

“So, says I, we are a brutal kind”ⁱ

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The transition from the Atlantic Slave trade to a ‘legitimate’ trade in palm oil has been a hot topic evoking much debate amongst historians of all generations. After the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 by the British, the coastal African economies whose success once depended on slaves would now be forced to turn to a trade in palm oil; palm oil was chosen because it was semi-domesticated to the region and because the world market was increasing its demand for the product. What is debated between scholars is how easily the oil trade replaced the slave trade, due to their structural make-ups, and what kind of effects the transition had on the kingdom. While some scholars, such as David Eltis and Ralph Austen, have theorized that little structural difference existed between the two trades, thus making the transition from one to the other relatively simple, others have come to see the structural differences as an important cause of difficulty in the transition from one to the other. Tony Hopkins, who has studied the inherent difference in the two trades, has come to call the period of transition the ‘crisis of adaptation’. The ‘crisis of adaptation’ is the idea that, “rulers were no longer able to control the export trade and appropriate the major share of its proceeds, and that transition significantly weakened their economic and political position.”ⁱⁱ The case of Dahomey, a kingdom that existed during the slave trade in the current region of southern Benin, has produced many sources that support the ‘crisis’ and thus shows the structural differences in the two trades. Thus, by examining the case of Dahomey, two points become clear; first of all, the ‘crisis of adaptation’ is a true phenomenon that is not dismissible and secondly, the structures of the slave trade and palm oil trade were vastly different and not conducive to a smooth transition.

An Introduction to Dahomey

Before looking at Dahomey’s involvement in the slave trade and the effect that the transition to palm oil had on the state, a short explanation of the Dahomey Kingdom is necessary. In looking at the Dahoman historiography, it is important to keep in mind that there is an abolitionist and an anti-abolitionist discourse, which has caused the historiography of the kingdom to take two routes, depending upon which side the scholar errs. Because of the time period that the kingdom existed, the slave trade is the most important point in its history and thus the greatest point of contention.

ⁱ The Shins. So Says I. *Chutes Too Narrow*. 2003.

ⁱⁱ Robin Law, “Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade” (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 1.

The Dahomey Kingdom existed in the southern part of the current People's Republic of Benin. There are disputes about the possibility that a kingdom names Dahomey existed in the same region as early as the early sixteenth century,ⁱⁱⁱ but the official beginning of the kingdom of Dahomey is commonly dated to 1727, after King Agaja of Abomey conquered Allada and Whydah, two coastal cities heavily involved with the Atlantic trade.^{iv} Scholars' opinions here too differ on the reason that Agaja attacked these states at this time. I. A. Akinjogbin claims that one of his motives "would appear to have been to restrict and eventually stop the slave trade, which had been the cause of the breakdown of the traditional system in Aja, and to substitute other 'legitimate' items of trade between Europeans and the new king of Dahomey."^v He is reporting the views that anti-abolitionist historians conveyed in primary sources while Snelgrave's work denotes abolitionist claims that Agaja's attack, "was motivated by a desire for more effective access to the Atlantic slave trade."^{vi} In looking at Dahomey's growing involvement in the trade after the period of conquest, it is difficult to find support for the idea that Agaja invaded for any reason other than to be involved in the slave trade.

The cause of Dahomey's inherently militaristic character is debated between anti-abolitionist and abolitionist scholars as whether or not it is a result of the kingdom's participation in the slave trade. Robin Law argues that, "the particular character of the Dahoman state as it existed by the early nineteenth century had been profoundly influenced by its participation in the Atlantic slave trade...since [it] was a new rather than ancient kingdom (founded only during the seventeenth century)."^{vii} While his view is that of the anti-abolitionists, who wanted to show how corrupt the trade was and how necessary it was to see the coming of the end, abolitionists claim that the people were inherently militaristic and had been since before the people came into contact with the slave trading communities. It is once again difficult to find legitimacy in the anti-abolitionists' views, as there is little proof that the kingdom of Dahomey predated the slave trade. In essence, the inhumanity of the trade in human cargo had a profound effect on the entire nature of the state as the state was being developed during the time when violence was necessary to secure a place in the burgeoning world economy.

