
An Expanding World
The European Impact on World History 1450–1800

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Slave Trades, 1500–1800:
Globalization of Forced Labour

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Introduction

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Slavery caused the slave trade; just as relentlessly, the slave trade brought new slavery. The exploitation of persons as property maintained an indissoluble link to the recruitment of new slaves and the exchange of those already in slavery. The question of whether slavery did more to create the slave trade, or whether the slave trade did more to create slavery, seems likely to remain a conundrum of social history. This volume is intended not to resolve that conundrum, but to illustrate one side of it: the rise and transformation of the slave trades in the early-modern world, 1500–1800. In seventeen chapters, the authors characterize a range of interconnected slave trades, show their magnitude and changing character, their links to changing systems of slavery, and their place in the more general transformation of human society.

Trade in slaves formed a painful yet central element of early-modern world history. Traffic in humans, predicated on social and economic inequalities, served to reinforce those inequalities and create new divisions; yet this same traffic linked distant regions into global systems, thereby engendering new commonalities and new equalities in societies. The slave trade served at once to create and destroy wealth. From the moral perspective of the twentieth century, the slave trade is easily seen as having been costly, brutal and unnecessary. But given the early-modern evolution of demand for slave labour, and the eventual assemblage of huge slave labour forces populating every continent – developments themselves arising out of a complex contingency – large-scale and systematic slave trade was virtually necessary and inevitable.

The ‘exploitation’ of slaves – the institution of slavery, along with the life and work of slaves – did much to influence the early-modern world. But that is another story. The focus of this volume is the ‘procurement’ of slaves. The direct and indirect effects of slave trafficking gave shape to the physical and social realities of the early-modern era and to the conceptions through which men and women viewed their world.

The direct effects of the slave trade brought the capture and transport of millions of persons from their societies of origin, and into the hands of owners in distant societies who forced them to labour and serve on command. The costs were immense. That grim ledger, beginning with the pain brought by oppression and degradation of the survivors – including the cruelty of their subjugation, training and renaming – must also account for the losses through premature death of the many who expired in the course of capture, transportation and seasoning. Those left behind had to bear a different loss: adjusting to the absence of the parents, children, brothers and sisters who were carried away into slavery. Yet

the slave trade continued because of the benefits it brought. The benefits – distributed most unevenly – stemmed in the long-run from domination of the large numbers of persons delivered in bondage to new regions, where they would perform productive and reproductive work as slaves, and in the short-run from the use of force, guile, law and wealth to sell stolen persons for profit.

The indirect effects of the slave trade ramified in every direction. Population was lost to the sending areas, and increased (to a lesser extent) in the receiving areas. Impoverishment was the lot of the majority in sending areas (excepting those who profited by sale of their neighbours), while revenues flowed to those who sustained the flow of slaves by selling food and clothing, by acting as guards, or by building and operating slave ships. The uneven age and sex composition developed in sending areas meant that new divisions of labour had to spring up; similarly, new family and sexual relations developed. For instance, the export of so many young adult West African males as slaves left a relative surplus of young females, many of them in slavery, so that the expansion of female concubinage was reinforced steadily in Africa. The patterns of slave trade led further to classification of slaves and slave merchants by each other, according to their roles in the trade. Slaves became known by ethnic or national categories and by racial categories that were in large part arbitrary labels ('ladino', 'Congo', 'English', 'mulatto', 'creole'); much the same can be said for slave merchants and owners. The high death rates of slaves in many receiving areas, and the high rates of emancipation in others, left a perpetual 'shortage' of slaves which sustained a demand for new captives.

The indirect effects of the slave trade worked their way into a wide range of ideas and actions. The contrast of slavery and freedom came to be reinforced in the minds of people in every corner of this global system. Resistance against capture continued, and the notion of human rights grew to be specified in contrast to the status of slavery. Religion served to comfort the slave, assuring him or her of ultimate salvation; religion served also to protect owners from revenge by the slaves. On the other hand, religion asserted the equality of all in the eyes of God. As time passed, first Christianity and then Islam came to argue that if all were equal in the eyes of God, then man had no right to enslave another.

Slavery and slave trade: links and distinctions

Although this volume focuses on the slave trade rather than on slavery, it will not be possible to make a neat separation of the two phenomena, for they overlapped in almost every particular. Instead, we may use some terminological distinctions to help locate the boundaries between slavery and the slave trade, and to delineate some distinct aspects of the slave trade. For instance, it is helpful to distinguish between 'captives', persons being transported and exchanged in slave trade, and 'slaves', those being exploited in slavery. The distinction is not absolute, as the slave trade also included the sale of persons long enslaved or

born into slavery; for instance, the sale of New England slaves to southern states in the late-eighteenth century, as the New England states moved to abolish slavery. Still, the difference between new captives and seasoned slaves showed up in the significantly higher prices of the latter.

