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# Africa: The Source

John Thornton

The people who were transported to the Americas during the Atlantic slave trade were drawn from a vast region of western and central Africa, with a few even coming from the southeastern part of the continent. From the lower fringe of the Sahara Desert, in the north, to the upper reaches of the Kalahari Desert in Angola, in the south, a great river of people embarked on what was by far the greatest forced migration in history.

At its height the slave trade was a huge business enterprise, directly and indirectly employing thousands of people. They ranged from the businessmen and bankers in Liverpool, Lisbon, Nantes, and Boston who financed the trade, to humble peasants in Africa who sold their farming surpluses to feed the captives awaiting export on the coast. It was also a moral disaster, for even as it flourished a good many observers felt a tinge of guilt at the violence, greed, and cruelty that such a forced passage required. The transatlantic slave trade also remains a puzzle for historians, for the more it is studied the harder it is to fully explain.

Wood carvings of bound African men and women, from Ghana. (Sample Pittman Collection, New York City.)



## AFRICAN CONTROL

The slave trade was not simply a matter of Europeans staging attacks on the African coast and enslaving their captives. The first Portuguese to visit West Africa in the middle of the fifteenth century tried this tactic, but were quickly undone. An ocean-going sailing ship cannot easily approach the African coast, and African coastal navies, whose shallow draft canoes were well adapted to the waters and small creeks of the coastal zone, quickly and decisively defeated such forays. Although other mariners in later times would try the tactic of raiding, none were successful beyond the short-term gains obtained by surprise, and most regretted their attempt.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, only in Angola did military forces led by Europeans—the Portuguese—play a significant role in the capture and enslavement of people. Even there, Portuguese involvement was a slow process that began in 1491. Initially it involved mercenaries in the service of African rulers; only after a long preliminary period did European forces begin seizing territory and launching wars, in 1579. And even then, the period when European-led armies were the primary means of enslavement was relatively short, lasting only about a century.<sup>2</sup>

Where circumstances did allow Europeans to participate directly, they could not force Africans to furnish them with slaves. For example, Africans in the region between modern northern Liberia and the eastern end of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) never participated in the trade in any significant way, even though the area was fairly densely populated and Europeans did trade there for ivory, pepper, wood, and cloth. Similarly, most of what is today Cameroon and Gabon did not export slaves, though they exported other commodities. The Kingdom of Benin in the southeastern part of today's Nigeria dropped out of the slave trade from about 1550 until perhaps 1710, and the Kingdom of Congo in modern northern Angola barely exported any slaves of its own taking between 1580 and 1650. Both kingdoms contributed significantly to the slave trade at other times, however, and others participated actively in some periods, and much less so in others.

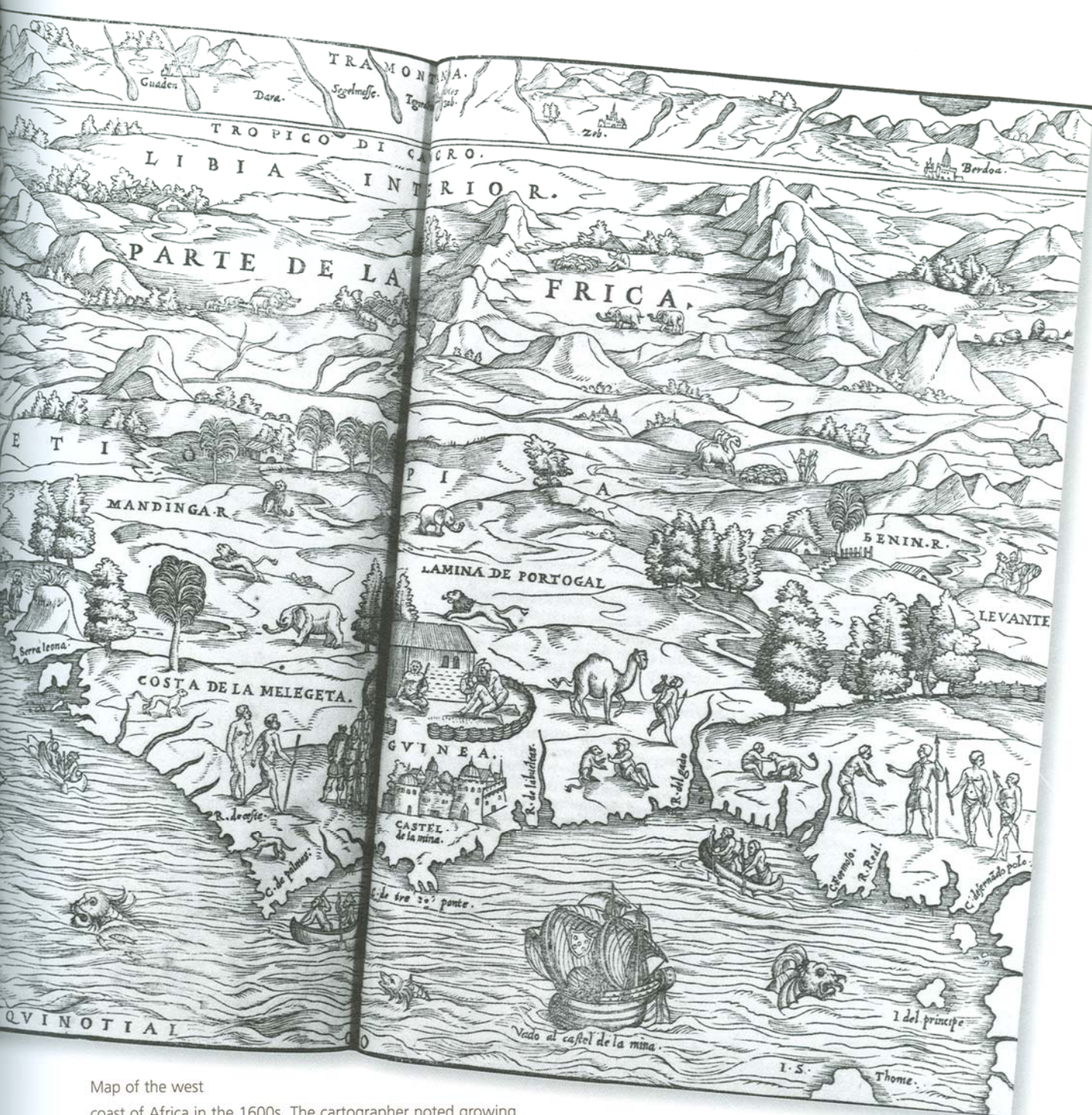
Where European merchants were allowed to build fortifications, as they did in the area of Senegambia and on the coast of modern Ghana, the forts were to protect the merchants and their cargoes from seaborne attack by pirates and not to serve as raiding bases against the Africans. Initially, many forts were constructed to protect gold awaiting shipment rather than as slave-trading entrepôts. Occasionally, Africans might engage fort garrisons as mercenaries, as often happened on the Gold Coast. But the garrisons were too weak to enforce their will against even petty African states. On more than one occasion, Europeans found out to their cost that Africans could take these forts by storm if they were determined to do so.<sup>3</sup>

