

The kings' position in the Atlantic slave trade: Portugal, Dahomey and Ardra/Hogbonu, 1810-1812

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Abstract: The article addresses the connection between two West African kingdoms (Ardra/Hogbonu and Dahomey) and Portugal, from 1810 to 1812. In 1810 Portugal and Great Britain signed the Strangford Treaty (in Brazil known as Treaty of Alliance and Friendship) that committed Portugal with the progressive extinction with the trade of human beings from Africa to the Americas. The research was based in a wide range of documents involving Dahomian and Brazilian History in order to highlight the role of African rulers in the debate about the end of the Atlantic slave trade.

Keywords: slave trade – Diplomacy – Brazil – Dahomey – Hogbonu - Great Britain

Introduction

Since the early days of Portuguese expansion along the Atlantic Coast Portugal maintained diplomatic relations with different African rulers. In 1810, two Mina Coast rulers sent embassies to the Portuguese court: Dada Adandozan, the ruler of Dahomey from 1797 to 1818; and Dè Ajohan, the ruler of Hogbonu from ca.1807 to ca.1816. At the time the Portuguese court was installed in Brazil. The ambassadors planned to go down to Rio de Janeiro, but they were forced to stay in Bahia, a usual scale, from where they returned to West Africa.

Throughout coeval Portuguese bureaucracy (there included Brazil) those rulers were called “kings”. This terminology – kings, kingdoms, embassies - indicates the recognition of those rulers as legitimate authorities in diplomatic and commercial negotiations. In the Portuguese diplomatic correspondence the Kingdom of Hogbonu

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was called Ardra. In 1810 the name Ardra designated the second Kingdom of Ardra. In 1724 The Dahomian troops invaded old Ardra (Allada); later in the eighteenth century a group of refugees moved eastward founding a new kingdom that kept the same name Ardra, using Ardra Grande for its new capital, and Ardra Pequeno for its port, more frequently known as Porto Novo.¹

The article starts from the study of these two embassies to explore the connections of those rulers (Dahomey, Hogbonu, Portugal) with the Atlantic slave trade. I focus, in particular, on their “attitudes” and intents in the face of the restrictions imposed by the British on the Atlantic slave trade, from 1807 onwards.

Since 1807, Europeans and African rulers and also slave traders - whether Europeans, Brazilians or Africans - were all aware of the ban on the slave trade by the British. In February 1810 Portugal signed two important treaties with the Great Britain: the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, and the Treaty of Alliance and Friendship. Such treaties, among other topics, involved a pact for the extinction of the Atlantic slave trade.² Both rulers and traders were also aware that the implementation of the agreements established in the treaties, even if not immediately, would affect the trade on human beings.³

As soon as they learned of the signing of the Treaty of Alliance and Friendship the rulers of Dahomey and Ardra rushed to defend their interests. Dahomey and Ardra had a history of alliances and conflicts spanning about a century and at that time they were vying for the attention of European and Brazilian slave traders. It was not possible to know which of the two took the initiative, but already in September 1810, the King of Ardra was making preparations for the long and costly trip to Brazil. According to documents consulted by Pierre Verger, a letter sent by the King of Ardra would have been dated September 7, 1810. The Embassy of Ardra must have embarked in Porto Novo between September and November, arriving at the port of Salvador, Bahia, in

¹ The war of 1724 resulted in around eight thousand prisoners, sold into slavery. Robert Cornevin. *Histoire du Dahomey*. Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault. 1962. p. 105. On kingdom terminology see the mentioned correspondence, and also: I. A. Akinjogbin. *Dahomey and its Neighbors 1708-1818*. London: Cambridge University Press. 1967. p. 214-215; Carlos da Silva Jr. “Interações atlânticas entre Salvador e Porto Novo (Costa da Mina) no século XVIII. *Revista de História*, n.176, 2017. p. 1-41.

² For the full text of the Treaty of Alliance and Friendship, see José Ferreira Borges de Castro. *Collecção dos tratados, e actos públicos celebrados entre a coroa de Portugal e as mais potencias desde 1640 até o presente*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1857. Volume IV.

³ This period precedes the redirection of the Mina Coast kingdoms towards the so-called “legitimate commerce”. Robin Law (ed.) *From Slave Trade to ‘Legitimate’ Commerce. The commercial transition in nineteenth-century West Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 1991.

December 1810. The letter from the King of Dahomey is dated October 9, suggesting that the embassy left Abomey that month. Situated inland, Abomey, the capital of Dahomey, required a longer overland journey. The emissaries of *Dada* Adandozan descended on foot, along the approximately 70 miles to the port of Whydah, arriving in Salvador, on January 30, 1811.⁴

This approach places African rulers at the heart of the debate on the slave trade, usually restricted to Portuguese and British authorities. The African rulers intended to continue the slave trade. On the other hand, they competed for the attention of the *Dom* João and the merchants, to convince them of the advantages of their respective commercial proposals: Dahomey wanted exclusivity, Ardra offered free trade. Dahomian and Portuguese commercial had been trading in Whydah since early eighteenth century while Porto Novo was recently installed, offering a less solid commercial network. To analyze this context, I focus on a set of letters written between 1810 and 1812, all directly associated with the two embassies. Among them, two letters written in 1810, at the behest of the rulers of Ardra and Dahomey stand out. The first is signed “Rey de Ardra” (King of Ardra) and the second “Rey Dagomé” (King of Dahomey).

The article was composed in four parts, the first about *Dom* João and the Atlantic context of the embassies; the second on the Ardra embassy and local conflicts; the third on the Dahomian embassy and the rhetoric of humiliation adopted by *Dada* Adandozan; and finally a brief question about diplomacy in trade negotiations.

I. The “attitudes” of *Dom* João, Prince Regent of Portugal

In 1810 *Dom* João was the Prince Regent of Portugal. He was crowned king later in 1818, after her mother, the Queen Mother, passed away in 1816. As the regent he was in charge of all Portuguese possessions, and diplomacy. Article 10 of the ratification of the Treaty of Alliance and Friendship between Portugal and Great Britain refers to the slave trade and explicitly mentions the ports of Mina Coast:

His Royal Highness the Prince of Portugal, being fully convinced of the injustice and impolicy of the slave trade, and of the great disadvantages which arise from the necessity of introducing and continually renewing a foreign and factitious population for the

⁴ Pierre Verger. *Fluxo e refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o Golfo do Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos dos séculos XVII a XIX* (1967). São Paulo: Corrupio. 1987. p. 280.

purpose of labour and industry within His South American dominions, has resolved to cooperate with His Britannic Majesty in the cause of humanity and justice, by adopting the most efficacious means for bringing about a gradual abolition of the slave trade throughout the whole of His dominions. And actuated by this principle, His Royal Highness and Prince Regent of Portugal engages, that His subjects shall not be permitted to carry on the slave trade on any part of the Coast of Africa, not actually belonging to His Royal Highness's dominions, in which that trade has been discontinued and abandoned by the Powers and States of Europe which formerly traded there; reserving however, to His own subjects the right of purchasing and trading in slaves in the African dominions of the Crown of Portugal. It must however to be distinctly understood, that the stipulations of the present Article are not to be considered as invalidating or otherwise affecting the rights of the Crown of Portugal to the territories of Cabinda and Molembo (which rights have formerly been questioned by the Government of France), nor as limiting or restraining the commerce of Ajudá and other ports in Africa (situated upon the commonly called in the Portuguese language, the *Costa da Mina*) belonging to, or claimed by the Crown of Portugal, His Royal Highness the Prince Regent of Portugal being resolved not to resign nor forego His just and legitimate pretensions thereto, nor the rights of His subjects to trade with those places, exactly in the same manner as they have hitherto done.⁵

This ratification made *Dom João*, and through him his subjects, accept to discontinue the Atlantic slave trade in all ports that did not belong to Portuguese domains.

