**Robert Norris, Agaja, and the Dahomean Conquest of Allada and Whydah: David Ross**

Read the article, looking for answers to the following questions:

1. How did Norris describe Agaja?

Agaja was a nation-builder who brought the Dahomeans and the people of Allada and Whydah together.

His new subjects were so pleased that they did not seek independence

1. What were the capitals of Allada and Whydah?

Allada and Savi

1. How united were the kingdoms of Allada and Whydah?

Early C18 – leaders formed alliances and counter alliances, even went to war with each other

Kings of Allada and Whydah were often against each other

Also internal factional disputes within provinces

Few, if any, governors held undisputed authority – many had well-established ‘family’ rivals trying to supplant them

1. How did Dahomey get a foothold in Allada?

1724 – Dahomeans crossed the Lama when the leader of one of the factions, Prince Hussar, invited Agaja to drive his brother, King of Allada, from the throne

(At least two of Whydah’s monarchs had gained the throne with European support (they traded in Savi))

Dahomeans marched south and joined forces with Prince Hussar – attacked the king’s men – long battle – king was beheaded

Hussar took the throne – Dahomeans withdrew but 6 months later, returned and seized Allada

The common provinces then paid tribute to Agaja

Hussar fled to the Alafin of Oyo and asked for assistance

Alafin sent an army – defeated Agaja but did not prevent him continuing his campaign

When Oyo left, the Dahomeans killed Hussar and reoccupied the capital

Agaja made peace with the Alafin – agreed to pay a large annual tribute?

By the end of 1726, after 4 major campaigns, Agaja was the undisputed master of Allada’s royal province

1. How did Dahomey get involved in Whydah?

Early March 1727 – Agaja attacked the Governor, or Akplogan, of Gome, a Whydah province just north of Savi

Same method- the Akplogan’s brother wanted to take over – asked King Houfon of Whydah – he didn’t help so he asked Agaja

Agaja saw an opportunity and helped install the brother

Once in Gome, the Dahomeans crossed a shallow, undefended river into Savi and took control

None of the provincial governors seem to have helped Houfon but strted paying tribute to Agaja

This did not mean he controlled all of Whydah

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1. How did Oyo make it difficult for Dahomey to establish control?

Oyo made it much harder for Agaja to conquer the numerous common provinces

1728-48 – the Alafin repeatedly sent troops – tried to corner and destroy Agaja’s army – only survived by going into hiding each time

1. Who was Agaja’s successor?

Agaja died in 1740 – his son and successor, Tegbesu, finished the process of conquering Whydah in the 1750s

1. What were the reasons for Dahomey’s southern campaigns?

Slave-hunting

Money

Control access to sea – Savi and Jacquin

Make the Dahomeans middlemen in trade between coast and interior

Acquire gold by trading directly with Portuguese

Acquiring slaves was most important

1. What was the Dahomean method of attack?

Similar to their 19th century descendants

* Surprise dawn attack
* Destroy habitations
* Return to base to share out prisoners and spoil
* Usually allowed raided foes who had escaped capture to make their peace by agreeing to pay tribute

Pursued slaves ruthlessly

Their dealings with Hussar, the Akinplogan of Gome, and with the people of Jaquin and Grehue show that they turned on their allies, made war on those who paid tribute, and raided towns and villages until their whole population was enslaved, killed or driven into exile

1. How many slaves a year were sold to the Europeans in the 1730s/40s?

1730s/40s – sold about 6000 slaves per year to Europeans

European reports – southern Ajaland’s population decreased dramatically

Many European witnesses talk about the desolation left

Continued to take slaves after Agaja’s death, even into Tegbesu’s last years

Contemporaries – Tegbesu seized slaves in the late 1760s from amongst conquered subjects, even though they had committed no crime

Not really interested in nation-building – settled Ouidah but to protect lines of communication rather than bringing fellow Aja under their protection

Southern Aja seems to have remained anti-Dahomean

Dahomeans had created havoc for 30 years

Even in mid C19 the Dahomeans still saw their kingdom as an Aborney-area military community with the purpose of raiding for slaves