Popo, which was founded (in the 1680s) by immigrants from Accra on the Gold Coast.
[= recovering] their land and from coming to power again.\textsuperscript{51}

b) \textsc{Snelgrave 1734, 55-9:}\textsuperscript{52}

[On a visit to a mulatto Portuguese in the Dahomian court at Allada, April 1727] This person had in the court of his house two pretty horses, each about thirteen hands [52 inches] high, which were every way much better than those we had seen at Jaqueen [Jakin].\textsuperscript{53} Upon our asking him, from whence he had them, he replied, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft They came from the Kingdom of J-o-e; which lies towards the north-east, many days journey off, beyond a great and famous lake, which is the fountain of several large rivers, that empty themselves into the Bay of Guinea.\textsuperscript{54} And he further added, that several fugitive Princes, whose fathers the King of Dahome [Dahomey] had conquered and beheaded, fled to the King of this country for protection, and at last prevailed with him to make war on the King of Dahome,\textsuperscript{55} which he did soon after the latter had conquered Ardra. The King of J-o-e sent, under the command of a General, a great army of horse, consisting of many thousands (for they never use infantry),\textsuperscript{56} wherewith he invaded the Dahomes in their own country: on this sudden and unexpected invasion, the King of Dahome marched immediately from Ardra into his own kingdom, and made head against the J-o-es. But as he had none but infantry, whose arms were guns and swords, he was hard put to it: for the country being open and without inclosures, the horsemen, who were armed with bows and arrows, javelins and cutting swords,\textsuperscript{57} had certainly conquer\textquoteright d, if the unusual noise of the Dahome's fire-arms had not so frightned the horses, that their riders could never make a home-charge on the

\textsuperscript{51}But cf. No.14a below, from which it appears that Hussar was defeated and killed by the Dahomians soon afterwards.

\textsuperscript{52}An English slave-trader, who visited Whydah and Allada, then recently conquered by the Dahomians, in 1727. The material cited here is also incorporated, in an abbreviated form, in Dalzel 1793, 14-15; and also in Isert 1992, 101-2. For further extracts from Snelgrave's work, see Nos 9, 12b, 13d and 15d below. The original manuscript of Snelgrave's work is also extant, and differs in wording (but not, in the case of the extracts included in this collection, in substance) from the published version: cf. Law 1990a.

\textsuperscript{53}For other references to the quality of horses from Oyo, cf. Nos 31b, 55d and f, and 61b and g below.

\textsuperscript{54}The concept of a great lake in Oyo also appears in No.65b below. The idea presumably arises through confused reports of the River Niger and its tributaries; here, however, since Oyo is said to be beyond (i.e. north or east) of the ‘lake’, the reference may be to the River Weme (with its tributaries the Zou and Okpara), which divides Dahomey from Oyo.

\textsuperscript{55}The dispossessed princes who solicited aid from Oyo certainly included one of Allada, which the Dahomians had conquered in 1724 (cf. Nos.8a above, and 10c and 14a below), and probably also princes of Weme, who are mentioned among those appealing for Oyo assistance in 1729 (No.12b below).

\textsuperscript{56}Cf. above, No.6, with comment in n.37.

\textsuperscript{57}Mounted archers were uncommon in West Africa, but their use by the Oyo is also reported in No.61b below; however, Clapperton in 1826 described the Oyo cavalry as armed with spears, while the archers went on foot (1829, 34; also Lander 1830, I 103).
enemies foot.\textsuperscript{58} However, the dispute having lasted, at times, four days,\textsuperscript{59} and the King of Dahome finding his soldiers so fatigued, that they could not hold out but a little longer, he contrived the following stratagem: he had great quantities of brandy by him, formerly bought at Whidaw [Whydah], which is the principal commodity the French ships bring there, to exchange for Negroes. So the King resolved to retreat in the night with his army, and leave the liquor as a bait for the enemy, with great quantities of valuable goods, which were in store, in a large town near the camp. When day came, the J-oes thinking the Dahomes were fled, fell to plundering and destroying the town, and drinking greedily of the brandy; and as they seldom had tasted of that liquor before, it so intoxicated them, that they fell asleep in great numbers on the ground. The King of Dahome being informed of this by his spies, returned with the utmost speed, and attacking them while they were in this disorder, routed them; but the greater part of the J-oes escaped with the help of their horses, and fled out of the country; however, the loss was so great, that the others esteemed it a compleat victory.\textsuperscript{60} The Portuguese gentleman added, that at the time of this rout, he took the two horses we had seen in his yard, and a great many more were seized at the same time by the Dahome soldiers. He said further, (but enjoin’d us secrecy) that tho’ the Dahomes were exceeding proud of his victory, they were still much afraid of a second invasion, an army of horse being very terrible to them: and that the King had lately sent great presents to the King of J-oe, to prevent his attacking him a second time.\textsuperscript{61} However, in case he did, and they should not be able to withstand them, they comforted themselves with this thought, that they might save their persons, by flying to the sea coast, to which the J-oes durst not follow them. For as their national Fetiche was the Sea, they were prohibited by their priests from ever seeing it, under no less a penalty than death; which they made the people believe, would by their God, if they were so presumptuous, be inflicted upon them”\textsuperscript{62}.

\textsuperscript{58}Evidently implying that the Oyo themselves did not yet have firearms; cf. also No.65d below.
\textsuperscript{59}Cf. the account in No.10c below, which says 8 days.
\textsuperscript{60}In view of the report in No.8a above, this claim of a Dahomian victory is probably no more than propaganda; the account of defeat by ambush is also suspect, since it appears to be a traditional stereotype, versions of which occur in accounts of other campaigns against Oyo: cf. Law 1973, 37-8.
\textsuperscript{61}Cf. No.14a below, which suggests that a formal peace between Dahomey and Oyo was concluded at this point.
\textsuperscript{62}Although the Sea was worshipped among the Yoruba (as the goddess Olokun), no other account suggests that it was the ‘national fetish’ of Oyo; and individual Oyo travelled to seaside towns such as Porto-Novo later (Nos 31b, 55b and 61b-c and f below).
[on trade at Jakin] ... tho’ formerly great numbers [of slaves] came to this
place, from other nations now destroyed by the Dahomes, there remains at
present only one country called Lucamee [Lukumi], lying towards the north-east,
for the Jaqueens to trade to. 63 Which nation, by means of a large river, had
escaped being made a conquest to the barbarous and cruel Dahomes. 64

-10-
1728

a) Letters of Hendrik Hertogh, Director of the Dutch factory at Jakin, 9 Jan.

[9 Jan. 1728] There is a strong rumour that the Ujose are ready for war
on the Dahommese, and that the King of Fida [Whydah], at present still in Popo,
will soon return to his country ... 65

[16 Feb. 1728] There is nothing but wars of one King against the other in
this country. The King of Ujo - a people which always fights on horse-back 66 -
is reported to be marching down to fight the King of Dahomme, who, having fought
the King of Fida, has made deep ditches around his entire country, as well as
walls and batteries mounted with cannons which he captured at Fida ...

b) Letter of Francisco Pereyra Mendes, Director of the Portuguese fort at
Whydah, 5 April 1728 (in VERGER 1976, 122):

The King of Ajuda’s position remains the same, without any hope of
seeing his throne restituted [= restored] to him, although among the Negroes of
this coast great changes are foreseen, because three kings from the interior who
are very powerful enemies of [the king of] Daome, called Ayo Brabo, 67 Acambu 68

63 ‘Lucamee’ is also attested in this period as a source of cloth (which the Europeans
purchased for re-sale on the Gold Coast) as well as slaves (Cf. Law 1991b, 195). It is
not certain whether this should be understood to refer to Oyo: another account of this
period says that Lukumi was a source of maize, which was brought to Jakin along the
coastal lagoon (ibid., 47), which may suggest that the reference is to some southern
Yoruba kingdom, such as Ijebu, rather than to Oyo. Note, however, the reference to the
purchase of Lukumi slaves in the Dahomian interior in No.7b above, which may well
refer to Oyo. It is likely that Jakin derived some of its slaves from Oyo, as the new ports
which emerged further east along the coast (Ekpe, Porto-Novo and Badagry) later
certainly did (cf. Nos 29, 31, etc. below).
64 Perhaps a reference to the Weme/Zou rivers, which obstructed Dahomian expansion
east of Allada/Whydah.
65 Dahomey had conquered Whydah in 1727, and the king of the latter had taken refuge
in the territory of Great Popo to the west.
66 cf. n.37 above.
67 Clearly Oyo, though the significance of the additional name ‘Brabo’ is not known.
68 Akwamu, in the interior of the Gold Coast: an army from Akwamu was encamped east
and Ahcomi have joined hands and have surrounded him. As he could not resist them, he withdrew to Ajuda hoping to find refuge there; but a powerful black man named Polega had set up camp, and resolved to stop him from entering, about which I am sceptical, because of the inconstancy and changeable character of the Negroes of this port [Whydah], and also because of the great power with which King Daome was in the habit of moving about.

c) Unsigned letter, probably by Dupetitval, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 20 May 1728 [AN: C.6/25]:

[on the failure of negotiations for peace between Dahomey and Whydah early in 1728] There was a point unknown to everybody in the difficulty between Dahome and the King of Juda, it turned on the coming of the Ayaux against Dahome, this people is warlike and although thirty days' journey distant which makes about 300 leagues [900 miles] they make this journey with the best grace in the world solely with a view to making war, two years ago they did it and beat Dahome who took refuge on a high mountain near the River Volta, the fight lasted eight days. It is the King of Juda together with the former King of Ardres which was destroyed by the Dahome four years ago who are negotiating the coming of this people, the rumour spread at the beginning of last February that they were on the march to carry out the design of these two fugitive Kings who very much desire to reoccupy their thrones. The Dahome people who were often in these districts to trade didn't appear much bothered at it, they only laughed at it; the Judaiques [Whydahs] on the contrary, became more insolent about it, they believed themselves already restored to their country and entrenched in it ...

The Ayaux in fact arrived against Dahome on 22 March last, more than one hundred thousand men strong, they found him entrenched in great ditches bounded by cannons which he had carried off from the King of Juda. It was not to defend himself that he took this precaution, it was by way of a good ruse to hold them up and facilitate his retreat, he knows that these people only come to make a raid and that by avoiding it he makes all their enterprises miscarry and preserves all his own people, in which he succeeded. His country is uncultivated, whether because of the nature of the land or the absence of people whom he takes away to war. A considerable number of troops like the Ayaux who have no supplies of

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69 Probably a miscopying of ‘Alcomi’, i.e. Olukumi, or Yoruba: presumably one of the western Yoruba kingdoms, such as Sabe, is meant.
70 ‘Polega’ presumably represents Aplogan, the title of a chief of Whydah; but there is evidently some confusion, since the Aplogan was allied to Dahomey (cf. below, No.12b).
71 A gross exaggeration, the actual distance between Dahomey and Oyo being only about 200 miles; contrast the estimate of only seven days’ journey given in No.64a below.
72 i.e. in 1726 (cf. No.8 above).
73 The same number is given for the strength of the Oyo armed forces by two later accounts (Nos 23 and 55e below); it is clearly a conventional figure, and probably greatly exaggerated.
food cannot keep the field in a country where there are no provisions. The wells are quite rare, there are some places like the place where Dahome resides from which it is necessary to go more than 4 leagues [12 miles] to find any. There is another greater inconvenience, which is that the Ayaux are forced to fit into the weather, they only come and return back during the season when the waters of the rivers are low enough to cross them, although they are only 30 days’ journey distant they are usually 4 to 6 months en route when they are in a military force, which means they cannot arrive later than March and necessarily return back in April, otherwise they will perish hopelessly, being unable to cross the rivers. It was easy for Dahome to profit from these considerations, he did it cleverly, when he saw the Ayaux he stayed calm, he amused them with a few cannon shots, which were unfamiliar to them, and during this time he made the bush with his troops after leaving only a few companions in the trenches to make a stand and make the Ayaux believe that the whole army was there to defend them, they forced the trenches without trouble, massacred the men they caught, plundered the stores which were filled with a large quantity of goods, and took with them some small cannon, that was all they did, the advanced season did not permit them to make a long stay, they stayed only twelve days in the country, straightaway Dahome appeared at the head of 8000 men at Ayuia, a small province near his home two days’ journey from Juda. He is at present in his home as if the Ayaux had never arrived. The Judaiques on their side made no move, they merely retook a small province subordinate to the kingdom of Juda where there was nobody to guard it ...

[after the Dahomian reconquest of Whydah at the beginning of May 1728, the writer spoke to the Dahomians] We at the same time discussed the expedition of the Ayaux, they relate it very differently from what was reported, they say that at their approach Dahome divided his troops into two parties which he posted at the two entrances of his trenches which are on opposite sides, the one on the side facing the Ayaux was intended to fight them, the other was to come to take them on the flank while he distracted their attention, making an about-turn round the outside of the trenches, following this plan he went in person to receive them, he fought them for four days with the party under his command, the 4th day was the decisive one of the battle, he returned to the charge and put into action his reserve force which came to surround the Ayaux who were routed, and the greater part of them cut to pieces, he withdrew in good order to his trenches, which he had not left and he had stayed there all the time. They add a wonderful trick of Dahome, he enlisted a powerful king neighbouring the Ayaux to fall on him with his forces, which he carried out so successfully that he had defeated and killed the King of the Ayaux, the news of this was brought to the army which was operating against Dahome on the 4th and last day of the battle which he was maintaining against it, all this army had done of any significance was to pass its anger at the defeat and death of its King onto the women and children who had stayed outside the trenches. This account is very different from that of the Judaiques. I told the envoys what had been said about the coming of the Ayaux, they prostrated themselves and ...
themselves on the ground, claiming that everything that had been said about it was false.\textsuperscript{76}

d) Letter of Thomas Wilson, Governor of the English fort at Whydah, 12 July 1728 (in LAW 1991a, 32, no.22):

[after the Dahomian reconquest of Whydah, at the beginning of May 1728] ... they sent Ambassadors both to the French Portuguese and us assuring us that they had no designe against the white men, and that they were only come against those of the Whydahs that had revolted [against] the king of Dahomey whilst the Ayous had come on him ...

\textbf{-11-}

1728

a) Letter of Dayrie, French factor at Jakin, to Dupetitval, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 17 Aug. 1728 [AN: C.6/25]:

I have the honour to inform you of ... the arrival of Antoine Pinte\textsuperscript{77} from Dahome yesterday ... He told [name illegible] in confidence that King Dada\textsuperscript{78} had told him expressly that some Whites had written to him that you were making the Ayos come against him [and] that you had given goods for this purpose to the party of the Kings of Ardre and Juda ...\textsuperscript{79}

b) Memorandum by Dupetitval, Director of the French fort at Whydah, for M. Delisle, for his negotiations with King ‘Dada’, 26 Aug. 1728 [ibid.].\textsuperscript{80}

I received a letter from Jacquin [Jakin] by an express of 17 August 1728 that Pinte had come back from Dahome the day before, the 16th, he had reported that Dada had told him expressly that some Whites had written to him that I was making the Ayos come against him, that I had given goods for this purposes to the party of the Kings of Ardre and Juda ...

I have never thought of the Ayos or of the kings of Ardre and Juda, I regard them as people who disturb trade and the peace of everybody ....

\textsuperscript{76}In view of the unwillingness of the Dahomians to face the Oyo invaders in the following year (below No.12b), this claim of a Dahomian victory was presumably no more than mendacious propaganda (as also the corresponding claim in 1726; cf. above No.8b).

\textsuperscript{77}Antonio Pinto, Director of the Portuguese fort at Jakin.

\textsuperscript{78}i.e. Agaja of Dahomey, ‘Dada’ being a Dahomian royal title (although often misunderstood by Europeans as a personal name).

\textsuperscript{79}There is no corroboration of this allegation; as Nos.11b-c below show, Dupetitval denied the charge, and appears to have convinced Agaja of his innocence.

\textsuperscript{80}Delisle was to be sent to the Dahomian capital in the interior.
c) Letter of Delisle, Dahomey, 31 Aug. 1728 [ibid.]:

He [i.e. King ‘Dada’] assured me that he had no better friend than you, Sir, and all Frenchmen, that he regards us as brave men, who keep their word, that if the Ayos come again into his country, he will have recourse only to us ... Since I arrived Dada has sent gold and coral to destroy the Ayos altogether ...  

-12-
1729

a) Letter of Viceroy of Brazil, 28 July 1729 (in VERGER 1976, 125):

The same confusion, which I have already reported to Your Majesty, reigns on the Mina Coast, and I think that it will be a long time before these disorders subside. The shrewdness and care of Daome make it difficult for the Kings who are warring against him to succeed. The one called Ayo, who is the one he fears the most, has descended again. He burned all of the deserted villages to the ground, and razed the fortifications of those where women and people who were incapable of fighting remained behind. Ayo had them all killed and stayed there on the spot for two months, attempting to install himself there so that this territory would not again fall under the power of Daome; but he gave up due to lack of food, and because he could not reach the people of Daome from whom he was separated by a river.  

b) SNELGRAVE 1734, 120-3.  

