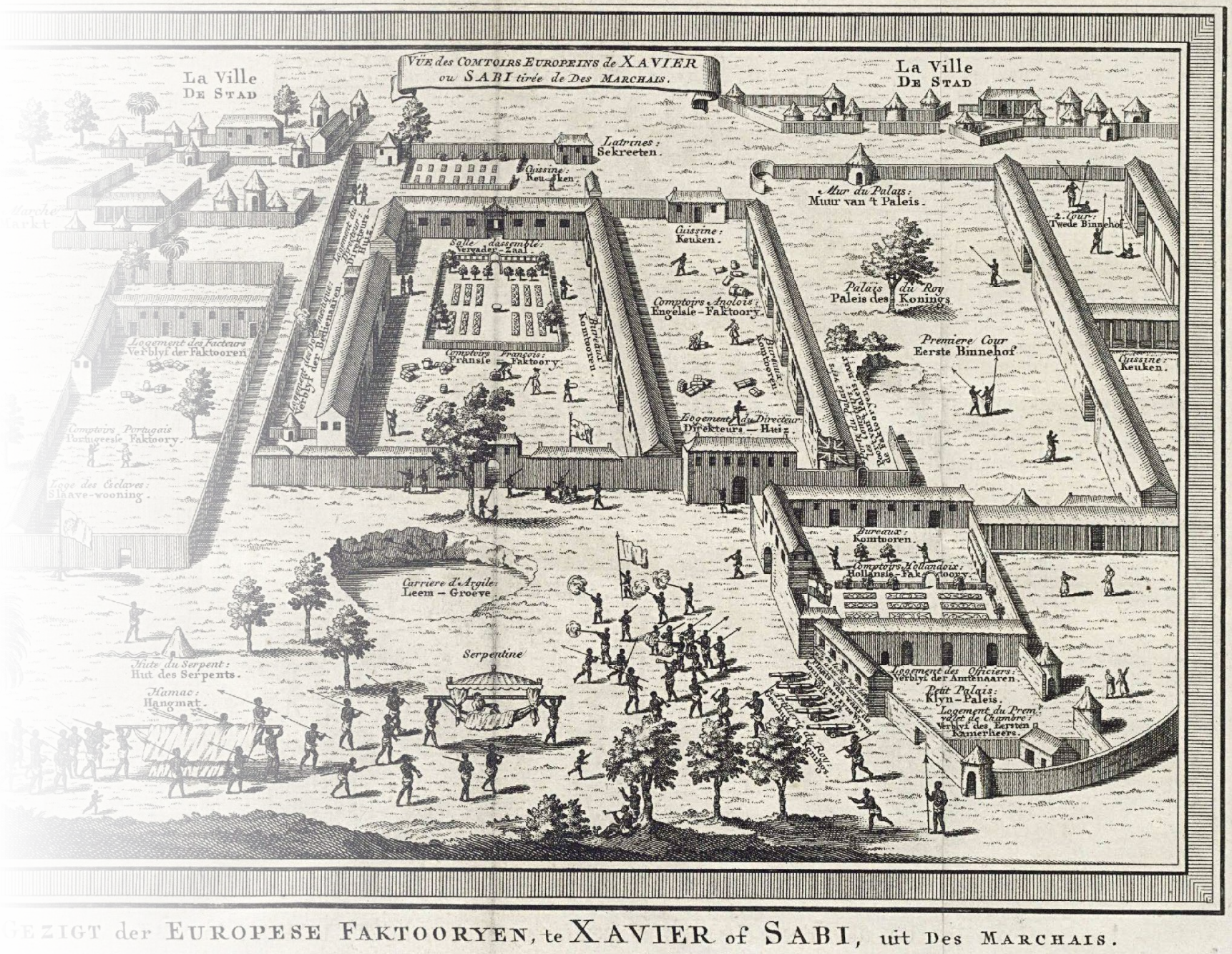
Danxomè Kingdom

A Brief Overview

Leonard Wantchekon

February 17, 2022



Introduction

I. West African Kingdom (1600-1904), developed on Abomey Plateau, among the Fon people

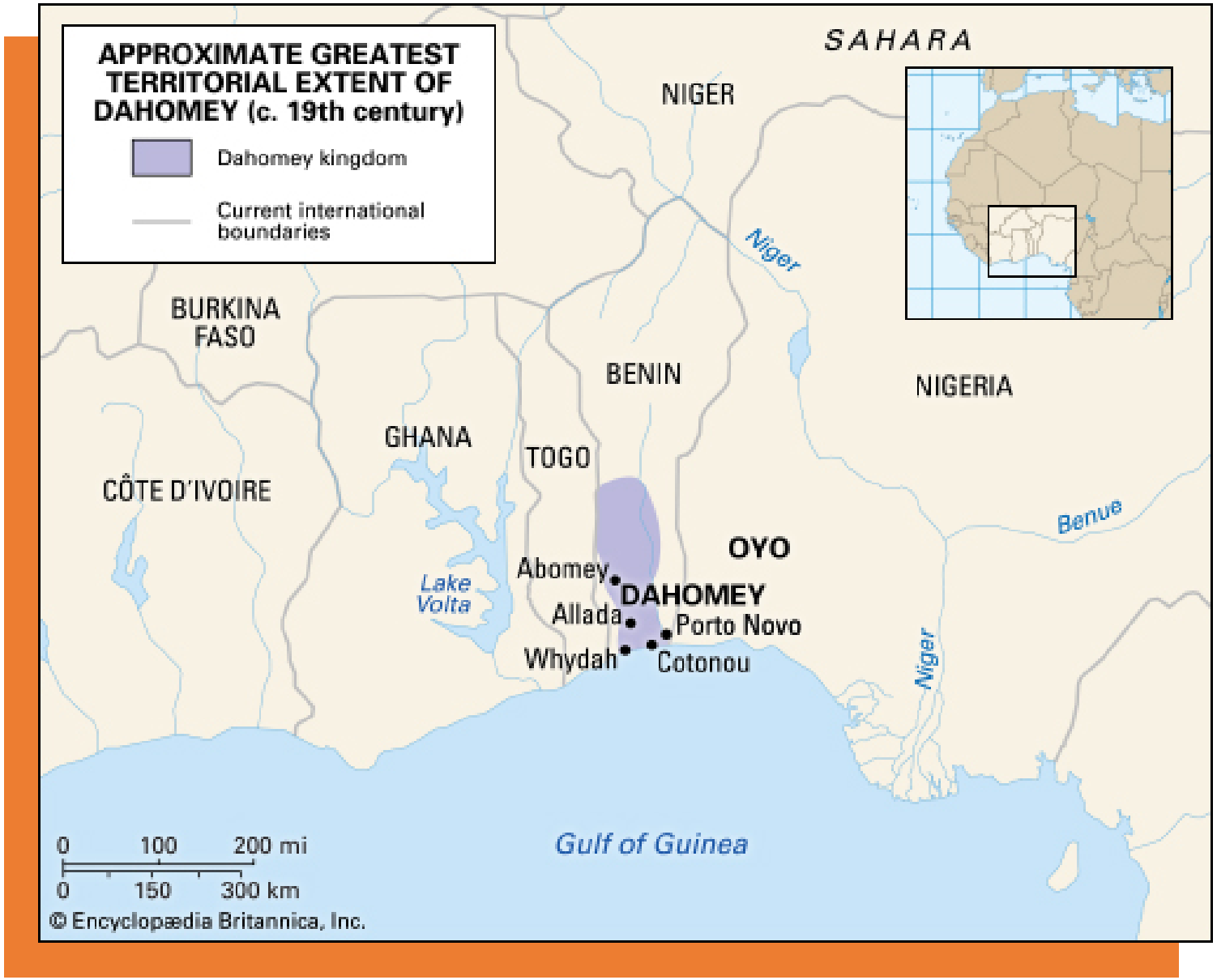
II. Regional power in the 18th and 19th century through conquest of key coastal cities

III. Domestic economy built on slave labor and international trade with Europe

IV. Centralized political and administrative organizations

V. Invaded by the French and colonized in 1894

VI. Unique features: Amazons, artwork, Vodun, music

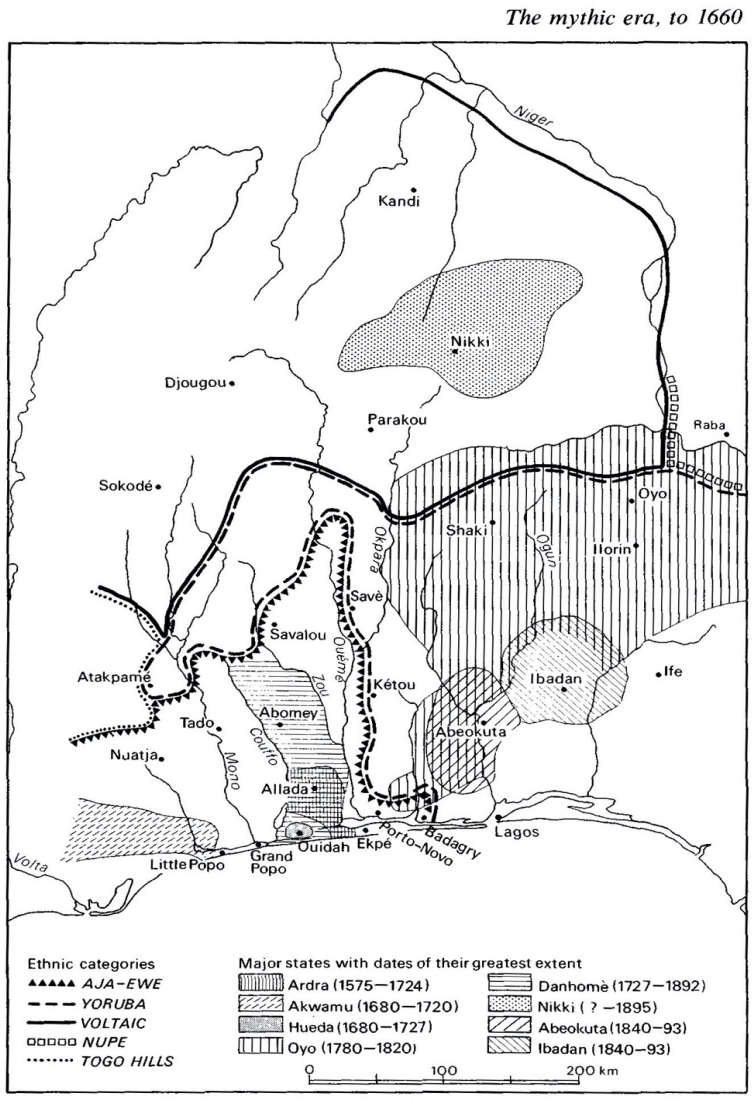


Outline

I. Foundation
II. Political Organization
III. State Formation & Institutions
IV. Art & Culture
V. Legacy

Foundation

- The Myth of Agassou
- Regicide and Departure from Tado
- Davié (Allada) and Departure of Dogbagli Guénou (Do Aklin) to the plateau of Guédévi
- Ganyé Hessou and Dako Donou: the foundation
- Houégbadja and the consolidation of the Kingdom (41 laws of the Kingdom's Constitution)
- Akaba and the formation of the name, *Danxomè*



Map 1 The Bight of Benin, 1640–1890

Foundation

- Each Ruler and their Symbol
- Queen Hangbé (1708-1711)
- King Adandozan (1797-1818) preceded Agonglo and was succeeded by Guezo