African rulers, therefore, controlled the wars and raids that led to the sale and transport of captives abroad. Everywhere except Angola, African slaves were acquired by European slave dealers through peaceful trade that was regulated by African governments. Hundreds of thousands of pages of commercial records left by European slave-trading companies such as the English Royal African Company or the Dutch West India Company document the process of purchase in great detail.<sup>4</sup> European traders paid taxes, tribute, and tolls to conduct their business, often dealt directly with the coastal political authorities or their representatives, and conducted their trade strictly in accordance with



English slave trader Thomas Gollightly served as mayor of Liverpool and was active in the trade until it became illegal in 1807. (Courtesy Board of Trustees, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.)

FONENT



Map of the west coast of Africa in the 1600s. The cartographer noted growing European intrusions on the coastline, including the Portuguese fortress known to the British as El Mina ("the mine") or Elmina Castle. This outpost was the first such trading center that Europeans established in Africa.

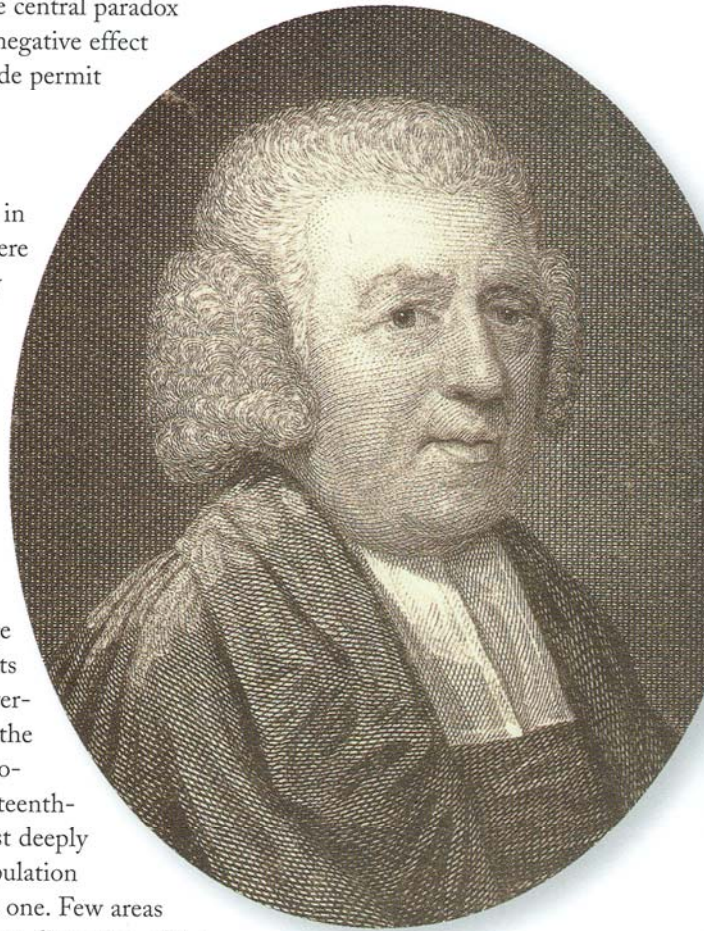
African law. They recorded purchases of agricultural goods to feed themselves and to supply the thousands of slaves destined for export. Likewise, in the few African locales for which there exist written African records, rulers themselves describe their activities in acquiring and selling slaves. For instance, in a letter written in 1514, King Afonso of Congo described gifts of slaves to various Portuguese, as well as the capture and sale of slaves by his armies.<sup>5</sup> Three centuries later in 1810, King Adandozan of Dahomey described for his "brother," the king of Portugal, a number of his campaigns and the many captives and slaves he took.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, it was the African political and economic elite, leaders who were capable of defending their countries from seaborne European marauders, who did the primary work of enslaving, transporting, and selling the Africans who would be traded on the coast. Yet this fact creates the central paradox of the Atlantic slave trade. Given the slave trade's strong negative effect on Africa, why did African leaders who controlled the trade permit it to continue?

