

Robert W. Strayer

**Ways of the World:  
A Brief Global History**

First Edition  
**CHAPTER XV**  
Global Commerce  
1450–1750

*Commerce in People  
The Atlantic Slave Trade*

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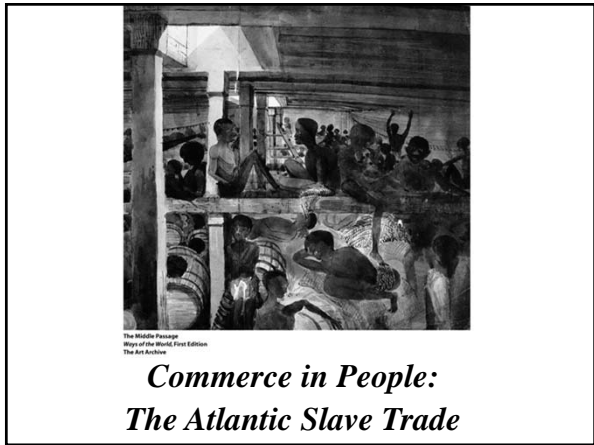
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A. Between 1500 and 1866, the Atlantic slave trade took an estimated 12.5 million people from Africa and deposited some 10.7 million of them in the Americas.

1. Around 1.8 million died during the transatlantic crossing
2. Millions more died in the process of capture and transport to the African coast
3. Vast human tragedy

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4. African slave trade transformed the societies of all participants

- a. The African diaspora created racially mixed societies in the Americas
- b. Slave trade and slavery enriched many
- c. Slavery became a metaphor for many types of social oppression




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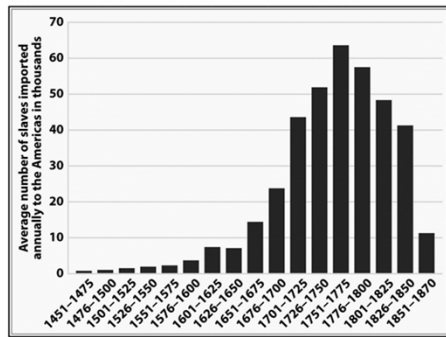
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**Snapshot The Slave Trade in Numbers**  
**The Rise and Decline of the Slave Trade<sup>28</sup>**



Snapshot 15-1a  
 Ways of the World, First Edition  
 © 2000 Bedford/St. Martin's

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*The Slave Trade in Context*

- 1. Most human societies have had slaves
- 2. Africans had practiced slavery and sold slaves for centuries
- 3. Slavery took many forms, depending on the region and time period

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*The Slave Trade in Context*

4. Distinctiveness of slavery in the Americas

- a. The scale and importance of the slave trade in the Americas was enormous
- b. Largely based on plantation agriculture, with slaves denied any rights at all
- c. Slave status was inherited

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*The Slave Trade in Context*

- d. Little hope of manumission
- e. Widespread slavery in society that valued human freedom and equality—unlike anywhere else except maybe ancient Greece
- f. Slavery was wholly identified with Africa and with “blackness”

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*The Slave Trade in Context*

5. Origins of Atlantic slavery lay in the Mediterranean and with sugar production

- a. sugar production was the first “modern” industry (major capital investment, technology, disciplined workers, mass market)
- b. The work was very difficult and dangerous—slaves were ideal

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*The Slave Trade in Context*

- c. At first, Slavs from the Black Sea region provided most slaves for Mediterranean sugar plantations
- d. Portuguese found an alternative slave source in West Africa

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*The Slave Trade in Context*

- 6. Africans became the primary source of slave labor for the Americas
  - a. Slavs weren't available
  - b. Indians died of European diseases

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*The Slave Trade in Context*

- c. Europeans were a bad alternative: Christians from marginal lands couldn't be enslaved; indentured servants were expensive
- d. Africans were farmers, had some immunity to diseases, were not Christian, and were readily available
- e. Much debate over how much racism was involved

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*The Slave Trade in Practice*

- 1. Slave trade was driven by European demand
- 2. Europeans didn't raid Africa for slaves; they traded freely with African merchants and elites
  - a. From capture to sale on the coast, trade was in African hands
  - b. Africans received trade goods in return, often bought with American silver