Portugal built the Fortress of Ajudá (Whydah) in 1720, keeping permanent installations since then, thus permanent domain. Porto Novo, on the other hand, was outside the area considered to be Portuguese domain, and therefore, trading there was

⁵ Castro. *Collecção dos tratados, convenções, contratos e actos públicos celebrados entre a coroa de Portugal e as mais potencias desde 1640 até o presente*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1857. vol. IV. p. 407-9.

prohibited.⁶ Despite the treaty, *Dom* João closely followed the commercial policy of his grandfather, King José I of Portugal, showing no intention of discontinuing the slave trade all along the Mina Coast. An example of this continuity is the way in which *Dom* João addressed the then King of Dahomey, *Dada* Agonglo, in 1796, referring to the embassy sent by that Dahomian monarch to Lisbon, in 1795:

The ambassadors, whom you sent to my Court in Lisbon, delivered to me your esteemed letter of March 20, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five, which I gave with that appreciation, and which I always make of Your Noble Person, and which the Kings have always my predecessors, desiring to strengthen more and more the bonds of Friendship, and good union, which fortunately has subsisted between our vassals and States for the increase and prosperity of a reciprocal commerce...⁷

If he accepted the exclusivity agreement with Dahomey, *Dom* João would be complying with article ten of the Treaty, but would restrict trade to Portuguese possessions.⁸ This commitment set aside the growing trade of slave traders established in Porto Novo and elsewhere, ports on the Mina Coast that had been left out of the treaty. Allowing the trade to pass through the signed pact, *Dom* João kept not only the trade in Whydah, but also in Porto Novo.

Regardless of how they were received, the embassies of 1810, show that Portugal, serving the interests of the slave trade, was willing to resist British pressure and maintain open trade with Whydah, Porto Novo and other ports along the Mina Coast.⁹ An indication of his attitude of compromise is the royal order sent to the Count dos Arcos, governor of Bahia, in February 1811. I have not yet located this royal order. I became aware of it through the governor himself who, still in 1811, mentioned its existence in a letter to *Dom* João de Almeida de Melo e Castro, 5th Count of Galveas,

⁶ Since 1807 this was the goal of Great Britain. Leslie Bethell. *A abolição do comércio brasileiro de escravos. A Grã-Bretanha, o Brasil e a questão do comércio de escravos, 1807-1869.* (1970). Brasília: Federal Senate, 2002. p. 28-29.

⁷ Letter from *Dom* João to King Agonglo of Dahomey. Palace of Queluz, 06.01.1796. IHGB DL 137.62. Transcribed in Mariza de Carvalho Soares. "Trocando galanterias: a diplomacia do comércio de escravos, Brasil- Daomé, 1810-1812. *Afro-Ásia*, 49 (2014), 229-271. Letter 1.

⁸ The port of Cabinda was one of the Portuguese commercial partnerships. An ambassador of the "king" of Cabinda visited the court in Rio de Janeiro shortly before the arrival of the ambassadors of Ardra and Dahomey. Verger. *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 282. The connection between Rio de Janeiro and Cabinda was made directly, without a stopover in Bahia, which facilitated access to the city. On the other hand, the visit was less embarrassing as it did not involve the presence of representatives not authorized by the treaty.

⁹ Its continuity can be observed, for example, in the royal charter of March 7, 1810. A. Delgado da Silva. *Coleção da Legislação Portuguesa*, vol. of 1802-1810. p. 858-860.

an important member of the royal administration.¹⁰ This is how the governor expressed himself:

As soon as I received the Royal Order that Your Excellency [Count of Galveas] gave me the grace to address on the 6th of February of the present year, I immediately sent to inform the Ambassadors of the Kings of Ardra or Porto Novo, and Dahomey so that in their observance would come to deal directly with me about their respective Missions.¹¹

The royal order reinforced *Dom João's* decision not to receive the ambassadors in Rio de Janeiro and gave his approval for negotiations to continue in Bahia. *Dom João* did not want Mina Coast ambassadors in Rio de Janeiro, but on the other hand, he had no intention of jeopardizing existing commercial ties. As he had said years before, this connection was essential for the “increase and prosperity of a reciprocal”.¹² The governor also mentions a royal imposition to the ambassadors ordering them to deal with the governor “about their respective Missions”. *Dom João* made it clear that the governor was handling the case on his behalf, as ambassadors did on behalf of their monarchs.¹³

In 1811, the governor of Bahia had in hands both the treaty signed with Great Britain and the letters from *Dom João* in favor of the continuity of the slave trade. He was also aware that, within the royal bureaucracy, there was room for a variety of

¹⁰ It is not clear in the governor's letter whether it is the same Royal Order issued in 1805 and resent by the Count of Galveas or a new order, reiterating the previous one. João de Almeida de Melo e Castro (1756-1814), 5th. Count of Galveas. He was ambassador in Vienna, London, Rome and The Hague, having a close knowledge of European and English politics in particular. From 1801 to 1803 he was Minister of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon, when he succeeded Dom Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. For the period between 1811 and 1812, I had difficulty establishing the holders and interim positions of minister and secretary of state, as well as understanding who was in Lisbon and who was in Rio de Janeiro. Between 1810 and 1812, Miguel Pereira Forjaz, who remained in Portugal as a member of the regency council, is listed as secretary. In Brazil, there is only reference to appointments from 1812 onwards. In 2012 (or was it still in 1811?) Galveas was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and War for the second time, and temporarily, for the Navy and Overseas. Even in 1812 he found himself seriously ill. On January 28, 1812 he assumed the post of secretary Fernando José de Portugal e Castro, the Marquis of Aguiar. Galveas wrote a second letter to the governor of Bahia on March 21, 1812, ordering the return of the ambassadors to his lands. Possibly, only after March, when apparently he was already unable to perform his duties, was he removed from the negotiations. Galveas died in 1814.

¹¹ Letter from the governor of Bahia, Count of Arcos, to the Count of Galveas. IHGB, doc DL 137.62. Bahia, 05.07.1811. Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 3.

¹² Letter from *Dom João* to King Agonglo of Dahomey. Theme I already explored in: Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 1.

¹³ Royal orders were a kind of letter issued by the king with instructions on the application of laws, rules of services, appointments, dismissals or punishments. They remain in modern administration, today called “portarias” (ordinances). Heloisa Liberalli Belloto. *Como fazer análise diplomática e análise tipológica*. State Archive and Official State Press, São Paulo, v. 8, p. 79, 2002.

interpretations about the Regent's intentions and attitudes towards the slave trade. He certainly still felt pressure from Bahian merchants and slave owners in favor of continuing the slave trade. On May 7, 1811, the governor wrote to the Count of Galveas. I could not find out what ties united the two Portuguese nobles, but from the tone of the letters, they had mutual trust in each other.¹⁴ To argue about the mismatch between the treaty and the Regent's instructions, the governor retrieved a letter sent by *Dom João* to the King of Dahomey in 1796, to which he had access at the Bahia Palace.¹⁵ The governor informed that the letter was “signed by the Royal Fist”, indicating problematic points in it, and making it known, explicitly, that he disagreed with its terms:

... I confess to Your Excellency [Count of Galveas] that I do not dare to speak of the Royal Highness Regent [*Dom João*] about this business: what will happen all the more, will not being new to temporize with these Potentates as shown in the enclosed copy of the letter signed by Royal Fist dated January 6, 1796.