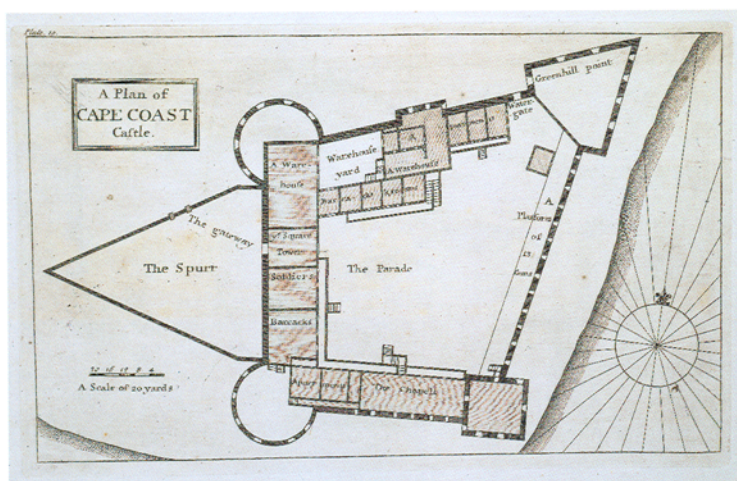
### CONSEQUENCES

The negative impact of the slave trade can be seen clearly in its demographics. Because slave buyers in the Americas were anxious to use African captives as laborers, in general they wished to buy adult males. On average, enslaved men outnumbered women two to one, and children or older people rarely made up even a tenth of exports. Thus the slave trade's drain on the population of Africa was all the worse because it targeted the most productive adults. While modern historians have gradually learned roughly how many people were boarded on ships in West Africa during the period of the slave trade, it is far from established how many people lived at the time in the areas most deeply affected. Thus we do not know what percentage of Africa's population was lost to the trade. Still, some hints suggest that in addition to a fairly small decrease in the overall population of the hardest hit areas such as Angola and the Bight of Benin, there was a significant impact on the demographic structure of the population. For example, late eighteenth-century census material from Angola, one of the areas most deeply involved in trading slaves, shows that among the adult population women had come to outnumber men by more than two to one. Few areas suffered as much as Angola did, but at least some population distortion of this sort took place in most regions that were trading slaves extensively.<sup>7</sup>

To some extent African laws and customs helped offset population losses. African marriage law did not limit the number of wives a man could have, and by the 1700s polygamy was widespread in many African countries, for humble and rich alike. The practice of men taking multiple wives allowed fertility to remain close to normal, so birth rates did not decline. In the same populations, the ratio of boys to girls among the children was fairly normal, although the ratio of adults to children was relatively low. This population distortion, in turn, probably had a number of results: there were fewer women, and many fewer adults in general, to take care of the large child population, and work



Captain John Newton made three slave voyages between 1745, when he was only twenty, and 1755. In middle age he married, became a clergyman, and wrote of his regret at having participated in and profited from the trade. Newton left as a legacy the words to the hymn "Amazing Grace," which he wrote around 1770. (Mary Evans Picture Library.)



Cape Coast Castle as drawn by William Smith around 1727. The Royal African Company appointed Smith to survey its West African trading posts, called "factories." (In *Thirty Different Drafts of Guinea*.)

that adult males should have performed would have had to be done by women or not done at all. Under these circumstances productivity had to fall, and some scholars suggest that Africa's relative backwardness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was due to this diminished economic capacity, an economic disaster from which Africa has yet to recover.<sup>8</sup>

Other negative impacts were less tangible. People did not accept enslavement voluntarily—virtually all those who crossed the Atlantic had been forcibly seized, either in war or illegally by bandits. To reap such a harvest of human beings, there must inevitably have been a great sowing of violence, with its related destruction and disruption. Additional

evidence suggests that those who were not forcibly seized were enslaved through court action, and in many areas the courts were corrupted to increase the numbers of people enslaved.<sup>9</sup>

#### AFRICAN SOURCES OF SLAVES

Because of the role of violence and judicial corruption in the process of enslavement, it is tempting to add condemnation of the African elites who ran the courts, conducted the wars, and sold the enslaved victims, to the censure of European merchants and their backers. Such a solution is not very satisfying, however. The slave trade lasted some 400 years; it involved at least 200 sovereign states in Africa, and thus many thousands of leaders. In many African societies, decisions such as the one to engage in the slave trade were made not just by rulers acting alone, but also by a large class of powerful, wealthy, and influential people. The decision to go to war and to sell slaves was made hundreds of times each year, and it is impossible to believe that so many African rulers were so irresponsible that they took such portentous steps simply to sell slaves. This is especially true because, in African traditions, some of these leaders are remembered as being wise and just and appear so even in contemporary records. For example, Queen Njinga, ruler of Ndongo and Matamba from 1624 to 1663, is remembered today as a heroine and a staunch patriot against Portuguese intruders in her realm, yet she unhesitatingly engaged in the slave trade.<sup>10</sup> It strains the imagination to suppose that all those leaders over all that time made decisions that were consistently wrong or guided solely by sordid principles of gain and power.

