

from the Nunez, and the residents had threatened to kill all the Englishmen who fell into their power. Fortunately the private traders carried the noble to the Company's factory at Sherbro, and the chief factor purchased the individual in question and returned him to his homeland. It therefore seems to have been the convention that nobles were not to suffer servitude, and that every effort should be made to secure the release of any noble who inadvertently fell into the hands of the slave traders.

The noble suffered a minimum of disadvantages through the degeneration of the customary law and the rise of slave trading, and if he was sold he stood a very good chance of regaining his freedom; the commoner was the target of all the abuses of the law, he was the victim of slave raids, and when he was sold his position was desperate. . . .

. . . [T]he *lançados* could purchase any captive without inquiring after the title by which he had been acquired, and with the assurance that they were not to be perpetually challenged to return purchases on the grounds that the individuals concerned had been stolen. This arrangement was essential if the Europeans were to trade simultaneously in the territories of the Casangas, Banhuns, Papels, Beafadas, and Bijagos—all within a limited compass, and each one selling its neighbours. When de Almada said that the river Cacheu was a slaver's delight, it must have been made so by the conjoint action of the ruling groups in each tribe to allow the *lançados* to buy persons freely, irrespective of how they were acquired. In the second place, Barreira's report that the kings did not challenge a sale when any of their subjects was involved implies that the several tribal rulers on the coast had come to a reciprocal understanding to equalize their greed. One king was not afraid to turn a blind eye when he saw his subjects being sold by another king, because perhaps the very next day their positions would be reversed.

There was another reciprocal agreement between the *lançados* and the African ruling class which militated against the ordinary individual who sought to escape after being sold. When a captive escaped from a *lançado*, the latter turned to the nearest chief or noble (with a "gift") and asked him to announce on his *bombalon* that such and such a person had fled. Such communications were the exclusive preserve of the ruling class, and without their co-operation the *lançados* could not have coped with the frequent escape of captives for whom they had already paid. Later the Royal African Company also found it necessary to pay neighbouring *fidalgos* to return fugitive slaves.

It is an obvious and well-recognized fact that the African chiefs and kings were actively engaged in partnership with the European slavers all along the coast, but the impression given of inter-tribal conflicts has usually seemed to outweigh that of internal struggles. On the Upper Guinea Coast at least, one is forced to give much more attention to the way that victims were produced for the slave ships from within individual tribes. As Basil Davidson points out, throughout the history of slaving all over the world the distinction between selling people within a group (such as an ethnic group or religious community) and those who were outsiders was not rigidly maintained. The same applied on the Upper Guinea Coast, where the kings were just as likely to rob their own people as to attack their neighbours. The isolated exceptions only serve to reinforce this generalization; because it could scarcely have been simple coincidence that the Djolas and the Balantas, who produced the least slaves either by raiding or by preying upon each other, were the

very tribes with an amorphous state structure from which a well-defined ruling class was absent.

Tribal divisions were not, then, the most important. When the line of demarcation is clearly drawn between the agents and the victims of slaving as it was carried on among the littoral peoples, that line coincides with the distinction between the privileged and the unprivileged in the society as a whole. The Atlantic slave trade was deliberately selective in its impact on the society of the Upper Guinea Coast, with the ruling class protecting itself, while helping the Europeans to exploit the common people. This is of course the widespread pattern of modern neo-colonialism; and by the same token the period of slave trading in West Africa should be regarded as protocolonial. Though on the one hand there was no semblance of European political control over the African rulers, on the other it was the Europeans who were accumulating capital.

In the midst of lamenting the trials and tribulations of the *lançados*, Barreira related that one day a Mandinga arrived at Cacheu, having journeyed there to resolve a doubt which was besetting him. He asked the Moslem *imam* of Cacheu: "Why is it that the whites are free, and the blacks are their slaves?" The reply was that God made the whites first and the blacks afterwards, and he decreed that the latter should serve their elder brothers. This was an imaginative portrayal of the colonial relationship.

Indirectly, via European testimony, the African rulers made it manifest that they regarded the slave trade as an imposition, but were prepared to pay that price for European goods. On this point, the Capuchins offered evidence which they elicited by questioning the African rulers on their attitude to the Atlantic slave trade. They found, as Barreira before them had done, that the African slavers recognized their profession for the evil it was, but contended that they indulged in man-stealing because the whites would purchase no other goods. In the long run, the terrible logic of this situation caused the African chiefs to cling to the Atlantic slave trade as their staple economic activity, even after it had become an anachronism within the capitalist system. . . .

African Societies Voluntarily Participated in the Slave Trade

JOHN THORNTON

Warfare and Slavery

We have established so far that Africans were not under any direct commercial or economic pressure to deal in slaves. Furthermore, we have seen not only that Africans accepted the institution of slavery in their own societies, but that the special place of slaves as private productive property made slavery widespread. At the beginning, at least, Europeans were only tapping existing slave markets. Nevertheless, one need not accept that these factors alone can explain the slave trade. There

are scholars who contend that although Europeans did not invade the continent and take slaves themselves, they did nevertheless promote the slave trade through indirect military pressure created by European control of important military technology, such as horses and guns. In this scenario—the “gun-slave cycle” or “horse-slave cycle”—Africans were compelled to trade in slaves, because without this commerce they could not obtain the necessary military technology (guns or horses) to defend themselves from any enemy. Furthermore, possession of the technology made them more capable of obtaining slaves, because successful war guaranteed large supplies of slaves.

Hence, through the operation of their control over the “means of destruction,” to use Jack Goody’s descriptive term, Europeans were able to influence Africans indirectly. They could direct commerce in ways that helped them and also compel Africans to wage wars that might otherwise not have been waged. This would cause Africans to seek more slaves than they needed for their own political and economic ends and depopulate the country against their wishes. The quantitative increase would exceed Africans’ own judgment of a proper level of exports. In the end, this not only might increase economic dependence but could result in large-scale destruction of goods, tools, and ultimately development potential. Hence, in the end, Africans would be helpless, exploited junior partners in a commerce directed by Europe.