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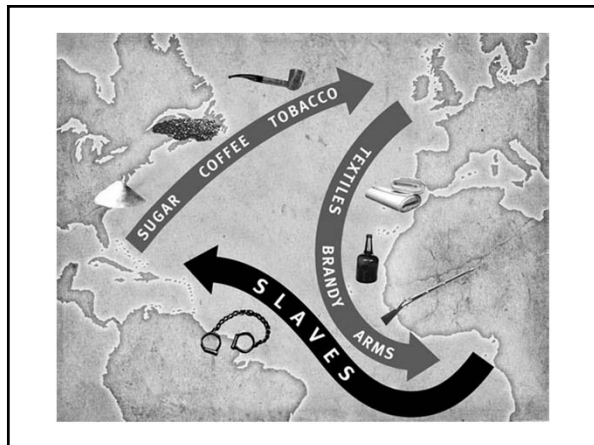
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*The Slave Trade in Practice*

- 3. Destabilization of African societies
  - a. Many smaller societies were completely disrupted by slave raids from their neighbors
  - b. Even larger states were affected (e.g., kingdom of Kongo)
  - c. Some African slave traders were themselves enslaved by unscrupulous Europeans

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*The Slave Trade in Practice*

- 4. Increasing pace of Atlantic slave trade
  - a. During the sixteenth century, annual slave exports from Africa averaged under 3,000 annually
  - b. In the seventeenth century, average of 10,000 slaves per year taken to the Americas

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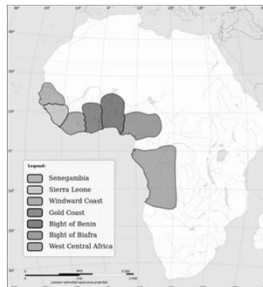
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*The Slave Trade in Practice*

- 5. Who was enslaved?
  - a. People from West Africa (present-day Mauritania to Angola)
  - b. Mostly people from marginal groups (prisoners of war, debtors, criminals)
  - c. Africans generally did not sell their own peoples



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*The Slave Trade in Practice*

- 6. 80 percent of slaves ended up in Brazil and the Caribbean
  - a. 5–6% in North America
  - b. The rest in mainland Spanish America or in Europe

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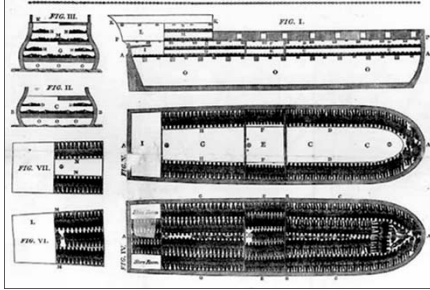
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*The Slave Trade in Practice*

DESCRIPTION OF A SLAVE SHIP.



c. About 15% of enslaved died during the Middle Passage

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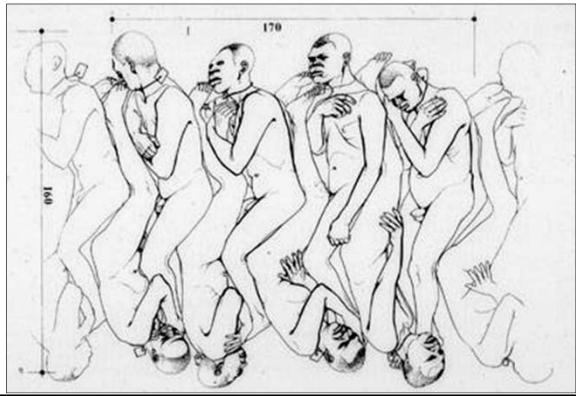
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**"Coffin" Position Below Deck**



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*Comparing Consequences: The Impact of the Slave Trade in Africa*

1. Created new transregional linkages
2. Slowed Africa's growth, while Europe and China expanded in population
  - a. sub-Saharan Africa had about 18 percent of the world's population in 1600 but only 6 percent in 1900

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*Comparing Consequences: The Impact of the Slave Trade in Africa*