I come now to relate a great misfortune which befel the Dahomes, some months after they had taken the French Fort. For the better understanding of it, the reader is to know, that the King of Dahomè having conquered several countries within a few years, and depopulated them; the King of Weemey [Weme]’s sons, with other Princes (whose fathers this conqueror had taken in war, and beheaded) fled to a far inland potent nation called the J-oes. The King  

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81 Meaning unclear; perhaps Agaja had sent these gifts to induce potential allies to attack Oyo.
82 Dahomian tradition indicates that the river beyond which the Dahomians took refuge on this occasion was the Mono, an affluent of the Kouffo, west of Dahomey (Le Herissé 1911, 318).
83 Cf. Dalzel 1793, 52-3. Snelgrave here recounts information which he heard on his second voyage to Jakin in 1730.
84 The Dahomians attacked and destroyed the French fort at Whydah in late 1728; later Snelgrave makes clear that this Oyo invasion occurred in 1729.
85 King Yahase of Weme, a kingdom west of the river of that name (south-east of Dahomey) had been defeated and killed by the Dahomians a few years earlier; Weme tradition confirms that Yahase’s eldest son, Nihao Aviti, then took refuge in Oyo, while
of Whidaw having, after Ossue’s defeat, found means to send messengers to the
King of this country, they, and the others that had fled to him for protection, did
at last, through their earnest solicitations, obtain an army to march against the
King of Dahomé, whom they all look’d upon as a most cruel destroyer of
mankind. This nation of J-oë fight all on horseback, and living a great way to the
north towards Nubia, they can at no other time march to the southward, but when
the season for forage, and the dry weather sets in. The King of Dahomé had notice of their coming, a few days before they
reached his country; and he having formerly experienced how terrible such
numbers of horse had been to his army, which consists of none but foot soldiers;
he resolved to bury his riches, burn his towns, and then fly into the woods and
thickets with his people; which is a common thing among the Negroes, for the
weaker side to do, when at war; for they have no fortified towns as in Europe: so
they that are masters of the field command the country far and near.

The King of Dahomé having thus in time provided for his safety by flight,
the J-oës were disappointed: but one Appragah [Aplogan] and his people,
formerly subject to the King of Whidaw, but now under the dominion of the
Dahomes did no escape so well. For not moving so soon by two days as they did,
the J-oës came up with him and his people, and took abundance of them, with all
Appragah’s riches; and he himself was hardly put to it to escape, with but a few of
his servants.

After this the J-oës marched on in quest of the Dahomes, but finding they
were gone into the thick woods and bushes, they incamped near them; making
frequent assaults, and often taking some of the Dahomes prisoners. At last, they
so distressed them, that for want of other provision, they were obliged to eat
many of their own slaves. Yet the Dahomes patiently endured these calamities,
knowing the J-oës would be obliged to retire in a little time, on account of the
rainy season that was approaching, and for want of forage: Accordingly they were
obliged to retire soon after; and the Dahomes then returned to their own country,
and rebuilt their towns again .... [this] was in the beginning of July 1729 ...

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1730

other sons retreated down the Weme, and eventually reconstituted the kingdom with its
capital at Dangbo, east of the River Weme (Dunglas 1957-8, I 97-9).

86‘Ossue [Assou]’ was the Whydah chief who attempted unsuccessfully to reoccupy
Whydah after the Oyo invasion of Dahomey in 1728 (cf. above No.10c); however,
Snelgrave is confused here, since it is clear from No.10c above that the exiled Whydah
king was in touch with Oyo before that invasion.

87Cf. n.37 above.

88Cf. No.10c above, for a fuller explanation.

89The indefensibility of the Dahomian capital Abomey, and its effect on Dahomian
tactics against the Oyo invaders, is also noted in No.19d below.

90This date seems, on Snelgrave’s own evidence, improbably late, since the rains
normally begin in mid-May. No.12a above shows that the news of the Oyo withdrawal
had already reached Brazil by late July, which (to allow time for the passage across the
Atlantic) implies that it had occurred some weeks earlier.

[21]
Diary of Edward Deane, Governor of the English fort at Whydah, 1730 (PRO: T.70/1466):

3 Jan. 1730: It is allarm’d that the Joes (a very powerful inland people) will be suddenly down against the Dahomies, this puts everybody on their guard, to prevent surprise, in case the Dahomies should be drove to attempt anything desperate.

9 Jan. 1730: We observe a great many Dahomys more than ordinary to be about the forts and are therefore apt to conjecture the Joes are drawing near.

21 Feb. 1730: Messengers from the King of Whydah, advise that the J-oes are now on their way towards Dahomy ...

Letters of Viceroy of Brazil, 29 April & 10 July 1730 (in VERGER 1976, 125-6):

[29 April 1730] The Mina Coast situation is still the same. As long as King Daome exists these disorders will continue. He has entered into negotiations with Ayo, the only one he fears and who attacked him on the side of Ajuda. If they make peace there will be no hope of seeing a remedy to the harm done, because he stops the passage of slaves and robs the Negroes who go into the interior to buy them ...

[30 July 1730] The trade continues in the same state of decline, for reasons which had already been stated. Daome has closed the roads through which the slaves come down, but as he has suffered great losses from the King of Ayo, who waged war on him in favour of Ajuda, he has tried through the intermediary of our director, to persuade the Ayo to withdraw from his country, promising him good friendliness. If this happens, an end would be put to the disorders of these Negroes, and the trade would continue with better luck.

c) Letter of Mallet de la Mine, formerly Director of the French fort at Whydah, 8 Jan. 1732 (ADLA: C.739):

When I left Juda I observed that the whites who reside there and at Jacquin despaired of seeing peace there again and trade re-established. It is true that we nevertheless had some hope for a few days. Dada King of the Dahomets had withdrawn to Novadan his capital city, the trading men had left Gregoy

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91 i.e. the Director of the Portuguese fort at Whydah, João Basilio.
92 But cf. No.13d below, which shows that these hopes of commercial revival were not fulfilled.
93 For a subsequent extract from the same document, cf. below No.15c.
94 Presumably Abomey, the original capital of Dahomey (though since conquering Allada in 1724 Agaja had often resided there); when Snelgrave arrived at Jakin in February
[Glehue, the port of Whydah]; and the King of the Ayos was preparing to pour upon him with his army, but Dada had the skill to win over this power by means of 600 captives according to the general rumour and he sent a part of his trading men back to Juda again.\(^{95}\)

d) SNELGRAVE 1734, 135-6:\(^{96}\)

Sometime after this [sc. the murder of the Governor of the English fort at Whydah, in late 1729] the King of Dahome considering he should certainly be invaded again by the J-oes, as soon as the season permitted them to march, and dreading very much their power, he sent embassadors with large presents to their King, together with one of his handsomest daughters. These were civilly received, and had the good fortune to succeed in their negotiations. For they so gained some great men about the King, by presenting them with large pieces of coral (which the J-oes esteem above all things)\(^{97}\) that by their means an advantageous peace was obtained for their master, and they were civilly dismissed with handsome presents. For confirmation of the peace, the King of J-oe sent, a little while after, one of his daughters to the King of Dahome for a wife; and she was received with great joy by the King and his people.

At my going on shore at Jaqueen, the latter end of February 1729/30; I was informed of all that I have here related;\(^{98}\) and tho’ I found trade very dull, yet all the white gentlemen residing at that place, were full of expectations, that, now a peace was concluded between the J-oes and the Dahomes, we should soon have a great many Negroes brought down for sale. But tho’ I was there above two months, trade did not mend in the least ...
[After the king of Dahomey had intervened in Allada to install the pretender Cossa as King, i.e. in 1724] Six months after this expedition, reflecting on the opportunity he had to make himself master of the kingdom of Ardres, he dreamed of getting hold of it himself by expelling Cossa who withdrew to the Ayots.\(^{101}\)

The Ayots certainly form the most powerful people in Negritia [i.e. the land of the Blacks]. Their king took an interest in restoring the fugitive prince, had him escorted to his realm by an army which defeated Daomet, the latter obliged to give way to a superior force withdrew,\(^{102}\) but it was [only] to come back after the departure of the Ayots; he got hold for the second time of the kingdom of Ardres, captured Cossa, put him and all the Great men and the people who had followed his faction to death; then he made his peace with the Ayots, and made himself tributary to them, in return for peaceful possession of the kingdom of Ardres ...\(^{103}\)

[after the Dahomian conquest of Whydah and flight of its king and people to Great Popo, 1727] The King of Juda and his people interested the Ayots in their misfortune by winning them over with presents, their King in 1728 sent an army which defeated Daomet and re-established the Judaiques in their home. Daomet, after the departure of the Ayots, returned to get control of the Kingdom of Juda, killed and captured a prodigious number of its inhabitants, [and] pursued the rest as far as their place of refuge ...\(^{104}\)

b) De CHENEVERT & BULLET 1776, 2:\(^{105}\)

[after the Dahomian conquest of Whydah, and the flight of part of its people west to Great Popo, in 1727] The other portion of the conquered Oueidas [Whydahs] took refuge among their fellow-citizens of Epée [Ekpe], Portenove [Porto-Novo] and Badagri, who procured them some reinforcements and got them some from the Ayaux, a powerful people; with these reinforcements and the remnants of their defeated troops, they came back on the Dahomets, whom they repelled far off,\(^{106}\) but the latter having allied with the Ayaux, who then abandoned the Oueidas,\(^{107}\) they were conquered all over again ...
[pp.40-1] Dahomé, ever more powerful, troubled and defeated some of his neighbours, merely out of the desire to make conquests.\textsuperscript{109} For this reason, and because he was an ingrate and the murderer of his benefactor, and in truth a usurper of all his dominions, over which he was titled lord: - the King of the Aionos, who beyond all these reasons, had also that he had been a close friend of the Nago king Dan,\textsuperscript{110} came with a large army to make war on this ungrateful king of Dahome, but met with such a reception that he was repulsed and put to flight with numerous losses.\textsuperscript{111} However, not losing sight of those just principles, by which he was once bound to punish insults, he undertook a second war in the next year, and had the good fortune of obliging Dahomé to withdraw, almost as far as entering the dominions of King Anobabu;\textsuperscript{112} and, because this traitor knew that he was in the situation of having to become subject to one or other king, he resolved to seek respite from the King of the Aionos, who would not grant it to him, except on the same condition, that Dahomé became obliged twice a year to pay him a certain tributary portion of all the produce of his country, which is still practised today.\textsuperscript{113}

[pp.87-8] [on the ‘fetish’ Gum]\textsuperscript{114} During the great wars of the Aionos with those of Dahomé, a fetish priest fled from the former, and came to the King of Dahomé to offer himself for his service, saying that all the strength of the Aionos, both weapons and fighting, came from the fetish which they had, but which, discontented, Dahome was seeking so as to be victorious in the war with the said Aionos, by virtue of his fetishes. Dahome accepted, and convinced himself of its truth, not sparing any expense in favour of the said Fetish.

The General of the Aionos, or great War Chief, who wanted him [the priest] by reason of the same superstition, made an agreement with the King of Dahomé that he would restore his fetish priest. In spite of asking a greater sum for him, Dahomé was always opposed to his demand, but, seeing that the Aionos were making great slaughter among his people, and that they would leave off

\textsuperscript{108} A Portuguese missionary, who visited Dahomey in 1797; for further material from his account, cf. No.54 below.

\textsuperscript{109} Referring to the founder of Dahomey, in other accounts called Dakodonu; Pires’ account is chronologically confused (or truncated), treating the Oyo attacks on Dahomey in the 1720s as if they occurred in the reign of this founding king.

\textsuperscript{110} The indigenous chief of Abomey, overthrown by the founder of Dahomey (and from whose name that of Dahomey is supposedly derived); the suggestion that this Dan was a Nago, or Yoruba, is noteworthy, though not supported by later sources.

\textsuperscript{111} This may allude to either of the Oyo invasions of 1726 or 1728, both of which the Dahomians claimed to have repulsed (cf. above Nos. 8, 10).

\textsuperscript{112} Presumably an allusion to the campaign of 1729, when the Dahomians withdrew to the west, though the reference to ‘Anobabu’ (presumably Anomabu, on the Gold Coast) is an exaggeration (cf. above, No.12).

\textsuperscript{113} i.e. the peace of 1730 (above No.13); other accounts imply that the tribute was paid only once a year (cf. Nos 19d, 23, 25, and 50 below).

\textsuperscript{114} i.e. Gun (the Yoruba Ogun), the god of war.

[25]
continuing this slaughter, only if Dahomé gave them half of this Fetish Priests, by
a new demand of this War Chief of the Aionos, however, he had no remedy but to
agree.

To this end he sent for the said Fetish Priest, and told him that he had to
allow himself to be split in half, dividing him into two parts, one for the Aionos,
and the other for Dahomé. The poor devil, who saw the sentence was to be
immediately carried out, making a virtue of necessity, told the King that, seeing it
had to be so, he was agreeable, but that he decided that the half of his body
belonging to Dahomé should be buried at the foot of a very large very leafy tree,
which stood by the backdoor of the Palace of the King in Abomé, and that every
year he should sacrifice a victim on the trunk of the tree. Hence all the heads of
these bodies, which come to that tree.

These prayers finished, the black wretch was divided in half, and the half
belonging to the Aionos was sent to the battlefield, which settled the war for
then...

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a) Letters of João Basílio, Director of the Portuguese fort at Whydah, 20

[20 May 1731] At the request of the King of Ajuda, I have been to Ardra,
court of the King of Daome, to negotiate a peace settlement between these two
kings, for the maintenance of trade, and in effect Daome promises to end the
hostilities on condition that the King of Ajuda turns himself over to him as his
tributary. But the latter is so much influenced by the Dutchman in Jaquin, 116 who
assures him that he should regain possession of his kingdom by armed force, and
to this end tells him that he will have a large army of Minas, called Fantyns
[Fante], 117 who together with the Ayos will destroy the Daome; and with this
hope the King does nothing; he will later be sorry, for the Daome is at peace with
everyone including the Ayo to whom he gives expensive gifts, and he fears none
of the others. 118

[8 Sept. 1732] As the King of Daomé was fortunate to have overpowered
the country of the Maquis [Mahi], after having besieged them for a year, 119 he

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115 This story is not recorded in any other source which I have traced (though the cult of
Gun is acknowledged to be of Yoruba origin). Stories of the defeat of enemies through
the theft of their ‘fetishes’ are, however, a traditional stereotype; cf. e.g. Herskovits &
Herskovits 1958, 368-72 (on the defeat of Yahase of Weme).
116 Hendrik Hertogh, Director of the Dutch factory at Jakin, who was at this time
encouraging the formation of an anti-Dahomian alliance.
117 Probably a reference to Akim, in the interior of the Gold Coast, an army from which
was currently operating east of the Volta, taking Keta in 1731, and which was invited by
Hertogh to proceed to attack Dahomey (Law 1991b, 316).
118 From the sequel (below No.15b-d), Hertogh was clearly better informed than Basilio.
119 The Mahi were the immediate north-eastern neighbours of Dahomey; for this
returned to Ardra on 30 March at the same time as his troops which he had withdrawn from this place, and on 1 April he sent them to attack ... Jaquin ... The king of this place and the Dutch director escaped by chance, for the aim of the King of Daome was to capture the latter who, according to him, provoked wars of the Minas and the Ayos against himself.

b) Summary of letter of Edward Deane, Governor of the English fort at Whydah, 26 June 1731 (PRO: T.70/7):

The Dahomys are repulsed by a very powerful inland people with whom they have been at war from 20 May.\textsuperscript{120}

c) Letter of Mallet de la Mine, formerly Director of the French fort at Whydah, 8 Jan. 1732 (ADLA: C.739):

That, Sir, was the situation of Juda and of the trade at my departure.\textsuperscript{121} I would nevertheless add a piece of news which I received then which seemed likely to turn out in our favour if it was confirmed. The Ayos having agreed in appearance with the Dahomets by means of the presents which they had received from them, they pretended to withdraw.\textsuperscript{122} The Maillais [Mahi] Negroes seized this moment to pour on the Dahomets, who put themselves in order to repel them, but the Ayos, according to what is said, approached and surrounded the Dahomets between two fires, so that Dada is believed to be in trouble. An army of the Ayos is going to stay on the frontiers of the Dahomets to keep them in check.\textsuperscript{123}

d) SNELGRAVE 1734, 148-9.\textsuperscript{124}

... the King of Dahome being a restless and ambitious Prince, instead of endeavouring (after the concluding of the peace with the J-oes) to settle his conquered countries, he marched far inland against a nation called the Yahooos.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{120} Probably a reference to Oyo; cf. Deane’s use of the same phrase ‘a very powerful inland people’ of the Oyo in No.13a above; and cf. the campaign against Oyo (as allies of the Mahi) reported in Nos.15c-d below.
\textsuperscript{121} Cf. No.13c above.
\textsuperscript{122} i.e. in 1730 (above, No.13).
\textsuperscript{123} Presumably the same victory as that reported in June 1731 (above, No.15b).
\textsuperscript{124} Cf. Dalzel 1793, 59-60 (though Dalzel identified the enemy of Dahomey in this campaign as the ‘Mahees [Mahi]’). This passage is taken from an appendix to Snelgrave’s account, which he presents as based on ‘the latest advices’ received after his own departure from the coast; this use of additional (presumably written) sources may explain why he evidently failed to realise that the ‘Yahoo’ referred to here was the same as the ‘J-o-e’ of his own account, i.e. Oyo.
\textsuperscript{125} i.e. Oyo; but it is clear from No.15a above that the Dahomians did not invade Oyo itself, the war being fought in the Mahi country. Snelgrave’s implication that the
These people valiantly defended themselves for many months, having retired amongst their mountains and woods, where they were besieged by the Dahomes.\textsuperscript{126} The rainy season coming on,\textsuperscript{127} the Dahome soldiers were desirous of returning to their own country, but the King was highly incensed at it, and put several of the principal officers to death, only for mentioning it. This caused great murmurings in the army, which were increased by their sufferings from the rains; so that some of his Captains deserted him with many soldiers, amongst whom was one of his sons, who fled with four thousand men to the King of Weemey.