If, by chance, this opinion of mine deserves the Royal Grace and it is still pleasing to His Royal Highness that I interpose my opinion on this matter for the future, I immediately ask Your Excellency for an explanation that will clarify the understanding of Article Ten of the Treaty of Alliance of February 19, 1810, it being equally indispensable for me to speak earnestly about this business to be sure whether the Supreme Will of His Royal Highness is to adopt the most effective means to achieve to the full extent of his dominions a gradual abolition of the Slave Trade, or that the stipulations of that same article shall not be deemed to limit or restrict the Trade in Ajudá.¹⁶

The trade with Porto Novo and other ports on the Mina Coast than Whydah was directly against the terms of the treaty. More than determining the boundaries of the Portuguese trade on the Mina Coast, the governor defended the spirit of the treaty.

¹⁴ Verger makes no mention about the connection between them. Verger. *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 280-281.

¹⁵ Letter from *Dom João* (on behalf of his mother the Queen *Dona Maria*) to King Agonglo of Dahomey. IHGB: DL 137.62. Published in: Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 1. This is an old letter that should have been kept at the Bahia government secretariat that was added to the letters brought by the ambassadors and sent to the Palace of Rio de Janeiro, in 1811.

¹⁶ Letter from the Count of Arcos to the Count of Galveas. IHGB, DL 137,62. Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 3.

How could he, as governor, negotiate commercial conditions that were in clear opposition to the signed treaty? The governor then asked Galveas to “clarify his intelligence” on the impasse he was faced with: in accordance with British intentions, he should “adopt the most effective means to achieve, throughout the entirety of his domains, a gradual abolition of the Commerce of Slaves”; but according to royal determinations, he should not consider the treaty as “limiting or restricting the trade in Whydah”; and besides that he was also to negotiate with the ambassador of Ardra, whose port which lay outside the limits established by the treaty.¹⁷

Installed in Rio de Janeiro, Galveas responded to the governor on August 2 of the same year. Before answering, he himself made a consultation with *Dom* Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, then Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and War, made 1st. Count of Linhares, in return for his performance in signing the 1810 treaties. The Count of Galveas' reply, given in line with the interpretation of the Count of Linhares, reinforced the governor's suspicions: the trade must continue; and not just in Whydah, but along the entire length of the coast. And, when possible, make progress:

Moving on, however, to the continuation that Your Excellency [Count of Arcos] gives to the Dealing with the Business of such Embassies, for which I represent Your Excellency, who began by needing greater elucidation on the true intelligence of Article X of the Treaty of Alliance of 19 of February 1810, concluded with Great Britain, even though Your Excellency was hesitating about the intentions that a gradual abolition of the slave trade would follow, which could not but be unpolitical in our present circumstances, I did not fail to address to the Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and War, Count of Linhares, as having been the Negotiator of that treaty, so that on the Article in question he could transmit to me all those declarations, with which Your Excellency, wished to be signed, although it was obvious from the letter of the said article; that our slave trade should continue not only in those ports, belonging to the Domain of His Royal Highness, and in those that were thought to be entitled to His Crown, but also in all the others in which their vassals were in possession of doing that trade. And transmitting to Your Excellency the copy of the reply given to me by the

¹⁷ Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 3.

aforementioned Secretary of State, in which he confirms this same interference, I must add to Your Excellency, by order of His Royal Highness, the declaration that, far from being his real intention to restrict such trade in any way, the Lord himself proposes to promote and facilitate it, as much as he can, well convinced of the necessity that there is, to make use of this unique resource, which we have, increase the population of this vast continent, where there is such a noticeable lack of hands, which Your Excellency knows, not only for agriculture, but for all the quality of work.¹⁸ (emphasis mine)

In opposition to the treaty, the letter was clear in determining the continuity and expansion of the trade as the only alternative to the lack of “arms” for agriculture in Brazil. Unfortunately, little is known about how slave traders and Bahian buyers interfered in the course of negotiations.¹⁹ Pierre Verger quickly cites contacts between the ambassadors and secretary Francisco Elesbão Pires de Carvalho e Albuquerque, a member of an important family of landowners in Bahia.²⁰

It was, perhaps, not only with knowledge of the treaty, but also of *Dom* João's intentions, that the Kings of Dahomey and Ardra hastened to come to Brazil to present their offers. The two embassies landed in the city of Salvador exactly one year after the signing of the treaty with Great Britain. When they went to the governor's presence they were officially informed that, by express orders from *Dom* João, they would not be allowed to continue their journey to Rio de Janeiro. At least *Dada* Adandozan already heard about this ban. In 1805 a similar order had been applied to another

¹⁸ Letter from the Count of Galveas to the Count of Arcos, 02.08.1811. BN-RJ – II-33-29-23. Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 4.

¹⁹ I am referring here both to the planters (tobacco, sugar cane and crops), but also to the urban slave owners, an important segment of the enslaved population of the Mina Coast gathered in Bahia. On Africans and slave labor in Bahia around 1810 see: A. J. R. Russell-Wood. *Escravos e libertos no Brasil colonial* (1982). Rio de Janeiro: Brazilian Civilization. 2005; Stuart B. Schwartz. *Segredos internos: engenhos e escravos na sociedade colonial, 1550-1835*. (1985) São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988; Katia M. de Queirós Mattoso. *Família e sociedade na Bahia no século XIX*. Salvador: Corrupio, 1988; João José Reis (org.). *Escravidão e invenção da liberdade*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1988; Maria José Andrade. *A mão-de-obra escrava em Salvador, 1811-1860*. Salvador: Corrupio, 1988. Bart J. Barickman. *A Bahian counterpoint: Sugar, tobacco, cassava, and slavery in the Recpncavo, 1780-1860*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1998. Jean Baptiste Nardi. *O fumo brasileiro no período colonial. Lavoura, comércio e administração*. São Paulo: Brasiliense. 1992.

²⁰ Document from AEB, presently Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia-APEB, 166 and 167. Verger. *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 280-281. About the family: Eduardo José Santos Borges. *Viver sob as leis da nobreza. A casa dos Pires de Carvalho e Albuquerque e as estratégias de ascensão social na Bahia do século XVIII*. PhD Dissertation in History. Universidade Federal da Bahia. 2015.