However, this argument will ultimately not be any more sustainable than the earlier commercial and economic ones. Certainly in the period before 1680, European technology was not essential for warfare, even if Africans did accept some of it. Likewise, it is much easier to assert than to demonstrate that Africans went to war against their will or solely to service the slave trade. Indeed the more we know about African warfare and resulting enslavement, the less clear and direct the connections between war and the export slave trade become.

The contemporary evidence strongly supports the idea that there was a direct connection between wars and slavery, both for domestic work and for export. This did not mean that there was no nonmilitary enslavement, of course. Judicial enslavement was one common way of obtaining slaves and judges, moreover, were not above distorting the law to provide more captives or enslaving distant relatives of guilty parties. Jesuit observers believed that this was common in Ndongo as early as 1600, and missionary travelers often commented on it in the seventeenth-century Upper Guinea region. But however scandalous this may have been, it is unlikely that judicial enslavement accounted for more than a few percent of the total exports from Africa.

Thus the fact that military enslavement was by far the most significant method is important, for it means that rulers were not, for the most part, selling their own subjects but people whom they, at least, regarded as aliens. The fact that many exported slaves were recent captives means that they were drawn from those captured in the course of warfare who had not yet been given an alternative employment within Africa. In these cases, rulers were deciding to forgo the potential future use of these slaves. Some of the exports were slaves whom local masters wished to dispose of for one reason or another and those who had been captured locally by brigands or judicially enslaved.

This is exactly the situation described by da Mosto in his account of Jolof in 1455. After a description of the use of the slaves in the domestic economy, da Mosto

noted that most slaves were captured in wars with neighboring countries and the civil wars. Many of these captives were integrated into the domestic economy, but the rest were sold to the “Moors” for horses (i.e., they entered the Saharan trade), although “Christians” had recently entered the trade on the coast. This account focuses on two aspects of African societies that predisposed them to participate in the slave trade. The first is the regular use of slaves in the domestic economy and particularly as revenue for centralizing states, and the second is the role of warfare.

The causes and motivations behind these wars are crucial for understanding the slave trade. Philip Curtin has examined the Senegambian slave trade of the eighteenth century and has proposed a schema for viewing African warfare that resulted in slave captures that can be fruitfully applied to the earlier period as well. He proposes that wars be classified as tending toward either an economic or a political model. In the economic model the wars were fought for the express purpose of acquiring slaves and perhaps to meet demands from European merchants; in the political model wars were fought for mostly political reasons, and slaves were simply a by-product that might yield a profit. Both models are seen as “ideal types,” and individual wars might contain a mixture of motives, of course. On the whole, however, Curtin believes that the eighteenth-century Senegambian data support a political, rather than the economic, model.

Actually, discerning between an economic and a political model is not easy in practice. Consider the case of Portuguese Angola, a state seemingly founded on the premise of exporting slaves. Angola’s wars ought to fit the economic model if any state’s would. Yet many of Angola’s wars, and the majority of the most lucrative ones in terms of acquiring slaves, had more or less clear-cut political motives. Portugal’s early wars in Angola, for example, were as much for establishing a foothold in the area as for capturing slaves. In 1579, after all, the Portuguese were nearly driven out by the forces of Ndongo, and the wars between then and about 1595 were defensive as much as offensive.

When the Portuguese at last went on the offensive against Ndongo, their series of wars in the early seventeenth century also resulted in gains in territory, and after 1624 they became embroiled in a long series of wars that might be called the War of the Ndongo Succession, in which Portuguese officials hoped to place a pliant king on Ndongo’s throne and met with the resistance of Queen Njinga (1624–63). This war, almost continuous from 1624 until 1655, can account for most of the activities of the Portuguese army in the period, and the expansion of the war to the east can account for the appearance of many eastern Angolan slaves in the New World during this time. Of course, this does not mean that all of Angola’s wars fit the political model, but only that we should keep in mind that in Africa, as elsewhere, wars could always be multivalent, even defensive or strategic ones. . . .

The Jolof and Angolan models we have just examined suggest that the solution to the problem of the nature of African wars will not be easy to assess. In theory, wars with objectives that Europeans might see as political, such as annexing territory (or defending territory) or acquiring and strengthening political rights, should be classed as political, whereas raids conducted solely to acquire loot or trade goods should be classed as economic. In practice, however, as we have already seen from our previous examination of Jolof politics, capturing slaves made political sense to Jolof rulers as well as economic sense. Slaves were sources of wealth, and even in a hit-and-run operation that did not envision political conquest (although Jolof

certainly did make conquests as well), the slaves could be made to produce wealth in the same way that a conquest would. Likewise, Jolof's rulers might employ the slaves to generate private revenue for them or to act as personal servants, soldiers, and administrators and thus raise them up against their rivals for power within Jolof. Hence, even a war that simply resembles a raid with no political objectives would have major political consequences if slaves were taken—and the fact that some were sold to outside parties should not lead us to the conclusion that the war had no political motives.

These considerations thus make it difficult to evaluate testimony about the motivations of warfare by European observers, who thought of wars that netted simply booty, even if this meant slaves, as being economic ventures (i.e., ventures aimed at securing slaves for export). Surely some of the ventures conducted by African rulers seem to have had no other purpose. Edward Fenton believed that his request for slaves in 1580 in Sierra Leone led the ruler to conduct a war merely to fill his requests—a war he thought would net 3,000–4,000 slaves. De Almada, likewise, recalled that once the ruler of Kayor waged a war in 1576 solely to obtain slaves to pay a debt he owed the Cape Verdian merchant. Similarly, several contemporary observers believed that many of the wars waged by the Angolan governor Mendes de Vasconcellos in the early seventeenth century had the acquisition of slaves as their only motive.