One explanation might be that African rulers waged wars simply to acquire slaves, much as a hunter attacks game. But war is not hunting, and the military situation in Africa was rarely so unbalanced that one country could raid its neighbors with impunity. In fact, many African leaders began wars that they could not be sure of winning at all, which is hardly rational if their objective was only to obtain slaves. The Kingdom of Dahomey, whose eighteenth-century rulers sold thousands of slaves acquired mostly in wars, engaged in a war or some other military operation virtually every year. Yet before one dismisses these operations as slave raids designed to garner income to satisfy the rulers' greed, one must consider that Dahomey actually *lost*



The word *coffle* derives from an Arabic term for caravan, and so-called coffle chains were used to bind captive Africans together in single file. This one, made of iron, dates from around 1700. (Sample Pittman Collection, New York City.)



This lithograph by British botanist Mungo Park depicts slaves being marched to a port or market in Africa around 1790.

one-third of its wars, sometimes with heavy casualties. In another third the results were indecisive and Dahomey's armies returned with few or no captives.<sup>11</sup> It also is not difficult to see that at least some of Dahomey's wars were waged to secure territory, extend royal power, or even obtain peace.<sup>12</sup>

Rather than dismiss all African rulers as selfish tyrants, one must attempt to consider the slave trade from an African perspective. It helps to start by recognizing that in Africa, the condition of slavery was not regarded as aberrant or immoral. Most African legal systems recognized slavery as a social condition: slaves constituted a class of people, captives or their descendants, over whom private citizens exercised the rights of the state to make law, punish, and control. These rights were alienable, that is, they could be transferred by sale. The exercise of such rights by private citizens (or by the ruler and state officials in their private capacities) was crucial, for African law did not recognize the right of a person to draw income from the rent or sale of land, as many other societies did. Thus, in many parts of Africa slaves were the prime source of private income.

In general, African slaves were probably treated better than slaves in the Americas. African slavery was mild, more like serfdom in medieval Europe. As the principal form of private income-bearing property, slaves were used in many more activities than were similar classes of people in Europe or the Americas. In addition to their roles as agricultural laborers and personal servants, African slaves sometimes performed administrative tasks or served in the military, occasionally in positions of command.

Although there was a slave class in Africa, this does not mean that Africans simply sold off an existing slave community in their dealings with Europeans. In fact, most available information suggests that people of the slave class who had been settled in one location for sufficient time (often less than one lifetime) came to possess a number of rights, including immunity from resale or arbitrary transfer to another owner or location. Moreover, most of the Africans sold as slaves for export were not from the established slave

class, but were newly enslaved captives taken in war or purchased from bandits. The existence of the class in African societies simply meant that there was a legal basis for selling slaves to Europeans, and an apparatus for acquiring, controlling, and moving enslaved people.<sup>13</sup>

Africans who made decisions about the slave trade did not necessarily imagine that they were transferring people to America to serve in the same ways that they did in Africa. African leaders probably knew that the type of slavery exported captives would know in America was harsh compared to the slavery of Africa. African leaders often sent ambassadors to Europe, and many African elites had their children educated abroad. Because

Hand-colored etching showing Lisbon's harbor around 1580. (Georg Braun and Franz Hogenburg, *Civitas Orbis Terrarum*.)



of the routes vessels took to reach Europe, such travelers crossed the Atlantic on the very ships that made the Middle Passage. In fact, it was impossible to travel from Africa to Europe and not pass through Brazil or the West Indies, where the harshest forms of American slavery—work in sugar production—were practiced. In 1643, it was just such an itinerary that Miguel de Castro, ambassador from the Congolese province of Soyo, followed during his diplomatic mission to Holland.<sup>14</sup> During layovers that might last months, travelers such as de Castro had ample opportunity to observe firsthand the horrors of American slavery, horrors they could and doubtless did report back to their families and sponsors upon their return to Africa. But although Africans were aware of the problems of American slavery, they were not selling their own subjects or usually even their own slaves abroad. They were selling foreigners and even enemies, people captured in wars waged for a wide variety of reasons.

### SPOILS OF WAR

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century observers who interviewed numerous African slaves in the Americas all testified to the important role warfare played. In fact, war was at the heart of the paradox of African enslavement, the means by which most of those who were enslaved were captured.

Wars in Africa were waged for much the same reasons as conflicts in other parts of the world. From the available evidence, African rulers waged war to increase their territory, to avenge wrongs done them by neighbors, to gain influence in a region, or to control key resources or travel routes. African wars often were civil wars between rival members of a ruling elite to secure power. Beyond the reports of elite Africans to Europeans or those preserved in chronicles, we know relatively little about the causes of many African wars during the era of the slave trade. African oral tradition, the source of much of our understanding of precolonial African history, indicates that African wars had origins that appear quite conventional in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century world.