In the trade of slaves, one may distinguish 'interregional trade' (e.g., the sale of Africans to the Americas or to the Persian Gulf), 'regional trade' (e.g., the sale of Indians in the Americas or of Africans in Africa), and 'local trade', in which slaves traveled small distances. Thus, while the Middle Passage across the Atlantic – though which millions of Africans suffered in bondage, cramped and humiliated – remains the central image of the slave trade in general, the full scope of even the interregional slave trade went far beyond the image and reality of this voyage. Slaves were traded across the Sahara desert and the Red Sea from Africa to the Muslim Mediterranean, in continuation of a trade that reached back into medieval times. North and east of the Mediterranean, a trade in Slavic-speaking and Caucasian peoples sent captives to the Ottoman Empire. Captives from East Africa and Madagascar went to Asia, to Indian Ocean islands, to the Americas and to the African mainland. The Slave trades of the Indian subcontinent and the islands and peninsulas of Southeast Asia sent captives to near and distant shores of the Indian Ocean, including to South Africa, where their descendants came to be known as Malays.

The slave trades 'within' major world regions, in turn, have provided a significant dimension to the overall movement of captives, and these regional trades have risen and fallen in interaction with the swings in interregional trade. In the Americas, few captives were sent overseas. Many Native Americans, however, were captured and held in slavery on the continent of their birth. Spain abolished trade in Indian captives and emancipated Indian slaves in the sixteenth century, following the celebrated defense of their case by Bartolomé de las Casas, but Portuguese and, to a lesser extent, French and English colonies permitted enslavement of Indians. Slave trade within the Americas moved both African and Indian slaves to Minas Gerais in Brazil with the gold boom at the turn of the eighteenth century, and moved slaves from English and Dutch importers through the Caribbean and into the hands of Spanish and other purchasers. In Africa, the export slave trade led to greatly expanded African use of slaves and thus to a large regional slave trade. The expansion of slavery in sixteenth-century Russia occasioned enslavement and movement of large numbers of Russians. In South and Southeast Asia, slaves from one part of the region were settled to work in other parts of the region. This trade led to expansion of plantations on Java and Ceylon in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and in the Philippines later on.

Local slave trades, finally, centered on the exchange of persons already enslaved among various owners. The trade at any marketplace – such as the great markets at Cairo, Cartagena, and later at Kano and New Orleans – lumped together transactions in interregional, regional, and local trade in slaves. For the

totality of these transactions, and especially in the eighteenth century, one may say that there existed a world market for slave labour, in which changing levels of demand and supply in slaves led to price fluctuations and to diversions in the flow of slaves in adjustment to market conditions. Through the capture and sale of slaves, labour – a factor of production normally difficult to move – was rendered mobile.

The abolition of the slave trade, in modern times, began in the late-eighteenth century. Much of the writing on the slave trade in that era and subsequently, has stemmed from the long campaign to abolish it. In the terms that have grown up in the literature, one speaks not of the ‘abolition’ of the slave trade, but of the ‘emancipation’ of slaves. In slave-owing societies, it was generally the case that support for ending the transportation or importing of slaves rose to a higher level at an earlier time than did support for freeing the slaves.

These distinctions have been of great importance from time to time: the British abolished the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, but allowed sale of slaves already held in British colonies until declaring emancipation of all slaves in 1838. In later times, British conquerors in Africa suppressed ‘slave raiding’ wherever possible, but allowed ‘slave dealing’, the sale of those previously enslaved, into the 1930s. For the United States, abolition took place in 1808, and emancipation in 1865. France legislated both abolition and emancipation in 1794, rescinded both in 1802, and then emancipated slaves again in 1848.

Slave trade in world history

The history of the slave trade provides a counterweight to whiggish interpretations of early-modern world history. The opening of global maritime contact did bring technical, intellectual and perhaps social advances, creating a global order. But the study of the slave trades reminds us of the violence, oppression and inequality that expanded along with the technical and social changes. The study of the slave trade is thus more than a footnote to world history, more than a side trip through the seamy side of our common past: it provides insight into the fundamental complexity of modern world history, and draws attention to the pain and loss that seem necessarily to have accompanied the triumphs of globalization. Thus the abolitionist movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appears, through one optic, as a breakthrough in humanitarian thinking and action, setting patterns for later reform movements. Seen from another angle, however, its innovations were not so much a smooth progress of the intellect as a set of bold moves to counter the unprecedented level of organized oppression posed by expanding slavery and slave trade.