Such wars, however, may well have been waged solely in order to acquire slaves even without the demands of Atlantic traders. One example of this comes from Fernandes's late fifteenth-century informants. According to them, the Sanhaja of the desert made war against the people south of them "more for pillage than for power." Likewise, Jannequin de Rochefort argued on the experience of his observations in 1639 that the wars were not for conquest but to raid for people and cattle.

This issue goes to the heart of the unusual nature of African politics and one of the matters that makes it different from Eurasian politics. Just as slavery took the place of landed property in Africa, so slave raids were equivalent to wars of conquest. For this reason, one must apply a different logic to African wars than the equations of political motives equals war of conquest and economic motives equals slave raid. This analysis changes our understanding of the objectives of war and must ultimately change our assessment of African warfare.

Lovejoy, for example, has proposed that warfare was endemic in Africa as a result of political fragmentation. In other words, the very fact that Africa had few large-scale political units meant that wars would be more frequent, and thus enslavement increased. As fragmentation increased (a situation that he believes took place during the period of the slave trade), war naturally increased. Underlying this is the assumption that a political situation of small states would naturally lead to a movement to consolidate them into larger, Eurasian-style polities. Thus, although African politics actually determined the course of warfare, the intrinsic structure of those politics created more wars. Furthermore, one need not consider most wars as being explained by the economic model but by the political model, in which wars were an attempt to remedy the fragmentation by consolidating power. The failure to consolidate was thus the fuel that fired the slave trade.

Lovejoy's solution would be more helpful if it were true that there is a correlation between political centralization and peace, but unfortunately this does not seem

to have been the case. This emerges clearly from an examination of the policies of the empire of Songhay, which controlled a huge area in the sixteenth century—larger than any other state at the time and on a scale that rivals most European states. Songhay was an expanding empire and thus waged wars of territorial conquest, capturing slaves along the way. According to the *Tarikhs*, local chronicle sources, for example, Sonni Ali, who ruled from 1468 to 1492 (about the same time as the Atlantic trade developed), conducted some sort of war or campaign in every year of his reign. The campaigns varied in length, size, and complexity, and not all were conducted by the king himself. The chroniclers who described these wars commented often on the motivations of their ruler (which were usually to extend territory, punish insults, retaliate for attacks on his territory, and the like) but never specifically mentioned the capture of slaves as one of the goals, nor did they take the trouble to enumerate or boast of the slaves captured, clearly implying that the Songhay expansion was politically rather than economically motivated.

The exploits of his successor, Askia Muhammed, are less clear, because a different chronicler discussed them, but he too conducted many large expeditions, although perhaps somewhat less frequently than his predecessor. As in the case of Sonni Ali, the acquisition of slaves was never mentioned or the number of captives discussed, and moreover, Askia Muhammed's motivations were similar to those of his predecessor.

But the warfare of an expanding Songhay was perhaps the exception in Africa. This is because most of Africa was, as Lovejoy argues, fragmented. However, this fragmentation was not simply the result of a failure of politics, nor did it increase appreciably during the time in question. Instead, it appears as a constant feature of African society, characteristic of the entire precolonial period.

As a measure of African fragmentation, consider the normal size of African states, based on the boundaries of these states. . . . There was no African state as large as the larger Asian or Euro-American empires of the period. . . .

In all, only perhaps 30 percent of Atlantic Africa's area was occupied by states with surface areas larger than 50,000 square kilometers, and at least half of that area was occupied by states in the medium-sized (50,000–150,000 square kilometers) range. The rest of Atlantic Africa was occupied by small, even tiny, states. Of this group, a few states in the southeastern part of modern Ghana and Benin-Togo—including Allada, the core of the later kingdom of Dahomey, and the larger Akan states (Akim, Denkyira, Akwamu, and the core of the later Asante kingdom)—each controlled perhaps 5,000 square kilometers in the late seventeenth century. But they too occupied a relatively small part of the total, and certainly more than half the area of Atlantic Africa was ruled by ministates whose surface area ranged from 500 to 1,000 square kilometers. If this were not dramatic enough, one should consider that if these statistics were broken down by population, a portion considerably greater than half of all of the people in Atlantic Africa lived in the ministates, because these states were found in the most densely populated parts of the region.

Thus, one can say with confidence that political fragmentation was the norm in Atlantic Africa. By this account, the "typical Atlantic African probably lived in a state that had absolute sovereignty but controlled a territory not exceeding 1,500 square kilometers (smaller than many American counties, perhaps the area occupied by a larger city). Populations might vary considerably; in the sparsely inhabited

areas of central Africa, such a state might have 3,000–5,000 inhabitants, but on the densely inhabited Slave and Gold coasts it could control as many as 20,000–30,000 people. Virtually all the land from the Gambia River along the coast to the Niger delta was in states of this size, and much of the land stretching into the interior. In areas like Angola ministates like these occupied the mountainous land between Kongo and Ndongo and the area of the Kwanza River between Ndongo and the larger states of the central highlands.

In short, enlargement of scale does not seem to have been a priority for leaders. Historians, anxious to assert that Africans did build large states, have to some extent focused too much attention on the empires and the medium-sized states, and thus the point is often overlooked. But the reasons for Africa's small states were probably not the result of some sort of backwardness that prevented them from seeing the advantages of larger units.