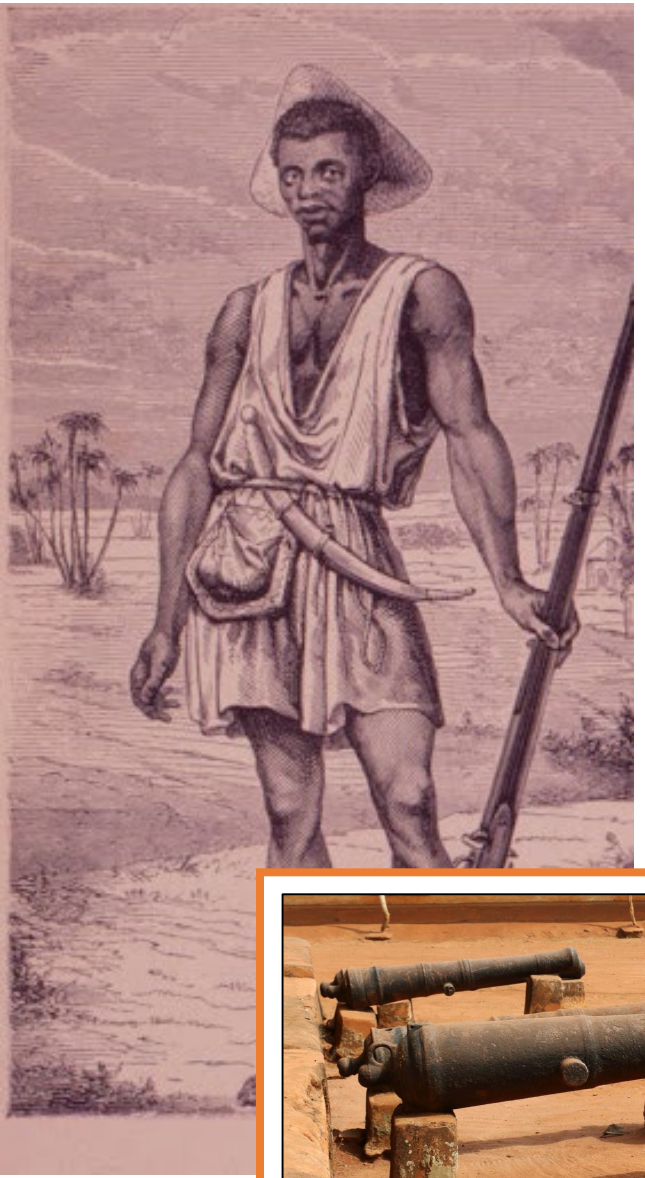
Political Organization of the Kingdom: The Cabinet

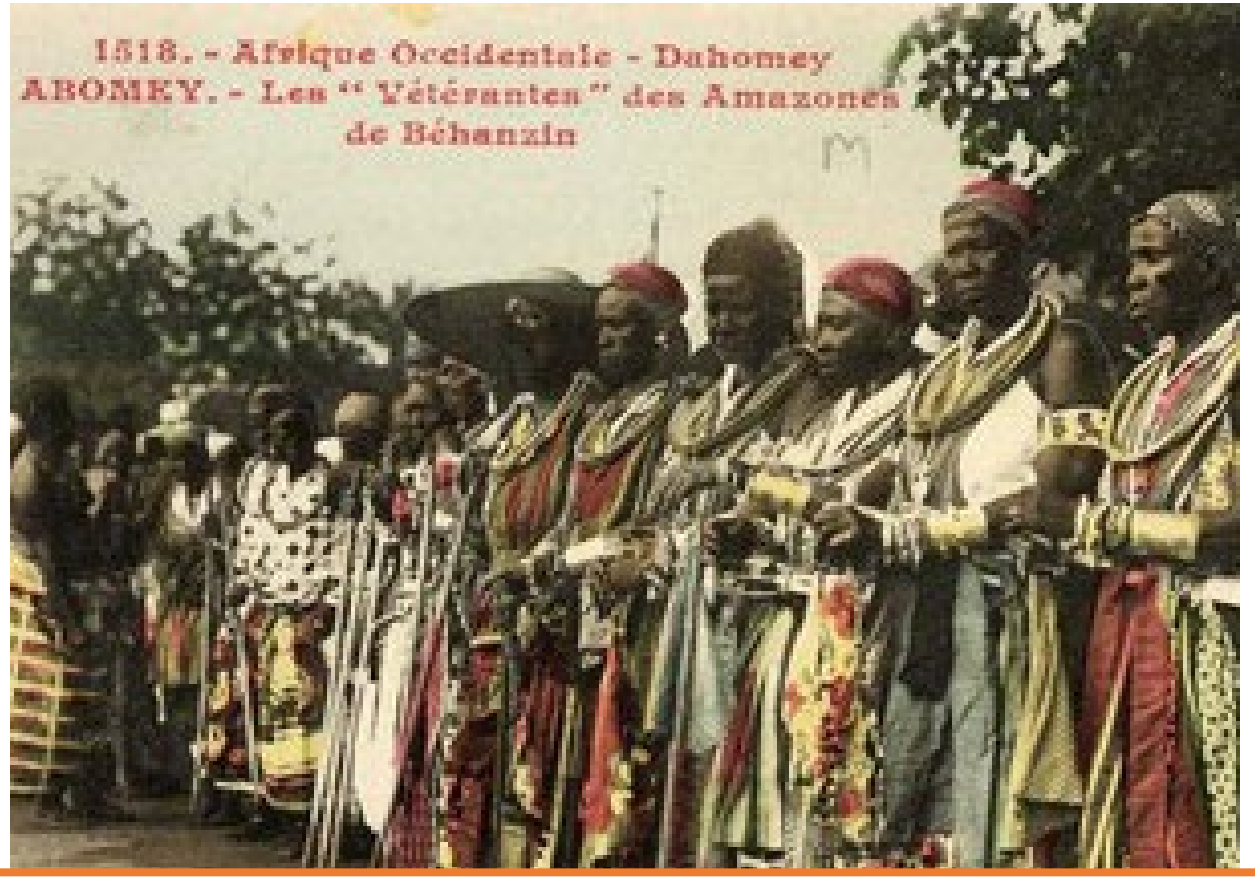
- The *Dada* or King
- The *Gbonougan* or Ministers
  - Migan/Migannon, Prime Minister and Minister of Justice
    - Akplogan, Minister of Cults who was based in Allada
  - Mèhou/Mèhounon, Second Prime Minister, preceptor of the princes/princesses
    - Yovogan, Minister of Foreign Affairs who was based in Ouidah
  - Adjaho, Minister in Charge of Security
  - Binazon, Minister of Finances
  - Tokpo, Minister of Agriculture