The history of the slave trade emphasizes links among regions of the early-modern world. The influence of the slave trade in world affairs began before 1500, and it continued well after 1800. But in the early-modern period there developed a particular nexus in which the slave trade played the role of carrying

labourers to areas of economic expansion at the profitable margins of the growing world economy. The institution of slavery brought the exploitation and the reconstruction of much of the world: the Americas, Africa, the contiguous regions from the Mediterranean to the South China Sea, and into the Russian steppes. The trade in slaves brought these regions and Europe into repeated contact, and set the terms of the hierarchy among them.

The theme of the slave trade gives particular emphasis to social and demographic dimensions of world history. This emphasis provides an important counterweight to the usual topics of world-historical analysis. That is, much of world history, as presently written, centers on great-power relationships, on military history, on commercial history, and on technological transfer. World-historical interpretations tend to rely on a diffusionist approach, one emphasizing the flow of power and innovations from certain central places – usually in Europe – to other regions of the world. The history of the slave trade, in contrast, focuses on numbers of people, on their age and sex distribution, their life and death, and their movements to numerous places. Where studies of the exploitation of slaves tend to focus on one region at a time, or on comparison of slavery in two regions, studies on the procurement of slaves tend to explore complex links among the various regions brought into contact by slave trade.¹ Analyses of the slave trade and slavery focus on the questions of class, race, and work which are otherwise underemphasized in studies of world history. The study of the slave trade is thus not simply a distinct topic to be studied in isolation, but yields an approach to world history with particular strengths and insights, whose benefits can perhaps be extended to other areas of world-historical investigation.

A rapid narrative of the history of the slave trade – its rise, spread, transformation, restriction, and suppression – may thus give an indication of broader pulsations in global interaction over the centuries. In one sense there is a single history of the slave trade, stretching from its origin in ancient times until its extinction in the early-twentieth century. In another sense, however, one may identify several distinct cycles of the slave trade, each centered on recruitment of labourers for a specific set of purchasers, based in a social and economic system specific to a given time and place. For each of these, one may discern an era of expansion and an era of decline, with the processes of abolition and emancipation in the latter stages of decline.

¹ Comparative studies of slavery in different regions of the Americas include Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York, 1946); Herbert S. Klein, *Slavery in the Americas: A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba* (Chicago, 1967); and Gwendolyn M. Hall, *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies: A Comparison of St. Dominique and Cuba* (Baltimore, 1971). An early but insightful study taking an interactive approach to the culture of the African diaspora is Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu, the New African Culture* (New York, 1961).

We may begin with the cycle of the slave trade in late-medieval times. Centered on the Mediterranean basin, it brought slaves to the regimes of the Mamluks in Egypt and the Ottomans in Anatolia, and included slaves forced to produce sugar on Mediterranean islands. While some of these slaves came across the Sahara, most of them came from areas adjoining the Black Sea, whence they were carried by Venetian and Genoese merchants. The latter trade died down as Ottoman influence expanded in the sixteenth century.²

The cycle of maritime expansion in the slave trade arose with the sixteenth-century Portuguese and Spanish seizure of lands in the Americas and at the fringes of the Atlantic and Indian oceans. African slaves, predominantly from Senegambia, Upper Guinea, and Angola, went first to the islands of the Atlantic and the Caribbean, and then to north-east Brazil and the highlands of Mexico and the Andes. In smaller numbers, the Portuguese carried slaves to their Indian and other Asian territories. In the same era, Ottoman and Russian societies expanded their slave holdings, the Ottomans drawing slaves from the fringes of their lands, and the Russians enslaving unfortunates within their own society. This cycle of slave trade peaked in the seventeenth century, and declined in the eighteenth century. Enslavement of native populations in Brazil declined in the eighteenth century, as did the delivery of African slaves to Mexico, Peru, and Colombia.

A third and larger cycle of slave trade developed with the expansion of commercial capitalism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, under leadership of Dutch, English, French and Brazilian slave traders. This cycle focused heavily on western Africa: slaves came in largest numbers from the Bight of Benin, Angola, the Bight of Biafra and the Congo coast, with smaller but significant numbers coming from Gold Coast, Upper Guinea and Senegambia. In the Americas, slaves were delivered primarily to the British and French Caribbean, but also to Bahia and Minas Gerais in Brazil and to British North America. The results in Africa led to a significant disruption and decline in population, to a relative shortage of adult males and, it appears, to enslavement of many of the women who remained in western Africa. The smaller slave trades across the Sahara and the Red sea may have declined somewhat during this cycle. The Indian Ocean slave trade, led by Dutch and French merchants, expanded somewhat: the French drew slaves from Madagascar and Mozambique to send to the Mascarene Islands, while the Dutch collected slaves there, in Malaya and India to settle in Java and South Africa.