Dahomian embassy that had arrived in Salvador bound for Lisbon. At the time, the ban was justified as an economy measure, since such embassies brought high expenses to the Portuguese coffers.²¹

To explain his decision, *Dom João* sent a letter to the King of Ardra, received by his ambassador in Bahia. Cited by Verger, the letter was intended to calm the spirits of the representative of the monarch of Ardra. No equivalent letter to the King of Dahomey has been found, but it is possible that one was written. The justification for preventing the Dahomian embassy from going to Lisbon in 1805 was financial. In the 1811 letter *Dom João* claimed to want to “avoid the fatigue of the second part of the voyage for these messengers” and the difficulty in obtaining vessels in Rio de Janeiro for their return, since “the navigation to the Mina Coast was ordinarily made from the port of Bahia”. The letter ends by saying that “all these delays were harmful to the smooth and fast progress of the negotiations”, which is why the negotiations should take place in Bahia. The letter shows the underhanded attitude of the Portuguese monarch. On the one hand, *Dom João* prevented the ambassadors from visiting the court and avoided exposing his support for the prohibited trade; on the other hand, he created the conditions for the continuation of the trade, beckoning to African ambassadors (and traders on both sides of the Atlantic) with a “good and fast march of negotiations”.²²

Upon taking over the negotiations, the governor prepared a package with the letters of the kings of Dahomey and Ardra, a copy of *Dom João's* letter from 1796, and trunk with the gifts of the King of Dahomey. He sent everything to Rio de Janeiro, in the care of the Count of Galveas. In his response letter Galveas showed he received the shipment and was aware of the arguments of African monarchs:

...It is recognized that the precautions for the King of Dahomey are in complete opposition to those of the King of Ardra, so that the former wants our trade to become exclusive to his ports, while the latter facilitates and offers his own, through every quality of

²¹ On the royal order of 1805, see Luís Nicolau Parés. “Cartas do Daomé: uma introdução”; and “Cartas do Daomé: (comentário e notas). *Afro-Ásia*, 47 (2013). p. 295-328 e 329-395, respectively. p. 384, note 272.

²² Letter from *Dom João* to the King of Ardra (1811). Letter found by Pierre Verger in Bahia. AEB, 112, fl. 170. I did not have access to the entire document. I quote Verger, *Fluxo e refluxo*, p. 280.

cooperation on your part, to make it more advantageous and safe, and it is likely that this opposition will result in complaints and attacks, which these two rulers mutually make, into whose matters His Royal Highness does not wish to enter so any;...²³

He then makes it clear that it would be up to the governor (who he knew was against the continuation of trading in human beings) to establish the terms of the negotiation:

Under these principles, Your Excellency (Count of Arcos, Governor of Bahia) may regulate those negotiations, given that restrictions and Monopoly, which the King of Dahomey intends, cannot be admitted, as such claims are expressly contrary to the system and principles of freedom of commerce, which His Royal Highness has ordered to be adopted to such a recognized advantage to his faithful vassals.²⁴

In the instructions, the criterion mentioned is “freedom of trade” and not the treaty and its trade restrictions. Then Galveas informs that the governor has the time necessary to make the best decisions. With a certain arrogance, he adds that it would not be “very difficult to space and time the emissaries, until a decisive answer is given to them”.²⁵ This time reached one year.

I. The commercial strategy of Dè Ajohan, King of Ardra

After the fall of Ardra, a small group fleeing from the destroyed the Kingdom of Ardra moved eastwards and settled in the town of Aklon, by Lake Nokoué, where they founded the new kingdom, opening a port there that became known as Porto Novo. The many wars waged by Dahomey throughout the eighteenth century ended up making it difficult for traders to move along the roads that linked the hinterland to the coast, as well as the various ports along the coast. From the mid-eighteenth century, the territory of the new Kingdom of Ardra became an alternative for the caravans from the hinterland that came to sell slaves in the Mina Coast, mainly traders from Oyo,

²³ Letter from the Count of Galveas to the Count of Arcos (02.08.1811). Soares, “Trocando Galanterias”. Letter 4. p. 268.

²⁴ Letter from the Count of Galveas to the Count of Arcos (02.08.1811). Soares, “Trocando Galanterias”. Letter 4. p. 269.

²⁵ Letter from the Count of Galveas to the Count of Arcos (02.08.1811). Soares, “Trocando Galanterias”. Letter 4. p. 270.

Yoruba territory. Since then Porto Novo has gained prominence in the slave trade.²⁶

The greater distance between Abomey and the new Kingdom of Ardra did not prevent the continuation of the Dahomian attacks that, at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, extended to Badagry. While Dahomey needed wars to sell its prisoners, Ardra needed peace, to ensure the opening of the roads and the arrival of caravans with slaves to sell in Porto Novo.²⁷ In the 1770s, the King of Ardra sent a letter to the governor of Bahia requesting funds to build a new wharf in Porto Novo.²⁸ While the conflicts between Dahomey and Ardra continued, the slave trade grew in the ports of Badagry and Lagos. In 1810 there was already intense competition between Dahomian merchants based in Whydah and Porto Novo merchants, allied to Oyo, Dahomey's traditional competitors.

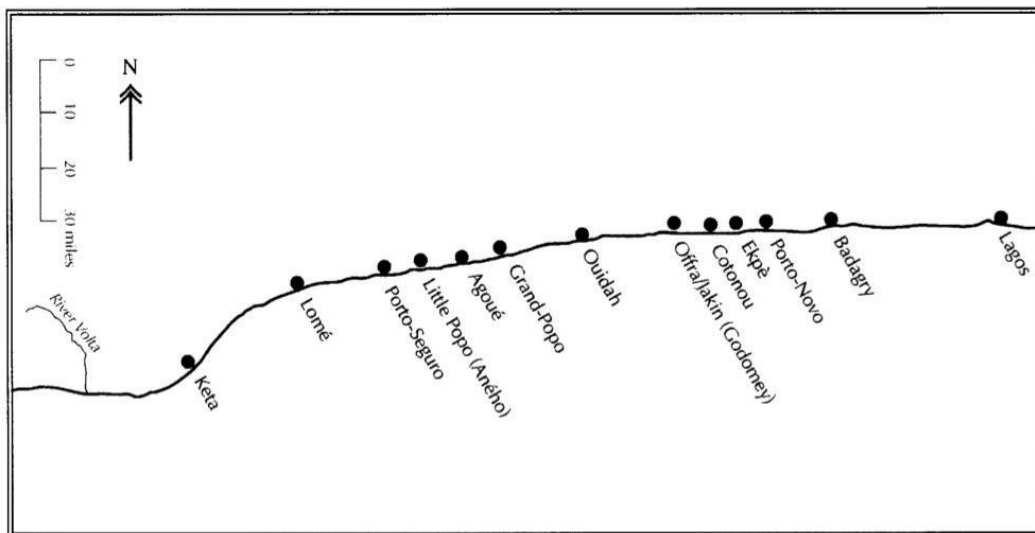
A sketch presented by Robin Law shows the sequence of the ports of Mina Coast (not all in operation all the time) where it is seen that Whydah had central position both in relation to the ports of the West (mainly the two Popo ports) and from the East (mainly Porto Novo and Badagry). The design of the coastal line gives the false impression that they would be coastal ports when, in fact, they were all on the shores of coastal lagoons and lakes, and not on ocean beaches.

²⁶ According to Verger, the slave trade in Porto Novo would have started in the reign of Houyi, between 1757 and 1761. Verger. *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 249, note 2. Person writes Huyi and doubts the accuracy of these dates, although he agrees that Dè Huyi ruled for a short time around this period. Yves Person. "Chronology of the Gun Kingdom of Hogbonu (Porto-Novo)". *Cahiers d'études africaines*, vol. 15, n° 58, 1975. p. 327.

²⁷ Historian Robin Law summarizes the successive clashes: Dahomey attacked Ekpè in 1747 and Porto Novo in 1763. In 1782-84 Dahomey allied with Porto Novo to attack and destroy Ekpè and Badagry. Then Dahomey attacked Porto Novo in 1787, 1791, and 1804. Law argues that "Dahomian pressure on Badagry and Porto Novo, however, was ineffective in the long run to the extent that it drove the trade of Oyo further east to Lagos, which was beyond the effective reach of Dahomian military operations." Robin Law. *Ouidah. The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port' 1727-1892*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 2004. p. 126.