Political Organization of the Kingdom: The Military

- Officially instituted by King Guezo and led by a Commander in Chief aka *Gahou*
- Composed of both men and women (Agoodjié aka Amazones)
- King Guézo also reorganized and officially instituted the women's army
- **Main battles:**
  - Guézo vs the Manhi (1828-1829): Victorious
  - First attack of Atakpamè (1840): The whole would have been defeated if it wasn't for the Amazones
  - Second attack of Atakpamè (1849): Victorious because of the Amazones
  - Defeated in Abeokuta in 1851



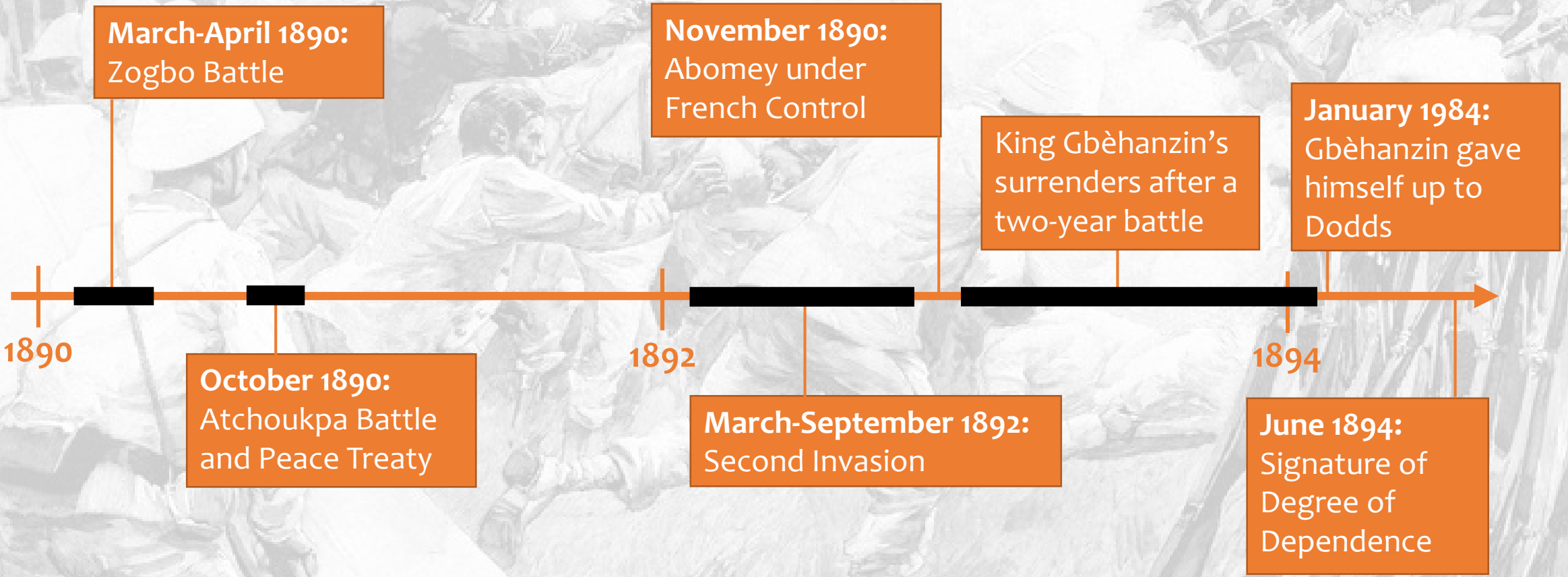