In the wars that occurred with surrounding states, many people were captured and taken back to Dahomey to become slaves, victims of human sacrifice, and commodities to be sold into the slave trade. Though, it is important to note, "that no Dahoman man ever embarked in war merely for the sake of procuring wherewithal to purchase [European] commodities."^{viii} Slaves played an important

ⁱⁱⁱ I.A. Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours 1708-1818 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 13.

^{iv} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade: Reflections on the Historiography of the Rise of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History* 27 (Number 2 1986): 242.

^v I.A. Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours 1708-1818 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 77.

^{vi} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade: Reflections on the Historiography of the Rise of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History* 27 (Number 2 1986): 244-245.

^{vii} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade" (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 3.

^{viii} Archibald Dalziel, The History of Dahomey, An Inland Kingdom of Africa (London: T. Spelsbury and Son, 1793) 218.

role within the Dahoman economy as they were both kept by the king for his own use and distributed to the chiefs as rewards. Also, "of especial importance was the use of slave labor on the royal farms, which supported not only the king and his palace establishment, but also the standing army, thus, facilitating the professionalization of the military forces."^{ix} Those slaves kept within the state thus helped the state procure more slaves. While it is clear that the use of captives as internal slaves was of extreme importance, the practice of using captives as victims of human sacrifice is also key in Dahoman society, as it will come to play a key role in the 'crisis of adaptation'.

Before excess captives were sold into the Atlantic trade, some were taken to be victims of human sacrifice. Human sacrifice in Dahomey had nothing to do with an excess of captives, as captives could easily be sold for a profit to the Europeans on the coast. Human sacrifice was a tradition in the community. William Snelgrave, on a trip to Dahomey, saw the sacrifice of 400 war captives along with seeing a pile of 4,000 skulls that had been sacrificed from the conquest of Whydah as a method of celebration. Slaves were also sacrificed every year in the 'Annual Customs' in order to honor the ancestors of the kingdom and provide them with slaves in the afterlife. The trend of human sacrifice was not short-lived and continues in sources from the beginning of the Dahomey kingdom all the way up until the 1860's when European ideals were having a greater impact on the African mindset.^x

After the required number of captives were taken to become internal slaves and sacrificed in tradition, the rest were taken to the coast at Whydah and sold to the Europeans. It is in the study of increasing Dahoman participation in the slave trade that the abolitionists' point, that the slave trade had an important impact on corrupting the kingdom, will be proven.

Dahomey in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Dahoman participation had such an impact on the trade that entire books have been written about it, but the summary here is meant just to show the growing numbers being exported from Dahomey after the conquering of Whydah and Allada in order to prove that Agaja did in fact conquer in order to get involved in the trade, not in hopes of ending it.

Patrick Manning explains that the people of Dahomey were engaged in a commodity exchange mode of production where, "individuals and family units produced goods for sale, sold them in the local market, and purchased a large portion of the goods they consumed, including food, manufactures, raw materials, and luxuries."^{xi} Simply put, the people of Dahomey were well versed in earning money from the profits of one good and using them to buy necessary staples; they were prepared for the market that the slave trade would require to succeed in a state. Herskovitz states that, "it might well be said that until slaving operations

^{ix} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade: Reflections on the Historiography of the Rise of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History* 27 (Number 2 1986): 258.

^x Robin Law, "Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade" (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 5.

^{xi} Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 7.

were suppressed, the surplus of slaves who could be sold out of the country constituted one of the primary resources of Dahomey.”^{xii}

The first contact with Europeans within the region that would later become the military kingdom of Dahomey, “is believed to have been with the Portuguese at Ouidah on the coast in the 1580’s.”^{xiii} Later the Portuguese, French, British, and Dutch would establish their respective trading castles on the coast of Dahomey. The Dahoman story of participation in the slave trade begins in 1727 when they conquered Whydah.

Controversy exists over the exact number of slaves that were shipped from Dahomey, although no scholar claims that Dahomey’s participation was anything but significant. Robin Law claims that between 5,000 and 8,000 slaves per year were shipped from the Dahoman coast, while Manning claims that the number of slaves shipped from the Bight of Benin was between 7,000 and 15,000 of which most came from Dahomey.^{xiv} Whatever the exact numbers may be, the slaves sold on the coast of the Bight of Benin, of which Dahomey, Lagos, and Badagry are a part, made up, “a total of nearly two million slaves, or roughly one-fifth of the volume of the Atlantic slave trade,”^{xv} of which the peak period of time was the late 18th century and the early 19th centuries. Numbers of slaves being exported at the end of the 18th century again reached over 100,000 per decade, whereas the quantity had settled down to around 70,000 during the period of the Dahoman conquest.^{xvi}