²⁸ Letter from the King of Porto Novo (1770). For a description of the conflicts between Dahomey and Ardra see Silva Jr. "Interações atlânticas". p. 33-36.

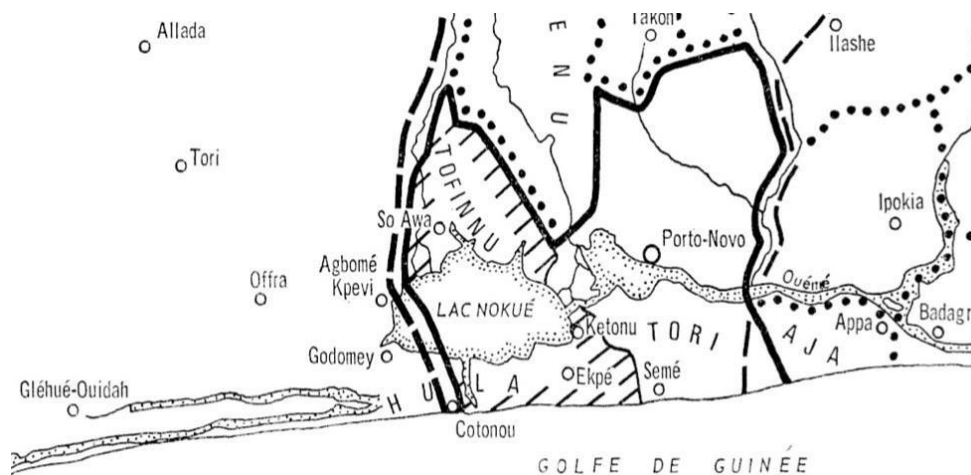
Slave trading ports on the Mina Coast (Robin Law)



Source: Robin Law. *Ouidah. The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port' 1727-1892*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 2004. p. 124.

Yves Person's map gives a better location of these ports. The solid black line indicates the perimeter of the new Kingdom of Ardra/Porto Novo (the former capital is marked Allada), as well as the location of Whydah (presently Ouidah), Jaquen (presently Godomey), Porto Novo, Badagry and Lagos. There, one has a better view of the difficulties faced in transporting people on foot or in canoes to the beaches where the vessels for the Atlantic crossing were offshore, waiting to be supplied.

Slave trading ports on the Mina Coast (Yves Person, detail)



Source: Yves Person. "Chronology of the Gun Kingdom of Hogbonu (Porto-Novo)".

Cahiers d'études africaines, vol. 15, n. 58, 1975. p. 217-238.

As announced in the introduction, by the end of 1810 the Kingdom of Ardra was

already ruled by *Dè Ajohan*, *Dè Hufon*'s successor. There is no consensus on the date of this succession. According to J. Geay (1924) *Hufon* ruled *Ardra* between 1800 and 1813; for *Akindélé* (1953) *Dè Hufon* would have ruled between 1794 and 1807. According to the chronology of *Yves Person* (1975), the most accepted, *Dè Hufon* would have ruled between 1803/4 and 1815. *Person* does not estimate the government of *Dè Ajohan*, leaving the chronologies of the authors cited by him as an option.²⁹ For the year 1805 there are indications that *Dè Hufon* still ruled. The various battles between the armies of *Dahomey* and *Ardra* (1804-1805) are always attributed to *Dada Adandozan* and *Dè Hufon*. On the same occasion, *Dè Hufon* is credited with continuing the negotiations for the improvements of *Porto Novo* started in 1770. In 1808 there was a proposal to build a canal with the aim of cutting off the access of the *Dahomians* to the port by land.³⁰

The letter from the King of *Ardra* to *Dom João* brought by the ambassador of that king in 1810 gives strong indications that *Hufon* was dead or removed and that *Ardra* had a new king. The letter is signed “The King [unreadable]”. The strikethroughs prevent the reading of the name or title registered therein. According to *Verger* (who had access to a copy of this letter he found in *Bahia*), the letter was written on September 7, 1810, but its author remains unidentified.³¹ However, the text of the letter gives clues about the king. In the second paragraph, the sentence begins by informing about the king's inauguration, with emphasis on his “coronation”. A long sentence begins by mentioning the coronation and ends by advocating free trade: “The following month after my inauguration and coronation ... for business is done at will and not by force”.³² The letter allows us to conclude that *Dè Ajohan* was “crowned” between 1805 and 1810, when the letter was written and brought to *Brazil* by the ambassador. According to *Robin Law*, *Hufon* had a government of little credibility because he was not recognized by the ancient Kingdom of *Ardra*.³³ By highlighting his

²⁹ For the three chronologies see: *Yves Person*. “Chronologie du royaume gun de *Hogbonu* (*Porto Novo*)”. *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, 1975, n. 58. p. 217-238.

³⁰ *kinjogbin*. *Dahomey and its Neighbours*. p. 188; *Parés*, “*Cartas do Daomé*”. p. 321-322.

³¹ *Pierre Verger* describes the first embassy of *Ardra* (*Porto Novo*) to the Portuguese court. The copy of the letter from the King of *Ardra* that he consulted in *Bahia* is dated September 7, 1810. *Verger*. *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 279-283. Cite: AEB, 112, fl. 50 (letter from *Dom João* to the King of *Ardra*, dated 06.02.1811); AEB 167, page 109.

³² Although the term “coronation” is used to indicate legitimation of the claimant, it is more a case of “enthronement” since the recognition of authority is done by the “throne” and not by the “crown”, a practice unknown in this region. Letter from the King of *Ardra* to *Dom João*. *Soares*. “*Trocando galanterias*”. Letter 2.

³³ *Law*, *Slave Coast*. p. 91.

coronation Dè Ajohan shows his superiority over his predecessor.³⁴ If my chronology of Ardra's rulers is correct, Dè Ajohan was then a newly installed ruler, determined to compete with Adandozan, the already experienced Dahomian King who had made his predecessor's life hell with frequent attacks on Porto Novo.

The 1810 embassy was the first sent by a King of Ardra to the Portuguese court, but that does not mean that Dè Ajohan was uninformed about the commercial situation at the time, or about the intricacies of politics. His attitude shows that he had not only internal support, but also other segments, such as the traders from Oyo who traded in Porto Novo, and a group of Brazilian traders. In his 1804 letter Dè Hufon argues: “this is the port with the greatest abundance of captives; the Oyo and the *Malês* (Muslim traders from the hinterland) bring them here, as His Highness can verify in the city of Bahia if it's true or not”.³⁵

Quite possibly, he was advised by merchants from Brazil who already frequented Porto Novo or were interested in settling there. Everything indicates that one of his informants could have been Inocencio Marques de Santana who, after serving and becoming annoyed with *Dada* Adandozan, had moved to Porto Novo. When referring to Inocência in his letter of 1810, Dè Ajohan says he “ordered Inocência to escort his ambassador to Bahia and from there to Rio de Janeiro...”. Inocência had already accompanied the Dahomian embassy to Salvador in 1805, and, according to the letter, he would have gone to Brazil again, this time on behalf of the King of Ardra.³⁶ If Inocência did accompany Ardra's ambassador, most likely he participated in the negotiations in Salvador. In his letter Dè Ajohan also mentioned traders from different nations, showing that Porto Novo was a “free port”.³⁷

³⁴ I do not enter here into the controversy over the legitimacy of Adandozan's government that occupies much of the historiography about his government. All of it comes after his deposition and, even based on his attitudes, was at least in part promoted by his opponents. For a summary of the controversy, see Akinjogbin (*Dahomey and its Neighbors*) and more recently Alberto da Costa e Silva. *Francisco Felix de Souza, mercador de escravos*. Rio de Janeiro: EdUERJ/Nova Fronteira. 2004.