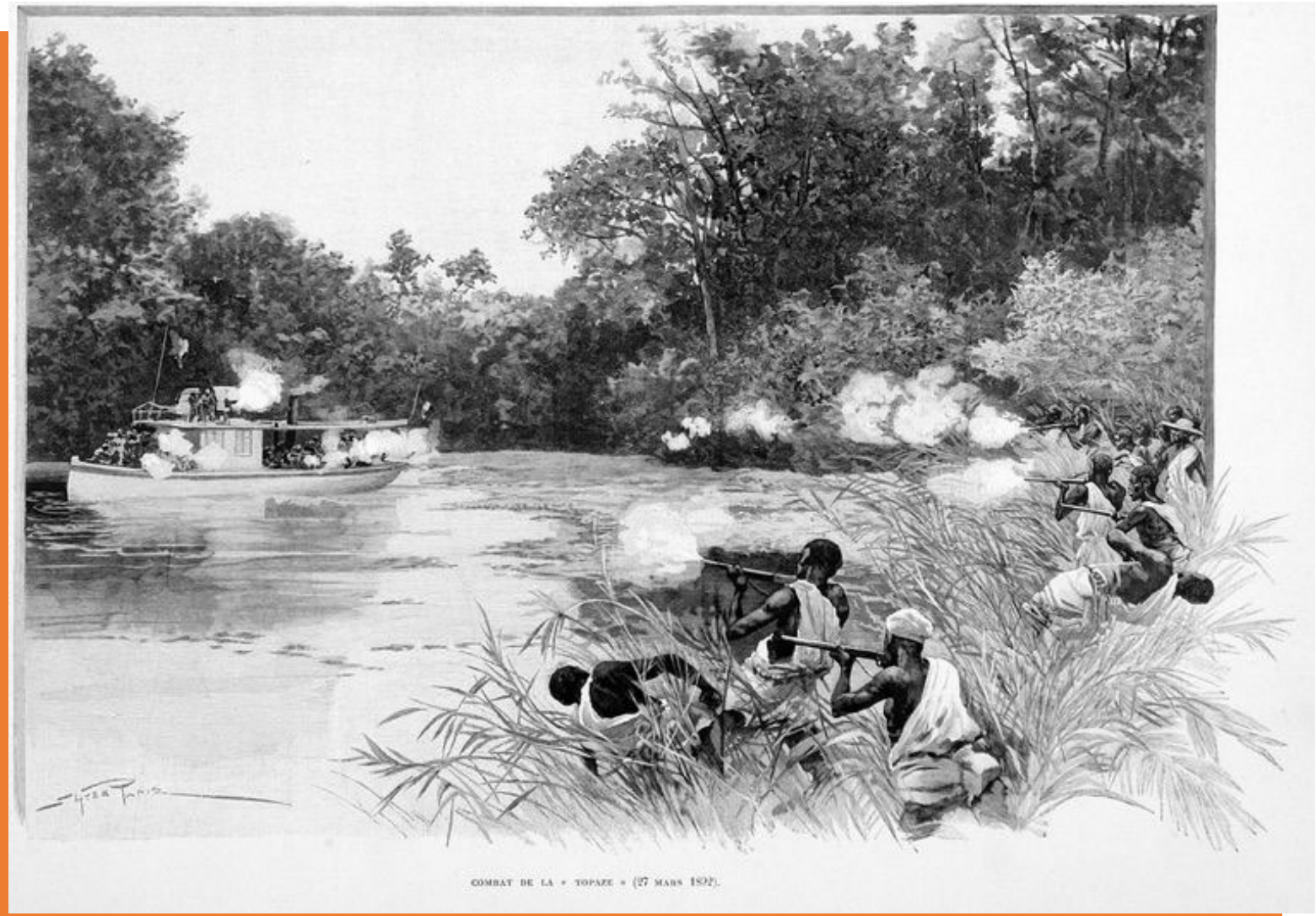
Von Frantzius wrote alike in 1888:

> As these all [the king and noblemen] want gains, it is not strange to hear that to the worker from his six days' wages only the reward for four days remains, for one third of it is without saying to be delivered to his nearest chief [. . .]. The standing army of the king is estimated at several thousand soldiers; besides he has an amazonian corps of about 5 000 women . . .[4]

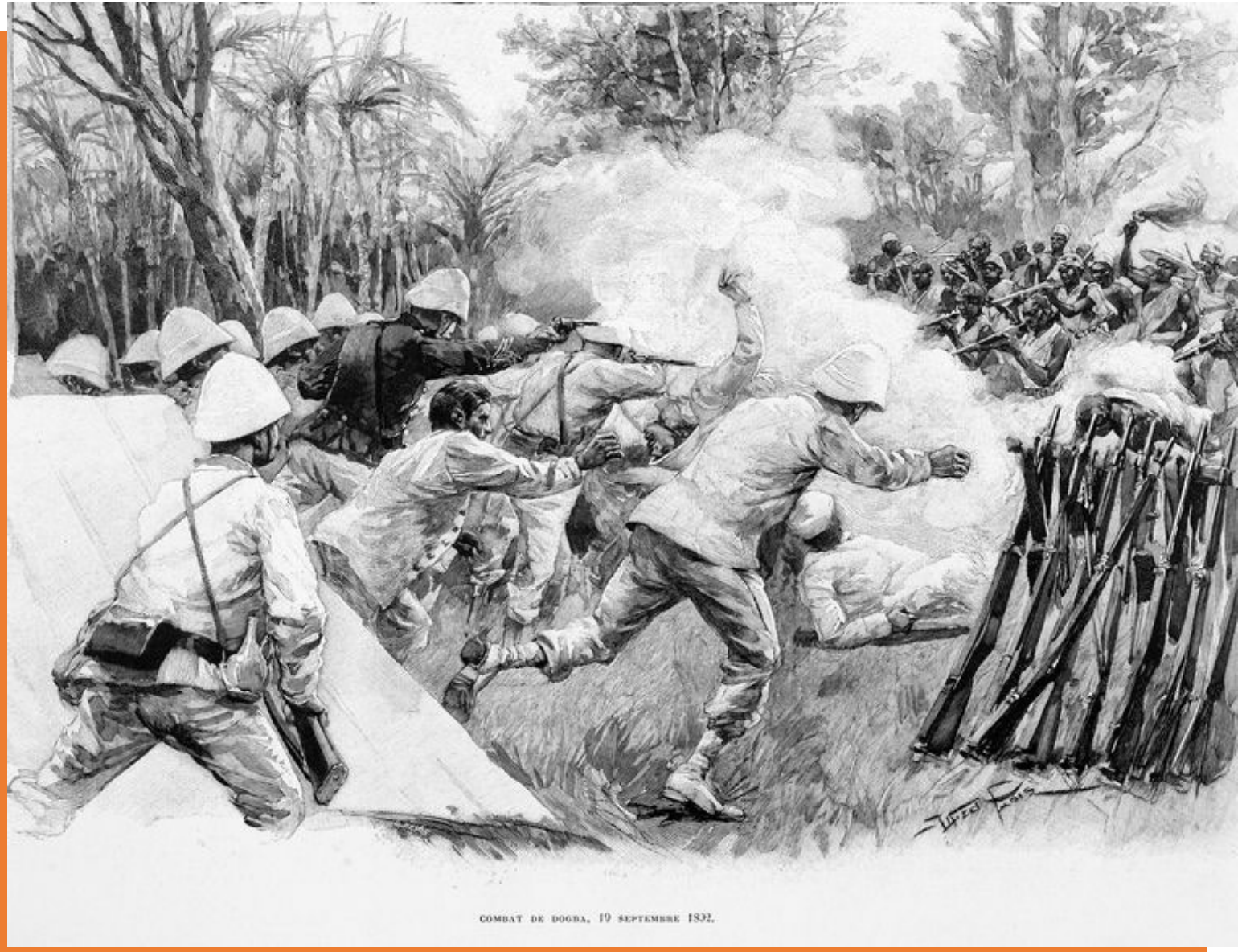
State Formation: French Invasion and End of the Kingdom