Finding himself in these circumstances, he resolved to make one grand effort on the Yahoos, in which he prevail'd; but tho' he beat them out of their fastnesses, he gain'd little by it, they making a brave retreat, in which his wearied soldiers could not pursue them; and soon after he returned to his own country, with the loss of most of his forces and of his reputation.\textsuperscript{128}

\textbf{-16-}

Letters of From, chief of the Dutch factory at Keta, 10 Dec. 1734 & 4 Feb. 1735 (in VAN DANTZIG 1978, 316, nos. 376-7):

[10 Dec. 1734] There is a rumour that Jaquin was attacked by the King of Dahome, and that all the [Dutch West India] Company's effects and the whitemen were captured, but also that Dahome himself has fled, as he is being pursued by the King of Aijo and his people.

[4 Feb. 1735] I sent one of my boys to Little Popo in order to learn about the situation at Jaquin ... and the Caboceers of Little Popo assured him that Dahome was chased by the Eijose [sic: miscopied for Eijose] people, and that the Dutch Company's effects were still at Jaquin, that the whitemen were being kept inside by the Eijose, but that the latter did not do any harm to the Europeans.\textsuperscript{129}

\textbf{-17-}

Dahomian attack was unprovoked is also refuted by No.15c above, which shows that it was preceded by a Mahi-Oyo attack on Dahomey.

\textsuperscript{126}Dahomian tradition suggests that the Mahi town besieged by the Dahomians on this occasion was Gbowele (Le Herissé 1911, 299).

\textsuperscript{127}The first stage of the campaign had, in fact, been fought during the main rainy season, in May-June 1731 (cf. above No.15b); presumably the reference here is to the second rainy season (September to November), implying perhaps that the Dahomian counter-attack had been launched during the brief lesser dry season (around August). The campaign was not concluded until March 1732 (above No.15a).

\textsuperscript{128}But cf. above No.15a, which makes clear that the Dahomians claimed this campaign as a victory.

\textsuperscript{129}These rumours were clearly false, the attack on Jakin being in fact carried out by the Dahomians themselves (cf. Akinjogbin 1967, 100; Law 1991a, 297).

[on trade at Apa under Hertogh]\(^{130}\) Several French, Dutch, and also
English and Portuguese ships for several years found abundant cargoes at Appa,
of good captives of Arradas [Allada], Ouedas [Whydahs], Accombous [Akwamu]
and Ayos.\(^{131}\)

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1737

‘A Description of the Castles, Forts & Settlements belonging to the Royal African

[on the gold trade at Whydah] ... the Portuguese .. undoubtedly bring the
greatest [part] of the gold that is to be met with here, it being as yet a doubt
whether the adjacent upland countries produce any gold. Some say that in the
Kingdom of Io, there has been here and there a mine found out, however this is so
ill confirmed that there is very little credit to be given to it.\(^{132}\)

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1742-8


An English ship arrived here with the news that the King of Ojo has
defeated the King of Dahomme with the help of the great robber Sjampon,\(^{133}\) and

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\(^{130}\) Hertogh, formerly Dutch factor at Jakin, had fled from that town on its destruction in
1732 and took up residence at Apa, from where he moved in 1736 to Badagry (where he
was murdered in 1738).

\(^{131}\) The suggestion that Hertogh derived supplies of slaves from the interior, including
Oyo, is plausible enough, since this was certainly true of the ports which replaced Apa
(Ékpe, Porto-Novo and Badagry) later in the eighteenth century (cf. Nos 29, 31 etc.
below); but the allusion to the Akwamu, west of Dahomey and therefore hardly likely to
send slaves to Apa, somewhat undermines belief in the reliability of this account.

\(^{132}\) For the gold trade at Whydah, including citation of this passage, see further Law
1990b; the suggestion that gold came from Oyo, however, is certainly no more than a
false rumour.

\(^{133}\) i.e. Ashangmo, chief of Little Popo, and a prominent enemy of Dahomey (cf. No.20
below); the suggestion here that Oyo and Ashangmo were allied is not corroborated by
any other account, and may represent a false rumour or wishful thinking on the part of
Dahomey's enemies.
that for three months now there has been no trade at all at Fida.


[20 Aug. 1743] [reporting an interview with the King of Dahomey] I complained of the removal of Mr Levens,\(^{134}\) and asked the reasons which could have led to such an act of violence, the king first replied with many reproaches against this Director who had never been the friend of the Dahomets; that the latter having been obliged to withdraw from Gregoy, to go to war against the Ayos, and some of their people having been unable to follow, Mr Levens had refused them asylum in the fort, and thereby exposed them to the anger of the Judaiques who had come to Gregoy after the departure of the Dahomets.\(^{135}\)

[31 Jan. 1744] [on a proposal to replace the fort with a ship stationed off-shore] The threats of the Judaiques, who still delude themselves that they will again become masters of this country, and give us no quarter, would become a matter of indifference to us, as well as the arrival of the Ayois, who will also, according to common rumour, get possession of it ...\(^{136}\)

c) Sundry Accounts, William’s Fort, Whydah, 1 Jan.-30 June 1748 (PRO: T.70/424A):

[records payment for] Subsistence and dispatch to two other Half Heads sent to call up Evegan [Yovogan] and Coke\(^{137}\) a second time and to dispatch them at their visite to each forte for the like intent and in a seeming hurry which gives some credit to a rumour that the Ioes were up in arms and designed against Dahomey and that the King had quitted his habitation and carried all his valuable moveables into the bush and that he was making large dashees to avoid the impending blow ...

[payment for] Dashee to Evegah Vice Roy at his grande visite attended by all the Generals, Captains of War, Councilors, Caboceers, Traders and their People on account of the Kings having made peace with the Ioes.

d) NORRIS 1789, 11-16:\(^{138}\)

\(^{134}\)Levet’s predecessor as Director of the French fort, deported by the Dahomian authorities earlier in 1743.

\(^{135}\)Cf. Norris 1789, 36-9 (and, copying him, Dalzel 1793, 88-90), for the Whydah attack, coinciding with an Oyo invasion, in 1743.

\(^{136}\)There is no corroboration of whether this anticipated Oyo invasion actually took place; cf. n.145 below.

\(^{137}\)i.e. the senior Dahomian officials at Whydah.

\(^{138}\)Cf. Dalzel 1793, 71-4. Norris was a slave-trader who wrote a history of Dahomey in the reign of Agaja’s successor ‘Bossa Ahudee’, or Tegbesu (1740-74); for other passages from this work, cf. below Nos.26-7, 50a; and for a general assessment see Law
The internal tranquility of the kingdom [of Dahomey] was restored by the
Mayhou’s defeat, but the Foys [Fon] did not long enjoy the sweets of peace:
destruction threatened them from another quarter. To the north-east of Dahomy
lies a fine, fertile, and extensive country, inhabited by a great and warlike people
called the Eyoes, the scourge and terror of all their neighbours ...

The Dahomans, to give an idea of the strength of an Eyoe army, assert,
that when they go to war, the general spreads the hide of a buffaloe before the
door of his tent, and pitches a spear in the ground, on each side of it; between
which the soldiers march, until the multitude, which pass over the hide, have worn
a hole through it; as soon as this happens, he presumes that his forces are
numerous enough to take the field. The Dahomans may possibly exaggerate,
but the Eyoes are certainly a very populous, warlike and powerful nation.

They invaded Dahomy in 1738 with an irresistible army, and laid waste
with fire and the sword to the gates of Abomey; here, the Foys had collected their
whole strength, and waited the arrival of the enemy, who were advancing with an
incredible multitude.

The Foys, although inferior in numbers, were not intimidated; they had
seen service under Trudo, but never was their valour called forth on a more
trying occasion; their country and everything that was dear to them, lay at stake;
and they did all that could be expected in its defence. The enemy attacked them in
the morning; they acted wonders on that day; twice they repulsed the Eyoes, and
had nearly given them a total defeat; but fresh supplies of the enemy continuously
pouring in, to replace those who fell, the Foys, worn out with fatigue, were
obliged to yield at last to superior numbers, and retreated, under cover of the
night, into Abomey: having killed of the Eyoes, above twice the number of their
own army. The situation now became truly calamitous, and no prospect was
before them, but an utter extinction of the Dahomy name and nation.

Abomey is a very large town, surrounded with a deep moat, but has no
wall or breast-work to defend the besieged; nor are there any springs of water in
it; consequently, it could not be long tenable. The first care of the Dahomans on
the night after the battle, whilst the Eyoes were too much fatigued to interrupt
them, was, to send away the wounded, and the women and children, to Zassa, a
town about twenty-five miles off, where the king then was; who when he
learned the unfortunate issue of the day, was immediately conveyed, with his
women and treasures, to an inaccessible retreat, about four hours journey from

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139 i.e. the defeat of a rebellion by the Mehu, early in the reign of Agaja’s successor Tegbesu; Norris dates this to 1735, but as Tegbesu succeeded only in 1740 it must in fact have occurred in the early 1740s.

140 A traditional stereotype, a version of which was also reported of the army of Borno around this period (R. Rennell, reporting information collected in Tripoli in 1789, in [African Association] 1810, I 154-5; also in Hallett 1964, 91).

141 This date cannot be correct, since Tegbesu acceded only in 1740 (though Norris gave the date incorrectly as 1732); more probably, the reference is to the invasion of 1742, reported in No. 19a above (cf. Law 1989a, 226-7).

142 i.e. Agaja, Tegbesu’s predecessor (d. 1740).

143 Not identified, but shown on Norris’s map as west of Abomey.
Zassa. The path leading to it is extremely intricate, and known to very few of the Dahomians themselves; and is never visited, except in cases of the last extremity, when the king is obliged to fly for the safety of his person. As none but the king’s own family take shelter there, it was esteemed an extraordinary mark of respect shewn to Mr Gregory, governor of the English fort at Whydah, 144 who happened to be at Zassa at this unhappy time, that the king was pleased to take him in his royal suite to this place. Agaow [Gau], 145 the king’s general at Abomey, continued to defend the place, and amuse the enemy, until he learned that the king was safe, and Zassa evacuated: he then took advantage of a dark night, conducted the remains of his army safe, passed the enemy, and fled; leaving the town to the mercy of the Eyoes, who afterwards plundered and burnt it; as they also did Calmina [Cana] and Zassa: they lived in the country at discretion, as long as they could procure subsistence; and in a few months, when that grew scarce, returned to their own country. Had they, when they engaged at Abomey, detached a part of their numerous army, and attacked Zassa at the same time, the king and all his treasure must inevitably fall into their hands: and for this neglect, their general was disgraced upon his return.

The Eyoes continued for several years to harass Dahomy with an annual visit: 146 the Foys never thought it prudent to engage them afterwards; but when apprized of their coming, used to evacuate their towns, divide into small parties, and shelter themselves as well as they could in their fastnesses and woods. The king used all his efforts to obtain an accommodation, and offered them any reasonable compensation to refrain from hostilities; but it was difficult to satisfy their demands. They claimed, in consequence of an old treaty, an annual tribute; the payment of which had been omitted in the prosperous days of Trudo. These arrears were considerable; and fresh demands were also added, on account of the conquest of Whydah, which the Eyoes looked upon as an inexhaustible source of wealth to the king. 147 Their expectations, upon the whole, were so exorbitant, that Ahadee found it impracticable to satisfy them, and the Eyoes continued to ravage the country for several years, burning their towns, destroying their crops in harvest, killing many people, and carrying numbers away into captivity. In the year 1747, however, the Eyoes consented to an accommodation, and compromized the matter for a tribute, which is paid them annually at Calmina, in the month of November. 148

144 Isaac Gregory, Governor of William’s Fort, 1739-45; by implication, Gregory may have been one of Norris’s sources for these events.

145 Commander-in-chief of the Dahomian army.

146 Contemporary sources attest further invasions (or rumours of the imminence of such invasions) in 1743, 1744 and 1748 (above Nos.19a-c), but there is no corroboration for the years 1745-7; it may be that Norris exaggerates the regularity of these invasions (as suggested by Akinjogbin 1967, 111), but it should be stressed that the surviving contemporary evidence is too fragmentary for such an argument from silence to be decisive.

147 Presumably a reference to the peace made in 1730 (above, No.13); but if so, Norris is confused, since the Dahomian conquest of Whydah (in 1727) preceded this peace.

148 The actual date was 1748 (cf. above No.19c).
The Dahomeys have been beaten and driven away by a nation called Aijo, revealing then that the power of the Dahomeys was so limited that Assiamboe [Ashangmo] at [Little] Popo could wage war against them, and sometimes come out the victor ... I have neither asked nor heard whether the nation of Aijo has an even more powerful nation north of it, but I do not doubt it, because the Negroes’ disposition is not at all to sit still when they can destroy a lesser neighbour ...

Letter of Guestard, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 10 July 1754 (AN: C.6/25):

[report of the death of the king of Dahomey] I ... am still keeping this very secret, because of the Ayauts, who could take advantage of this turn of events, if they knew of it, to come to make some raids into the country ...

Extract of letter of W. Devaynes, Governor of the English fort at Whydah, 22 Oct. 1754, quoted in letter of T. Melvil, Cape Coast Castle, 30 Nov. 1754 (PRO: T.70/1523):

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149 The original Danish version of Rømer’s work was published in 1760; Rømer was Danish factor at Accra on the Gold Coast, and also visited Keta, west of Little Popo, in 1743, when he presumably gathered the information recorded here.

150 Probably alluding to the Oyo invasions of 1726-30 (above Nos 8, 10, 12-14), but alternatively perhaps to the more recent invasions of the early 1740s (above No.19).

151 Ashangmo had defeated an attack by Dahomey in 1737 (Law 1991b, 316-17).

152 For later reports of more powerful neighbours inland from Oyo, cf. Nos 31a, 50a and 52 below. Rømer’s wording here is interesting, suggesting that such reports may reflect an a priori European perception (assuming that relationships observed near the coast must be duplicated in the interior), rather than reporting real events (cf. Akinjobin 1967, 175 n.2).

153 The report of the king’s death was false, and there is no evidence that any Oyo attack actually took place on this occasion; but this is interesting evidence of continued nervousness about Oyo in Dahomey, even after the conclusion of a formal peace in 1748 (above No.19c-d).
Trade is very dull here ... the King of Io is dead, and they are wrangling and fighting who shall have the stool. Two that have been seated on it within these two months are both killed.\[^{154}\]

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[1750-64]

PRUNEAU de POMMEGORGE 1789, 235-6;\[^{155}\]

The Dahomian people ... despite its reputation for courage, has several times been obliged, even during the time of their greatest prosperity, to flee from their country for thirty or forty days, when their king could not pay the annual tribute to another king much more powerful than he, who is called the king of the Ayeots,\[^{156}\] who they say puts a hundred thousand men into the field,\[^{157}\] and to whom ten other kings also pay tribute, He resides a hundred and fifty or two hundred leagues [450-600 miles] in the interior.\[^{158}\] When his ambassadors come to receive what is due to their master,\[^{159}\] if there is at the time a white with the king of the Dahomets, great care is taken that he is not able to speak to these ambassadors.\[^{160}\] The Ayeots make no captives, the prisoners are tied to the tails of their horses, and they gallop with them until they are dead.\[^{161}\]

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154 Probably a reference to the Alafin [kings] of Oyo Labisi and Awonbioju, who are said to have been murdered or forced to commit suicide after very brief reigns (17 days and 130 days, respectively) by the Basorun (senior chief) Gaha, who then usurped effective authority in Oyo (Johnson 1921, 178). Cf. also below No.27, for further reports of the deposition of Oyo kings; and No.30, for the overthrow of Gaha in 1774; and for the correlation of European and indigenous sources for these events, see further Law 1982. This citing of events in Oyo to explain the state of trade at Whydah evidently implies that many of the slaves sold there by the Dahomians normally came from Oyo, and this is also implied in No.29 below; for the context, cf. Law 1989b.

155 Although published in 1789, Pruneau’s work is presumed to reflect conditions earlier, when he served in the French fort at Whydah; he was already in the staff of the fort in 1750 (cf. No.14a above), and became Director of it in 1763-4, after which he appears to have returned to France.

156 Presumably an allusion to the wars of 1742-8 (above No.19).

157 Cf. No.10c above and 55e below for the same estimate of the size of the Oyo army.

158 An exaggeration: in fact, nearer 200 miles.

159 For other references to Oyo ambassadors (or ‘messengers’) sent to collect tribute from Dahomey, cf. Nos 25, 34, 47, 49b and 54 below.

160 Cf. also below No.25, for a similar report.

161 Cf. the similar atrocity stories in No.6 above. Given the involvement of Oyo in selling slaves to the Europeans at this period (e.g. below Nos.29, 31, 33), this statement that they took no prisoners can hardly be literally true.
Letter of W. Mutter, Cape Coast Castle, 27 May 1764 (PRO: T.70/31):

The Ashantees [Asante] have met with a very considerable loss lately ... The affair is one of their Caboceers called Odanquah having made an incursion into the Io country which is behind Whydah, he and all his people to the number of 10 or 1200 fell into an ambuscade and were either killed or made slaves of. 162

Minutes of Meeting of Council of the African Association, 2 Aug. 1804 (in HALLETT 1964, 193-4):

[discussion on the best route by which to approach exploration of the River Niger] Mr Dalzell stated his observations during a long residence amongst the people of Dahomey 163 as affecting the probable success of any attempt to penetrate that country towards the interior of Africa.