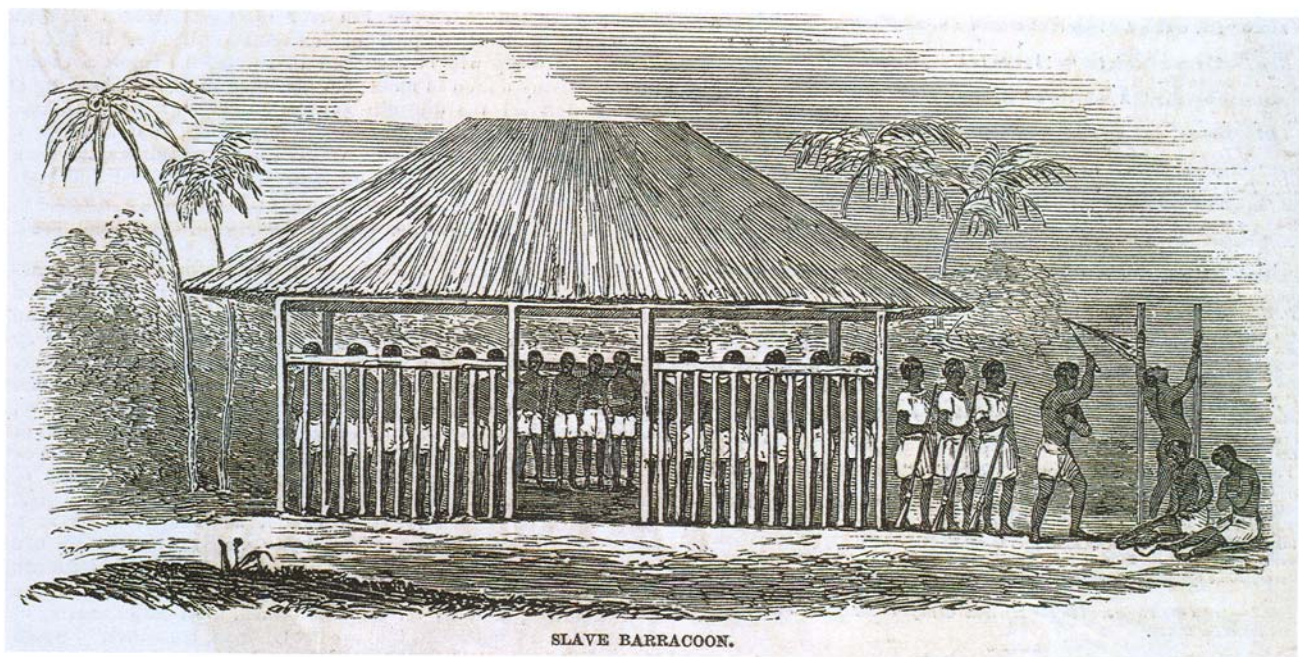
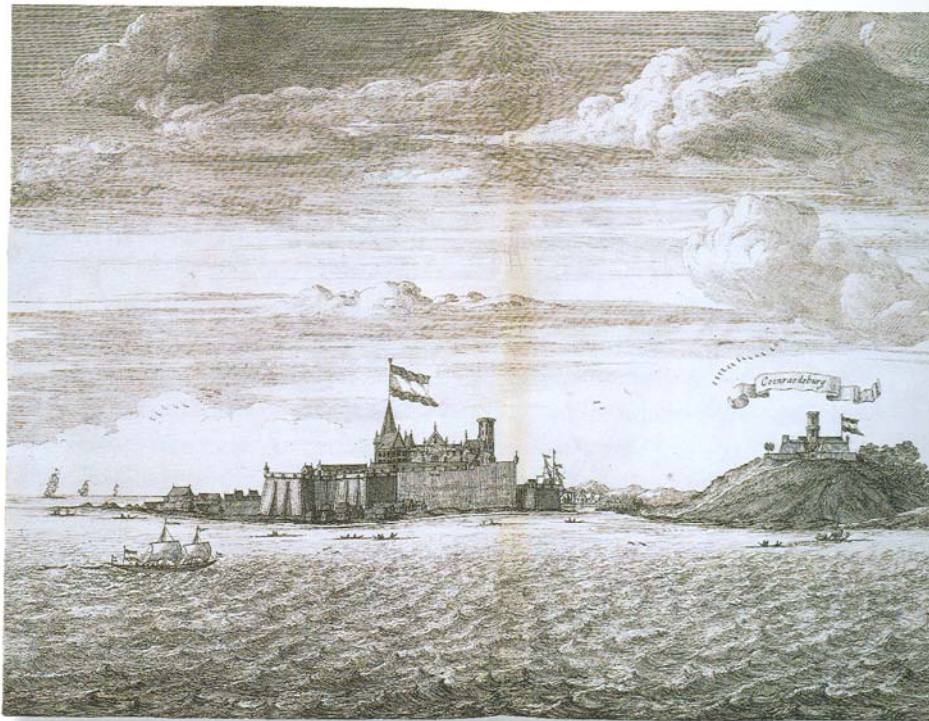
While African wars apparently were like those elsewhere, however, the slave trade was not merely an outgrowth of warfare that would have been waged anyway. It may well have been influenced by the European demand for



This "Meeting with the King of Sestro" was drawn from a description in the journal of French Huguenot slave captain Jean Barbot, who plied the Atlantic slave trade in the service of English interests in the late 1600s. Barbot, like many others, justified his choice of livelihood in part by citing how slaves would benefit from being converted to Christianity. (Awnsham and John Churchill, *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 5, London.)