One reason for the smallness of scale (not necessarily the only one) may derive from the legal system, which did not make land private property, and may also explain why the Americas, the other world area without landed property, was also the home of small and even tiny states (outside its own few dramatic empires). In Eurasia, control over large areas of land was essential, because it was through grants of land that one rewarded followers, and this land was normally worked by tenants of one kind or another. Eurasians were relatively less interested in controlling people, for without land, the people's labor could not be assigned or its reward collected by landowners. African states were not concerned with land—for as long as there was no population pressure on the land, more people could always be accommodated. Hence, African wars that aimed at acquiring slaves were in fact the exact equivalent of Eurasian wars aimed at acquiring land. The state and its citizens could increase their wealth by acquiring slaves and did not need to acquire land, unless they were short of land at home (which was not the case, as far as we can tell).

The acquisition of slaves instead of land in wars had other advantages. Whereas conquest of land necessarily required administration of larger areas and expansion of military resources, the acquisition of slaves only required a short campaign that need not create any new administrative conditions. Moreover, conquest of land and its subsequent government usually required sharing the proceeds of land with existing landlords, state officials, and other wealthy member of the defeated state, who might be defeated but usually still had to be co-opted. Slaves, on the other hand, were unable to bargain as wealthy landlords might have and could be integrated individually or in small groups into existing structures.

We can see these processes in operation in the case of Sierra Leone. The Sapes, as the early Sierra Leone inhabitants were called in documents of the time, were not creating empires or even larger states. They seem to have exported many slaves, however, for although the Sapes did not apparently enter into the trade immediately, by 1500 they accounted for a large proportion of the slaves imported into Europe. If the frequency of the ethnonym in bills of sale is any guide to relative volume, early sixteenth-century port records have them as the third most common group, behind Jolofs (which probably also includes exports from Songhay and some from Mali) and Mandinkas (Mali exports). The Sape slaves, according to Fernandes's informant Alvaro Velho, were the result of "constant wars" of the region.

These wars do not appear to have been waged for territorial expansion; although we lack the chronicle sources of the Sudanese region to confirm this, certainly there was no consolidation in Sierra Leone as a result of warfare. But as Velho also testified, slaves were used in the domestic economy to increase the ruler's personal income, and perhaps this in itself can explain the propensity for wars that did not increase wealth by the annexation of territory but by the annexation and transport of people.

This feature can also explain the existence, already in Velho's time (1499), of small raids being conducted in the "Rivers" region, composed, according to Fernandes, of Falup raiding parties in canoes penetrating all the rivers of the region. In the sixteenth century the Falup were joined by the Bissagos Islanders, who were soon renowned for their naval attacks on the mainland. This type of war was very common in that region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where a host of visitors describe canoe-based parties that would move silently and strike suddenly (sometimes at night) and carry off people.

In these instances, the slaves could well have been used either by the rulers of the small states of the area to increase their personal dependents and thus strengthen their power base or by private citizens, merchants, or aristocrats to increase their wealth or to increase their power vis á vis the rulers. Although some of these raids may also have been undertaken to supply European demand, this demand was in addition to the greater African demand for slaves to be used domestically as well as for export.

Many Africans retained females from the raids and sold off males, because the Atlantic trade often demanded more males than females. The Bissagos Islanders held many female slaves, and observers believed that virtually all the productive labor was done by women. Lemos Coelho, a Cape Verdian merchant, believed that many societies held large reserves of slaves who could be sold but who would work for their owners in the meantime. Naturally enough, the Portuguese in Angola fell into the same pattern, retaining many slaves on their plantations along the major river, and still selling off many, especially males.

Increasing wealth through warfare and enslavement was of course a cheap way of increasing power. Slaves could be captured in wars and in raids and carried back to the home territory by the victors and put to work, without the attacking armies having to conquer and occupy territory. For small states with small armies, this was a logical way to become richer. But of course, in the medium-sized states and empires, territorial expansion also took place. We have already discussed the wars of expansion in Songhay and Jolof and noted that in addition to increasing territory, their wars also resulted in capturing slaves. For the expanding empire, enslavement of the conquered population allowed the rulers of the expanding state to increase their personal wealth and also to build armies and administrative corps of direct dependents, just as the revenues from the conquered territories provided continuous new income. Thus, external expansion could also increase wealth, and the slaves that were a by-product of the wars of expansion could increase centralization at home.

All these factors resulted in an enormous slave population in Africa at the time of the arrival of the first Europeans and during the whole era of the slave trade. They meant that the necessary legal institutions and material resources were available to

support a large slave market, one that anyone could participate in, including Europeans and other foreigners. Those who held slaves and did not intend to use them immediately could also sell them, and indeed, this is why the number of African merchants who dealt in slaves was large.

Central African data corroborate this process very well. Although there were few useful records for the pre-1483 period, it is clear that Kongo was expanding territorially during the initial period of Portuguese contact, because it was regularly cited as fighting frequent wars. However, we have also already seen that one of the most important aspects of Kongo's centralization was the development of a large urban center with numerous slaves, giving the ruler an advantage over other members of the coalition that began the kingdom. Political motives such as increasing territory, revenues and a loyal power base played a role in Kongo as in Jolof.

Thanks to Portuguese participation in some of Kongo's wars, we can find out how slaves were used. As in the other areas, the ostensible motive for wars was quite strictly political. For example, Kongo made war against islands in the mouth of the Zaire River in 1491 to bring them back to obedience. The instructions of the king of Portugal to Gonçalo Rodrigues in 1509 strongly support the idea that slaves were captured in such wars. Rodrigues was given orders concerning how to sell whatever slaves the king of Kongo might choose to grant him for participation in the campaign. A still better description concerns a campaign conducted in 1513 or 1514 against Munza, an enemy south of Kongo. This war was apparently a defensive war, for Munza was said to have attacked Afonso's son, the Mweni Mbamba, and the war was to relieve him and punish Munza. King Afonso and the Portuguese in his service sent at least 600 slaves back to the capital during the war (and when the army returned, they brought at least 190 more), of which 510 were diverted to the Atlantic trade. Of all these slaves at least 90 remained in Kongo, and Afonso complained that the Portuguese whom he had entrusted with disposal of the slaves in the war had done so improperly, leaving too few in Kongo and, moreover, among them only those who were "old and thin." Afonso was clearly concerned with both domestic use and foreign exports and, at least in this case, believed that his interests were not served by the export of too many, but he was also clearly willing to allow a substantial number to be sold outside the country.