He said ‘that the Dahomians were really a polished and hospitable people, and that there was no fear of a stranger not being well received and that it was easy therefore to pass from Whydah to Abomy the Capital’.

But that to pass from that Capital towards the Northern Country was next to impracticable, not so much from any bad temper or indisposition of the inland people the Eyoes, but from the extreme jealousy of the Dahomians and their Government lest any intelligence should be carried to the Eyoes, who are a most extended and powerful nation and who yearly come for Tribute to the Dahomans and which their King readily pays in purchase of peace and quiet.

Mr Dalzell stated that he saw the Ambassadors from the Eyoe country come for and receive the Tribute: but tho’ otherwise on the best footing, and in strict amity with the Government he was never permitted to converse with them. 164

Asante tradition recalls a war in which Dankwa, the chief of Juaben (one of the component states of the Asante confederacy) was killed, but names the enemy as the ‘Apo’ (Rattray 1929, 221), which seems to be a Gold Coast name for the Dahomians (cf. Reindorf 1966, 37); traditions of a war with Dahomey around this time were also recorded in Asante in 1820 (Dupuis 1824, 237-9). Possibly Dahomey has been substituted for Oyo in these traditions through confusion; but it is also possible that Oyo and Dahomey were both involved, as allies against Asante. For discussion of the context of this war from the Asante perspective, cf. Fynn 1971, 96-7; Wilks 1975, 320-1.

Archibald Dalzel was Governor of the British fort at Whydah in 1767-70. He later wrote a history of Dahomey (1793), passages from which are cited below (Nos 30 etc.).

162

163

164

1772

Cf. No.23 above, for a similar report.
NORRIS 1789, 124-5:165

[At the Annual Customs in Dahomey] On this occasion, a large stage is erected near one of the palace gates ... on this are piled heaps of silesias, checks, callicoes, and a variety of other European and Indian goods; a great many fine cotton cloths that are manufactured in the Eyo country; and a prodigious quantity of cowries. When all is ready, the king comes upon that stage, accompanied by any of the [European] governors, or captains of ships, that may be there, and attended by the Tamegah, Mayhou,166 and a few others of his headmen; to each of these he gives, according to their rank, the choice of an Eyo cloth, or a string of coral beads ...167

-27-
[1773]

NORRIS 1789, 11-12:168

These Eyoes are governed by a king; but not by one so absolute as the tyrant of Dahomy. If what reports says of him be true, when his ill conduct gives just offence to his people, a deputation from them wait upon him, it is said, and represent to him, that the burden of government has been so fatiguing, that it is full time for him to repose from his cares, and to indulge himself with a little sleep. He thanks his people for their attention to his ease, retires to his apartment as if to sleep, where he gives directions to his women to strangle him; which is immediately executed, and his son quietly succeeds him,169 upon the same terms of holding the government no longer than his conduct merits the approbation of his people.170

165Cf. also Dalzel 1793, 146-7; this section of Norris’s work describes a visit to the Dahomian capital Abomey in 1772.
166i.e. the Migan and Mehu, the most senior chiefs in Dahomey after the king.
167For Oyo cloth, cf. also Norris’s own further remarks in No.50a, and also No.55e below.
168Cf. also Dalzel 1793, 12-13. Although published in 1789, the section of Norris’s book in which this passage occurs is said to have been written in 1773, and is presumed to refer to conditions then.
169Probably a careless projection of European norms, rather than an accurate report of the succession rules in Oyo, where the throne at this period does not appear normally to have passed from father to son: for discussion, cf. Law 1977, 66-7, 77-9.
170Cf. No.22 above. Oyo tradition confirms that the Alafin (kings) of Oyo were obliged to commit suicide if rejected by the Basorun (senior chief) in the name of the people (Johnson 1921, 70, 173). A succession of kings is said to have been removed in this way during the eighteenth century (ibid., 169-81), and in the period when Norris collected his information, effective power in Oyo had been usurped by the Basorun Gaha, who is said to have killed four successive kings (ibid., 178-81). The version of this passage in Dalzel 1793, 12-13, adds the details that the people’s disapproval of the king was ‘sometimes insidiously infused into them, by the artifice of his discontented ministers’ and that the
'An Account of the Forts belonging to the British and Forreign Nations on that part of Africa called Guinea', 30 Nov. 1773 (PRO: T.70/1532):

[William’s Fort, Whydah] ... is situated in the Kingdom of Whydah and opens a trade to the countries of Ardrah [Allada, i.e. Porto-Novo], Eppe [Ekpe], Lagos, Karam,171 Dahome, and Yaho, for Negroes and ivory.

De CHENEVERT & BULLET 1776, 3:172

Dada173 was a very old man when his life and reign came to an end; it appears that he had fallen into imbecility; for six years he had neglected all sorts of business; this neglect had passed to his ministers, there was disorder in the finances, in the army, in trade; the result was that his trading partners in the interior, who had been used to choose his court as the entrepot for the Blacks which they brought to sell, no longer finding at his place the goods which he had been accustomed to give them in exchange, took measures according to their circumstances, and established other relations, especially with the Ayaux, through the medium of whom they transmitted to Epee [Ekpe], Portenove [Porto-Novos] and Badagri all the slaves who previously came to be sold at the village of Glegoi [Glehue].174

deputation gave him ‘a present of parrot’s eggs, as mark of its authenticity’; these details may derive from the report of an abortive attempt to depose the king in 1774, recorded in No.30 below.

171 i.e. Kuramo, another name for Lagos.
172 The material cited here is also copied in the published account of Labarthe 1803, 116.
173 i.e. Tegbesu (1740-74); in the published version by Labarthe 1803, 116, the context suggests that the king concerned was Tegbesu’s predecessor Agaja (d.1740), and this error is reproduced by Law 1977, 221.
174 For the supply of slaves from Oyo to these ports, see further Nos 31, 35, 38, 41, 45, 46a, 55g, 57, 59, and 61f below. The wording here implies that many if not most of the slaves sold by Oyo came from further inland; cf. references to slaves from Nupe and Bariba in Nos 41 and 45a.
About the time of Adahoonzou’s accession, the ministers of the King of Eyeo, being tired of his government, had attempted, as had been their usual practice, to depose their monarch in the manner which has been mentioned... But this Prince had the good sense to despise, and the fortitude to resist, such a ridiculous custom. He, therefore, peremptorily refused the parrot’s eggs, which had been offered for his acceptance: telling his ministers that he had as yet no inclination to take a nap, but that he was resolved to watch for the benefit of his people.

The ministers were extremely disappointed and astonished at this unexpected contempt of a political custom, the abolition of which must destroy their power: they endeavoured, therefore, to effect by force, what they could not accomplish by this stale trick. Ochenoo, the prime minister, put himself at the head of the rebel party, which, though formidable, was soon defeated by the adherents of the Sovereign, with great slaughter. Ochenoo himself, with all his numerous family, were put to death by the victors; who did not even spare the pregnant women, but ripped open their bellies, and cut to pieces the immature fruit of their womb. Thus, by his spirited conduct, the King of Eyeo emancipated himself from the tyranny of his ministers, and established a remarkable precedent to direct his successors on similar occasions.

Upon the re-establishment of his authority, after this event, Adahoonzou sent an embassy of congratulation to the King of Eyeo, who bestowed upon him the following proverbial name: Yee ma sa hoo beate cofru gloh; an elephant cannot shelter himself under the swish-pots: intimating, it would seem, that it was as difficult to conceal the accomplishments of Adahoonzou, as to hide an elephant in so small a place. This appellation was proclaimed, for two months, in all the market-places of Dahomy, and in the different adjacent friendly towns.

De CHENEVERT & BULLET 1776:

175 The earlier parts of Dalzel’s history of Dahomey are based on published sources, including especially Snelgrave (1734) and Norris (1789), but his account of the period 1774-90, including this and all subsequently cited passages (except No.50b), is based upon a manuscript (no longer extant) written by Lionel Abson, Governor of the British fort at Whydah in 1770-1803.
176 i.e. Kpengla, who succeeded as King of Dahomey in May 1774.
177 Cf. No.27 with n.169 above.
178 Dalzel (1793, 13) described the parrot’s eggs as ‘a mark of authenticity’ of the delegation to the king; but comparison with Clapperton 1829, 49, suggests that they were rather receptacles for poison which the king was expected to take.
179 Osorun, a shorter form of Basorun, the title of the senior chief in Oyo after the king.
180 Evidently referring to the overthrow of Basorun Gaha by Alafin Abiodun, recorded in Oyo traditions (Johnson 1921, 182-4); Gaha had been the effective ruler of Oyo apparently since 1754 (cf. above, No.22 with n.153).
a) [pp.5-6, on Dahomian military weakness] ... it is nevertheless in these difficult circumstances that their king Adamouzou[^181] makes the greatest boasts. The weaker he is the more he threatens; so he ceremoniously announces that he proposes to furnish the trade at Glegoi with his own troops alone, without acting as broker or buying captives from the interior nations;[^182] such a project, strictly carried out, would ruin the most powerful sovereign, because he would stir up against himself all his neighbours who would unite to destroy him. He proposes besides to throw off the yoke of the king of the Ayaux to whom he is tributary;[^183] and this king who holds the balance of peace can, it is said, put to field 20,000 cavalry, without counting infantry, which is probably an exaggeration, but certainly he is very powerful ... It is the Ayaux who furnish the slaves to Badagri, Porte Nove, Epee [Ekpe] and even here [i.e. at Whydah]; they bring them to a large village called Beaumé Clavier [Abomey-Calavi], a neutral place, 20 leagues [60 miles] north-east of our forts; this place is a sort of free fair, where the different nations resort to trade;[^184] it is the Ayaux who currently hold the key to trade, and through whose hands pass the greater part of the slaves who are sold on this coast, they extend far into the interior and, in consequence, have many neighbours with whom they have relations: they are nevertheless tributary to the Tapas,[^185] as the Tapas are to the Barbas [Bariba], and the latter perhaps to some other nation ...[^186]

b) [pp.41-2][^187] This kingdom [Dahomey] is bounded on the south by that of Juda, on the east by the country of the Mahis of which they hold some districts. This Mahi people is very extensive, it is divided into small republics; they are a mountain people, warlike, bold, and also wicked, as is seen by the slaves which come from there; they are enemies of the Dahomets and have thrown off the yoke of the Ayaux to whom they were tributary;[^188] they live in the high lands between

[^181]: i.e. Kpengla, who had succeeded to the Dahomian throne in 1774.
[^182]: This plan was clearly not immediately implemented, since next year slaves were still being sent from Oyo for sale through Dahomey (No.33 below); by 1786, however, Dahomey had reportedly been closed to Oyo traders (No.42 below). For the context, see further Law 1989b, 54-7.
[^183]: As far as is known, Kpengla never in fact attempted rebellion against Oyo, although towards the end of his reign he defied Oyo sufficiently to provoke the threat of an Oyo attack (cf. below Nos 44, 46, 48 and 49b below).
[^184]: Abomey-Calavi is situated on the western shore of Lake Nokue; slaves from Oyo were presumably brought there by canoe through the lagoons, having first been brought overland to Badagry or Porto-Novo.
[^185]: Tapa, the usual Yoruba name for the Nupe, the immediate north-eastern neighbours of Oyo: for later references to Oyo subjection to Nupe at this time, cf. below Nos. 50a and 52.
[^186]: The Bariba (of Borgu) were the north-western neighbours of Oyo. For Bariba power in this period, cf. No.38 below, reporting a defeat of Oyo in 1783. There is no corroboration, however, that the Nupe were tributary to the Bariba at this time, and this may be no more than speculation (cf. No.20, with n.151 above).
[^187]: A version of this passage is also included in Labarthe 1803, 104-5.
[^188]: No earlier source confirms that the Mahi were subject to Oyo. Oyo power was presumably re-asserted, after the rebellion reported here, by the successful expedition of
the kingdom of Dahomet and that of the Ayaux.

These last are a brave, numerous and very extensive people; the Dahomets owe them tribute; their sway stretches as far as 20 leagues [60 miles] to the N.E. of Glegoi,\textsuperscript{189} their country is rich and fertile, the sheep which come from it are a third taller than those of Flanders, they have excellent horses,\textsuperscript{190} provisions in abundance; the tokens of exchange appear rare among them, as for a cowry, which is worth here a fifth of a farthing [liard], one can make a meal;\textsuperscript{191} it is they who furnish the major part of the slaves to this coast; they have flooded by preference towards Badagri, Epée and Portenove, because at present they are permitted to come themselves to trade as far as the sea-side;\textsuperscript{192} this arrangement will continue, if the divisions of Badagri do not drive them away ...\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{189}i.e. evidently to Abomey-Calavi, mentioned earlier as a frontier market between Dahomey and Oyo. The implication is that Oyo rule extended to the Nokue: presumably through Porto-Novo, which was explicitly reported to be under Oyo ‘protection’ in the following year (below No. 32).

\textsuperscript{190}For a fuller description of Oyo horses and sheep, cf. below No.61g.

\textsuperscript{191}The earliest contemporary evidence for the use of the cowry currency in Oyo; cf. also Nos.55h and 65a below. It is doubtful whether the assertion that a meal could be bought for a single cowry should be taken literally; certainly by 1826, prices were higher than this implies, a single yam then costing 40 cowries (Clapperton 1829, 59).

\textsuperscript{192}Whereas in Dahomey, as implied earlier, Oyo traders had to sell their slaves to the Dahomians at the frontier market of Abomey-Calavi.

\textsuperscript{193}An allusion to internal rivalries among the chiefs of Badagry; by 1780, perhaps as a result of these, Oyo had diverted all its trade through Porto-Novo (cf. below, No.35). Presumably, against the threat of attack from Dahomey; Dahomian forces had raided Porto-Novo in 1763 (PRO: T.70/1159, Day Book, William's Fort, Whydah, 3 Aug. 1763).
The Dahomets are in a state of weakness, which hardly permits them any longer to procure war captives ... If any of their powerful neighbours who surround them such as the Ayaux, to whom they pay tribute, attacks them, they will be incapable of resistance. Last year, there was little trade here for two obvious reasons: the first is that the ports of Badagris and above all Porte Nove were full of ships. There were nevertheless sufficient slaves in these two ports for a considerable quantity to flow back to this one, but the Dahomets having quarrels with the kings established on the roads which lead from Porte Nove and Badagris to Juda, the captives could not pass in safety. These disagreements being brought to an end about the month of March of this year, the Indies Company and other ships discharged some goods. The ports lower down having at that time few ships, the captives from Porte Nove and Badagris came in quite large quantities. The result of all this is that the Ayaux furnish the captives to Porte Nove, Badagris, Epee, and here, and the Dahomets nothing or next to nothing ...

DALZEL 1793, 175-6:

[On the death of the Mehu of Dahomey] The King of Dahomy, like the Grand Signior, is heir to all his subjects. On the death of any of his officers, their whole effects, of which their wives and children are considered to be a part, go to the King. The late Mayhou had been very long in office, and consequently was supposed to possess much property.

The Eyeo ambassadors, therefore, who happened to be in Dahomy, at the time of his death, thought this a good opportunity to increase the amount of the annual tribute, which they had been sent to receive. They made a demand of one hundred of the Mayhou’s women, which Adahounzou endeavoured to elude; but they insisted on his compliance, and, in peremptory terms, refused to return without them. The King, however reluctantly, was obliged to give them some of the women, in order to get rid of them.

Tributary states can never satisfy the avarice of the powers from whom they have been obliged to purchase peace by such a disgraceful acknowledgement. Three months after the departure of his ambassadors, a messenger arrived from the King of Eyeo, with a demand of the rest of the Mayhou’s women; accompanied with a threat, that, in case of non-compliance on the part of Dahomy, the Eyeo general Banchenoo should be sent to fetch them. Adahoonzou was mortified to the last degree at this haughty message: but

195 This incident is dated by Dalzel to 1781, but contemporary evidence shows that both the death of the Mehu and the campaign against Aguna alluded to here were in fact in 1779 (Akinjogbin 1967, 163 n.1).
196 i.e. the Basorun, the senior chief of Oyo; cf. ‘Ochenoo’, for Osorun, a shorter form of the same title, described as the ‘prime minister’ in No.30 above.
he was obliged to submit, without daring to shew his resentment. Not choosing, however, to part with the Dahoman women who had belonged to the Mayhou, he sent his army into the neighbouring country of Agoonah [Aguna], to procure wherewithal to satisfy the Eyeo monarch.