Topaze Battle



Dogba Battle



COMBAT DE DOGBA, 19 SEPTEMBRE 1892.

King Behanzin Surrenders



King Behanzin Deported



State Institutions

- Royal Palace
- Dé (Customs)
- Army
- Bureaucracy:
  - Translators
  - Logistics for the King's Journeys
  - Central Bank

The correspondence started only in 1882 when the following letter, written in English and signed by Bismarck[1], was sent to Abomey:

Foreign Office of the German Empire, Berlin
January 16th 1882.
To His Majesty Gelele, King of Dahomey, Abomey

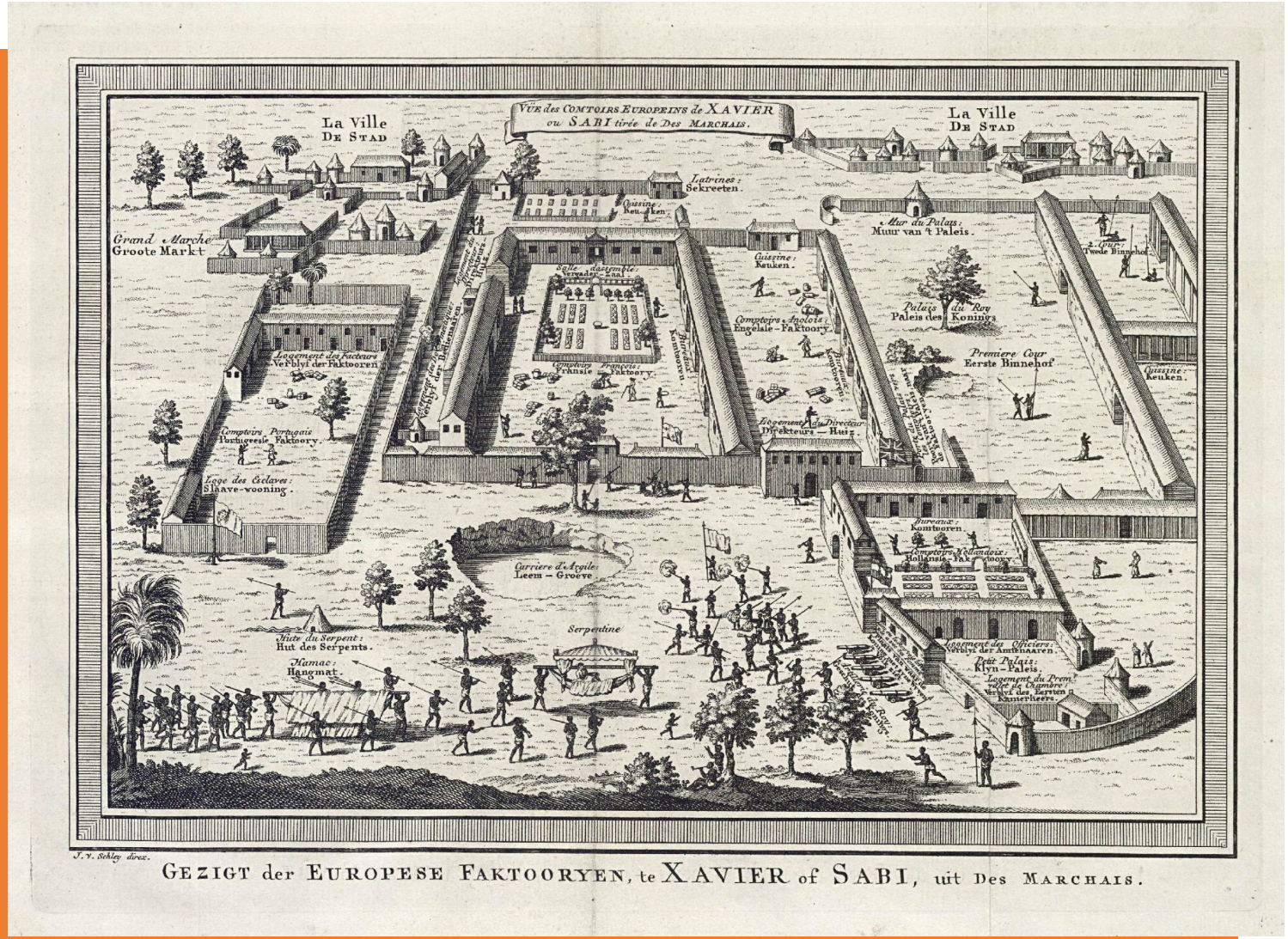
Your Majesty!