- b. Slave trade generated economic stagnation and political disruption in Africa
  - i. Those who profited in the trade did not invest in production
  - ii. Did not generate breakthroughs in agriculture or industry—since Europeans didn't increase demand for Africa's products, just for its people

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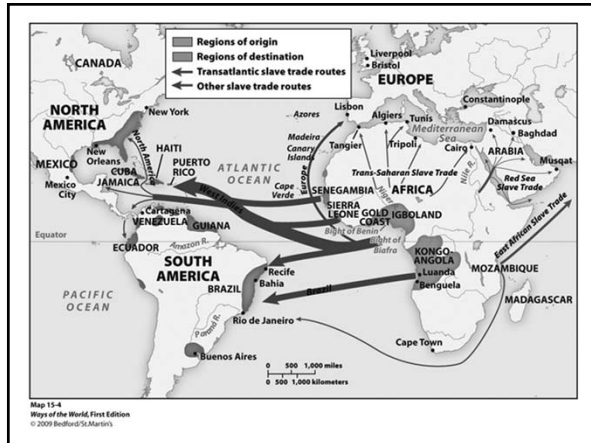
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**Comparison**

Slavery in the Americas was distinctive from other slave-holding systems in history because in the Americas

- Slaves were treated more as human beings than as mere property.
- Slavery was identified with “blackness.”
- Slaves were used as a primary labor force in agricultural enterprises.
- Female slaves were more highly valued than male slaves.

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**Reflections: Economic Globalization—Then and Now**

- A study of global commerce in the early modern period shows both how different from and how similar we are to people of the past.
- Globalization isn’t just a twentieth-century phenomenon.
  - But early modern globalization was much slower and on a smaller scale

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*Reflections: Economic Globalization—Then and Now*

2. Early modern globalization was not yet centered on Western civilizations
3. Early modern economic life was mostly preindustrial
4. Early modern globalization was tied to empire building and slavery

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<i>Dutch</i>	<i>British</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Dutch acted to control—not only the shipping but also the production of cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, and mace. With much bloodshed, the Dutch seized control of a number of small spice-producing islands, forcing their people to sell only to the Dutch.</li> <li>• On the Banda Islands—the Dutch killed, enslaved, or left to starve virtually the entire population and then replaced them with Dutch planters, using a slave labor force to produce the nutmeg crop.</li> <li>• Ultimately, the local economy of the Spice Islands was shattered by Dutch policies, and the people there were impoverished.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They established—three major trading settlements in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> century: Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. They secured their trading bases with the permission of Mughal authorities or local rulers.</li> <li>• British traders focused on—Indian cotton textiles, and hundreds of villages in the interior of southern India became specialized producers for the British market.</li> </ul>

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<i>Japan</i>	<i>China</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The shoguns allied with the merchant class to develop a market-based economy and to invest heavily in agricultural and industrial enterprises.</li> <li>• Local and state authorities acted to protect and renew forests.</li> <li>• Families practiced late marriages, contraception, abortion, and infanticide.</li> <li>• The outcome was the dramatic slowing of Japan's population growth, the easing of an impending ecological crisis, and a flourishing, highly commercialized economy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to obtain silver needed to pay their taxes, more and more people had to sell something—either labor or their products.</li> <li>• Areas that devoted themselves to growing mulberry trees, on which silkworms fed, had to buy their rice from other regions. The Chinese economy became more regionally specialized.</li> <li>• In southern China, this surging economic growth resulted in the loss of about half the area's forest cover as more and more land was devoted to cash crops.</li> </ul>

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<i>Positive Impact</i>	<i>Negative Impact</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fur trade did bring some benefits, including the trade of pelts for goods of real value.</li> <li>• It enhanced influence and authority for some Native American leaders.</li> <li>• It ensured the protection of Native Americans involved in the fur trade, for a time, from the kind of extermination, enslavement, or displacement that was the fate of some native peoples elsewhere in the Americas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It exposed Native Americans to European diseases and generated warfare.</li> <li>• It left Native Americans dependent on European goods without a corresponding ability to manufacture the goods themselves.</li> <li>• It brought alcohol into Indian societies, often with destructive effects.</li> </ul>

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