³⁵ Verger. *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 275. The letter is signed “King of Ardra, Hypo” (Hypo or Hufon). View Person. “Chronologie du royaume gun of Hogbonu (Porto-Novo)”. p. 224.

³⁶ Letter from King of Ardra to Dom João (1810). Soares. “Trocando galaterias”. Letter 2. p. 265. On the wiles of innocent nothingness Innocent (Inocência), see Parés. “Cartas do Daomé”. p. 318-323. On Inocência Marques de Santana in 1805 see: Verger. *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 279-283; e Silva. *Francisco Felix de Souza*. p. 77.

³⁷ Between 1805 and 1815 there is no record of the presence of vessels with these flags in Porto Novo. Even taking into account a possible under-registration, the information is suspect. Considering the shipments in Porto Novo (the main port of embarkation) between the years 1805 and 1815, a total of fifteen voyages is obtained, eleven with the Portuguese flag and the other four with owners and captains with names in

Finally, *Dè Ajohan* does not spare accusations against *Dada Adandozan*. He informs *Dom João* to have tried unsuccessfully to agree with the enemy monarch; and discusses the “damage” *Adandozan* has done. The tone of the letter is that of a king who presents himself as a legitimate political and commercial interlocutor, interested in opening new negotiations and who openly criticizes his competitor, disqualifying him as a commercial partner:

In the following month of my inauguration and coronation, I sent an ambassador of mine to propose the said [*Adandozan*], although it scares me to hear my predecessors say and also being from my time wants to go about falsely and without causes, causing damage to the ships that despise their port and seek this and any others where they see that they can do better on their finances, and the brevity also proposing to him that it was very wrong to do damage to the ships and captivate the whites, since it was never recorded with him that there was war with the nations of this country and that he saw the British, Portuguese, Americans and Danes if they continued to come to this port and to the others and they despised their era for the bad shelter they received there, since all business is done at will and not by force.³⁸

The accusations are very precise: attacks on ships, wrongful enslavement of white people and bad treatment of foreign merchants and officials. On the other hand, *Dè Ajohan* offers a good welcome, freedom of trade and good quality slaves, coming from the interior. It also makes it clear that the Portuguese could build a fort and a warehouse, in addition to planting crops for themselves and their people. Also as an incentive, *Dè Ajohan* authorized traders to trade, tax-free, goods such as ivory, wax, brazilwood, cloth and palm oil. Another important argument he considers is the offer of a plot of land for the construction of a Portuguese fort “on the water’s edge”, while the Portuguese Fortress of *Ajudá* was “distant [from the sea] between two leagues”. It is not clear whether the lot was in a more accessible point of the lagoons or effectively by the sea.³⁹ None of these advantages took away from Portugal the right to trade in

Portuguese. To see TSTDB: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/cfPdnTJC> On the English in *Ajuda* after 1807 see Akinjogbin. *Dahomey and its Neighbours*. p. 192-193.

³⁸ Letter from the King of *Ardra* to *Dom João*. See Soares. “*Trocando galanterias*”. Letter 2.

³⁹ It also clarifies that agricultural work could be done by Portuguese slaves, or by per day local workers. It is unclear whether free workers, or slaves for hire. The letter says: “and they will also be able to plant

other ports such as Popo, Badagry and even Whydah. On the other hand, Porto Novo advocated for itself the right to remain a free port.⁴⁰

Porto Novo clearly not only competed with Whydah but proposed that Portugal violate the terms of the Treaty of Friendship, which explains, at least in part, its apparent generosity. The new monarch was betting on Whydah's difficulties in supplying the market and on the growing demand of Bahian buyers. Boldly, the King of Ardra proposed the violation of the treaty in exchange for better hands for the work. Dè Ajohan and the merchants based in Porto Novo and Bahia bet that it was worth violating the treaty to serve the interests of slave buyers in Brazil.

2. The strategy of *Dadá Adandozan*, King of Dahomey

Dada Adandozan was the most controversial ruler in the history of Dahomey.⁴¹ He ruled from the death of Agonglo in 1797 until 1818 when he was deposed and subsequently erased from the Dahomian royal dynasty by his successor King Ghezo.⁴² In 1810 *Dada* Adandozan knew of the importance of the port of Whydah, the only one on the Mina Coast where Portugal, without hurting British pretensions, was able to maintain the slave trade. But he also knew that, in the medium term, the treaty threatened the human beings commerce. It is possible that he decided to send his embassy to Brazil after learning of the intentions of the new King of Ardra. As announced by Dè Ajohan in his letter to *Dom* João, he had tried to negotiate an agreement with *Dada* Adandozan on the division of service to the demand of Brazilian

cotton, coffee, indigo, corn, beans, rice and everything else that the land produces, not paying any of the aforementioned, only yes to day laborers in [the case] who do not want to work with their slaves". Letter from the King of Ardra to Dom João. Soares. "Trocando galanterias". Letter 2.

⁴⁰ According to Michel Videgla, the Gun, people from the region where the migrants from Ardra settled, never imposed the closure of trade, in the same way as Dahomey in Whydah. Once installed there, the ruler of Ardra would have followed the same practice. Videgla associates this difference with the warrior character of Dahomey, always willing to protect its trade, while Ardra kept its free port and less dependent on the slave trade. Michel Videgla. "Le royaume de Porto-Novo vis-à-vis the abolitionist policy of European nations from 1848 to 1882". In: Robin Law e Silke Strickrodt. *Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra)*. Occasional Paper n. 6, October 1999. Stirling, Scotland: Centre of Commonwealth Studies. p. 136.

⁴¹ According to Akinjogbin's questionable version, Adandozan was an "imaginative and progressive young monarch", "far ahead of his time" who tried to modernize his domains and replace the slave trade with agriculture. Akinjogbin. *Dahomey and its Neighbors*. p. 200.

⁴² Historian Elisée Soumonni summarizes this debate, which in Benin today is historiographical, but also political. Elisée Soumonni. "The compatibility between the slave trade and the oil palm trade in Dahomey, 1818-1858". In: Elisée Soumonni. *Dahomey and the Atlantic world*. Rio de Janeiro/Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History-SEPHIS/Center for Afro-Asian Studies-CEAA. 2001. p. 61- 79.

merchants among them (“I had sent an ambassador of mine to propose...”).⁴³ With the failure of this proposal, the solution for *Dè Ajohan* and then for *Dada Adandozan* was to involve *Dom João* in the already fierce dispute.

Like the King of Ardra, *Dadá Adandozan* also makes his ambassadors be emissaries of a letter to *Dom João*. While *Dè Ajohan's* letter makes some accusations against the King of Dahomey and succinctly presents his commercial proposal, *Adandozan's* letter is long, deals with various subjects and is dedicated to accusing and humiliating his competitor at length, without any reference to commercial negotiation.⁴⁴ While *Dè Ajohan* informs that he has been recently “crowned”, *Dada Adandozan* signs his letter with a well-designed stamp, reinforcing his familiarity with Portuguese etiquette.

Signature stamp: Rey D'Agome



Source: Letter of *Dadá Adandozan* to *Dom João* (1810)

HGB DL 137,62. Cortesia do IHGB.