-35-
1780

Letter of Ollivier de Montaguère, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 30 Dec. 1780 (AN:C.6/26):

This place [Porto-Novo] is the one on the coast where almost all the trade is done, because the King of the Ailleaux, who is all-powerful in these parts, regards this country as his own, and does hardly anything in the other places.\footnote{This has made Juda decline greatly, the Dahomet king not being sufficiently powerful to be able to oblige it [i.e. Porto-Novo], as in the past, to bring its trade to him ...}

-36-
1781

Letter of Ollivier de Montaguère, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 24 Nov. 1781 (AN: C.6/26):

I take the liberty of warning ... of a quite considerable war of the peoples of Badagris, Onis [Lagos],\footnote{For the use of the name Onim (and other variants) for Lagos, cf. Verger 1959.} and the whole area of Benin, who have allied against the peoples of Portenauve [Porto-Novo] and Epee [Ekpe] through jealousy of their trade, have seized the sea-side, and by this means, have interrupted it [the trade] absolutely. Which obliges the ships to stop here [at Whydah]; this has restored to the trade of Juda its ancient splendour. If that continues, it is certain that this port will become the only one which will be worth any consideration, which is hardly to be expected, given the power of the king of the Ailleaux, who supports the people of Portenauve ...\footnote{In the event, the form which Oyo support took was to encourage Dahomian intervention against Badagry and its allies: cf. below Nos 39-40 and 49a.}

-37-
[1782]
DALZEL 1793, 170:

[Dahomian destruction of Ekpe, and flight of its king to Weme] Adahoonzou was much disappointed at the escape of the King of Apee [Ekpe], and would have certainly punished his protectors, had he not dreaded the resentment of the King of Eyeo, with whom the state of Weemey was then on a friendly footing ... 201

Letter of Lionel Abson, Governor of the English fort at Whydah, 26 Sept. 1783 (PRO: T.70/1545):

[on raising of prices of slaves at Whydah] To this pitch is Whydah already arrived and the reason is simple, the Ihos the nation he pays tribute to received 2 months agoe a total overthow from a country by name Barrabas [Bariba], having lost in the battle 11 umbrellas and the generals under them, these [i.e. the Oyo] were the people by [sic] whose excursions used to give life and commerce to Porto Novo and Badagree, now they have 8 ships at the latter & by letters received 3 days agoe from there nobody had purchased a single slave for better than 2 months. Porto Novo has 6 ships and none of them have purchased a slave in 3 months.

DALZEL 1793, 182-7:

About two months after the Customs, the King [of Dahomey] prepared for another campaign [sc. against Badagry]. The army encamped in the neighbourhood of Calmina [Cana], and was quickly joined by a numerous body of auxiliaries from the inland countries of Mahee and Nago. Thus augmented, the Agaow decamped, and marched in great force towards Badagree, conducted by guides, which had been provided by the King of Eyeo. He laid waste the whole

200 Dalzel dates this incident to 1779, but other contemporary accounts show that the destruction of Ekpe in fact occurred in 1782 (Law 1977, 177 n.181).
201 Cf. below, No.40, for the subsequent breakdown of friendship between Oyo and Weme (in 1786).
202 Probably alluding to a defeat by the southern Bariba town of Kaiama, recorded in Kaiama tradition (Duff 1920, 28).
203 Dahomey, in alliance with Porto-Novo, had unsuccessfully attacked Badagry in 1783.
204 It is clear from Dalzel’s account that the Dahomian force marched towards Badagry north of the coastal lagoon; they were therefore presumably passing through Oyo.
country in his progress, making many prisoners, which were immediately sent to
Eyeo, according to a treaty which had previously been entered into with that
Prince.

Having arrived in the vicinity of Badagree, he rested three days, and on
the 4th encamped with his numerous army ... Sessu [Zinsu], an Ardrah [Allada,
i.e. Porto-Novo] Cabocean,\textsuperscript{205} gave the Agaow assurances of a plentiful supply of
provisions during the investment of Badagree, although it should continue for
three years; as did likewise Kossu, a Nago chief, belonging to Eyeo.\textsuperscript{206} The
operations of the Dahoman army were directed by the Eyeo messengers, who had
conducted them hither; and nothing of importance was undertaken without their
compliance ...

[after the fall of Badagry] The most important prisoners were sent by the
Agaow to Adahoonzou, with a message, intimating, that he waited for orders.
The King soon returned an answer, instructing him to make the Ardrahs paddle
the army across the river, and to pursue his route homewards by the beach. The
reason for this manoeuvre was for some time kept a secret; but it was afterwards
known that the King of Eyeo, expecting the Agaow’s return by the same path in
which his messengers had conducted the army to Badagree, had sent a strong
force to intercept him, and bring the Dahomans, with all their plunder, to Eyeo.
The messengers, therefore, who had hitherto been their conductors, were
extremely astonished when the Agaow dismissed them and bid them make the
best of their way homewards.\textsuperscript{207}

DALZEL 1793, 191-2:

There were still several obstacles to prevent the execution of the design
which the King of Dahomy had formed against Ardrah [Allada, i.e. Porto-Novo];
the most important of which was the friendship of the King of Eyeo with the
latter, and the alliance of Wemey, a contiguous and respectable state. These
obstacles, however, Adahoonzou did his endeavour to surmount, in order to
accomplish his design, without being very scrupulous about the means. He sowed
the seeds of dissension between the allied states of Wemey and Ardrah, so
effectually as to produce a rupture ...

1786. Soon after this transaction, Wemey became obnoxious to the King

\textsuperscript{205} An exiled chief of Badagry, who after the destruction of this town by the Dahomians
in 1784 assumed authority there.

\textsuperscript{206} Not identified, but presumably in the Egbado area of the Oyo kingdom close to
Badagry.

\textsuperscript{207} The implication here of tension between Oyo and Dahomey contrasts with the account
given in Dahomian tradition, which claims that in gratitude for Dahomey’s assistance
against Badagry Oyo reduced its tribute by a half (although the original rate was
of Eyeo, on account of some of his trading-men having been way-laid and robbed, by a party belonging to that state. Upon this occasion, the King of Eyeo begged that Adaahoonzou might chastise them, as it was too far for him to send an army for that purpose. Nothing could be more acceptable to the King of Dahomy than this commission, as it exactly according with his own views ... [The Dahomians accordingly besieged and took Weme, in May to November 1786.]


Porte-Nove ... offers an astonishing quantity of captives, which may last a long time by reason of the great resources of this country, through its situation which places it in the middle of the largest peoples, like those of the Ayaux, Sabos [Sabe?] and Tapas [Tapa, i.e. Nupe] ... You see no slaves in this kingdom except those that have been stolen by the Ayaux and the King of Benin who borders them in a small area on the south ...

de Champagny, ‘Mémoire contenant des observations sur quelques points de la Côte de Guinée’, 6 Sept. 1786 (AN: C.6/26):

This Prince [of Dahomey] is nevertheless tributary to the King of a powerful nation, the Aios, further away from the sea, and who alone can set limits to his usurpations ... The King of the Dahomets ... has nowhise the spirit of commerce, he closes the entrance to his states to the Aios, who trade many slaves. It has gone so far that there is no more trade at Juda ...

[45]
[on the use of tamarind juice as a medicine] Unfortunately I had very little of this last in my possession, for the tree which produces it doesn’t exist at Owhère [Warri] or Benin; it had to be brought from the kingdom of the Ayeaux, more than three hundred leagues [900 miles] from the sea.\footnote{A French trader, who maintained a factory in the Benin River in the 1780s.}

This kingdom, situated in the interior of Africa, is powerful. Some blacks of this country came to see me; they knew how to write and calculate in Arabic.\footnote{A gross exaggeration: nearer 250-300 miles, depending on the route taken.} They showed no surprise on seeing the fort, our cannons, our muskets, our pistols, our sabres. They informed me, through the medium of their interpreter, that they possessed foundries for cannon and factories for all the weapons which I showed them; that boats came to their king’s residence, coming from very far, but by a different sea from the one where my vessel was.\footnote{Implying evidently that they were Muslims, and therefore constituting the earliest contemporary evidence for Islam in Oyo (or in Yorubaland more generally); tradition suggests that by the eighteenth century there was a significant Muslim community in Oyo, including both northern immigrants and indigenous Oyo converts (cf. Law 1977, 75-6, 206).} ... I presumed that the Ayeaux might be a colony of Moors, and that the vessels of which they spoke passed through the Mozambique channel or the Red Sea ... Having asked them how long they had taken to travel to my establishment, they replied ‘Three moons as far as Benin’ ....

The Beninians often talked about the Ayeaux with me; they told me that this people supplied them with finer goods than us, but that they were also much dearer. I did not doubt it; objects brought from so far on animals must incur an excess charge which we avoided.

Having questioned them on the motive of their coming to my establishment, I learned that having been sent by their king on political business to the king of Benin,\footnote{This account can hardly refer to Oyo; Ryder 1969, 224-5, suggests Hausaland, although the details seem more appropriate for North Africa. The implication may be that these were foreigners in Oyo service rather than natives of Oyo.} the latter had boasted much to them of my fort and its dependencies; [and] that being so little distance from this place, they hadn’t wanted to return to their country without taking the chance of seeing some whites, a sort of men, according to them, which until this day was totally unknown to them.

They passed two days in the fort. I made each of them a present of fine peace of Cholet cloth, together with a document containing my name and that of my nation, and also these words: French fort and establishment built at the mouth of the Benin or Formosa River, Coast of Africa. The stature of these negroes was handsome; their hair was not at all curled like that of the Africans who inhabit the coasts. An extreme vivacity shone in their countenances: they had a complexion almost like that of mulattoes. I would say that they were intermediate as regards colour between the latter and the blacks.\footnote{For diplomatic contacts between Oyo and Benin, cf. also Clapperton 1829, 41.} Their language had a great softness which made it very pleasant: all their words ended in a vowel.

\footnote{Cf. n.213 above.}
The King of Dahomey was excessively elated with his late success [sc. against Weme, 1786], and nothing but the want of Eyeo’s permission prevented him from attacking Ardrah [i.e. Porto-Novo], which now lay open before him. This permission, it was said, he had obtained, though in terms somewhat ambiguous: Eyeo having consented that Adahoonzou might repel any insult that might be offered by the King of Ardrah; but at the same time, strictly forbidding the commencement of hostilities, without leave first asked and obtained ... [The Dahomians nevertheless raided the beach at Porto-Novo] ... the king of Ardrah was highly irritated at this infraction of the alliance which had lately subsisted between the two kingdoms. He immediately dispatched ambassadors to the King of Eyeo, complaining of this unprovoked breach of friendship, which was followed by a message from that Prince, reprehending the conduct of Adahoonzou, in terms the most menacing and offensive, forbidding him ever to think of a hostile visit to Ardrah in future, and telling him, “That Ardrah was Eyeo’s callabash, out of which nobody should be permitted to eat but himself”.218

The King of Dahomy was thunderstruck at this message, which, however, he durst not resent, but was obliged to appease his irritated master, by dividing with him his late ill-gotten spoil.

Nor was this all: for so great was his dread of Eyeo’s resentment, that for many months afterwards, whenever any warlike preparations were made by that monarch, Adahoonzou was under the greatest apprehension that the kingdom of Dahomey would feel the effects of his vengeance.219

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a) de la Flotte, ‘Situation de la Côte d’Afrique’, 1787 (AN: C.6/26): 220

[On a proposal to establish a French factory at Porto-Novo] The establishment at Ardres will equally open to us the trade with the Kingdoms of Barbar [Bariba], Tappar [Tapa], Guyavais [Sabe?], Katou [Ketu], and the

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217 Dalzel dates this incident to 1786, but other contemporary reports show that the raid on Porto-Novo actually occurred in 1787 (Akinjogbin 1967, 170).
218 For similar warnings in 1789 and 1806, cf. Nos 48 and 58 below. In 1791, however, Oyo permitted a Dahomian raid on Porto-Novo: cf. No.53 below.
219 Cf. No.46 below.
220 Also incorporated into Labarthe 1803, 163.
Alliots ...  

b) LABARTHE 1803, 163-4:  

Porte-Nove is part of the kingdom of Ardres, it is the mart for the trade of the Alliots, the Nagots, the Mahis, the country of Amdé, and that of Aya ... The slave merchants go there in greater numbers since the road to Juda is forbidden to them ...  

[on the projected French factory at Porto-Novo] In case the king of the Dahomets should seek to oppose the erection of a fort, he will find in the king of the Alliots an obstacle against which his efforts would be powerless: one must suppose that the latter has the greatest interest in protecting the trade which he does at Porte-Nove.

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1788

a) Letters of Gourg, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 24 Jan. & 16 July 1788 (AN: C.6/26):

[24 Jan. 1788] Mr Abson ... told me that it is being said publicly at Portenove that the Alliots, a nation far distant in the interior which furnishes nearly all the captives which are sold at Portenove and Badagris, are to come to make war this year on the Dahomet King, despite the alliance which prevails between the two Kings, the Dahomet King being tributary to the King of the Alliots ...

[16 July 1788] I have had the honour by my letter of 26 May last to report to you an expedition which the Blacks [of Dahomey] made, and which I thought was against the Mahis who had escaped from the blades of the Alliots. It was

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Cf. No.41 above.

Labarthe’s book is essentially an account of a voyage to Whydah in 1788, but incorporates material from manuscript sources, including the account of De Chenevert and Bullet quoted above (Nos 14b, 29 and 31b); his account of Porto-Novo, which he apparently did not visit, is based on various documents, including the account of de la Flotte cited above (No.45a), and other sources not traced; the material from de la Flotte is omitted here.

Not identified.

Presumably ‘Aya’ as well as ‘Alliots’ here represents Oyo, the duplication being due to the combination of material from different sources.

Cf. No.42 above.

Governor of the British fort at Whydah (cf. above, n.174).

As shown in Nos 46b-c below, the Dahomians themselves were apprehensive of the possibility of such an attack; but in fact, the Oyo attacked the Mahi rather than Dahomey.

For this campaign, see Nos 46b-c below.

[48]
not against the Mahis, Sir, that the Dahomets went, but against the Nagots ... 229

b) NORRIS 1789, 138-9:230

The Eyos are even now engaged in hostilities against the Mahees [Mahi], with the usual fury of savages. At the commencement of the last periodical rains (in May 1788) they had ravaged no less than fourteen districts; and, burning and destroying multitudes of towns and villages, continued their progress with such devastation and horror, that the tyrant of Dahomy was not without violent apprehensions for his own safety ... 231

c) DALZEL 1793, 196, 198-9:

[on Dahomian fears of an Oyo attack, following the raid on Porto-Novo in 1787] This impression continued to disturb the Dahomans for a considerable time afterwards; so that on the following year, 1787 [sic: = 1788], when the King of Eyeo made some movements towards the Mahee country, Adahoonzou was so much alarmed, that he set all his people to work, to barricade and secure the halls of his different palaces, that he might in case of attack, have some places of security, in which he might hide himself ...

[after the Customs of 1788] The Eyeo army was still in the field; and the panic, occasioned by the apprehension of a hostile visit, continued to disturb the Dahomans; so that no enterprise was thought of, till it was known that the Eyeos were on their march homewards, which happened a considerable time afterwards ...

-47-
1788

DALZEL 1793, 205:

[Dahomian expedition against Croo-too-hoon-too]232 ... Upon the return of the Agaow from the expedition against Croo-too-hoon-too, the Eyeo messengers being then at Calmina,233 the King did not choose to communicate to them the success of his arms, lest they should make a demand of the spoil for the

229 i.e. the attack on Croootoohoonto, recorded in No.47 below.
230 From an appendix to Norris’s history of Tegbesu, which unlike the main text was evidently not written in 1773, but at the time of publication in 1789.
231 Presumably in belated response to the ‘revolt’ of the Mahis reported some years earlier (No.31b above). For further military action against the Mahi, cf. also No.64b below.
232 Not identified, but this seems to be the campaign against the Nago, or Yoruba, recorded in No.46a above.
233 i.e. to collect the annual tribute, which was paid at Cana (cf. No.19d above)
use of their master. For it had been usual for them, on the eve of the return of the Dahomans from any victory, to covet every thing they saw in Dahomy that was curious or valuable. The King, therefore, had directed the Agaow to proceed to Abomey, and deposit his plunder there; and in the meantime Adahoonzou hastened to dismiss the Eyeo ambassadors.

Letters of Gourg, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 28 Feb. & 7 March 1789 (AN: C.6/26):

[28 Feb. 1789] [after reporting a Dahomian expedition, initially thought to be directed at Porto-Novo, but which in fact went against the ‘Nagots’ 235] … It turns out, according to a letter written by Pierre, secretary of the King of Ardre, 236 to Mr Mary capain of the ship La Musette, which he has communicated to me … that the King of Ardres has sent a message to the King of the Alliots, for Pierre remarks that they [i.e. the people of Ardres] are calm and that the Dahomets would not dare go to their country nor to the beach, and that if they set out for the least violence, the King of the Alliots, to whom he says they belong, will make war on them. 237

[7 March 1789] Mr Rodrigue, officer on the ship La Musette of Nantes commanded by Mr Mary, who was at Portenove at the time of the expedition of the Dahomets, has reported to me that they came one night to four leagues [12 miles] from Ardre … I believe that the surest means of reducing the Dahomets, who are too warlike, would be for no trade at all to come this region for two or three years, the Dahomet King would then be unable to meet the tributes which he pays annually to the Alliots and would be forced to reconcile himself with them [i.e. Porto-Novo] and abandon his claims. This same officer has reported to me that the people of Ardre were saying publicly that in two years they will come to make war on the Dahomets so as to render them incapable of undertaking anything for a long time. I think that they will join with the Alliots, because this nation is in the habit of only making expeditions every three years, 238 and having made one last year, 239 it will be the army of the Alliots that they will bring out.