The sharp decline in this cycle of slave trade, at the turn of the nineteenth century, resulted from the democratic revolutions, the Napoleonic wars, and

² Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 2 vols. (Bruges, Ghent, 1955, 1977); Daniel Evans, 'Slave Coast of Europe', *Slavery and Abolition* (1985), 41-58.

humanitarian abolitionism. Not only did the demand for slaves decline because of changing economic and demographic conditions, but a formal campaign against enslavement arose out of Enlightenment philosophy and social mores. Denmark was the first nation to abolish the slave trade, in 1792. There were even instances of emancipation in this period, first by political leaders in the northern United States, and then by slaves themselves in French Saint-Domingue.

A fourth and final cycle of the slave trade expanded along with industrial capitalism. (Since most of the events in this cycle took place after 1800, they lie beyond the scope of this volume, but we may review them briefly.) As slavery declined in some areas, it expanded in others. Great quantities of captives were brought in the nineteenth century to Cuba and southern Brazil; through internal migration, many slaves moved from the Old South to new areas of the United States. Most of those carried across the Atlantic came from Angola, Congo, and the Bights of Benin and Biafra. As compared with earlier times, these captives included larger proportions of captives from Africa's far interior (these almost entirely male) and larger proportions of children.³ In the same period, demand for slaves expanded sharply in the Indian Ocean and in the Muslim Mediterranean, apparently in response to expanded opportunities in global commerce. Captives went from the Nile Valley and the Central Sudan to Saharan oases, to Egypt, the Ottoman heartland, and the Arabian peninsula. Captives from the Horn of Africa, particularly women, went to the Arabian peninsula.⁴ Captives from the areas of modern Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar went to Indian Ocean islands and to the Persian Gulf.⁵ Linked to this expanded export of slaves was a great expansion of the slave trade and slavery on the African continent. A similar expansion of the slave trade, in a context of expanding commerce, took place in areas of Southeast Asia.⁶

The humanitarian campaign for abolition of the slave trade, in one sense continuing from the previous cycle, now took more pointed forms. It included the British naval and diplomatic campaign for suppression of the slave trade, the Civil War of the United States, the Ten Years' War in Cuba, the end of the empire

³ David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1987).

⁴ Janet Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders, and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley, 1700-1885* (Madison, 1990); Timothy Fernyhough, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Southern Ethiopia in the Nineteenth Century', *Slavery and Abolition* (1988), 103-30.

⁵ Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London, 1987); Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East African Coast* (New Haven, 1977); Thomas M. Ricks, See above chapter 14.

⁶ James F. Warren, 'Slave Markets and Exchange in the Malay World: The Sulu Sultanate, 1770-1878', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (1977), 162-75.

in Brazil, and the European conquests of Africa and the Middle East. The debates on slavery in this era became more complex, as humanitarian anti-slavery had to contend with rising doctrines of racial discrimination.

Development of debate and research on slave trade

The contemporary and historical literatures on the slave trade have retained a world-historical focus from early days. Eighteenth-century writers such as Jean-Baptiste Labat traced the routes of slaves across the Atlantic in the course of presenting a view of the world. Abolitionist writers Thomas Clarkson and Thomas Fowell Buxton, while centered very deeply in their British national tradition, nonetheless showed a global sweep in their presentation of the devastation brought by the slave trade.⁷ The writings of David Livingstone and other missionary critics of the slave trade in its latter days may seem rather parochial by contrast, but by their time the reality of slavery and the slave trade was largely restricted to Africa and the Middle East.⁸

The era of imperial conquest and expansion, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, brought a number of major scholarly studies of slavery and the slave trade. These alternated in approach between those sharply critical of slavery and those rationalizing it. W.E.B. DuBois's historical study traced the long campaign for suppression of the Atlantic slave trade to North America. The Dutch scholar H.J. Nieboer, in an encyclopedic anthropological investigation, chose to treat slavery as the independent invention of each society around the world, and ignored slave trade as a modern global system.⁹ Ulrich B. Phillips for the American South (in 1918) and Gilberto Freyre for Brazil (in 1933) published studies which analyzed slavery meticulously, but which had the effect of rationalizing the need for slavery in the development of the regional or national culture of each. In Britain, Reginald Coupland published a biography of William Wilberforce in 1922 and a celebration of the British anti-slavery movement in 1933. In the United States, Lowell Ragatz wrote a critique of the planter class in the British Caribbean, and Elizabeth Donnan produced a massive collection of documents on the history of the slave trade, which has been mined with profit

⁷ Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amérique* (Paris, 1722); Labat, *Voyage du chevalier Des Marchais en Guinée*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1730); Thomas Clarkson, *The Cries of Africa to the Inhabitants of Europe* (London, 1822); Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave-Trade and its Remedy* (London, 1839).