Perhaps one of the reasons that the central African region was a rich source of slaves was that there were several states like Kongo for whom slaves were both a by-product of wars of expansion and useful in themselves for increasing centralization and loyalty. Beginning around 1520, Kongo ran into the growing power of Ndongo, which like Kongo was expanding and using slaves to support centralization. That such wars as developed in the mid-1520s worked in this way is suggested by several letters of complaint written by Afonso in 1526; in one of his bitterest he deplores the (unofficial) help that the Portuguese gave the ruler of Ndongo, which resulted in the capture and sale of Afonso's subjects, even the nobility. A similar struggle seems to have been waged earlier against the Nziko kingdom, which continued exporting slaves itself, becoming a major exporter by the 1530s. Even the countries that were not leading the expansion might export slaves as a result of this warfare; the inhabitants of the islands in the mouth of the Zaire River called "Pamzelungos" in sixteenth-century sources, also exported slaves, perhaps taken in unsuccessful attempts by Kongo to suppress their revolts. On the basis of the

available evidence it is possible to make a very strong case for a simple political explanation of slave-producing wars, even when these wars did not have expansion as a goal and in spite of the Portuguese involvement and the Africans' own strong interests in exporting slaves. . . .

African Warfare and European Military Technology

Although I have shown the African wars led to enslavement on a large scale and that African politics can explain even slave raids that seem to have no political motive, the hypothesis that Europeans influenced African behavior through control over military resources must still be addressed. Given the significance of warfare for expansion of wealth in Africa, the military case must be carefully examined.

Certainly, Europeans did participate, wherever possible, in African politics, often as "military experts" or advisors, occasionally as armed mercenaries. They did this both officially through government-sponsored assistance programs such as the aid that Portugal gave to Kongo in 1491, 1509, 1512, and 1570, or unofficially and without authorization, as in the support for Ndongo in the 1520s, the help that gunners gave to the Mane in the 1550s, and perhaps the assistance to Benin in the 1510s and 1520s. Other foreigners of European origin also provided assistance—Hawkins's help in Sierra Leone and Ulsheimer's in Benin are two more sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century examples. Acceptance of this assistance might simply be seen as the desire of centralizers to make use of foreign, rather than local, officials and dependents as a means of keeping local political debts to a minimum and of creating a dependent bureaucracy. But it is also clear that Europeans provided new military techniques and technology as well, perhaps at the price of demanding more vigorous participation in the slave trade than their patrons wished.

However, the kind of military assistance that Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could render in Africa was not as decisive as much of the writing on the "gun-slave" and "horse-slave" cycles implies. For example, Elbl has examined records of Portuguese horse imports into Senegambia and found that they can scarcely be considered numerous enough to be crucial to the military survival or even success of Jolof cavalries. Moreover, as Law has pointed out in a detailed study of the horse problem, much of the Sudanese region was capable of breeding fairly large numbers of horses by the fourteenth century. Thus, the Atlantic trade coincided with a period when demands for horses were declining, and perhaps the trade must be seen in much the same light as the trade in other commodities—as supplementing or even complementing an existing trade and production.

Firearms and other personal weapons (as in the gun-slave cycle) are even more problematic. European firearms and crossbows, the missile weapons that differed most from those in use in Africa, were designed to counteract armored cavalry or for naval warfare in Europe. Although they had great range and penetrating power (capabilities that developed out of a long-standing projectile-versus-armor contest), they had a very slow rate of fire. For Africans, who generally eschewed armor, the advantages of range (penetrating power being relatively unimportant) were more than offset by the disadvantages of the slow rate of fire, except in special circumstances. Such circumstances were found in naval warfare, for example. . . . [I]n the initial encounters between da Mosto's ships and Mandinga craft in the Gambia, the

crossbowmen in the tops were able to fire to good effect against the attacking forces, protected as they were by the high sides of their ships. This particular feature of the ship may be one of the reasons Kongo favored Portuguese assistance in its wars with the Zaire islands, where African craft, Portuguese ships, and the long-range weapons of the Europeans could be used to good effect.

Likewise, artillery would be useful for attacking fortified locations. European artillery was used in Sierra Leone in the 1560s and in Benin, probably in 1514, when the king of Benin seized a Portuguese bombard, but certainly in 1601, when Ulsheimer joined Dutch sailors who used a gun to blast down the gate of a rebel town. In these cases, as in those of the naval engagements, however, the new weapons were hardly of such overwhelming decisiveness that they tipped the scales of warfare strongly.

European ships could be employed only as a supplementary force, for . . . unsupported European ships were helpless close in to shore. Only slight changes in fortifications could greatly reduce the effectiveness of artillery. In the Benin area, artillery was not effective, because most of the fortifications were largely earthworks. Indeed, it is only because they could not defend their gate that the defenders of the town that Ulsheimer helped attack were defeated. The stockades of Sierra Leone were perhaps more vulnerable, but earthworks could render them much safer. The common use of earthworks and hedges of living trees in fortifications probably explains why the cannon had such little value as a siege engine in the Angolan wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In this instance the Portuguese operations in Angola after 1575 are especially informative, for here the Portuguese attempted direct conquest with their own weapons and, at least in some instances, with their own soldiers. If European military technology and techniques were of special merit, surely this would be demonstrated in Angola. Portuguese operations might then be of the simple slave-raiding model that many scholars prefer, in which an all-powerful state conducts systematic wars on its weaker and ill-organized neighbors to gather slaves, relying on the strength of its weapons and the organization and size of its armies to ensure victory and minimize losses. If European weaponry or military organization were indeed superior, given their strong motivations to acquire slaves for export, one would surely expect this model to describe the Portuguese attacks in Angola.