Dadá Adandozan refers to the Kingdom of Ardra as Porto Novo, without mentioning the name of the then ruler (nor does the King of Ardra give the name of the King of Dahomey). Unlike the King of Ardra who, in addition to being recently sworn in, sent his first embassy to the Portuguese court, the King of Dahomey was an old partner of Portugal. *Dadá Adandozan* reminds *Dom João* of this old friendship by informing about gifts received by his great-grandfather:

I warn you that I still have eight parasols [...] which parasols

⁴³ Letter from the King of Ardra to *Dom João* (1810). Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 2.

⁴⁴ *Adandozan's* letter of 1810, the original of which belongs to the IHGB (DL 137.62) was published in a set of 14 letters issued by Dahomian rulers. See Parés. “Cartas do Daomé”. The 1810 letter is the 13th in the list.

were a king of Portugal [...] old brother who sent from Lisbon to my great-grandfather.⁴⁵

In a letter of 1804-5 *Dada* Adandozan had referred to *Dom* João as “my brother the King of Portugal” and to the King of Ardra as “King of Arda”, and lord of the “called Porto Novo”.⁴⁶

In the 1810 letter Adandozan addressed *Dom* João as “prince of Portugal” and “my brother”. The letter built around a rhetoric of humiliation of the two monarchs (*Dom* João and *Dè* Ajohan) and the valorization of his own power. He praises his own victories in the war, particularly against the Kingdom of Ardra/Porto Novo. He despises his enemy and competitor by describing in detail Dahomey's militar victory over Porto Novo at Agonsa. About the battle he says: “no one escaped even to go to take the war message to the king”. He adds that he had killed them all “so that he [King of Ardra] can never again raise arms for any king.” As a counterpoint to the humiliation of his competitor, he praises himself: “I did all this and took the title myself, the *Imigôu a Funquijá*, which is when a man is braver than another and attacks him with his arms and kicks him in the floor...”.⁴⁷

But for Adandozan to humiliate *Dè* Ajohan was not enough. He also needed to humiliate *Dom* João. In the letter Adandozan claims to have received news from a ship that “the entire [Portuguese] royal family had been prisoners of the French and that they had taken Lisbon”. To make the humiliation even greater, he says that he learned from another ship that “Your Royal Highness, and your sovereign mother, the Queen of Portugal, had withdrawn, under the British and Portuguese fleet, to the city of Bahia”. While Adandozan attacked and destroyed his enemies, *Dom* João abandoned his kingdom and fled. Under the protection of the British Army. Portugal and Ardra were two defeated and humiliated monarchs before him. In a coup de grace, he ended this part of the letter, addressing *Dom* João: “my feeling has been that I am not close of Your Highness, nor can I walk to help you with my arm, because my will is big.”⁴⁸

The rhetoric of humiliation aimed to demonstrate Adandozan's superiority. He

⁴⁵ Parés, “Cartas do Daomé”. Letter 13. p. 390. Remark: The word “daxa” in the Portuguese published transcript should be replaced by Lxa, abbreviation for Lisbon.

⁴⁶ Parés, “Cartas do Daomé”. Letter 12. p. 360.

⁴⁷ Parés, “Cartas do Daomé”. Letter 13. p. 380, 381.

⁴⁸ Parés, “Cartas do Daomé”. Letter 13. p. 378.

believed that pointing out *Dom João's* weakness would benefit commercial negotiation. The strategy was to reactivate early connections (by the mention of his great-father), and to convince *Dom João* to reactivate the old Portuguese Fortress of Ajudá. That is why he says: “I will ask Your Royal Highness, that we will straighten our friendship, [and I ask you] to send me a governor designated by this Court, as it was before, with lieutenant, storekeeper, scrivener, priest and surgeon.” To conclude his full plea: “For a brother, even if he fights with another, always turns out to be fine”.⁴⁹

Still in his strategy of humiliating to negotiate, Adandozan exposes *Dom João* to ridicule when he talks to him about the trunk of gifts he sent with “gallantry that is made in my homeland, of which Your Royal Highness will forgive me”. The apology shows his perfect sense of the difference between the two courts, Abomey and Lisbon/Rio de Janeiro. Aware of these differences, he adds: “Your Royal Highness can wear the said pants and wrap yourself in a cloth like this”. And he jokes: “your people will say, the King of Portugal is so rich, how will he wear that [?]”.⁵⁰ His strategy of humiliation culminates in the sending to *Dom João* of a “war flag” in which the decapitated heads of two generals of Ardra are seen, in addition to many other prisoners.⁵¹ As *Dom João* does not have his own victories in the war against the French, Adandozan suggests that he go out in cortege with his flag that bears the dead of the war against Ardra. As he lends his arms, he lends his dead:

I also send a flag of the wars that belongs to the people I caught and the heads I cut off, by the way for my brother to see, and to bring before him when he goes out on his walks.⁵²

In summary, the strategy of *Dada Adandozan* is quite clear: use diplomacy to humiliate competitors and trading partners in order to emerge victorious in trade

⁴⁹ Parés, “Cartas do Daomé”. Letter 13. p. 383, 384.

⁵⁰ The gifts mentioned are, among other things, sandals, pipes, leather bag, cloths, and the mentioned “war flag”. The Adandozan Collection was destroyed along with the whole building of the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro, which burned down in September 2018. About the gifts see: Mariza de Carvalho Soares; Michele de Barcelos Agostinho; Rachel Corrêa Lima. *Getting to Know the Kumbukumbu Exhibition at the National Museum, Brazil, 1818-2018*. Nashville: Slave Societies Digital Archive Press. 2021. https://www.museunacional.ufrj.br/see/docs/publicacoes/Kumbukumbu_US.pdf [accessed on 10.30.2021]. For a more extended analysis see: Mariza de Carvalho Soares. *A coleção Adandozan do Museu Nacional. Brasil-Daomé, 1818-2018*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X. 2022.

⁵¹ The conflict between Dahomey and Ardra has been dealt with by several authors. For recent papers see Parés. “Letters from Dahomey”. p. 380; Silva Jr. “Interações atlânticas”. p. 33; Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. p. 250-254.

⁵² Parés, “Cartas do Daomé”. Letter 13. p. 392.

negotiations. What can be seen from the unfolding of events is that his plan did not work. *Dada* knew that his trade was at risk not only because of the treaty, but by competition from neighboring ports. But he did not understand that his strategy, inspired by his predecessors, was no longer effective.

3. The presence of Portuguese diplomacy in trade relations

It is essential to highlight the participation of the count of Galveas in this negotiation. The letter dated March 21, 1812, is one of his last interferences before he became seriously ill, and replaced, still in 1812, by the Count of Aguiar. In this letter he transmit new orders from *Dom João* saying: “it would be convenient to have them withdraw to their homeland, as soon as possible”. *Dom João* ordered the return of the ambassadors to Mina Coast without jeopardizing what he called the “relationships we have with the territories from which they came”, that means, the continuity of the Atlantic slave trade.⁵³ The dimension of Galveas' participation in the negotiations with the African monarchs that succeeded the Treaty of Alliance and Friendship is yet to be better studied. Perhaps because he died in 1814, Galveas was left out by the historiography of the slave trade in the Johannine period. But between 1810 and 1812 he was the bearer of the word of *Dom João* and probably collaborated actively in the definition of royal decisions: he helped to circumvent the alleged monopoly of Dahomey, to open the doors to trade with Porto Novo and, despite of British pretensions, to guarantee the supply of enslaved labor to Brazil.