⁸ David Livingstone, in ed. Horace Waller *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa*, 2 vols. (London, 1974); François Renault, *Lavigerie, l'esclavage africain et l'Europe, 1868-1892*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1971).

⁹ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (New York, 1969; first published 1896); H.J. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System: Ethnological Researches* (The Hague, 1900).

by scholars ever since. In France, Gaston Martin published studies on the slave trade of Nantes.¹⁰

Of the studies appearing during and just after World War II, the most prominent has remained *Capitalism and Slavery*, by the Trinidadian historian Eric Williams. He argued that the profits of slavery and the slave trade in the British Caribbean contributed significantly to Britain's industrial revolution, but that the expansion of the wage-labour system caused British industrial leaders to press for abolition of the competing trade in slaves; debate on this thesis continues to this day. Other major studies of the period resulted from the work of Christopher Lloyd on the British naval suppression of slave trade, Mauricio Goulart on slave trade and slavery in Brazil, and Noel Deerr on the history of sugar.¹¹

The era of decolonization (in Africa and the Caribbean) and of civil rights struggles (in the United States) brought a new level of attention to the study of slave trade. As a harbinger of the coming scholarly focus, Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley published a general survey of the Atlantic slave trade, *Black Cargoes*, in 1962. The detailed studies began in earnest with the 1969 publication of Philip D. Curtin's *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*.¹² Drawing on available published material, Curtin constructed a global estimate of the volume of the Atlantic slave trade, broken down by time period, by African region of origin, by the nation of the slave carriers, and by American region in which slaves were landed. That book and the scholarly response to it have determined both the outlines and the controversies of the discussion ever since. It focused an immense amount of scholarly energy on collecting data on the slave trade, and brought forth waves of interpretive summaries.

The main initial debate centered on the volume of Atlantic slave trade, because Curtin's estimates (totalling just under ten million slaves delivered to the Americas) were smaller than those which had been cited before. Another topic

¹⁰ Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (New York, 1918); Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e Senzala* (Rio de Janeiro, 1933); Reginald Coupland, *Wilberforce* (Oxford, 1923); Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London, 1933); Lowell J. Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (New York, 1928); Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols. (Washington, 1930-35); Gaston Martin, *Nantes au XVIIIe siècle : l'ère des négriers (1714-1774)* (Paris, 1931).

¹¹ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944); Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade* (London, 1949); Mauricio Goulart, *Escravidão africana no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1950); Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar*, 2 vols. (London, 1949-50). In 1946, Frank Tannenbaum published *Slave and Citizen*, a concise but influential comparison of slavery in Catholic and Protestant regions of the Americas.

¹² Daniel P. Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1862* (New York, 1962); Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, 1969). Curtin, 'Epidemiology and the Slave Trade', *Political Science Quarterly* LXXXIII (1968), 190-216.

of early debate was the distribution of slaves in the Americas: Curtin's figures suggested that slaves delivered to the United States had totalled only five percent of all deliveries. This figure contrasted with the large African-descended population of the United States, which totaled perhaps 30% of the African-descended population of the Americas.¹³

Indeed, in the first decade after appearance of the *Census*, scholars tended to use the new data to counter the prevailing 'conventional wisdom' and minimize the impact of the slave trade on world history. Among economic historians, Evsey Domar had already taken up Nieboer's approach to explaining the presence or absence of slavery in terms of land-labour ratios, thus abstracting them from the practical realities of the slave trade. Stanley Engerman and Roger Anstey independently launched critiques of Eric Williams' thesis, arguing that the profits of the slave trade and of Caribbean slavery were too small to have had much impact on British industrialization. John Fage compared Curtin's figures on slave exports to estimates of West-African population, and concluded that the slave trade had done no more than to 'cream-off surplus population' in West Africa.¹⁴ These minimalist interpretations of the 1970s did show that simple, causal assertions of global transformation through the slave trade could be challenged with the newly available data.