Certainly, the early exports of slaves from Angola were clearly linked to the operations of the Portuguese army. This can be seen in customs data from Luanda covering the period 1579–85, when great surges of exports in 1579–80 and lesser ones in 1581 and 1583 are correlated with wars (described in great detail by contemporary Jesuit observers), and the periods of relative peace in 1580 and 1584–5 show almost no exports. Similarly, Beatrix Heintze has estimated that the wars promoted by Mendes de Vasconcellos, Portuguese governor from 1617 to 1622, resulted in the export of over 50,000 slaves in just a few years—though this ferocious rate of export was not kept up.

But the documentation cannot support the idea that the Portuguese wars in Angola were simply raids of a militarily dominant European power against its weaker neighbors. Cadornega, the chronicler of the Angolan wars of the seventeenth century, was quick to point this fact out. His campaign and battle descriptions are lengthy and show a soldier's eye for military detail. He often records fairly

small-scale Portuguese operations conducted, one might easily say, simply for obtaining slaves, that ended in failure and disaster. After recounting one particularly difficult campaign, he asserts that this was far too difficult to be simply a "guerra de negros" (war for slaves). Although one can discount this comment in part as simply a reply to critics who believed that all the Angolan wars were just slave raids, with no political or diplomatic gains in mind (and perhaps running counter to such gains), the detail of his documentation does confirm that whoever conducted war to capture slaves was in no way guaranteed success and might well be killed by his quarry. Cadornega reports an apt saying in this context: "He who would singe another man's whiskers had better look out for his own."

Portugal's African enemies often possessed skilled and well-equipped armies and very often constructed strong fortifications. Cavazzi described in detail the complicated operations needed to attack one of these fortified locations during a campaign that he accompanied in 1659. This particular campaign, moreover, continued after taking the town, only to lose badly in another battle, with the result that virtually all its Portuguese members were killed.

Likewise, although the Portuguese played the role of a heavily armored infantry in many of the campaigns, their presence was not decisive, and in most respects their tactics were identical to those of their enemies. Portuguese soldiers could not win unsupported by Africans and were regularly massacred when they tried to do so. If Angola was a major participant in the Atlantic slave trade and the source of export for many thousands of people, it was not through the superiority of European arms.

In summary, we can say that although European arms may have assisted African rulers in war in some cases, they were not decisive. It is unlikely that any European technology or assistance increased the Africans' chances of waging successful war (as the Portuguese in Angola could surely have attested) or that it made the attackers suffer fewer losses. Therefore, Europeans did not bring about some sort of military revolution that forced participation in the Atlantic trade as a price for survival.

The Rapid Growth of Slave Exports and Innovations in Military Technology and Warfare

It is possible to conclude that European influence over the slave trade may not have been significant in the first century and a half of the trade simply by acknowledging that Africans had slaves and a slave trade already, and that early forms of European military technology and organization were not critical to the success of African armies. But it might still be possible to argue that ultimately Europeans forced Africans to exceed their capacity to deliver slaves at a later period when high demands for slaves and improved military technology played a more important role.

One potential piece of evidence is the dramatic increase in slave exports after 1650. This increase is roughly correlated both with the explosion of growth of plantation economies under northern European control in the Caribbean and with the large-scale arrival of northern Europeans on the African coast. These newcomers brought with them improved weapons technology and a generally greater industrial capacity than Portugal had. Could these events have signaled the arrival of a new

and potentially more disruptive group of merchants and resulted in Africans being forced to expand the existing trade against their will? My research suggests, however, that the changes were more of quantity than quality, and that although the increased demand (and subsequent rise in prices) may have persuaded more Africans to part with their slaves, it did not force them to do so against their will.

African exports of slaves expanded dramatically beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, to the point where the number of exported slaves grew from being a relatively small number relative to the total population of the African regions from which they were taken to having a major demographic impact. Virtually all the work on the volume of the slave trade shows that the total number of slaves exported increased relative to the total areas or to the (estimated) African populations involved. The negative demographic impacts, although somewhat apparent in the beginning of the period in some areas (such as central Africa), intensified and spread to virtually the whole of Atlantic Africa. In the late eighteenth century much of Africa reached demographic exhaustion.

It is possible to trace the growth in slave exports in considerable detail for most of the seventeenth century. Even allowing for a fair margin of error, it is obvious that exports did indeed grow significantly. Thanks to the detailed data on shipping available in the archives of Seville and the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1580, which brought much of Portuguese trade in Africa under Spanish supervision, we have a detailed picture of trade in the last years of the sixteenth century to 1640, when the ending of the union once again clouds the picture. . . .

Several points are worthy of note. First of all, it is clear that there was dramatic growth, increasing from a rate of 0.6 percent per annum in the sixteenth century to well over 1.5 percent per annum by the second half of the seventeenth century, with exports nearly doubling between 1650 and 1700. However, this growth was uneven, for some regions exported more slaves, while others maintained more or less the same level.

For example, the trade of the western regions, such as Senegambia, hardly grew at all throughout the period. Angolan trade grew more, but still modestly, during the same period. Angola's total exports moved from something on the order of 2,000–3,000 slaves in the early sixteenth century to 4,500 by century's end, continuing to 8,000 by 1650 and eventually 11,000 by century's end. The growth increased the Angolan share of the trade from approximately half in 1500 to better than 65 percent by 1650.

But Angolan growth was eventually eclipsed by the dramatic rise of exports from the Gulf of Guinea. In 1500 most slaves from this area came from Benin, but by the end of the sixteenth century Benin had ceased selling slaves in any appreciable number. This loss was more than compensated for by the rapid growth of the slave trade of Allada in the last half of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century. Slaves from this area first appear in American inventories about 1550: a "Lucumi" (Yoruba) slave first appears on Hispaniola in 1547, and "Ardras" (Allada) first appear in Peru in the 1560s. All such groups become increasingly numerous in the seventeenth century, both in absolute terms and relative to slaves from other areas in American data.