234 The second of these letters was not included in the original (1992) version of this collection.
235 i.e. against the western Yoruba kingdom of Ketu, as recorded by Dalzel 1793, 201-2.
236 A slave-trader of African origin settled at Porto-Novo (cf. No.55b below).
237 A repetition of the threat made directly to Dahomey in 1787 (above No.44); yet in 1791, Oyo permitted a Dahomian attack on Porto-Novo (below No.53).
238 Perhaps a literal translation of the indigenous African idiom of inclusive reckoning, and therefore corresponding to ‘every second year’ by normal European usage. Oyo tradition confirms that the Alafin at this period sent out military expeditions ‘every other year’ (Johnson 1921, 131, 187).
239_i.e. against the Mahi (cf. above No.46).
A Portuguese officer who is trading at Portenauve for his ship which is stationed here has written to his captain that the Dahomets have been stopped on their way by the army of the Alliots who told them that, if they went to the country of any of their friends, they will have to deal with two, because they were there to defend them. Although this news seems to me apocryphal, I nevertheless believe that there is something in it, for the Dahomets appear very downcast.

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DALZEL 1793:240

[1784-9]

DALZEL 1793:240

a) [pp.206-7] Although Adahoonzou possessed a great share of personal courage, he appears to have been remarkably deficient in every other endowment requisite for the government of a great kingdom. His bravery, and enterprising spirit, served only to point him out as the fit engine for accomplishing the wishes of his more politic and formidable neighbour and master, the King of Eyeo.241

This remark will account for the conquests which the King of Dahomy had been permitted to make, without the interruption or interference of Eyeo. Ardrah had been the tool, by whose instigation Adahoonzou had been prompted to harass his neighbours; and Eyeo got the major part of the spoil that had been acquired by Adahoonzou’s victories.

The King of Dahomy was made to believe, that the whole trade of the Europeans was to center at Whydah, and that all the slaves who were brought to Ardrah, should be sent to Grigwhee [Glehue] for sale. This turned out to be a scandalous imposition: for the King of Ardrah soon stopped all communication with Whydah. The messengers from Porto Novo were no longer seen at the King of Dahomy’s Customs; and the Dahoman traders, who had been accustomed to visit Ardrah, were no more allowed that liberty.

The excursion of the Dahomans to Porto Novo beach, therefore, is not to be wondered at; and Ardrah would most probably have received a more severe chastisement, but for the interference of Eyeo.242

Adahoonzou was extremely exasperated at having been made the dupe of the people of Ardrah, and left no method untried to set Eyeo against them; but they were too rich, and constantly defeated Dahomy’s designs, by heaping a profusion of presents on the King of Eyeo.243 Porto Novo road was seldom without seven or eight large French ships, and the richest European commodities were continually passing from thence, to be presented to the King of Eyeo, a very close-fisted and shrewd monarch.

240 The incidents recounted here are not precisely dated by Dalzel, but appear to relate to the latter years of King Kpengla (1774-89).

241 Cf. the campaigns against Badagry in 1784 (in alliance with Oyo) and Weme in 1786 (at the request of Oyo), recorded in Nos 39-40 above.

242 Cf. No.44 above.

243 Another account of this period refers to ‘tribute’ paid by Porto-Novou to Oyo (below, No.55a); presumably Porto-Novou affected to regard these payments as voluntary gifts, while Oyo regarded them as an acknowledgement of sovereignty.
b) [pp.208-9] A woman named Paussie, who lived under the protection of the French fort [i.e. at Whydah], and had acquired considerable property by trade, to the amount of seventy slaves, and upwards, had insinuated herself into the good graces of Mons. Olivier, the former governor of the French fort at Grigwhee, by her dexterity in her profession.

This woman used to follow her husband, who was also a considerable trader, to Dahomy, where she made many friends, and among others, some of the Eyeo nation. Olivier, who was possessed of some valuable coral, which he could not dispose of at Grigwhee for the price it merited, had employed Paussie to sell it for him; and she accordingly had disposed of it to the Eyeo messengers, at an extravagant price ...

The Eyeo messengers having carried the coral to their own country, it somehow fell into the hands of their King, and of consequence produced an enquiry, how it had been obtained. Now it seems, coral had formed no part of the tribute which had lately been paid by the King of Dahomy; upon the plea, that for a long while there had been none to be found in the country, as there had been no ships in Whydah for a considerable time.

The King of Eyeo sent a special messenger to the Dahoman Monarch, to reprehend him for the supposed subterfuge, and to shew him the coral which had been purchased in his country; informing him at the same time, that Adahoonzou knew he held his dominions no longer than whilst he regularly paid his tribute; and when he neglected that, Dahomy belonged to Eyeo.

This message was mortifying to Adahoonzou, who resolved to make a severe example of those who had been the occasion of it. A strict enquiry was immediately set on foot; and the disposer of the coral, together with her husband, were soon apprehended. The latter was sold, and died on board a ship in Whydah road. The woman was carried up to Dahomy, where, it was said by some, that she had been chopped in pieces; though others affirmed, that the King of Eyeo had interfered, and saved her life.

244 This seems to imply that at the time this incident occurred, Oyo traders could operate in Dahomey; contrast the report in 1786, of the closing of Dahomey to Oyo traders (above, No.42).

245 i.e. those sent to collect the annual tribute (cf. e.g. Nos 23, 25, and 34 above).

246 The arrest of this woman is also alluded to in records of the French fort, where her name is given as ‘Poissy’: see Interrogation of Joseph Le Beau, 10 Sept. 1787 (AN, C6/26), who deposed that she was arrested ‘because she sold large coral and iron to the Ayaux’.

247 Again, this was presumably before the closure of Dahomey to Oyo traders in 1786, reported in No.42 above.

c) [p.213] In consequence of the failure of some of his expeditions, the King took it into his head, that it was owing to the intrigues of aliens residing in his dominions. He therefore ordered the Gong-gong to be beaten, giving warning to all strangers, Eyeos excepted, immediately to quit the kingdom: alleging, that whenever any expedition was on foot, his designs were by them communicated to the enemy ...
The borderers on this kingdom [Dahomy] are the Eyos or Eyoes on the eastern side, between Dahomy and Benin; the Mahees, on the western; and the Tappas, whose country lies contiguous to the Eyos. The latter are a very spirited nation, and first gave a check to the ambitions of Guadja Trudo. Their form of government is not very different from that of Dahomy, from which their despot, until very lately, exacted a yearly tribute for many years, as the price of peace. They cultivate cotton, and a species of grass, and manufacture both into clothing, for the use of the natives. Their traders deal likewise in slaves, which are disposed of by the factors of Dahomy.

Of the Tappas, but little is known. This nation, however, must have acquired considerable importance, as they drew a regular tribute from the Eyos.

... the King [of Dahomey] pays a considerable yearly tribute, in cowries and merchandise, to his formidable neighbour the King of Eyoe, part of which is defrayed from the contributions levied upon those states which are tributary to Dahomey.
I have the honour to advise you that the King of the Ailliots died almost at the same time as the Dahomet King and even some time before, that is to say in April last. I had forgotten, My Lord, to inform you of it.

DALZEL 1793, 229:

A transaction happened about this period, which is worthy notice. Eyeo, powerful as we have seen it, appears to be tributary to a neighbouring and more powerful Prince, called Tappah [Tapa, i.e. Nupe], of whose history little is known. The King of Eyeo, desirous, it seems, to throw off the yoke, had ordered the buffalo’s hide to be twice trodden, in order to give Tappah a hearty drubbing. His army, however, numerous as it was, met with a complete overthrow, and was under the necessity of submitting to the victor’s own terms, having lost thirteen umbrellas in the action.

Letter of Denyau de la Garenne, Director of the French fort at Whydah, 2 March 1791 (AN: C.6/27):

I learned, My Lord, when I was in Beaumé [Abomey], that the Dahomet King had obtained permission from the King of the Ayaux to make war on the King of Ardres and that it was to take place after the Customs ...

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257 Referring to King Kpengla of Dahomey. The Oyo king involved must be Abiodun, who had assumed effective power in 1774 (cf. No.30 with n.179 above). For the chronology of Oyo history, including discussion of this evidence for the date of Abiodun’s death, see further Akinjogbin 1966b; Law 1970.

258 Cf. above, Nos 31a and 50a.

259 i.e. to raise an army twice the normal size (cf. No.19d above).

260 i.e. 13 generals (cf. No.38 above); for the context of this war from the Nupe perspective, cf. Mason 1981, 16.

261 Dahomey did indeed raid Porto-Novos beach, though not until several months later, in September (AN: C.6/27, Denyau de la Garenne, 30 Sept. 1791). The reason for this reversal of Oyo’s earlier policy of protecting Porto-Novos (above, Nos 44 and 48) is not known, but it appears to have been only temporary: cf. below, No.58).
PIRES 1957:262

[On the payment of tribute by Dahomey to Oyo] Nevertheless I believe it is more for prestige than for necessity, since this Potentate Dahomé is at present quite equal with that of the Aionos.263 Note that every six months there arrive at Dahomé two ambassadors of the Aionos to receive the tribute,264 who, apart from the reception of this tax, get 200 buzios [i.e. cowries], the money of the country, which is each worth 2 milreis of our [Portuguese] money ... They received further into their hands two cows, so that, despite the great distance between the residence of [the King of] Dahomé and the confines of the Aionos, the two ambassadors of the Aionos live as normal in Dahomé.

-55-
[1786-1800]

ADAMS 1823:265

a) [pp.78-9] Outside and parallel with the wall [of Ardrah, i.e. Porto-Novo], at the north-west extremity of the town, is the road which leads to Hio, a country of great extent, and inhabited by a powerful and warlike nation; the capital of which, according to the natives’ account, lies about NNE. from Ardrah, at the distance of nine days’ journey, or 180 miles, allowing a traveller to proceed at the rate of twenty miles a day.266

To the King of Hio the Ardrah people pay tribute,267 as he protects them from the incursions of the Dahomians, whose king has always been very jealous of their rivalry in trade.

b) [pp.82-7] The most wealthy man in the town [of Porto-Novo] is Tammata, but who is better known by his European name, Monsieur Pierre.268 He is a native of Housa [Hausa], and was originally a slave and taken to France by

262 Cf. n.107 above.
263 For contradictory assessments of the balance of power between Oyo and Dahomé a few years later, cf. Nos 56 and 61e below.
264 Cf. n.112 above.
265 A British former slave-trader, but writing after the abolition of the slave trade and with a view to the development of alternative forms of trade: although published in 1823, Adams’ account is based mainly on his observations during several voyages to West Africa between 1786 and 1800.
266 A reasonably accurate estimate; cf. also below, No.61f, giving an estimate of seven days. But cf. also No.64a, with n.324, below, for higher figures.
267 Cf. n.242 above. Clapperton in 1826 still described ‘Ardrah’, i.e. Porto-Novo, as a tributary of Oyo (1829, 56).
268 For this man, cf. No.48 above; the details given by Adams illustrate the importance of contacts with the Oyo for a man in his position.
the master of a French vessel, when very young ... Speaking the Hausa, Eyeo, and
French languages, his business (that of a slave merchant) became very
extensive ... he eats food] well buttered with palm oil, and wherein potash is
mixed in lieu of salt, and which seasoning is commonly used as a substitute for
salt by the natives of Ardrah, Hausa, and Eyeo.269
... Among his European acquirements, that of blowing the French horn
was his favorite, as he generally gave a few flourishes upon it every evening,
especially when any traders belonging to Hio had arrived from that kingdom,
before whom he was very proud of exhibiting his skill ...

c) [p.89] [Porto-Novo market] There are also exhibited for sale, cloth from
Eyeo270 and Jaboo [Ijebu] ... [etc.] ...

d) [p.91] A great number of cattle are kept by the natives of Ardrah, the milk
of which is consumed by the black musulmans271 and European residents. Horses
are also very numerous, well broken, and tractable; and the natives, especially
those of Hio, manage them with considerable address. The use of milk, and the
management of horses, there is little doubt, have been originally taught by the
Moors to the natives of Hausa and Hio, and, by them, to the inhabitants of
Ardrah ...

e) [pp.92-4] The Hios are a fine race of people, and are well skilled both in
agriculture and in manufacturing articles for domestic purposes. The country
which they inhabit is of great extent, being bordered on the north-east by Hausa,
on the south-west by Dahomy, and the influence of its government extends to the
south as far as the sea by way of Ardrah.

If we are to believe the accounts of the natives, the king of Hio has an
organized army amounting to 100,000 men,272 composed of infantry, and cavalry;
but the natives of Africa are so prone to exaggerate every circumstance connected
with the nation to which they individually belong, that it is very difficult to
ascertain the truth, particularly as connected with the population of a town, the
numerical force of an army, or the extent of a kingdom.

I heard of but one white man, who had ever been at the capital of Hio,
and he was a French officer belonging to a slave ship.273 He certainly stated the

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269 However, real salt (extracted by evaporation from sea water at the coast) was also
imported into Oyo: cf. No.2 with n.19 above.
270 For Oyo cloth, cf. also No. 55e below. Clapperton in 1825/6 reported that ‘a
considerable quantity of cloth is made, and bartered with the people of the coast’ (1829,
57).
271 Elsewhere, Adams observes that ‘many persons’ in Porto-Novo were Muslims (1823,
78); Porto-Novo traditions suggest the Muslim community there in the late eighteenth
century were Yoruba immigrants, presumably reflecting the importance of commercial
links with Oyo (cf. Law 1986b, 109).
272 Cf. Nos 10c and 23 above.
273 There is no other record of this alleged visit to Oyo. Note that Clapperton in 1826 was
given by the King of Oyo to understand that he was the first white man to go there:
population to be considerable, but by no means equal to what he had been taught 
to expect; and the army, as an African army, as far as he could judge, he thought 
to be a tolerably efficient one. A part of it was marshalled before him, and he 
strongly suspected that several of the corps were passed in review more than 
one, as corps which he had not seen. This was a political stratagem that would 
hardly have been expected from an African savage; but the Frenchman had no 
doubt of the fact.

He was treated by the king while in Hio, with great distinction, although 
he thought himself closely watched. He was absent nearly a month, and described 
the country over which he passed, as level, wild, uncultivated, and possessing but 
a scanty population. 274

The cloth manufactured in Hio is superior, both for variety of pattern, 
color, and dimensions, to any made in the neighbouring states; and some of the 
articles wrought by them in iron exhibit much skill and industry. It surprised me to 
find the Hio women as well as those of Hausa acquainted with the taste of cheese, 
as well as the mode of making it, which they described, and which left no doubt in 
my mind that it was an article of domestic consumption in these countries. 275

The Hios are extremely black and muscular, and generally above the 
middle size; in disposition they are mild, docile, and submissive. Their country 
mark on the face consists of three short cuts, each about one and a half inch long, 
running obliquely on each side of the mouth. 276

f) [p.186] But few horses are to be seen near the coast, except at Ardrah, to 
which place they are brought from Hio. They are small sprightly animals, and 
indigenous to the country.

g) [pp.218-22] Lagos only rose into importance as a place of trade, when the 
European war and the revolution in France prevented the slave-ships belonging to 
France carrying on their usual trade at Ardrah; 277 and the latter place derived its 
consequence from the king of Dahomy monopolizing the trade in slaves in his 
own dominions, which proving extremely injurious to the interests of both the

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274 Contrast the impressions of Clapperton in 1825/6, describing the country towards 
Oyo as ‘well planted and thickly inhabited … full of large towns’ (1829, 24, 27); 
Richard Lander observed that ‘the further we penetrated into the country, the more dense 
we found the population to be’ (1830, I 95).

275 ‘neither himself, nor his father, nor any of his ancestors had ever seen one’ (1829, 39).

276 Unlike the earlier accounts of Sandoval and Des Marchais (above Nos 1c and 5a), 
this account does seem to describe the abaja marks later characteristic of the Oyo (cf. 
Johnson 1921, 104-7). Cf. also Lander 1830, II 218 (though the illustration there shows 
eight rather than three parallel marks).

277 Alluding to the outbreak of war between Britain and France (1793) and the French 
abolition of slavery and the slave-trade (1794); although the latter was reversed by 
Napoleon in 1802, the French slave trade did not fully recover.
white and black traders, drove them to the expedient of seeking another market. Ardrah became the refuge of the Wydah traders, and the king of Hio, who is much more powerful than the monarch of Dahomy, placed it under his immediate protection, which created a degree of confidence in those traders, that rendered its trade very extensive ...

The negroes obtained ... at Ardrah were natives belonging to Hio, Housa, Dahomy, Mahee, and Ardrah ...

I have little doubt that the Niger might be visited by way of Ardrah and Hio, with less personal risk to the traveller, from the natives, than by any other route we are at present acquainted with. Horses are to be obtained at Ardrah, and also natives who understand both the Hio and French languages.

Many of the slaves of the Housa nation, with whom I have conversed, both at Ardrah and Lagos, and also on board of vessels slaving there, have invariably stated, that they travelled on foot from their own country through that of Hio ...

Slaves of the Housa nation are brought to Ardrah by the Hio traders, and then sold, either to European or black traders, belonging to Lagos and Badagry ...

h) [p.262-4] [on trade goods suitable for the West African trade] South American, or Brazil, Tobacco ... This tobacco is preferred in Ashantee, Dahomy, Hio, Housa, Jaboo, Lagos, and Benin, to every other kind ...

Cowries. Are shells brought to Europe from the Maldive islands in the East Indies, and are always in great demand at Wydah, Ardrah, and Lagos, at which places they are not only the medium of exchange, but from whence they are also sent to Dahomy, Hio, Housa, Jaboo, and into the very heart of North Africa, where it is known that they are the circulating currency.

