

Le Benin

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History:

I. Historical forces

- until 17th c. like most of W. Africa, divided into principalities
- One chief had fight with brother moved to **Abomey** and took neighboring kingdom of Dan, which became known as Dahomey (in Dan's belly)
- pledged to leave more land than inherited/resulted in war after war
- relationship with Yoruba of Nigeria affected

- Benin borders shaped by three forces:
 - (1) Dahomey major economic and political force in pre-colonial times, from Savalou to Togo to Nigeria
 - Portuguese had ports at Ouidah and Porto Novo
 - (2) German and British presence in Togo and Nigeria
 - (3) French came in the 1800's and gained control of the coast, desired to expand north to Burkina Faso and Niger

II. Trade

- Dahomey traded with the Europeans—prisoners of war sold into slavery in return for guns
- slave trade dominated 18th-19th c.
- average of 10,000 slaves a year shipped to Brazil, Haiti, Caribbean
- trade involved development of competition, modern world economy, transport of ideas

- King Ghezo modernized his weaponry through European imports, introduced the production of palm oil, traded with France
- slave trade ended in 1851, major powers tried to secure themselves here with little success

III. Modernization

- WW2 Dahomey modernized rapidly, forming unions and political parties
- 1960 became independent
- 1963 military coup, over next nine years, 5 coups ,9 changes in government, and 5 different constitutions
- Army deposed the leader Soglo in 1967 by knocking on his door
- 1972 Kerekou seized control, led Marxist government until 1990