Continued growth from the region of Allada and its immediate neighbors eventually earned the area the title of "Slave Coast" in the late seventeenth century.

From virtually no exports in 1500, this region was exporting over 19,000 slaves per year, more than half the entire African total, by 1700. But the seventeenth-century growth of slavery in Lower Guinea (Gold Coast to Cameroon) was also enhanced by the entry of the Gold Coast states into the slave trade after 1630, and especially after 1650. This growth is particularly dramatic because the Gold Coast began the seventeenth century as a net importer of slaves and exporter of gold and ended it as a net exporter of slaves and was even importing gold.

Thus, in order to understand why the numbers of slaves increased so dramatically in the seventeenth century, we really need to focus on Angola and the Lower Guinea region. For Angola we must seek the causes of the continued growth of slave trading, and for Lower Guinea the reasons for its people's decision to participate in the trade and expand their exports toward the end of the century.

There are several possible explanations for the growth of the slave trade in these areas. Both Curtin and Lovejoy have suggested that increases in the price of slaves, which can be documented for the period, might have enticed more slaves from their owners. It may have encouraged more "economic model" wars, and it may have persuaded owners that it would be better to forgo domestic use in exchange for the higher price available from the Atlantic trade. Also, owners of slaves living far from the coast might be willing to bear the transport costs of moving slaves to the coast if a higher price were offered. This explanation does give European merchants a role in the growth of enslavement in Africa, but it clearly places the economic decisions in the hands of Africans.

Other explanations focus simply on the increase in wars caused by African political dynamics, discounting the role of trade. The connection between African trade, control over the trade, and politics is a complex and controversial one, but for our purposes, such an explanation still rules out European coercion.

Finally, of course, there is the idea that European coercion, either direct or indirect, is responsible for the increase in warfare, which resulted in more slaves for the Atlantic. In the late seventeenth century the musket was developed into a more effective weapon. Moreover, very large numbers of such weapons were produced as European armies re-armed into bodies in which every infantryman carried a musket. Naturally enough, larger quantities of the improved weapons were also available to ship to Africa, where, it is argued, they may have revolutionized warfare. Thus, by directing weapons selectively to those willing to supply slaves, European merchants may have been able to effect the gun-slave cycle.

A detailed examination of both Angola and the Gulf of Guinea can shed some light on probable causes for the transformation of slave exports. In both cases, however, it seems clear that economic motives and political motives not directly connected to the slave trade were far more important than European coercion or influence.

In Angola, the growth can be explained in large measure by the fact that the same areas continued supplying slaves, and slaves whose capture took place farther and farther east joined the exodus from central Africa. For example, the war of the Ndongo succession really only ended in 1627, though hostilities between Matamba, Angola, and Kasanje (in various combinations, not always involving Portuguese participation) continued sporadically, as, for example, in 1679–85. If supplies of slaves captured in the wars of the Ndongo succession were lost with the

ending of the war, the Kongo civil wars (1665–1718) surely contributed more than Kongo had earlier in the century, for all the central African slaves in the Remire plantation in Cayenne (French Guiana) acquired from Dutch traders between 1685 and 1690 were baptized Christians from Kongo.

But, as we have already seen, the big wars were not the only source of Angolan slaves, for smaller campaigns (which some thought were no more than slave raids) also continued in the same areas as before. Cadornega's chronicle, which provides detailed documentation on the operations of the Portuguese army up to 1681, mentions several such wars directed against the usual enemies: the Ndembu and Mbwila region to the north; Kisama, Benguela, and the central highlands to the south; and the lands bordering Matamba on the east. The effects of these eastern wars and similar operations by Matamba's army were noted by several late seventeenth-century travelers. The absence of comprehensive chronicles, like Cadornega's, for the period after 1681 obscures the exact direction and nature of these wars, but they surely seem to have continued.

If improved musketry was somehow a factor in the conduct of any of these wars, great or small, it is not visible in these records. Portuguese military success seems no better in 1680 or even 1700 than it was a century earlier, whatever rearmament or reorganization may have taken place as a result of the entry of muskets.

To these sources, which supplied much of the earlier slave trade, came others from far in the interior. It seems reasonable to suggest that the motive for the capture and transport of these slaves, who often came from hundreds of kilometers east of the positions of the Portuguese, may well have been the higher prices paid for slaves in the late seventeenth century. Cadornega mentions contacts between Kasanje and the emerging Lunda state of the far interior that took place before 1680 but does not mention slaves as among Lunda's exports. Nevertheless, Lunda did begin exporting slaves soon afterward, soon contributing a large supply, and capturing many during its wars of expansion and consolidation. It is interesting to note in this regard that Lunda's armies were not reliant on guns from the Atlantic, for as late as the mid-eighteenth century they still eschewed muskets as cowards' weapons.

We have much less information about the causes of the sudden surge of slave exports from Lower Guinea. The region around Allada, first of the states of the Slave Coast to begin large-scale exports, is very poorly documented by sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century sources, and it is not really until well into the seventeenth century that this situation is remedied. Oral traditions collected in the nineteenth century suggest that this period was characterized by the rise of the powerful Oyo Empire, which is perhaps in some way correlated with the surge of exports. That many of Allada's exports were slaves captured during Oyo expansion is suggested by the fact that Capuchin visitors of the 1660s believed that many of the slaves Allada exported came from the interior and were purchased at markets. Allada and its subject states and neighbors fought numerous wars during the later seventeenth century, even as the kingdom of Dahomey came to dominate the interior and then the coast.