Besides looking solely at the numbers of slaves being exported during this period for proof of Dahomey’s increased involvement in the trade, Dahomey’s participation is evident in the fact that they had not only adopted European weapons but that they now depended on them when engaging in the warfare that in turn procured more slaves.^{xvii} The Dahoman army had adopted the guns and other weapons provided by the European traders early in the 18th century, and so it was essential that the guns be received from the Europeans at the coast in order to continue the economic cycle of the slaving society. Here again lies proof from the African viewpoint that there was no motivation for the trade in slaves to end.

The Ending of the Slave Trade

The African side did not dispute the export of slaves coming from Dahomey, thus the end of the trade would eventually come from the European powers. The morality of the trade in human cargo had long since been a debate in the European countries, although little had been done up until the early 19th century. British abolitionists realized that because of the economic profit that all

^{xii} Melville Herskovitz, Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1938): 100.

^{xiii} Dov Ronen, Dahomey: Between Tradition and Modernity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1975): 16.

^{xiv} Robin Law, “Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade” (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 2. And Patrick Manning, Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 332.

^{xv} Patrick Manning, Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 29.

^{xvi} Patrick Manning, Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 332.

^{xvii} Robin Law, “Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade” (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 2.

members of the trade were acquiring, “the slave trade as an institution...would not die out but would have to be stifled.”^{xviii} Thus, the British legally abolished the slave trade in 1807, although this had little immediate effect on stifling the trade to any great degree.

While European merchants ended their presence on the coast, France in 1797, Portugal in 1805, and England in 1812, Brazilian merchants ready to continue the trade to Brazil as well as begin a trade route to Cuba filled their spot. These Brazilian merchants, led by Francisco Felix de Souza, soon established themselves as the richest and most powerful merchants in the nineteenth century.^{xix} As a result, the African kingdoms were able to continue trading in slaves without feeling economic tension due to a decline in demand. In fact, de Souza helped Gezo seize the throne of Dahomey in 1818 and was thus given the power to, “preside over his commercial empire from the Portuguese fort in Ouidah until his death in 1849.”^{xx}

Britain’s immediate action after rendering the slave trade illegal was to patrol the waters north of the equator near the port of Whydah in an effort to keep other countries from illegally engaging in the trade. This had little effect beyond speeding up the slave ship loading process in avoiding British naval ships—the numbers of slaves exported at the beginning of the 19th century was still increasing. It wasn’t until the 1830’s that the British abolitionist policies had a great effect; they had an effect both on the numbers of exports sent from Dahomey as well as on the beginning of state decisions that led to the ‘crisis of adaptation’.

The British imposed the Equipment Act of 1839 that allowed for the detention of slave ships even when no slaves were onboard. By the 1840’s, numbers had been impacted by British actions and the British government also, “attempted to negotiate a treaty with the Dahoman authorities for the banning of the export slave trade.”^{xxi} When Gezo, the king of Dahomey during the period when the British were attempting to negotiate a treaty, would not accept any agreement ending the trade, the British set up a naval blockade of Dahomey in 1852 in order to prove that they were not longer willing to negotiate a settlement—this gave Gezo no option but to agree to a treaty ending the trade. As a result, he engaged in no major African wars and procured very few excess captives to export. The British claimed that Gezo violated the treaty, but he in fact claimed that while there were minor exports being sent, the royal court had no hand in it, as it had in the majority of exports in the past.^{xxii} The numbers of slaves exported during this period of time were a quarter of what they had been during the peak of the slave trade during the 1780’s.

Along with the Britain’s growing attempts to end the export trade in slaves from the African coast, the demand from the world market also had a significant effect on numbers. After 1850, the importing market into Brazil, which

^{xviii} Patrick Manning, “Slaves, Palm Oil, and Political Power on the West African Coast,” *African Historical Studies* 2 (Number 2 1969): 279.

^{xix} Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 46.

^{xx} Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 47.

^{xxi} Robin Law, “Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade” (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 6.