Collection and publication of additional data has provided the most basic contribution to the development of research on the slave trade. For the Atlantic slave trade, the most important collections of data have been the work of Jean Mettas and Serge Daget on the French trade (based on shipping records), the work of David Eltis on the nineteenth-century Atlantic slave trade (based on British naval and consular records), the work of Johannes Postma on the Dutch trade, of Joseph Miller on the Portuguese trade, and of David Richardson on the English trade.¹⁵ The slave trade from sub-Saharan Africa to the north and east, across the Sahara, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, is much more difficult to

¹³ See the chapter by Lovejoy in this volume.

¹⁴ Evsey Domar, 'The Causes of Slavery or Serfdom: A Hypothesis', *Journal of Economic History* (1970), 18-32; Stanley L. Engerman, 'The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation in the Eighteenth Century: A Comment on the Williams Thesis', *Business History Review* (1972), 430-43; John D. Fage, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History', *Journal of African History* (1969), 393-404.

Ronald W. Bailey argues that the sum of scholarship into the 1960s represented a 'conventional wisdom' that slavery and the slave trade had brought major changes to European and American societies. He takes Engerman's 1972 article as a key turn away from this earlier consensus. Bailey, 'Africa, the Slave Trade, and the Rise of Industrial Capitalism in Europe and the United States: A Historiographic Review', *American History* (1986), 1-91.

¹⁵ See Bibliography, section 1, for these and other recent contributions of new data. Recently a data bank on transatlantic slave voyages has been established at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute of Harvard University, under the direction of David Eltis.

document, especially for early times. Ralph Austen developed a system of cataloguing the many scattered references to the volume and composition of these trades, and has drawn up estimates of their total volume.¹⁶ On the prices of slaves in the Atlantic trade, Richard Bean constructed an important set of early estimates; David Galenson and David Richardson have collected additional and more precise prices.¹⁷ More recently, Richardson and Paul Lovejoy have begun systematic collection of slave prices on the African continent.¹⁸ Beyond the Atlantic, the largest body of new data on early modern slavery is presented in the work of Richard Hellie on Russia.¹⁹

A series of conferences during the 1970s and 1980s led to the publication of a remarkable collection of edited volumes containing studies on slavery and the slave trade in many parts of the world, but especially in the Atlantic world.²⁰ Following closely upon the edited collections of studies appeared a large number of monographic studies of slavery and the slave trade, including both new evidence and new analysis.²¹ General surveys of slave trade have appeared regularly, mostly focusing on the Americas and Africa, but including surveys of the Indian Ocean and the Middle East.²²

In some cases, particular themes on the slave trade came to prominence. Curtin's *Census* and the initial responses spoke in terms of slaves in general, without much attention to their distribution by age and sex. With time, however, scholars began to focus more on demographic details, and the demographic history of the slave trade became a significant subfield of slave trade studies.²³ In pursuing the economic linkages of the slave trade, Jan Hogendorn and Marion Johnson produced an excellent analysis of the cowrie trade.²⁴

¹⁶ Ralph A. Austen, 'The Islamic Red Sea Slave Trade: An Effort at Quantification', *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies* (Chicago, 1979); see also Austen's chapter in this volume.

¹⁷ Richard Bean, *The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1650-1775* (New York, 1975). E. Phillip LeVein conducted an analysis of slave prices after 1770, but relied on scanty data. See LeVein, *British Slave Trade Suppression Policies, 1821-1865* (New York, 1977). Joseph C. Miller, 'Slave Prices in the Portuguese Southern Atlantic', in ed. Paul E. Lovejoy *Africans in Bondage* (Madison, 1986), 43-77.

¹⁸ Richardson and Lovejoy, forthcoming.

¹⁹ Richard Hellie, *Slavery in Russia, 1450-1725* (Chicago, 1982). The documents are on the lives of slaves, rather than on their purchase and sale.

²⁰ See Bibliography, section 2.

²¹ See Bibliography, section 3.

²² See Bibliography, section 4.

²³ See Bibliography, section 5.

²⁴ Hogendorn, Jan S., and Marion Johnson, *The Shell Money of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1986). For a general economic historical analysis of African slave trade, see the forthcoming monograph of Stefano Fenoaltea.

As research proceeded, the minimalist interpretations of the 1970s came under challenge in the 1980s and early 1990s. The counter-challenge, mounted by scholars who could be called interactionist in their approach, focused on reaffirming a nexus of the slave trade and world history. Thus the new data, in the hands of the minimalists, had initially brought renunciation of the rather one-dimensionally causal linkages of capitalism and slavery in the 'conventional wisdom'. Now the same data, when explored through sufficiently nuanced analytical models, could support interactive statements linking the slave trade to global transformation.²⁵ The slave trade seems now to be reconfirmed as a significant ingredient in early-modern world history.