The local African politics of the Gold Coast, the second region to enter the slave trade from Lower Guinea, involved a complicated series of wars between the local states, whose motives are not clear to us and were equally unclear to the Europeans, although the more perceptive observers, such as Willem Bosman, the Dutch factor, provided detailed historical background for some. In total, however, the

complexities of local politics and the steady rise of the interior kingdoms of Denkyira, Akwamu, and ultimately Asante overwhelmed the petty politics of the area—the result of deep-seated social changes in the interior kingdoms that owed little to coastal influences. . . .

The military reorganization of Lower Guinea that led to the rise of the great interior powers, such as Asante and Dahomey (and perhaps even the late seventeenth-century expansion of Oyo), has often been blamed on imports of European firearms. But Kea, whose study of this period for the Gold Coast takes such military factors seriously, notes that although the methods of warfare were revolutionized by the interior kingdoms, it was mainly by their use of mass-recruited armies, and firearms had very little effect. The development of these mass armies was the product of social changes and was not determined by the availability of new military technology. Indeed, he argues that the early expansion of Asante was accomplished by mass armies armed with missile weapons, but these were bows and arrows in the crucial early phases, and only later were the troops re-armed with muskets.

It is worth noting that the creation of mass armies and their subsequent re-arming with firearms may have done a great deal to increase the numbers of people enslaved. If earlier wars involved relatively small professional armies, and the majority of the slaves were taken from the military captives, then obviously the group of people vulnerable to enslavement would be fairly small. But with the rise of mass armies, battles were likely to involve more soldiers, thus increasing the number of potential slaves accruing to the victor. However, the simple correlation between imports of firearms and exports of slaves is not a causal relationship. It is more likely that African demands for guns increased simply because they were creating larger armies, which itself had complicated internal, social causes. The availability of European weapons did not provoke an increase in warfare.

As African armies re-armed and became accustomed to the tactics of musket warfare it became harder to go back to some other "art of war," thus ensuring continued demand. This certainly helped European business in general, but it did not deliver to any European power the capacity to engage in weapons blackmail against states that might wish to refuse to sell slaves. This is because no European country or group of merchants came close to having control over the supply of arms to any African state, at least in any but the very shortest run. Europeans could therefore not freely decide to supply arms or not to supply them to force Africans into any decisions. In any case, the only real form of influence available to merchants would be withholding the very means to make war, and such a strategy would be more likely to inhibit than encourage warfare.

As historians learn more about warfare in Africa in this period, and as they probe more deeply into the political and social structures of African states, they realize that warfare needs to be explained in terms of the internal dynamics of the state or state system. As such dynamics are understood, the role of Europeans in causing war (as opposed to benefiting from it, either as a vehicle to sell arms or to buy slaves) begins to diminish. Thus, for example, the study of the Kongo civil wars of the late seventeenth century yields explanations for the wars that lie in the politics of the country and not in Portuguese machinations, as was previously believed.

The same conclusions can be drawn from the study of the Slave Coast and Gold Coast, where the explosion of slave exports and growth of arms imports are

the clearest. The numerous surviving letters of Dutch and English factors on the Gold Coast from about 1680 onward certainly tell of a willingness to buy slaves, at least "if the price is right," as one factor wrote in 1683, but there is nothing to suggest that they could or did exercise actual pressure to get the local people to sell them. They did certainly encourage and occasionally bribe local rulers in the multistate system of the coast to fight, including supplying them with arms and even soldiers, but it was normally to get military help in driving other European rivals from their posts and not simply to get slaves. One of the best examples of such an event was the Komenda war of the 1690s, detailed in several contemporary sources. Its origins lay in the complicated politics of African trade, or, as the Dutch factor Bosman said, in "bad government and absurd customs." All sides obtained mercenaries from the Europeans. The relatively small size of African states and the prevalence of professional armies along the coast (it was only in the interior that the mass armies were forming) made small bodies of mercenaries potentially effective, and consequently Europeans frequently hired themselves out in this way. The practice of acting as mercenaries was not restricted to Europeans; several states on both the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast routinely supplied mercenaries in the wars of the period. Robin Law has recently proposed that the kingdom of Dahomey served first as a sort of mercenary state. Their role as suppliers of mercenaries did not give the Europeans much power on the coast; rather, one gets a much stronger impression of European weakness and helplessness in the face of local African politics.

African rulers continued to engage in wars, not unlike those of previous centuries, and naturally, as the new weapons figured more prominently in warfare, acquiring supplies of the weapons became important. Thus, in the late seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century, civil wars troubled the Senegambian states, and often pretenders sought and acquired weapons in order to make their claims. But it would be incorrect to say that somehow Europeans had persuaded the potential candidates to seek power in order to get slaves, even if they did delight in the prospect of increased slaves as a result. Senegalese state leaders built up substantial armies of slave soldiers, and often these armies engaged in local raiding (frequently without royal permission), which proved quite disruptive, but neither the origin of these armed forces nor their kings' lack of ability or desire to control them was the result of European policies or pressures.

In conclusion, then, we must accept that African participation in the slave trade was voluntary and under the control of African decision makers. This was not just at the surface level of daily exchange but even at deeper levels. Europeans possessed no means, either economic or military, to compel African leaders to sell slaves.

The willingness of Africa's commercial and political elite to supply slaves should be sought in their own internal dynamics and history. Institutional factors predisposed African societies to hold slaves, and the development of Africa's domestic economy encouraged large-scale trading and possession of slaves long before Europeans visited African shores. The increase in warfare and political instability in some regions may well have contributed to the growth of the slave trade from those regions, but one cannot easily assign the demand for slaves as the cause of the instability, especially as our knowledge of African politics provides many more internal causes. Given the commercial interests of African states and

the existing slave market in private hands in Africa, it is not surprising that Africans were able to respond to European demands for slaves, as long as the prices attracted them.



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