-56-
[1803]

M’LEOD 1820, 106:280

Dahomey, about a century ago, one of the most powerful and flourishing of the African nations, ... is now much fallen; not only from the loss of its trade, but it has also been extremely humbled by unsuccessful wars with the Eyoes and

278 The slave trade in Dahomey was not normally a royal monopoly, but King Kpengla in the 1780s did attempt to establish one, which drove traders away from Dahomey (Dalzel 1793, 213-4; also Law 1989b, 56-7); cf. also the report in 1786 that Dahomey had been closed to Oyo traders (No.42 above).
279 For the export of Hausa slaves through Oyo, cf. also No.62 below. Accounts in the 1780s, while mentioning the supply of slaves from Nupe and Bariba, had not mentioned Hausaland as a source (above Nos 41 and 45a); possibly the large-scale trade in Hausa slaves to the coast was an innovation of the 1790s (cf. Law 1977, 227).
280 A British slave-trader; although published in 1820, M’Leod’s work mainly describes a visit to Whydah in 1803.
Ashantees.281


... this is the port where there is the greatest abundance of captives; the Ayos and Males282 bring them here, as Your Highness can verify in the town of Bahia if it is true or not ...


If nevertheless ships come to trade they can go to Aunis [Lagos] or to Portenauve [Porto-Novo] without fear because the King of the Aiots has forbidden the King of Daumai to go any more to the beach or Portenauve, otherwise he will march on his country here, the latter is afraid ...


Trade in the port of Onim [Lagos] is a consequence of the wars between Dagomé and the King of Porto-Novo,284 and the lack of faithfulness which the inhabitants of Ape [Ekpe] and Badagry showed during the time of the disensions in their contracts with the inhabitants of the interior empire of Ayono and other

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281 The wording seems to imply wars between Oyo and Dahomey more recent than those in the 1720s and 1740s; cf. also No.61e with n.298 below. Some Dahomian traditions recall an unsuccessful revolt against Oyo under King Agonglo (1789-97), which may be referred to here (Dunglas 1957-8, II 31-2; for discussion cf. Law 1977, 268-9). The reference to wars with Asante is also puzzling; as has been seen above (No.24, n.161) Dahomey may have been allied with Oyo in a war against Asante in 1764, but on that occasion the Asante were defeated.

282 i.e. Imale, the normal Yoruba term for Muslims; these may have been either Oyo Muslims (cf. n.212 above), or from Muslim countries inland from Oyo (cf. the reference to Hausa merchants going to Lagos in No.63 below).


284 Cf. n.282 above.
potentates. The latter now poured back into Onim and, because of a lack of slaves in the other ports, forced our ships to go down along the coast to the said port.

Day Book, William’s Fort, Whydah, 1808 (PRO: T.70/1163):

10 March 1808. [payment to] Messenger from Abomey come to acquaint me the King had dispatched the Iah Embassadors.285

ROBERTSON 1819:286

a) [p.181] There are good grounds for believing that the influence of the Ashantee government extends to the eastward as far as Eyo and Filanee [Fulani]. The Dahomians admit, that the former of these nations sometimes pays tribute to Ashantee ... 287

b) [pp.207-8] Much respect is shown to the traders of the interior, who frequent the places of trade on the coast. Indeed, the Eyoos, who come down to Allada (Ardra) [i.e. Porto-Novo], are really respectable in their appearance. They generally came down during the Slave-Trade, in great numbers, and had many horses with them, which they sometimes sold to advantage; they have, however, more the appearance of Welsh ponies than of Arabian horses: the largest of these, which I have seen, not being more than thirteen hands high; some of them, although strong and heavy in the chest, are very fleet: others are awkwardly formed, and have a shuffling pace, something like that of an ass ... The Ashantees and the Dahomians, as well as the inhabitants of Popo, concur in their statements of the Eyoos and the Filanee being accustomed to employ a numerous cavalry in their armies; that their cavalry, as well as infantry, use bows and arrows, in the use of which they are very expert.288 Eyo is said to

285 This may have been the regular tribute-collecting embassy (as assumed by Akinjogbin 1967, 188, 196); but may also have been to reiterate the warning about Porto-Novo reported in No.58 above.
286 An employee of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, the body which at this time managed the British possessions on the West African coast; although published in 1819, this account seems to reflect primarily conditions immediately prior to the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807.
287 This claim is uncorroborated, and inherently unlikely.
288 In the 1820s the Oyo were said to have ‘the reputation of being the best bowmen in Africa’ (Lander 1830, II 222); for their use of mounted archers, cf. above, n.56.
be merely a dependency of Filanee; and instead of its being an extensive
country, as it has generally been believed by Europeans, it is only a populous city,
which, like others in Africa, has many towns and villages which claim its
protection from the inroads of neighbouring states ...

c) [p.209] The traders of Eyeo, whom I have seen at the coast, were all
dressed in the same costume: a pair of trousers, which they call choocatoa, that
draw round the waist, and only come half way down their thighs, with a loose
 tunic, having holes for the head and arms, constituted their whole dress; but
whether they wear the large cloths commonly worn by persons of rank in
Dahomy, and other parts of the coast here, when they are at home, I could not
learn ...

d) [p.262] The King of Dahomy has been uniformly desirous of extending
his dominions; had he not been restrained by the Ashantees and Eyeos, from
subjugating Alladah and Badagree, or rather Badaghe, to his immediate dominion,
the navigation of the river at Lagos would have been in his power ...

e) [pp.266-70] The Arabs are called by the natives Alliffa. ... I had
frequent conversations with these cosmopolites, and found them unreserved in
their communications although this is not their common character. They answered
my questions without hesitation; I obtained, however, little information from
them, as their ideas of geography were scarcely more extended than those of the
negroes themselves. They spoke of Eyeoo, Filanee, and Aweessaw [Hausa],
familiarly ... From having read Mr Dalzel's History of Dahomy, I was led to
enquire particularly concerning the Eyeoo nation; but from the information which

289 Cf. the statement in No.61e below, that Oyo was considered by some a dependency of
'Aweessaw', or Hausa. These accounts presumably refer to the Sokoto Caliphate, the
Muslim state under Fulani leadership established in Hausaland in 1804. A major revolt
of Muslims in Oyo, in support of the rebellious city of Ilorin, began in 1817, which
would eventually (though not until c.1823) turn Ilorin into an emirate of Sokoto (cf. Law
1977, 255-60); this seems too late to explain Robertson's reference, but it may be that
some Muslims in Oyo had acknowledged Sokoto overlordship even before 1817.
290 The name Oyo can properly be applied both to the city and to the kingdom of which it
is the capital; but Robertson's assertion here that Oyo was 'only' a city may reflect the
collapse of central authority in the kingdom, marked by the revolt of Ilorin, from the
1790s onwards (cf. Law 1977, 250-5).
291 Yoruba sokoto.
292 Cf. Lander 1830, II 212-3: 'The apparel of the Yaribeans consist of full trousers, tied
with a running string to the waist, but extending no lower than the knee; a short
sleeveless tobe with large holes for the arms, made of country cloth with various
colours ...'.
293 For Oyo protection of Porto-Novo, cf. Nos 44, 48 and 58 above. The wording
suggests that Asante, as well as Oyo, had been hostile to Dahomey earlier; cf. also
No.56, with n.280, above.
294 alufa, the Fon and Yoruba term for Muslim clerics.

[61]
I obtained, I suspect that the accounts of these people are much exaggerated, relative to their numbers and power. Some say, that it is merely a district of Aweessaw; and others declare it to be an independent state, which is situated between Foong [Fon], (Dahomian territory) and Adoo [Edo], or Abinee, Benin. I incline to the latter opinion; as Africa is in a similar situation to that in which Europe was, during the existence of the Roman Empire: as soon as a city is sufficiently populous to command respect, all those in the vicinity are subjected to it; thus, it appears, that when the Eyeoos commence hostilities against any of their neighbours, the Anagoos, Mahees, and Takpas, are compelled to send contingent forces to their support.296

The King of Dahomy has, latterly, been irregular in paying the tribute which has been usually exacted, and as he has been adding some of the districts of Takpama [Atakpame] to the interior of his dominions, Cootucootuee, Tpissee [Kpessi], &c., as well as some of those of Mahee, it seems the scale of power has changed in his favour ...298

The Dahomians boast, with exaggerations, of their victories obtained over the Eyeoos, who, they say, are under the necessity of using poisoned arrows, because “a cat is not able to fight a tyger”; by such and many other figurative expressions, showing their mental as well as military superiority ...

f) [pp.280-3] Allada, at one time, was reduced by an army, and subjected to pay an annual tribute [sc. to Dahomey]; but latterly, from being protected by the Eyeoos, they have been irregular in their payment, and in consequence the Dahomians have annoyed their trade a good deal ...300

Traders from Eyeoo constantly come to Allada and bring down great numbers of slaves. As they are generally in fear of being attacked by the Dahomians, they travel in caravans and frequently have from two to three hundred horses with them. They generally ride without saddles, having merely a

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295 Cf. n.288 above.
296 The name Anago (or Nago) was normally applied to Yoruba-speakers, and here presumably refers to western Yoruba communities (such as Sabe or Ketu); but note that elsewhere (p.209) Robertson describes Bussa (in Borgu) as the ‘capital of Anagoo’, which suggests that they have been confused with the Bariba. For Oyo rule over the Mahi, cf. Nos 31b and 46b above, and 64b below. The assertion that (some of?) the Tapa or Nupe were subject to Oyo represents a reversal of relationship since 1790, when Oyo was tributary to Nupe (cf. No.52 above).
297 Contrast the assessment of M’Leod in 1803 (above No.56); but Robertson may well be reporting subsequent shifts in the balance of power. ‘Cootucootuee’ may be the same as the ‘Crootoohoontoo’ which Dahomey had attacked in 1788 (cf. No.47 above).
298 This may refer to victories claimed in the wars of the 1720s (cf. above Nos 8b and 10c); but the context perhaps suggests more recent fighting (cf. also No.56 with n.280 above).
300 No other source suggests that Porto-Novo had earlier been tributary to Dahomey, and this assertion probably involves confusion with old Allada (conquered by Dahomey in 1724); for Dahomian raids on Porto-Novo in the 1800s, cf. No.58 with n.282 above.
piece of scarlet, or other coloured woollen cloth, which they use instead.\textsuperscript{301} They appear rather a reserved people, and are unwilling to give direct answers to the interrogations of Europeans. They informed me, however, that Eyeoo is seven days’ journey from Allada,\textsuperscript{302} and that they have to cross one great river (Azewoa), which runs towards the south-east,\textsuperscript{303} but they were either unwilling to tell, or were ignorant of, its termination. They speak of it as being very broad, and compared it to the Nowhee [Nokue], the lake between Allada and the shore; but the comparison must be received with some caution, as in some places its breadth is six miles. They mentioned Boussa [Bussa]\textsuperscript{304} as a place of great trade, and that Aweessaw derived much of its importance from that source.

The Eyeoos travel armed with bows and arrows (avong);\textsuperscript{305} the people on the sea-coast express great fear of their effects, from the arrows being poisoned; for they assert, that if they only wound, the person dies almost immediately.\textsuperscript{306} The Ashantees dislike the Eyeoos, giving them the name of inepe bonee, bad men; and relate some of their barbarities on their marauding excursions with horror.\textsuperscript{307} No signs of that character are, however, obvious in their common conduct.

g) [pp.284-5] Eyeoo horses are to be bought at either Allada or Badaghe [Badagri], on moderate terms; very fine ones for ten to fifteen pounds sterling.\textsuperscript{308} Some of them are fourteen hands [56 inches] high, although this height is not common. They very much resemble Arabian horses, but are more full in the chest; and, in fact, better for general purposes. Some of them are very swift, especially the small ones; but they are so very slight in the limbs, and general structure, that they cannot gallop far with a heavy rider. The horned cattle are a tolerable size, being something larger than highland cattle; but their cows give very little milk. Some of the Eyeoo sheep brought here, are at least one third higher than the largest in England; but I don’t think their meat so good as those which are smaller, and which are generally bred by the inhabitants on the sea-coast, in preference.\textsuperscript{309}

\textsuperscript{301} Saddles were, however, certainly not unknown in Oyo, being mentioned e.g. by Clapperton in 1825-6 (1829, 2, 8, 34).
\textsuperscript{302} Cf. 55a with n.265 above (giving the distance as nine days’ journey); but cf. also the longer estimate in No.64a below.
\textsuperscript{303} Presumably the Zou, an affluent of the Weme; but this is west of Porto-Novo, so that if the Oyo crossed it on their way there they evidently used a circuitous route (cf. n.320 below).
\textsuperscript{304} In Borgu, north-west of Oyo.
\textsuperscript{305} Perhaps a miscopying of ‘arong’, representing Yoruba orun, ‘bow’.
\textsuperscript{306} For the use of poisoned weapons, cf. also No.65d below.
\textsuperscript{307} Perhaps an echo of the war between the two kingdoms in 1764 (above, No.24).
\textsuperscript{308} Clapperton in 1826 gives a comparable price for a horse at the Oyo capital, of 80,000-100,000 cowries, equivalent in value to $40-50, or £10-£12.10s. (1829, 59).
\textsuperscript{309} Cf. No.31b above.
Muhammad Bello, in ARNETT 1922:310

a) [p.13] West of Katsina and Gobir there are seven separate countries called “Banza Bakwai”.311 These are Zamfara and Kebbi, Yauri, Nufi [Nupe], Yoruba,312 Borgu and Gurma. Each of these has a Sarki [i.e. king] who is equal to the others ...

b) [p.16] The country of Yoruba is extensive and has streams and forests and rocks and hills. There are many curious and beautiful things in it. The ships of the Christians come there.313 The people of Yoruba are descended from the Kanaana [= Canaanites] and the kindred of Nimrud.314 Now the reason of their having settled in the west according to what we are told is that Yaarubu son of Kahtan drove them out of Irak to westwards315 and they travelled between Masar [Misr, i.e. Egypt] and Habash [= Ethiopia] until they reached Yoruba. It happened that they left a portion of their people in every country they passed. It is said that the Sudanese who live up on the hills [i.e. the Nigerian Plateau] are all their kindred; so also the people of Yauri are their kindred.

The people of Yoruba resemble those of Nufi in appearance. In the land of Yoruba are found the birds green in colour which are called ‘Babaga’ in Arabic and which we call ‘Aku’. It is a bird which talks and is beautiful.316

Now in this country of Yoruba there are many wonderful things. Mallam Mohamman Masani has related them in his book Nafhat’ul Ambariya. He has also written further about this country in his book Azharu Ruba about Yoruba.317 The people of Yoruba catch slaves from our land and sell them to the Christians so we are told. I mention this to stop people selling Moslem slaves to them, because of those who buy them. Harm will result from this.318

310 Scholar and later (1817-31) Caliph of Sokoto, author of many works in Arabic; his Infaq al-Maisur, cited here, was written in 1812. A partial translation of this passage was included in Denham & Clapperton 1826, 163, 165.
311 i.e. the ‘bastard seven’, as opposed to the seven true Hausa states, the former being supposedly descended from the legitimate and the latter from the legitimate sons of the legendary ancestor of the Hausa, Bayajidda.
312 Yoruba (or more correctly, Yaraba) is the usual Hausa name for Oyo (as noted e.g. by Clapperton 1829, 4); but cf. also below No.66e for its use in a more general sense.
313 Cf. No.68a and c below, for this mistaken belief that Europeans visited Oyo; in fact, of course, the Oyo dealt with them only through coastal ports such as Porto-Novo.
314 Cf. similar stories of descent from Nimrud (‘Lamurudu’) recorded later in Oyo traditions (Johnson 1921, 3-4; and discussion by Law 1984, 199-205).
315 Yar’ub ibn Qahtan, legendary ancestor of the southern Arabs; evidently a folk etymology to explain the name Yoruba.
316 i.e. parrots (Hausa aku).
317 Muhammad ibn Masanih of Katsina (d. 1667): see further Bivar & Hiskett 1962, 116. These works relating to Yoruba have apparently not survived.
318 For the sale of Hausa slaves through Oyo, cf. No.55g above. Bello appears to disapprove of this because it involved the sale of Muslim slaves into non-Muslim ownership; cf. further Fisher 1988.
A gentleman who has resided at different intervals, a considerable time at the settlement of Lagos, and other stations on the African coast in the bight of Benin, states that the Haoussa traders, who previous to the abolition of the slave trade, were continually to be met with at Lagos, still come down to that mart, though in smaller bodies. The principal negro nation on the journey are the Joos, a powerful and not ill-disposed people, and nearer the coast (avoiding the Dahomey territories) the Anagoos and Mahees.