^{xxii} Robin Law, “Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade” (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 6.

made up a vast majority of the slave imports, was closed, thus lowering demand for slaves from Africa.^{xxiii}

During the same period that the British treaty ending the slave trade was lowering Dahomey's slave exports, Gezo also abolished the tradition of human sacrifice. The fact that he abolished human sacrifice during this time shows that there is a significant link between the violent character of Dahoman society and the slave trading economy. The abolition of this tradition was at first controversial in the society and in fact led to a controversial transition to the next leader of the kingdom after the death of Gezo. As the next leader, Glele, did not feel the same about the demise of the slave trade and practice of human sacrifice, he took measures to reinstate them. But, before looking at the period of crisis felt during the rule of Glele, it is important to look at the trade that replaced the slave trade and understand the structural relationship between the two.

Palm Oil in Dahomey

Palm oil is an extremely important resource both within the African economy and as an export good. The oil comes from palm kernels from the oil palm tree. The kernels are dried and put through a machine to have the oil pressed out of them. The oil itself is used for cooking, soap making, and the production of many other oils and fats.^{xxiv}

Manning, in 1969, presented a hypothesis that was generally accepted in earlier studies of the transition from the slave trade to the palm oil trade. His hypothesis is that, "the West African coastal states required the revenue from the slave trade for their continued good health. They therefore maintained the slave trade as long as possible and switched to trade in palm oil as a source of revenue when further exports of slaves became impossible."^{xxv} It can be understood how this argument was founded, as palm oil was an important trade after the downsizing and eventual halt of the slave trade. What Manning failed to address in this hypothesis is the fact that the palm oil trade was actually growing along with the slave trade in the early nineteenth century.

David Northrup, though speaking not solely about Dahomey, explains that palm oil had been a small secondary trade for many years before a substantial trade with Britain began to emerge on the coast in the 1780's. The oil was used on the slave ships as provisions but was not intended for the destination ports. Robin Law notes that in Dahomey, just as along the rest of the coast, there was some amount of palm oil being shipped to Britain, but Dahomey's take off didn't really occur until the 1840's. Records have been found that estimated just less than 50 tons in 1836 and 2,000 tons by 1848. These numbers show a steep increase in palm oil just when the slave trade was just beginning to decline.^{xxvi} In

^{xxiii} Ibid.

^{xxiv} Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 50.

^{xxv} Patrick Manning, "Slaves, Palm Oil, and Political Power on the West African Coast," *African Historical Studies* 2 (Number 2 1969): 280.

^{xxvi} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade" (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 7.

the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, demand began overseas for the palm oil.^{xxvii}

Why, suddenly, did the Dahoman people turn to trading in palm oil along with slaves when they were successful with the slave trade alone? As Dahomey is a complicated case to study, there isn't one single answer to this question. There are several aspects that made up the increase in palm oil. First of all, though not necessarily most important, "the trade in palm oil arose because of an expanding demand, especially in Britain, for all sorts of fats and oils to be used for industrial lubrication and for the 'new vogues' of washing with soap and lighting candles."^{xxviii} As traders were coming to the coast with an increased interest in procuring the goods, the Africans came willing to fulfill their demands.

The Brazilian slave traders that had taken over slave trading along the Dahoman coast at first talked of their disinterest in the palm oil trade, but eventually aided in supporting it. They were able to become middlemen between the Europeans and the Africans in trading European manufactured goods against slaves and palm oil. They were using the oil trade as a supplement to the slave trade; Domingo Martinez, the leading Brazilian trader after the death of de Souza, was noted as saying that, "the slave and palm-oil trade helped each other, and that in connection he did not know which was the most profitable."^{xxix}

By the 1850's, as the British were making stronger efforts to completely abolish the trade and Brazil's market was no longer open for imports, the trade in slaves fizzled out almost completely. Before looking at the crisis of adaptation that occurred with a change in ruler at the end of the slave trade, it is important to look at the relationship between the slave trade and the oil trade in order to see the structural differences that made it impossible to smoothly replace the slave trade with the palm oil trade.

The Relationship Between the Slave Trade and the Oil Trade

As previously mentioned, scholars debate about the structure of the trade in slaves versus the trade in palm oil. Many scholars who claim that there is no such thing as the 'crisis of adaptation' do not see a structural difference between the slave trade and the palm oil trade and thus do not understand why there would be crisis when one took the place of the other. In the case of Dahomey, a crisis of adaptation did occur and thus the many differences in the two trades must be examined.