"Prospect of St. George's Castle at Elmina,"  
on the Gold Coast, c. 1732. (Awnsham and  
John Churchill, *Collections of Voyages and  
Travels*, vol. 6, London, 1746.)



A slave barracoon in Sierra Leone in the  
1840s. Chained by the neck and legs,  
recently captured Africans could be held  
under guard in a barracoon and flogged,  
sometimes fatally, if they resisted or tried to  
escape. (*Illustrated London News*.)

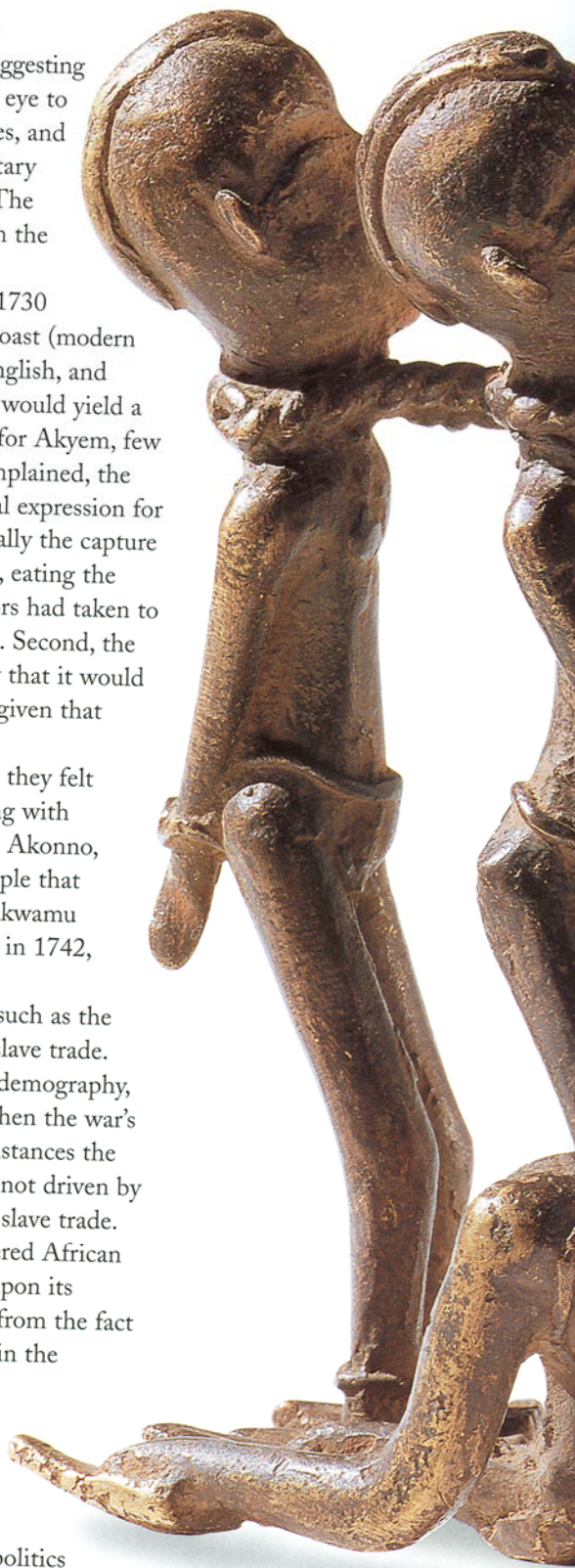
slave labor. One clue that this was so comes from the fact that Europeans sold munitions as an important item of commerce, suggesting that the African decision to wage war was often made with an eye to the trade in weapons. In disposing their troops, planning battles, and making their attacks, African generals might consider the military and financial implications of capturing and deporting people. The slave trade may not have caused wars, but it played a big role in the way that wars were waged.

An example of this planning logic comes from the war in 1730 between Akwamu and Akyem, two small states on the Gold Coast (modern Ghana). As the threat of war built in the late 1720s, Dutch, English, and Danish traders predicted that it would be a big showdown and would yield a great haul of slaves. Yet when the war ended with total victory for Akyem, few slaves were forthcoming. This was because, a Danish factor complained, the Akyem authorities had decided not to “eat the country”—a local expression for the policy of complete devastation of a defeated country, especially the capture and export of its population. The practice had two effects. First, eating the country helped defray the costs of war and repay loans the victors had taken to finance it, including loans from European traders for munitions. Second, the devastation of the population so weakened the defeated country that it would be unable to recover its political initiative—an important point given that Akyem had no chance of absorbing and garrisoning Akwamu.

The rulers of Akyem decided not to “eat” Akwamu because they felt they needed its military resources for a new war that was brewing with their more powerful neighbor, Asante. They were confident that Akonno, the late ruler of Akwamu, had sufficiently alienated his own people that they would be loyal to Akyem if they were spared. In the end, Akwamu did support Akyem in the war with Asante when it finally came in 1742, although Asante won anyway.<sup>15</sup>

As this example shows, a combination of ordinary motives, such as the desire to capture territory and defeat rivals, might feed into the slave trade. The economic demands of waging war, as well as the politics of demography, made selling captives into the slave trade a principal goal even when the war’s fundamental purpose was something else. So whereas in many instances the decision to make war, with the accompanying risk of defeat, was not driven by the slave trade per se, the conduct of that war was shaped by the slave trade. Europeans did not operate a “gun-slave cycle” whereby they fostered African wars by selling guns to one power in order to persuade it to fall upon its neighbors, using the guns to ensure victory. But they did benefit from the fact that both the purchase of guns and the sale of slaves made sense in the course of seeking other, more conventional outcomes.