The participation of merchants and planters in these negotiations is still open, which may explain why the ambassadors took so long in Bahia. The chronology of the letters gives the measure of this slowness: the embassies arrived in Salvador between December 1810 and January 1811, one year after the signing of the treaty; still in February, the Count of Galveas sent instructions for the ambassadors not to go to Rio de Janeiro and for negotiations to take place in Salvador; in May the governor of Bahia wrote to Galveas asking for “clarification”; in august Galveas responded by reiterating *Dom João's* determination to continue negotiations. Finally, in March 1812, Galveas sent a new order from *Dom João* to Salvador, determining that the negotiations be closed.

⁵³ Note that the correspondence is dated March 21, 1812. Letter from the Count of Galveas to the Count of Arcos, written in the Palace of Rio de Janeiro, 21.03.1812. Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 5. Verger partially transcribes a letter dated May 21, 1812, signed by the Count of Aguiar, indicating that he oversaw continuing negotiations with the Count of Arcos regarding the slave trade and the 1810 treaty with merchants from Bahia. Verger, *Fluxo e refluxo*, p. 333.

In October the ambassadors were informed about the arrangements for their return.⁵⁴

The ambassador of Dahomey boarded the brigantine *Pistola* bound for the port of Whydah. The *Pistola*, owned by Raimundo José Pereira do Vale and Domingos Pacheco Pereira, left for Whydah under the responsibility of master Antônio Narciso on October 15, 1812. Certainly, when they arrived in Abomey, the two ambassadors had difficulty explaining to *Dada* Adandozan why they did not personally deliver the letter and gifts to *Dom* João and why they did not obtain the intended commercial exclusivity. After 90 days, the *Pistola* returned to Bahia on August 15, 1813, bringing 366 slaves, out of the 371 that were shipped.⁵⁵

According to Verger, on the same occasion it was stipulated that the ambassador of Ardra would board the brigantine *Constante*, owned by Domingos Pacheco Pereira, whose master was Francisco Xavier de Abreu, bound for Porto Novo.⁵⁶ But the return of the Ardra ambassador appears to have been different from what Verger predicted. Lisa Castillo recently located a baptism record that states that on January 10, 1813, the ambassador of Ardra and his secretary were still in town. The were baptized by the bishop of Bahia in the archbishop's chapel, in Salvador. Perhaps negotiations continued with him, or perhaps Joseph, as he was baptized, had other reasons to delay his return.⁵⁷

The ambassador had as godparents the count of Arcos (governor) and Luiz de Saldanha, son of the Count of Ponte, former governor who died in 1809. The secretary had as godparents Domingos Vaz de Carvalho, a member of an important family of

⁵⁴ Galveas refers to only one ambassador, probably the Dahomian. This ambassador had to return to his land with all diplomatic honors, taking as a “treat” a tray of a complete tea set, probably silver. Letter from Galveas to the Count of Arcos (21.03.1812). Soares. “Trocando galanterias”. Letter 5.

⁵⁵ Verger, *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 283. The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database records three voyages for the *Pistola*: 7334, 7356 and 47178. The third record appears to contain errors. <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/AMsi3jsM> <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/AMsi3jsM> [accessed on 30.10.2018].

⁵⁶ Verger, *Fluxo e refluxo*. p. 283.

⁵⁷ Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Salvador. Baptism Book of the Parish of Sé (1807-1814), Salvador, Bahia. 1) “José ambassador of Porto Novo - On the tenth of January of one thousand eight hundred and thirteen in the archbishop's chapel, the Most Excellent and Illustrious Bishop Friar José de Santa Escolástica, baptized José of [Mundobi] Nation, ambassador of the King of Porto Novo having as godfather the Most Excellency Count of Arcos governor of this captaincy...”; 2) “Bernardo secretary – On the tenth of January of one thousand eight hundred and thirteen, in the archbishop's chapel, the Most Reverend Archbishop Friar José de Santa Escolástica baptized Bernardo of [Mundobi] Nation, an adult, secretary to the king's ambassador from Porto Novo. The godfather was Domingos Vaz de Carvalho...”. I thank Lisa Castillo for transcribing and generously sending the two records she found. Available in <https://ident.familysearch.org/cis-web/oauth2/v3/authorization> [Acesso em 21.01.2020]

merchants in Bahia, and Luiz de Saldanha.⁵⁸ The ambassador and his secretary were Mundobi (or Mondobi), a “nation” found in Bahia for the first time precisely in 1812 and with several other records from the 1820s-30s, when trade between Bahia and Porto Novo increased.⁵⁹

To what extent the visit of the two embassies changed, or not, the terms of the negotiations between Bahian and African traders is a topic still to be explored. What is certain is that until the 1860s, starting from Whydah and Porto Novo, the trade in human beings continued to disembark enslaved Mina Coast people of different nations in Bahia.

Conclusion

The set of correspondence analyzed inserts the West African rulers in the debate about the continuity or extinction of the Atlantic slave trade, usually restricted to Europeans. Commercial negotiations were carried out, based in political power and diplomacy which shows the use of power as an instrument of pressure to guarantee favorable commercial agreements. The correspondence of the monarchs of Dahomey and Ardra with *Dom João* analyzed here brings to light a little-known facet of the commercial relations of the Johannine period, showing the importance of diplomacy between Portugal and the African kingdoms in the Atlantic slave trade.

As I argued previously, and I reiterate here, by preventing the embassies from traveling to Rio de Janeiro, *Dom João* displeased the monarchs who controlled the two main trading posts for the sale of enslaved Africans on the Mina Coast. The course of events showed that, even offering significant advantages, the King of Ardra was not able to replace Dahomey in the slave trade. The King of Dahomey, in turn, failed in his attempt to win the monopoly on the slave trade with Portugal in Mina Coast. Disregarding both, but maintaining commercial relations with both, *Dom João* seems to have won: He guaranteed the continuity of the trade and avoided open friction with the British.⁶⁰ It is difficult to assess the extent to which the two African rulers knew the ins and outs of European diplomacy, the breaches it contained and the underlying divergences. What is certain is that both knew that the new treaty could have negative

⁵⁸ Domingos Vaz de Carvalho was a resident of the city of Salvador and a member of the aforementioned important merchant family since the 18th century. In 1816 he was captain. *Idade d'Ouro*, n. 102, 20.12.1816.

⁵⁹ Verger, *Fluxo e Refluxo*. p. 669.

⁶⁰ I reiterate here the argument already presented in Soares. “Trocando galanterias”.

consequences for trade and that negotiations were urgent. Not only the Kings of Dahomey and Ardra realized this, but also the slave traders of Mina Coast and Brazil.

Quantitative data on slave shipments in Whydah and Porto Novo mask two different commercial strategies on the part of Dahomey and Ardra. Dahomey intended to continue exporting prisoners enslaved in wars against its neighbors through Whydah. Porto Novo opened up a new commercial route counting on supply from the interior, mainly from Oyo, bringing great damage to the already difficult trade in Whydah. With the support of the traders of Oyo (not explored here), *Dè Ajohan* was able to offer slaves considered to be of better quality, and commercial freedom. Finally, the efforts of the governor of Bahia in favor of ending the trade was thwarted by pressure from virtually all parties involved in this negotiation. By the time the ambassadors returned to Mina Coast all those who involved in that trade were content.

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