One important distinction that must be made between the two trades is the cost required to get the good to the coast. In the case of the slave trade, the slaves were procured by capturing them and they could get themselves to the coast thus, "requiring comparatively little exertion by the traders".^{xxx} So in order to get one slave, representing one unit for trade, to the coast, all that was required was for him to transport himself under the watchful eye of the slave trader. On the

^{xxvii} David Northrup, "The Compatibility of the Slave and Palm Oil Trades in the Bight of Biafra," *The Journal of African History* 17 (Number 3 1976): 358.

^{xxviii} *Ibid*, 359.

^{xxix} Robin Law, "The Politics of Commercial Transition: Factional Conflict in Dahomey in the Context of the Ending of the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The Journal of African History* 38 (Number 2 1997): 222.

^{xxx} David Northrup, "The Compatibility of the Slave and Palm Oil Trades in the Bight of Biafra," *The Journal of African History* 17 (Number 3 1976): 361.

other hand, one unit for trade in the palm oil trade was equal to one ton of oil and required not only the labor of 315 people per day per ton to produce, but also required much exertion by the trader in order to get the good to the coast for export.^{xxx}

Not only was much more effort required to produce and transport the goods in the Atlantic trade, but also more people were able to take part in the trade, thus dispersing profit throughout the state instead of centering it at the royal palace. In the case of the slave trade, a royal monopoly existed which meant that the king was overseeing most of the slave trading and thus had full control over the profit received from the trade. King Gezo attempted to establish a royal monopoly on the profit made from the palm oil trade, but, "in practice the export of palm produce was impossible to monopolize because of the dispersed nature of its production and commerce."^{xxxii} In essence, he was not able to control all of the oil palm trees because of their widespread dispersal throughout the land and was only eventually able to make profit directly from the palm oil itself when he employed traders to control slaves producing oil on his plantations.^{xxxiii} While the immediate attempt of the state to monopolize the oil trade was unsuccessful, by the period of the 1970's Law provides evidence to show that "'the greater part' of the oil exported from Dahomey originated from the king's plantations."^{xxxiv} The trade in slaves was monopolized by a small number of entrepreneurs made up of the king and his chiefs, whereas the palm oil trade was more open to communal involvement.

While the state had almost complete control over the slave trade, their slow gain in control over the palm oil trade caused the king to enforce other measures to gain a profit from the trade. In the beginning of the trade, in the 1840's, he earned that profit only by charging a sales tax of 1/18th on all exports of oil. As the trade increased, by the 1850's, the king added a production tax that required payment of 1/3rd of the value of all oil produced.^{xxxv}

On a different note but also of significance is the nature of each trade. While the slave trade was more militaristic and brutal, like the character of the state of Dahomey, the agricultural trade in palm oil was not conducive to the reputation that Dahomey was trying to uphold. For a militaristic society to depend upon an agricultural economy would be laughable. As will be seen, this was one of the points that the king took into account as he decided between signing the treaty with the British and continuing with the slave trade.

Lastly, and to some extent most importantly, the oil trade never brought as much revenue as the slave trade. The reason that this could be deemed the most important difference in the trade is because of the important role that it had in later shaping the crisis of adaptation. Robin Law claims that Gezo was never opposed to completely ending the slave trade, but that an alternate, and equal,

^{xxx} Robin Law, From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 11.

^{xxxii} Patrick Manning, Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 53.

^{xxxiii} Robin Law, "The Politics of Commercial Transition: Factional Conflict in Dahomey in the Context of the Ending of the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The Journal of African History* 38 (Number 2 1997): 224.

^{xxxiv} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade" (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 8.

^{xxxv} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade" (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 8.

form of revenue would have to be provided. When Gezo made this claim, the British government began making offers to him in hopes of alluring the end of slavery. While all of the offers were much smaller than what Gezo was claiming necessary, the British actually never gave any amount to Gezo or the succeeding ruler of Dahomey.^{xxxvi} Had the oil trade actually provided as much revenue as the slave trade had for Dahomey, there is a chance that the crisis of adaptation that ensued for ten to fifteen years may never have occurred.

The Crisis of Adaptation

As has been mentioned several times previously, the crisis of adaptation is the struggle felt by African coastal states as the slave trade turned into a more agriculturally focused trade. Dahomey's crisis of adaptation began at the end of King Gezo's rule and continued throughout Glele's, his successor, rule.