The idea of “eating the country” worked as a strategic principle in international wars; so could the decision not to do it, as with Akyem and Akwamu. Similar strategies might also be employed in civil wars, or in complex combinations of the two. Northwest of the Gold Coast in the Senegal valley, for example, politics encompassed a complicated combination of civil war, international war, and invasion by bandits. The states of the eighteenth-century Senegal valley were parts of the former Empire of the Great Fulo, which dominated the valley and many regions outside it through much of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. But when Great Fulo declined, many formerly independent



regions regained their freedom and competed for regional dominance. Near the Atlantic coast, two such states were Bawol and Kajoor, which sometimes united and sometimes fought, while at the same time the throne of each was occasionally contested by rival candidates. Within the old core of the Empire of the Great Fulo, the state of Futa Tooro was divided into rival contenders and even within each section of the contenders' territories there were civil wars between different factions. In each of these situations, the interstate rivalry intersected with civil wars, so that rival states sometimes supported one side or another in such conflicts. Furthermore, the whole upper western region of Africa was affected by raiding desert nomads from the north, who sometimes were backed by the Sultan of Morocco (who also sent armed forces to the region). Still other raids were launched from Khasso in the east. Raiders did not always function independently; sometimes they were invited to pillage an area by one side in a civil war, or by one state in an interstate rivalry.<sup>16</sup>

Tactics employed by various factions were the Senegalese version of eating the country. As in Gold Coast, it was a strategic advantage to weaken the demographic base of rivals, even if in the long run one hoped these rivals' people would become citizens of a reunited state. This advantage included using the proceeds of the sale of captives to purchase munitions from English and French merchants on the coast or in posts along the Senegal valley. In addition, rulers might actually pay for the services of nomadic raiders from the north or east by allowing them to pillage an area, typically one in the lands of a rival state or contender.

In describing African wars, European visitors sometimes divided them into the "great pillage" and the "little pillage." Great pillages were international wars waged by armies in support of formal goals of a contender or a state, while little pillages were conducted by the same rulers against lands of rivals either within or outside their state. Little pillages were designed to weaken the opposition's population base and to obtain resources through the trade in captives. Little pillage also coincided with invasions of Moors and Arabs from the eastern desert of the Khassonke, raiders whose main interest was obtaining slaves for sale.

Sometimes, instead of provoking or encouraging international rivalry, a civil war's main impact was to destroy internal discipline. This happened with the civil wars that wracked the Kingdom of Congo in central Africa in the

Bronze figurine of slaves chained together in a coffle.  
(Sample Pittman Collection, New York City.)





A bronze muzzle for a young female slave. At forts and along the slave coast, muzzles were used for various purposes, including punishing slaves for "insubordination." (Eugene and Adele Redd Collection.)



A Portuguese musketeer rendered in bronze and dating from the 1500s. (British Museum, London.)

late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This happened with the civil wars that wracked the Kingdom of Congo in Central Africa in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The strife was triggered by a succession crisis following the death in 1665 of King António I in the battle of Mbvila against the Portuguese in the colony of Angola.<sup>17</sup> The rival kings established bases in various parts of Congo, and there entrenched they waged wars on one another as each sought to take control of the abandoned capital city of São Salvador. Even after the successful reoccupation of the capital by Pedro IV in 1709, the rivals maintained their bases and periodically destroyed the city. Like the internal wars of the Senegal valley, these also led to the large-scale deportation of people, following the same logic as elsewhere. Selling people weakened rivals and financed munitions and other war costs.

Most enslaved Africans who were not captured in open war were instead waylaid by bandits. Civil war fueled banditry as bands of armed men, often leaderless in a factional struggle, fended for themselves. One such bandit was Pedro Mpanzu a Mvemba, who operated in 1693. Formerly a regional commander for the province, he was dismissed when his overlord was overthrown. Refusing to accept this turn of affairs, with his soldiers Mpanzu a Mvemba took up residence on a local flat-topped mountain and from there raided commerce and villages far and wide. With time he became a local bandit and nuisance, no civil authority having the power to stop him.<sup>18</sup> Nearly a century later, in the 1780s, another bandit known only by his sobriquet of Mbwa Lau (Mad Dog), operated in a similar war in the area just east of São Salvador. He too had begun as a noble commander who, finding his superiors out of power, had taken to crime, preying especially on travelers whom he could sell to slave dealers.<sup>19</sup>

There were places in Africa where extreme political fragmentation was the norm and where banditry could not be checked because no entity ever had enough power to prevent it. The Igbo (Ibo) region of modern Nigeria was in this category. This area was divided into more than fifty small, independent villages, each jealously guarding its independence. Igbos valued their small-scale, open, and opportunity-oriented governmental system and, aside from a nominal and symbolic loyalty to the Emperor of Benin, they were loathe to accept real authority from any warlord. Yet this carefully protected small-scale governance, combined with the fact that their country lay in a heavily forested region that was nevertheless easily penetrable by river, meant that outlaws and bandits, lurking in the woods and highly mobile in watercraft, could strike at will, kidnapping people when they did. To defeat such raiders would have demanded an individual or a coalition of people who would take the matter in hand, an arrangement that does not seem to have developed.