BOWDICH 1819:

a) [pp.208-10] ... [route from Dagomba, through Djougou, Parakou and Yauri to Hausaland] Eight journeys from Barragoo [Parakou] is Toombea [Tumbuya], three beyond is Goodoobirree [Godeberi]. A river running to the Quolla [Kwara, i.e. Niger] ... called Leeäsa, flows close to the eastward of this path, and is crossed, going from Goodoobirree southwards, to a large kingdom called Yariba by the Moors, but Yarba [i.e. Yoruba] more generally by the natives. Aquallie [Agbonle?] is the frontier town of Yariba, one journey from Goodoobirree, and one from Bootee, second only to the capital, Katanga, four journeys beyond it. Yariba was described to be about 24 journies, through Hio, (its immediate neighbour) from Aratakasse or Alatakasse, which we shall

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1816

‘The Niger’, in The Times, 18 May 1816.319

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1817

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319 This material was also incorporated into the Editor’s Introduction to Adams 1816 (xxxvi-xxxvii).
320 The arrival of Hausa traders at Lagos is corroborated by Robertson 1819, 287; cf. however No.64b below.
321 The route indicated is not easy to envisage, since travelling from Oyo through Anago (western Yoruba) and Mahi would seem to be directed towards Dahomey; if accurate, it suggests that traders went from Mahi south-east (via Ketu) back into Oyo territory towards Lagos.
322 Bowdich undertook a mission for the Company of Merchants to the capital of Asante, Kumasi, in 1817. He seems to have got most of his information in the first extract quoted here from Muslim residents at Kumasi, one of whom (the secretary to the Asante royal treasurer) he says had ‘resided some time in Hio’ (1819, 296); but note that he also cites a ‘Hio man’, though whether he met him at Kumasi is not made clear.
323 i.e. Oyo (cf. above, n.311).
324 Clapperton in 1826 mentions ‘Agolly’ as the main market for trade between Oyo and countries to the north (1829, 135, 127; cf. Law 1977, 282 n.21).
325 Katunga was the usual Hausa name for the Oyo capital.
hereafter recognise in Ardra [i.e. Porto-Novo]: this determines its position pretty well.\textsuperscript{326} Dahomey was said to be tributary to Yariba, as well as to Hio, which I have an impression is also tributary to Hio.\textsuperscript{327} From Hio to Dahomey is seven journeys.\textsuperscript{328} The military are despotic in Hio, they always intercept the new King on his way to the palace, and demand his naming some neighbouring country for their invasion and plunder, before they confirm him.\textsuperscript{329} The King before the present, had named Dahomey,\textsuperscript{330} but after three years neglect of the fulfilment, he ordered the army against a northern neighbour. The army went, wasted and pillaged the country, but when within a day's march of the capital on their return, they sent deputies to enjoin his abdication, as inevitable to a falsehood to them; he was obstinate; they arrived and cut off his head.\textsuperscript{331} The numerals of Hio are:

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<td>One</td>
<td>Innee [eni]</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Eygee [eji]</td>
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<td>Three</td>
<td>Etta [eta]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Ernee [erin]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Aroon [arun]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Effa [efa]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Eggay [eje]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Eggo [ego]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Essun [esun]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Eywaw [owo].\textsuperscript{332}</td>
</tr>
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The Hio man, who gave me the above numerals, spoke of the Apaccas as a more powerful northern neighbour, but I never heard of them from any other person.\textsuperscript{333} Yariba must certainly be the Yarba of Imhammed, though he described it as 18 or 20 journeys from Gonjah towards the N.W., for he is likely to be incorrect in this.\textsuperscript{334} ... Yariba ... is always announced to enquirers, both by Moors

\textsuperscript{326} Contrast the much lower estimates (of nine or seven days’ journey) given by Adams and Robertson earlier (Nos 55a and 61f above). Note, however, that Clapperton in 1825 was told that the journey from Badagry, east of Porto-Novo, to Oyo took 30 days (1829, 4); these discrepant estimates may assume different modes of transport (horse or foot).

\textsuperscript{327} Yoruba and Oyo were, in fact, alternative names for the same place (above, n.311), Bowdich’s suggestion here being perhaps an attempt to reconcile the apparent contradictions in his sources.

\textsuperscript{328} Contrast the 30 days’ journey suggested in 1728 (above, No.10c).

\textsuperscript{329} This custom is alluded to in Oyo tradition (Johnson 1921, 188-9).

\textsuperscript{330} The suggestion of conflict with Dahomey is noteworthy; cf. also above, No.56 with n.280.

\textsuperscript{331} Presumably an allusion to the overthrow of Alafin Awole (Abiodun’s successor) by an army mutiny, probably c.1796. Oyo tradition, however, recalls the campaign after which this occurred as against Iwere (in the Oyo kingdom south-east of the capital) rather than ‘a northern neighbour’ (Johnson 1921, 189-92).

\textsuperscript{332} This list of numerals has some curiosity interest, as being apparently the earliest linguistic data recorded for the Yoruba language. It was soon superseded, however, by the fuller vocabulary included as an appendix in Clapperton 1829, 341-2.

\textsuperscript{333} Possibly a garbled form of Tapa, i.e. Nupe, Oyo’s north-eastern neighbour.

\textsuperscript{334} The reference is to [African Association] 1810, I 221, citing information collected from the Sharif Imhammed in Tripoli in 1789; Bowdich is in error, however, since the
and Negroes, as a very powerful and much frequented kingdom.

b) [pp.223-6] An officer in this service, who resided at Lagos three years, and is the only European resident who has survived of those who have made the attempt, enables me to correct the following errors. The above mentioned gentleman proves the informant of Adams’s editor incorrect in stating that the Houssa [Hausa] traders were constantly to be met with at Lagos, previous to the abolition of the slave trade, for it has always been the policy of Kosie [Ikosi], a kingdom on the eastern bank of the river, and about 60 miles inland from the mouth, to prevent all intercourse between the traders of the interior, and those of Lagos, to secure themselves the exorbitant profits they make as the brokers or medium. ... the King of Kosie desired a European might visit him, to gratify his curiosity, and that of his people; but no one being willing, a mulatto, named Peter Brown, was dressed up and sent. This man, being now at Cape Coast, I have questioned. He only heard the people of Kosie speak of two great nations, the Hios, and the Awissees [Hausa] ... The gentleman to whom I am indebted, places the Mahees north of Dahomey, instead of north-west as in Norris’s map, and this is also more probable, because about nine years ago, the King of Hio entirely conquered the Mahees, and upwards of 20,000 of them were brought to sale at Lagos. The Joos, inconsiderately reported to Adams's editor as being, with the Anagoos and Mahees, the principal nations on the journey to the Niger, and nearer to the coast, avoiding Dahomey, are probably the Jaboos [Ijebu].

DUPUIS 1824:

‘Yarba’ mentioned there is certainly not Yoruba, but Yagaba, in northern Ghana.

Evidently a different person from the man cited in No.63 above, whose information Bowdich here attacks.

This refers to the account in No.63 above, as reproduced in Adams 1816, xxxvi-xxxvii.

This clearly involves confusion between the lagoonside port of Ikosi and the kingdom of Ijebu (and its capital Ijebu Ode), to which it belonged.

But Bowdich fails to take account of the possibility that such Hausa traders might not have come via Ijebu, but travelled first to Porto-Novos and then along the coastal lagoon to Lagos.

For an earlier Oyo attack on the Mahi in 1788, cf. above No.46. In 1826 Clapperton was told that Mahi, as well as Dahomey, Porto-Novos and Badagry, was tributary to Oyo (1829, 56).

Cf. No.63 above; but it is again Bowdich who is in error, the ‘Joos’ of the earlier source being not the Ijebu but the Oyo.

Dupuis undertook a second British mission to Kumasi, the capital of Asante, in 1820, and like Bowdich earlier derived his information mainly from the Muslim community there.
a) The countries to the eastward of Dahomy, including Ghodau [Ogodo?], Yagah [Yagba?], Khimbee [unidentified], Ayoh, Ajasee [i.e. Porto-Novo], and Benin, are all heathen, or are governed by heathen monarchs, whose laws and religion have no relation to the Koranic institutions, but are in a proportionate degree the same as prevail generally among the heathens, although in a milder manner, from the more commercial and agricultural habits of many or most of the tribes in eastern Wangara. The people of these parts, however, in common with the Moors, practice circumcision.

The current coin throughout these regions is cowries ...

b) Behind the Komashar in the Ayoh country, and upon the parallel of Salgha [Salaga], is a lake of very great extent, whose shores the traveller, on an eastern or western journey, does not quit for two days; the name of it I know not: but my informers describe it as a fresh water lake, which had no communication with any river. Zogho [Djougou] is due north of this lake, from which it is distant six journies, or less than one hundred horizontal miles ... The tribes of Ayoh inhabit an extensive flat surface, south of the lake, and they also serve the sovereign of Zogho as tributaries ...

... My informers said, in the most positive terms, there was no kingdom existing between Dahomy and Zogho, except such small ones as were tributary to the latter, the sultan of which was the most powerful monarch known in these parts, without excepting the kings of Ashantee or Benin. They confirmed what Mr Dalzel reported in his history of the kingdom of Dahomy; that the sovereigns of this country pay tribute to Ayoh, which they affirm is the same as Zogho, for these southern tribes are employed, as occasion may require, to collect it by force of arms.

c) Whether the great districts of tropical Africa ... are indebted to the Arabs for the names they now bear, I am not able to decide; but that of Yarraba [Yoruba], as I was assured by many, certainly received its name from the

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342 Ogodo was a market-town on the frontier between Oyo and Nupe (Johnson 1921, 217) - possibly identical with the Raka referred to in Nos 68a-b below.
343 Elsewhere (XLVI) Dupuis describes the ‘Yagahs’ as ‘the same nearly in language and customs as Ayoh’, and apparently east of the latter.
344 Ajase was the usual Yoruba name for Porto-Novo.
345 The term ‘Wangara’ was used by Dupuis’ informants for the coastal area from Asante in the west to Benin in the east: see Law 1995.
346 The Komashar is described elsewhere as a great river running between Dahomey and Benin - perhaps the Weme is meant.
347 For the idea of a lake in Oyo, cf. No.8b above; here it makes best sense as alluding to the River Niger and its tributaries.
348 The assertion that Oyo was tributary to Djougou is difficult to explain (unless it involves confusion with some other northern state, such as Nupe).
349 As with Bowdich’s earlier suggestion that Yoruba was tributary to Oyo (No.64a above), this may be no more than an attempt to reconcile contradictory reports.
eastern Arab tribes, as the sound itself implies ...  

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d) [pp.LIII-LIV] The eastern kingdoms and tribes of Wangara, are deemed infinitely more populous and civilized than the western, a truth which, I believe, is not to be questioned, for there agriculture is encouraged, and commerce exists upon an equal scale with the most commercial people in Africa ... In all these countries, Benin excepted, horses are plentiful, particularly in Ayoh and Yagah.  

351 Fire arms and gunpowder are, however, unknown in these parts or very scarce, but their weapons, which they yield with great dexterity and execution, are much dreaded in that country. These weapons, which I have seen in Coomassay [Kumasi], are very long supple lances, barbed and poisoned, targets, bows and arrows, tomahawks and iron maces, the former of which they are in the practice of poisoning with a venom more deadly than that which is used by any other nation, as its operation is said to be sometimes instantaneous, and its wound, although ever so slight, usually produces death within the lapse of a few minutes.

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e) [pp.LXXXIV-LXXXV] Africa south of the Desert is divided into many important sections or districts ... Those familiar to my informers were ... [among others] ... Yarraba ...

Yarraba is the greatest in extent among these southern sections. Its boundaries are, on the north, Killinga; on the east, unknown districts of the Soudan, called Dakhlata [unidentified]; on the west, Ghuja and Dagomba; on the south, Benin and Waree [Warri]. It is said to occupy the traveller forty days, in traversing from east to west; but its extent north and south I cannot speak of with any certainty; however, it may possibly spread as many as four hundred and sixty geographic miles, reckoning from the southernmost provinces of the kingdom of Bargho [Borgu], in Killinga, to the land which runs parallel with Cape Formosa.

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Evidently an allusion to the derivation of the name Yoruba from that of Ya’rub b. Qahtan, recorded by Muhammad Bello (cf. above, No.62b); the implication is either that Bello’s work may have been known to the Muslims of Kumasi by 1820, or that he was reporting ideas widely current in the Muslim community.

351 Horses were, however, no longer plentiful in Oyo by the 1820s; Clapperton in 1826 found them ‘scarce’ (1829, 56).

352 Again, this was no longer true by the 1820s, when Lander reported that ‘quantities of muskets’ were being imported into Oyo from the coast, although not put to effective use (1830, II 222).

353 i.e. Borgu, north-west of Oyo (Killinga being an alternative name for Djougou, which Dupuis represents as the principal state in this region).

354 Gonja, but in Dupuis’ usage, applied to a large area including Asante and Dahomey.

355 This definition of Yoruba as a large area, evidently including the entire Yoruba-speaking area, is of great interest. Strictly, Yoruba was an alternative name for Oyo (cf. above n.311); it is normally supposed that its extension to a generic sense was the work of European missionaries in the 1830s, but Dupuis’ account here suggests that it was anticipated in local West African Muslim usage.

[69]
Letter of G.A. Robertson, Cape Coast Castle, 2 Sept. 1820 (PRO: CO.2/11):

The King of Dahomey has been deposed - his brother has taken the monarchy, and from what I can learn from a messenger who has been sent up here to induce the Company to re-occupy the Fort, a new system of policy is established and now Eyo, Tappa [Tapa, i.e. Nupe] and Inta [i.e. Gonja] trade there in common - but I am sorry to understand that their principal traffick is for slaves ...

Royal Gold Coast Gazette, Vol.1 (1823):

[No.12, 21 Jan. 1823] We have just learned that the King of Dahomy, in consequence of the increased demand for slaves, had invaded the neighbouring states whence the palm oil had been usually supplied, but was happily disappointed of the booty he had expected, as the inhabitants had abandoned the towns and villages before the attack. These places being tributary to the Io nation, who has taken up the affair, a partial obstruction of trade had also been the result, which induced De Souza to proceed into the interior with rich presents to mediate a peace ...

[No.15, 11 Feb. 1823] By accounts from Whydah, dated 12 Jan., we learn that the differences between the Io’s and Dahomonians [sic] had not been adjusted. The mediation attempted by De Souza to negotiate a peace had entirely failed, and trade even for slaves was at a stand. The Io nation has made a large demand on the King of Dahomy for the aggressive inroad on their tributary states, which had been peremptorily refused, and it was feared hostilities must be the

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356 The same man as the author of No.61 above.
357 Alluding to the deposition of Adandozan in favour of his brother Gezo, conventionally dated to 1818.
358 i.e. the British fort at Whydah, which had been abandoned in 1812.
359 Presumably the effective suppression of slave exports out of the Gold Coast (where the British had sufficient control to enforce their abolition of the trade in 1807) had caused the diversion of Gonja’s slaves through Dahomey. This report suggests a more liberal policy towards traders from the interior than reported in the 1780s (cf. Nos 42 and 55g above); for the context, see further Law 1989b, 57-8.
360 Probably alluding to Badagry, which was attacked by Dahomey (in alliance with Porto-Novo and Lagos) around this time (cf. Law 1978, 44-6).
361 This evidently implies that Oyo was again sending slaves for sale through Dahomey (cf. No.66 above).
362 Francisco Felix de Souza, a Brazilian slave trader settled at Whydah, where he was principal agent to King Gezo of Dahomey.
result.

[No.20, 18 March 1823] [report of defeat of Dahomian attack on ‘Anna’] The account had caused the most melancholy sensation in Dahomy, as the country is threatened with invasion from Io, which however they had a hope of averting by negotiation.  

DENHAM & CLAPPERTON 1824:

a) [Clapperton’s Narrative, 32: Kano, 23 Jan. 1824] In the evening I overheard a conversation concerning the River Quarra [Kwara, i.e. Niger] between my servant and the man the governor of Katagum sent with me. The latter described it as running into the sea at Raka, and added the following particulars. The country is called Yowriba [Yoruba] by the natives. The ships of the Christians visit the town, which is only twenty-four days’ journey from Nyffee [Nupe] at a quick rate of travelling, or thirty-two days at a leisurely pace.

b) [Clapperton’s Narrative, 87: Sokoto, 20 March 1824] I learned, besides, from Gomsoo, that he had been detained a prisoner three years in a country called Yoriba [Yoruba], on the west side of the Quarra; which, he said, entered the sea at Fundah [Panda], a little below the town of Rakah. The latter is opposite to Nyffee; is a place of great trade between the interior and the coast, and all kinds of European goods, such as beads, woollen and cotton cloth, pewter...

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[71]
and copper dishes, gunpowder, rum, & c., are to be had there in exchange for slaves. The inhabitants of Yoriba he represented to be extremely ill disposed.

c) [Denham’s Narrative, 278: Kuka, Borno, 7 Aug. 1824] Mohammed Bousgayey, an Arab, who left this place with Dr Oudney and Mr Clapperton [i.e. in Dec.1823], came to my hut; he had gone to Kana [Kano] with four or five Arabs, to Yeouri [Yauri] and to Nyffe, and had stayed some time at a place called Gusgey [N’Gaski] on the Quolla [Kwara], two days west-south-west nearly to Yeouri .... At eight days distance only from Yeouri, large boats come to a place called Yearban [Yoruba], but it is not on the bahre kebir. Katungah is the great port, which is at some distance; to both of these places people he called Americans come; they were white, and Christians; they always demand gum arabic and male slaves, for which they will pay as high as sixty and seventy dollars each.

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370By 1826, however, Raka was in the hands of Fulani allied to the rebellious city of Ilorin, and communication between it and Oyo had been cut (Clapperton 1829, 46).

371Arabic for ‘great river’, meaning here presumably the Niger; the ambiguity of this phrase may account for the misunderstanding of places on the Niger as being at the sea-coast, as in Nos 68a and b above.

372Katungah, as noted above (no.64a, with n.324) was the Hausa name for the Oyo capital; here again, the suggestion that European ships came there is a confusion.

373The figure of $60-70 probably relates to the price of slaves at the coast, rather than at the Oyo capital; in 1826 Clapperton gives the price of a slave at the latter as 40,000-60,000 cowries, equivalent to only $20-30 (Clapperton 1829, 59). The reference to gum seems also to be a confusion, since although this was exported through Benin it does not appear to have been a major export from Oyo.
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