The concentration of the slave trade literature on Africa and Africans should be evident to the reader. Specialists on Africa have done most of the work on the slave trade in the past three decades.²⁶ The detailed work done in tracing exports of slaves from African regions has not met with equivalent work on tracing slave imports by specialists on the Americas, the Middle East and North Africa, and the Indian Ocean basin. Particularly for Asian regions, slavery was a less prominent and less controversial institution than in the Americas: historians have chosen to focus on other issues. But slavery and the slave trade did exist in many parts of the Asian mainland and islands, and the documents for its analysis exist in considerable quantity, so that slavery, the slave trade and their influence can be elucidated for Asia as well as Africa and the Americas. Richard Hellie's study of slavery in early modern Russia is exemplary in this regard.

Finally, years of systematic work by Joseph C. Miller have resulted in an extraordinarily comprehensive bibliography on slavery and the slave trade, organized efficiently by time period, by region, and by topic. These citations appear each year as a bibliographical supplement to the main journal in the field, *Slavery and Abolition*, and have twice been collected into separate volumes, edited by Miller.²⁷

²⁵ Eltis, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*; Joseph Inikori, 'Slavery and the Development of Industrial Capitalism', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1987), 771-95; Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison, 1989); Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life* (Cambridge, 1990); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Formation of the Modern World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1992); Gwendolyn M. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture* (Baton Rouge, 1992); and the chapter by David Richardson in this volume. Of these authors, Eltis and Miller, while showing extensive ramifications of slave trade, argue that its negative effect on African population was limited.

²⁶ For all the work on African slave trade, we still lack major empirical studies of slave trade within Africa before the nineteenth century. This results partly from the shortage of data, but also from the decision of historians to focus on export slave trade. For examples of studies of African slave trade in the nineteenth century, see Michael Mason, 'Captive and client labour and the economy of the Bida Emirate, 1857-1901', *Journal of African History* (1973), 453-71; and Dennis D. Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti and the Last Years of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (Madison, 1985).

²⁷ See Bibliography, section 6.

Articles in this volume

The articles selected for republication in this volume stand out in that, individually and collectively, they present major recent contributions to the literature by addressing the key issues in analyses of the slave trade, and the main flows of slaves. While the literature is large and diverse, so that many other articles were strong candidates for inclusion, these seventeen were selected for individual strength and topical balance.

The opening section offers three overviews of slave trade. Ralph Austen's article (see Chapter 1 below) presents his revised estimate of the volume of the trans-Saharan trade, showing its character, its longevity, its ups and downs. Paul Lovejoy (see chapter 2 below) gives an analogous estimate of the Atlantic slave trade, published thirteen years after Curtin's *Census*. The article summarizes not just numerical totals, but also the directions of the slave trade and the main carriers of slaves. His results show the great accumulation of detail in the years following Curtin's study, and the modest increase in the estimated volume of the slave trade. Patrick Manning (see chapter 3 below) offers a discussion of the impact of Atlantic trade on the Americas, on Africa, and on those who travelled. The article gives emphasis to the resulting development of the slave trade and slavery within Africa, and also notes the concentration of arrivals from Africa in the Caribbean and Brazil.

Five articles then detail the slave trade from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. Luiz Felipe de Alencastro (see chapter 4 below) explores Portuguese imperial policy during that time, and its impact on the movement of slaves. John Monteiro's study of Brazil (see chapter 5 below) emphasizes that the Portuguese took many Indian slaves in Brazil: it documents the capture and settlement of Indian slaves during the seventeenth century, and their interactions with African slaves. John Thornton's concise study (see chapter 6 below) of Upper Guinea in Portuguese times notes that mostly men were taken as slaves, and mostly women were left behind. The resulting changes in social structure and economic roles suggest that life in Africa began to change, under the influence of the slave trade, as early as the sixteenth century. For the same period in India, Ann Pescatello (see chapter 7 below) argues that the Portuguese expanded slavery in areas of the subcontinent under their influence. Slave labour, though small in volume compared to peasant labour, became economically and socially significant, especially in urban settings. In this 1972 article, Pescatello proposed a research agenda on slavery in India which has not, unfortunately, been pursued with energy.²⁸ The patterns of slave trade to the eastern Mediterranean are reflected in Ronald Jennings' tracing of the lives of several dozen slaves who crossed the

²⁸ For a new study, see R.R. Singh Chauhen, *Africans in India: From Slavery to Royalty*.

Sahara to be settled in Cyprus, where many of them were placed in service as domestics (see chapter 8 below).