As the British were attempting to negotiate with Gezo to end the slave trade and in turn the issue of human sacrifice, he began questioning how he could give up the trade that "made him terrible to his enemies, and loved, honoured and respected by his people."^{xxxvii} To an even greater extent, Gezo mentioned fearing that if he didn't carry out the customs as usual, he could be dethroned or even hurt by his people.^{xxxviii} Clearly, the issue of the ending of the slave trade was not just an economic issue; it was also a political and psychological issue that had an effect on the entire kingdom of Dahomey.

The psychological effects that a change from a military to an agricultural society had on the kingdom were important. It was not a small task to rally support of a shift from a military ethos to an agricultural state. As Gezo later came to sign a treaty with the British promising the end of the trade and human sacrifice and in turn a switch trade to agricultural, it is clear that order was going to be disturbed. In fact, the political effects that this switch had can be seen in the policies of King Glele.^{xxxix}

After Gezo's death in 1858, Glele became the new king of Dahomey and reinstated Dahoman militarism which meant the reintroduction of the exporting of slaves and return to the practice of human sacrifice. He was able to do so because Cuba had opened an import market in 1854 to which he could export Dahoman slaves.^{xl} He took these measures not only because he did not agree with the actions taken by his predecessor, but also because the British had never given Gezo the monetary stipend which they had promised him. Unfortunately for the Dahoman kingdom, the remilitarization did not see a return to the previous way of life where the people were happy living in a militaristic state, but instead it led to the crisis of adaptation.

^{xxxvi} Ibid, 9.

^{xxxvii} Robin Law, "Dahomey and the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade" (Boston: Boston University African Studies Working Papers) 10.

^{xxxviii} Robin Law, "The Politics of Commercial Transition: Factional Conflict in Dahomey in the Context of the Ending of the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The Journal of African History* 38 (Number 2 1997): 219.

^{xxxix} Robin Law, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 89.

^{xl} Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 53.

As the government remilitarized the state, many things went wrong. First of all, by reopening the slave trade, he ended up undermining the palm oil trade by removing producers and selling them into the trade. As a result of this economic disruption, in 1862 the British Consul at Lagos “complained that in Dahomey agriculture is at a standstill, and legitimate trade next to nothing.”^{xli} There were very few people that supported Glele’s attempts, and for the most part there was a large amount of hostility towards him. Law finds proof that, “opposition to Glele was especially strong in the coastal town of Whydah, which was most committed to the trade in palm oil.”^{xlii} Any political equilibrium that existed when Glele came to office had been destroyed by his attempts to return the country to a militaristic society based on the slave trade.

Even more detrimental to his demise, the Cuban import economy closed in 1866 completely ending the trans-Atlantic trade. Law claims that the divisions that Glele caused within society can be felt all throughout the kingdom and even up until the 1880’s in the more affected places such as Whydah. The crisis of adaptation is clearly understood after looking at this example. The people wouldn’t back Gezo in his attempts to make treaty with the British and end the slave trade and human sacrifice, but when his successor attempted to put back into place all that Gezo had taken away, the people were again unsatisfied.^{xliii}

The case of Dahomey is an extremely important case to study for the two reasons focused on in this paper. Dahomey presents one of the clearest examples of the ‘crisis of adaptation’ felt in the transition from the slave trade to the palm oil trade and in turn allows for scholars to see the inherent differences in the export market of slaves versus palm oil. While they undoubtedly experienced it, the Dahoman society handled the ‘crisis of adaptation’ somewhat successfully, continuing to export palm oil until the French conquered them at the beginning of the colonial period. Unfortunately for them, the military ethos that caused their state to prosper in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade also ultimately caused their downfall during the period of legitimate trade. In looking at the transition of the two trades and Dahomey’s ability to handle that transition, there is a question that would be fascinating to know the answer to: If Dahomey had been able to put an end to their military character and come to accept the ‘legitimate trade’, would they have been able to fend off the French colonial conquests? Unfortunately, due to the Dahoman way of life, there is no way to tell.

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^{xli} Robin Law, “The Politics of Commercial Transition: Factional Conflict in Dahomey in the Context of the Ending of the Atlantic Slave Trade,” *The Journal of African History* 38 (Number 2 1997): 229.

^{xlii} *Ibid*, 230.

^{xliii} *Ibid*, 233.

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