The German firm C. Goedelt, being desirous to extend its (already considerable) *existing* commerce with other countries of Western Africa to the Kingdom of Dahomey, has bought, subject to the consent of Your Majesty, the factory at Whydah which has hitherto belonged to the English firm F. A. Swanzy & Co. Hoping that Your Majesty may behold with favor this first effort to open direct intercourse between Germany and Dahomey, (which can not fail to contribute to the welfare of Your people and) *to* the benefit(s) of (which will be shared by) both countries, I (take leave) *beg* to recommend to Your Majesty's good will Mr. Adolph Elliot, who is bearer of this letter into Whydah, where he is to act as Agent of the said German firm. He is a highly respectable *German* merchant. (and a subject of William the First, German Emperor and King of Prussia) I (beg and) trust that Your Majesty will bestow upon him and other Germans, who may come by themselves or with

The above said agent of the Goedelt firm A. Elliot evidently was not a very suitable person for the delicate task of being the pioneer German merchant in the region. He behaved tactlessly with respect to the religious 'customs' in Whydah, and the Yovogan and the chiefs of the city complained in Abomey.[2] Nevertheless, the head of the said German firm, C. Goedelt, stressed in his letter[3] to Count Hatzfeld, German Minister of State, that the incident with his agent did not affect the general friendly relations of the Dahomeyan Court towards Germany and that an expedition should be sent to Abomey to make a treaty between the two States.[4] This nevertheless did not happen, as it seems, because of financial and time reasons. The German authorities were afraid of the strange custom of the Dahomeyan King, to keep European visitors for several months at his Court,[5] of course mostly at their expenses.

Response from King Gele

Royal Palace



GEZIGT der EUROPESE FAKTOORYEN, te XAVIER of SABI, uit Des MARCHAIS.

Economic Organization of the Kingdom

- *Amlonkouè* (paid by everyone including children able to do a one-day journey on foot with small luggage)
- *Kouzou* (collected on palm trees, corns and millet by farmers)
- Tariffs (*Dé gbigba kouè'*) collected at the customs (*Dênou)*
- Taxes imposed on goods being sold in every markets
- 50% discount on all goods sold by Europeans to the King
- Hunters had to provide the royal family with a tax on the proceeds from hunting
- *Kannoumonnon* or slaves worked at the farms of the royal family and were also being sold to western slave traders

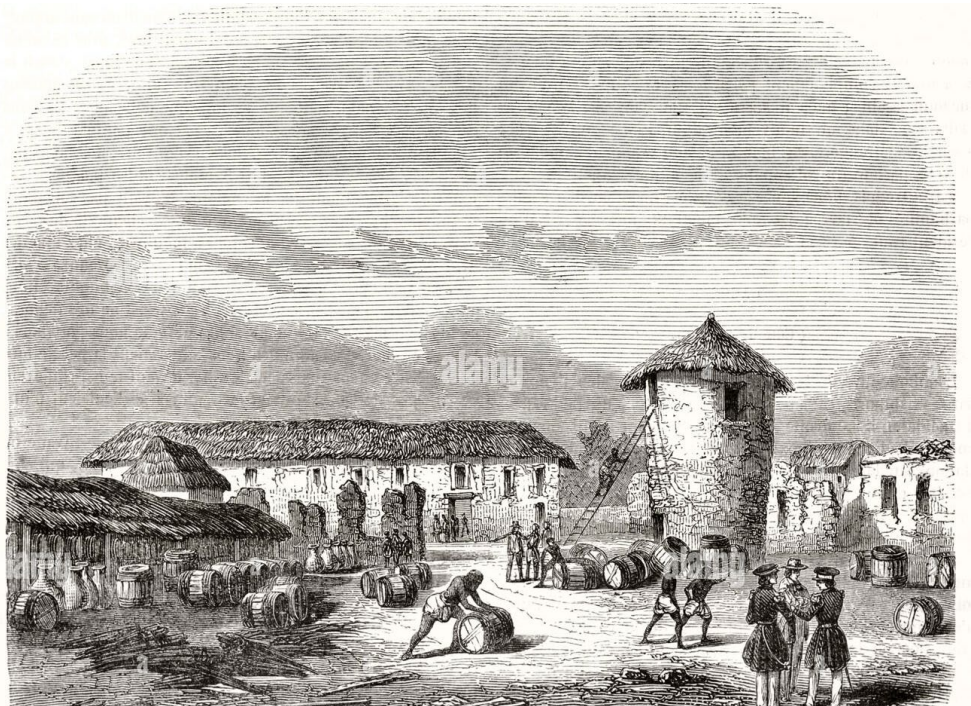






4. - DAHOMEY. - Le Bois de Filaos - Route de OUIDAH

dition E. R.