Six studies of the slave trade in the eighteenth century document the slave trade at its peak. Richard Rathbone (see chapter 9 below) emphasizes that resistance and escape by captives was as much a factor in Africa and on board ship as it was among slaves in the Americas. His insights on this point have been followed by later scholars. Stephen Deyle (see chapter 10 below) presents an overview of recent work showing the details of the slave trade to British North America. In particular, his work provides a reminder that slaves were sent to the northern as well as the southern colonies. Joseph Miller's analysis of the Portuguese slave trade (see chapter 11 below) emphasizes that it grew to a very large volume in the eighteenth century, and that it ran on quite different principles than the better-known British and French trades. He characterizes this trade as marginal, yet conveys at the same time a sense of its centrality. For the Indian Ocean, Jean-Michel Filliot (see chapter 12 below) shows that the French trade from Madagascar and East Africa to the Mascarenes replaced the Portuguese trade to India, and that this slave trade resembled the Atlantic trade in many particulars. David Geggus (see chapter 13 below) draws on records of French slavery and slave trade to reveal patterns of age, sex, and ethnicity among eighteenth-century slaves. His results show the sharp variations in the composition of slave cargoes taken from different parts of the African coast. Thomas Ricks (see chapter 14 below) summarizes the expansion of the slave trade from East Africa to the Persian Gulf in the late-eighteenth century, as part of a regional commercial expansion linked to increased English trade in the Gulf.

The concluding section of the volume includes three articles on the effects of slave trade. Barbara Bush (see chapter 15 below) reviews the role of women in Caribbean slavery, showing how the heavy usage of slaves led to a need for their replacement with new arrivals. David Richardson (see chapter 16 below) presents a new analysis of the effects of the slave trade on eighteenth-century English economic growth. This revised analysis notes the significance of slave trade at certain key points in English industrial development, and also notes the question of the impact of slave trade on economic growth in the Americas and in Africa. Finally, Seymour Drescher (see chapter 17 below) provides us with a tour of Liverpool, the greatest slave-trading port, at the moment when the abolitionist movement gained the upper hand there.

Conclusion

The slave trade linked diverse regions of the world, but in antagonism rather than in unity. The slave trade represented no peaceful expansion of European influence. It brought violent confrontation of wealth with need, of momentary power with momentary weakness. It was primitive accumulation: the rank redistribution of wealth and power. Demand for slaves emanated from areas short of population,

or short of particular types of workers. Supply focused on areas populous but vulnerable; on workers skilled but available at a price. Mortality and disruption in the supplying areas became part of the price.

If the institution of slavery entailed as a counterpoint, over time, the establishment of certain reciprocal, familial and affectionate relations between master and slave, such was not the case in the slave trade. Relations linking captive and owner could rarely have developed beyond physical coupling.

Periodically, the economic advantage of such cruel exploitation subsided. If it coincided with a broadening of definitions of rights – by nation, race, religion – then slavery and enslavement were abolished or at least limited. Otherwise it could rebound. Out of the slave trade grew some of the most invidious of distinctions among men – discrimination by race, by ‘civilization’, by status of slavery. Enslavement permitted and enhanced sexual discrimination on all the continents.

The ironies of the slave trade underscore the importance of utilizing a global framework to evaluate the slave trade. Thus, Africa was monetized, increasingly, through the impact of the slave trade. But increased monetary flow coincided with the degradation of the African commercial order, not its enrichment or elevation.

Only those few who traveled the full circuit – from the lands of the enslaved, to the lands of slavery, to the lands profiting from slavery – could appreciate the magnitude, the irony, the cruelty, the waste of the system. Some of these were European travellers like Jean-Baptiste Labat and Mungo Park. Many more were slaves. A few of the slaves were able to record their views.²⁹ The most sweeping and comprehensive view, presented in epic terms, is the narrative of Olaudah Equiano. Equiano, whose travels throughout the North Atlantic formed the basis of his 1792 book, became a devout Christian yet retained pride in the Ibo society of his birth. He condemned the slave trade in language linking Calvinism to Enlightenment humanism, and tying individual emotions to global interactions.³⁰

I remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the man's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion to see their distress and hear their cries in parting. O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, 'learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you?... Surely this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery'....

But is not the slave trade entirely a war with the heart of man? And surely that which is begun by breaking down the barriers of virtue, involves in its continuance destruction to every principle, and buries all sentiments in ruin!

²⁹ Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered* (Madison, 1962).

³⁰ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Revised edn, Leeds, 1814), reprinted in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York, 1987), 38, 79.

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