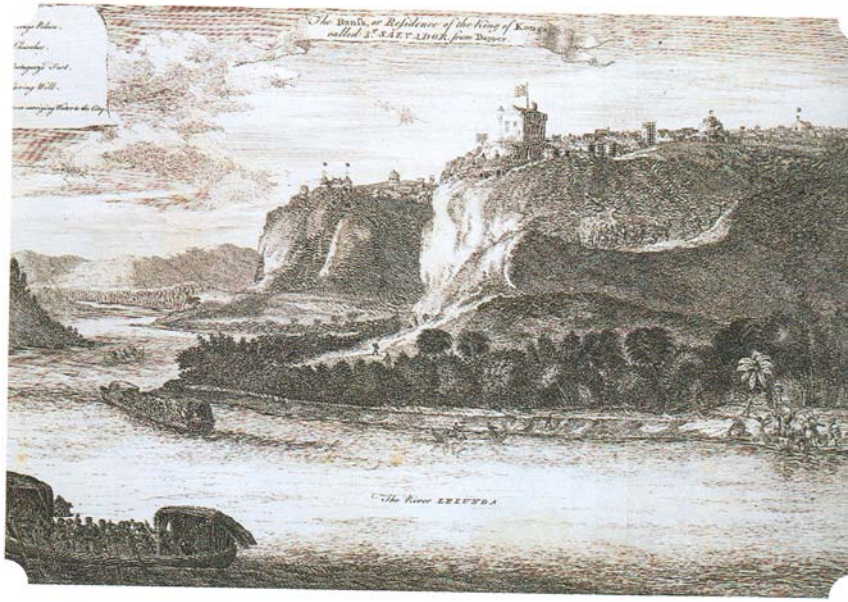
The King of Benin with armed soldiers, early 1700s. (Library of Congress.)

## VOICES OF PROTEST

In the final analysis, African political authorities found it logical to support the slave trade, sometimes for reasons rooted in self-interest and greed, on other occasions for strategic reasons. Bandits might have no other motive than personal gain, and there were instances when they could not be checked. Nevertheless, there were times when common people, oppressed by war and enslavement, might protest spontaneously and these protests occasionally shook up the political order.

From 1704 to 1706 in Congo, for example, a young woman named Doña Beatriz Kimpa Vita, who believed herself to be possessed by Saint Anthony, led a powerful revival movement intended to stop the wars and restore the kingdom. While she never directly objected to the slave trade, her protest against the unnecessary wars, and the political ambition that underlay them, struck at the root of the slave trade.<sup>20</sup> More explicit in his denunciations was Nasr al-Din, a Senegalese marabout (religious teacher), lawyer, and leader who led the *toubenon* (purification) movement in 1673–77. He began preaching among the desert Arabs and in time counted many of them among his followers. But when he took his message to the Senegal valley he directed his teaching against the political authorities, reminding them that God did not permit them to raid and pillage their own subjects (a reference to the civil wars). Teaching also that Islam specifically prohibited the selling of Muslim slaves to Christian buyers, he temporarily brought the slave trade to a halt. Not that Nasr al-Din opposed the holding or even the selling of slaves—he had slaves himself—but he charged that the changes wrought in the established government by its participation in the slave trade had made tyrants of the rulers who did so.

A century later the same interpretation of Islamic law led Abd al-Qadir, a Muslim leader who seized power in Futa Tooro in 1776, to outlaw the export of Muslims as slaves. His own rise to power had been impelled by exhaustion at the constant raiding by desert Arabs, and he addressed the issue of their wars early in his reign. He also returned to the same themes that Nasr al-Din had broached a century earlier concerning the Atlantic slave trade. In a sharp letter to the British factor on the Gambia River, he rebuked the official for buying Muslim slaves, and ordered that anyone from that region who came to his lands to do so would be killed.<sup>21</sup>



A sketch showing the residence of the King of Congo, c. 1700. Set on a hilltop, the king's palace dominated a small city that also included Catholic churches and Portuguese forts. Large canoes on the river in the foreground are carrying water to the city from a spring well. (Thomas Astley, ed., *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 3, London, 1745–47.)



Ultimately, understanding the slave trade and the paradox of enslavement only comes through a careful examination of African social, political, and military history. In that study we see that the slave trade was the doing neither solely of European merchants nor solely of African elites. Although commercial profit may have played a substantial role, the various decisions of African rulers to participate in the trade were far more complex. They were rooted in a complicated series of local situations in which financial, military, and political considerations conspired to make the capture and export of people a logical solution. This logic did not operate equally everywhere, but some version of it operated everywhere the slave trade proceeded at its highest levels.



Mali handgun. (Danny Drain Collection, Walterboro, South Carolina.)

This late-eighteenth-century engraving depicts Danish slave traders negotiating with the Akwamu king. ( P. E. Isert, *Neue Reise nach Guinea und den Carabischen Inseln*. By permission of the British Library, London.)