Art & Culture



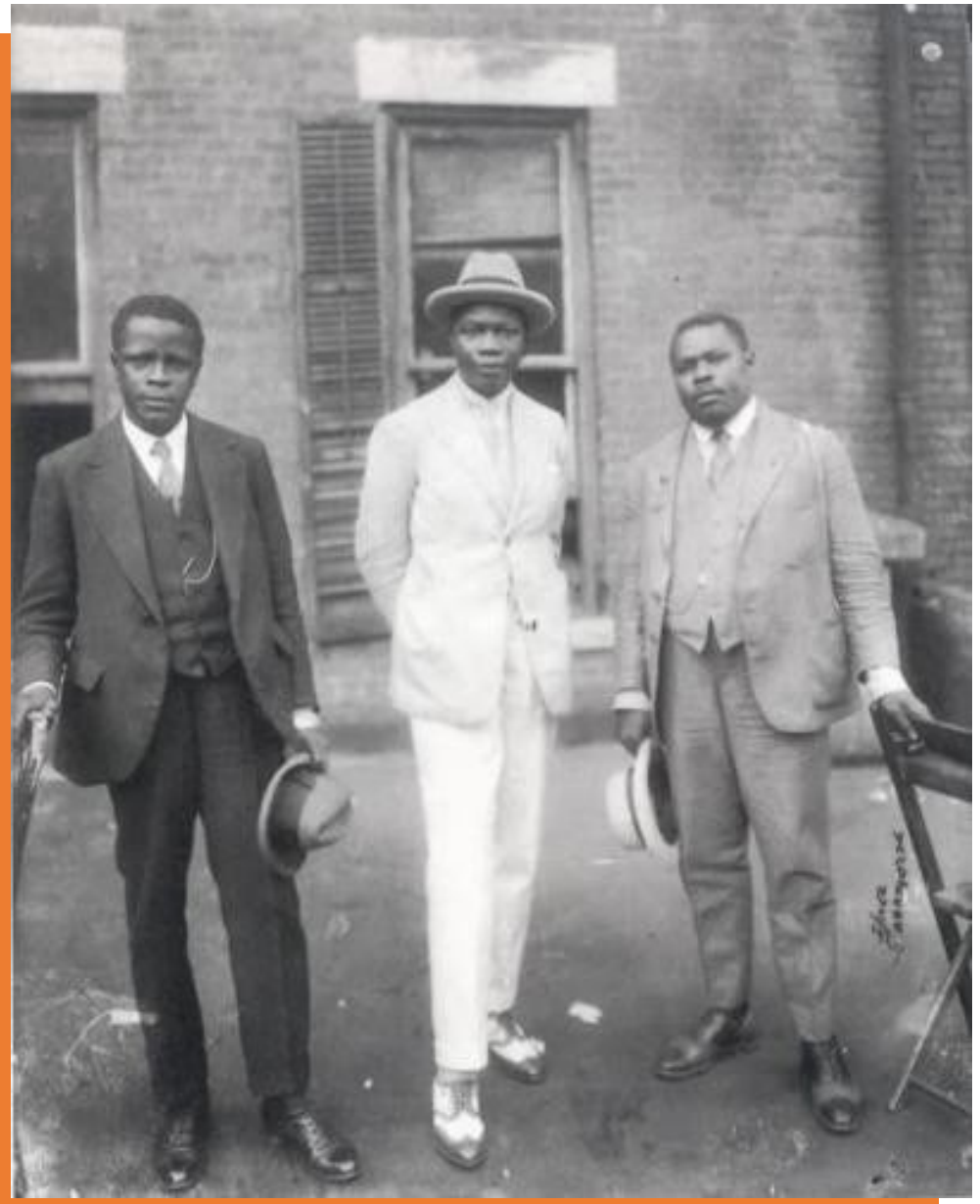
Traditional Dance



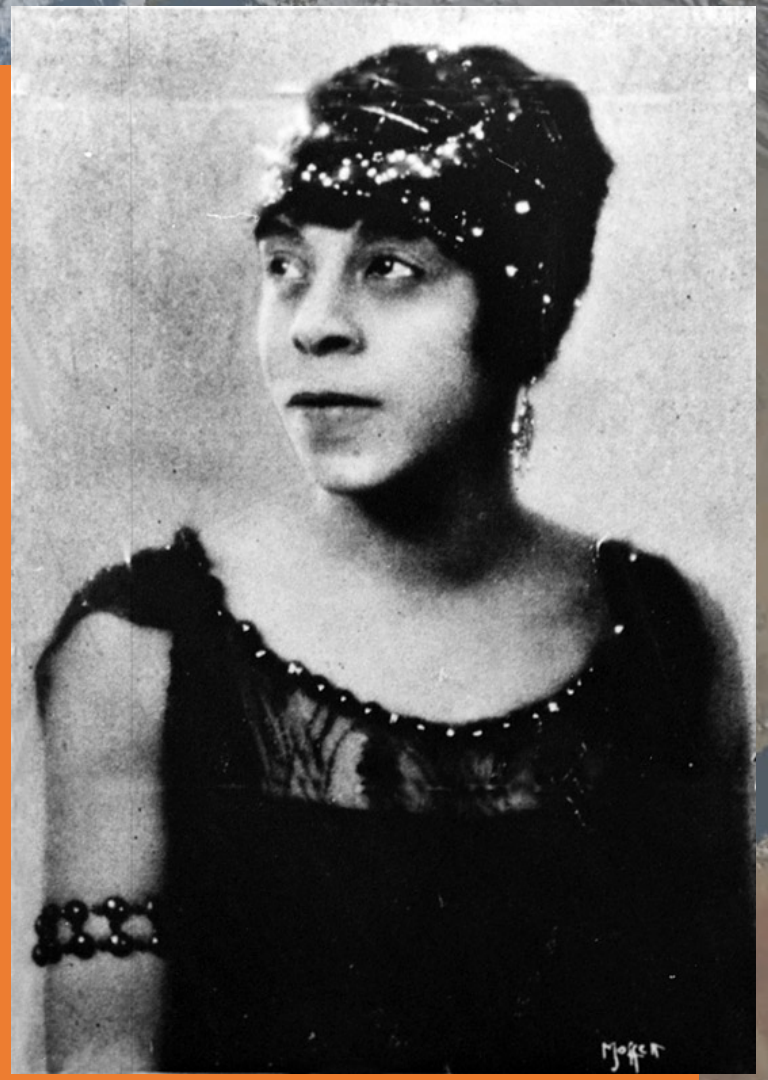
Video

Legacy

Dr. Kojo Tovalou, Nephew of Behanzin, with Marcus Garvey (1924)



Connection to the United States



Roberta Dodd Crawford, Lyric soprano

Chicago Singer Weds Prince Houenou of Dahomey in Paris

Paris, Oct. 6 (UP).—Roberta Dodd Crawford, a singer from Chicago, and Prince Kojo Touvalou Houenou of Dahomey, whose ancestors once commanded the finest Amazonian army in the world, were married here today.

The Prince and his bride will leave on the next ship for Dahomey, French West Africa, where the religious ceremony will be held at Ouidah Cathedral. The Prince, who has studied law and medicine in France and served in the medical corps during the World War, is related to former King Behanzin of Dahomey.

OCTOBER 6, 1932.



Prince Kojo Touvalou Houénou