

THE SLAVE TRAFFIC AND CULTURE IN AFRICA

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Outline

- Introduction
- African & European Conceptions of Slavery
- Slavery in Africa
- The Slave Traffic
- Effects
- Conclusions

Introduction

- Slavery as an economic practice in Africa
- Historical studies have often wrongly treated slavery and human trafficking as purely economic practices
- The cultural basis of slavery is *the* reason slavery came to assume the cross-cultural element of dishonor
- Enlightenment Scholars' argument against slavery was mostly cultural
 - Smith, who made an economic argument found it wanting

Introduction

- Culture (and identity) shaped and was shaped by the slave trade, slavery, and antislavery, both globally and in Africa
- While this position underscores its cultural basis of slavery, it does not necessarily seek to discount its economic basis
- Trading vs Trafficking

Slavery in Africa

- The starting point of understanding the slave traffic is slavery because slavery begot the traffic
- Differences between African and European Conceptions of Slavery
 - Post-Renaissance and Enlightenment Europeans vs Africans
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- If Europeans went out of their way to avoid enslaving fellow Europeans to the extent of killing them, many Africans went out of their way to enslave others
 - Whyddah, 1720s
 - Whyddah king planned to “keep [the Dahomean king] for a slave to do the vilest offices” (Snelgrave)
 - Dahomey

Slavery in Africa

- At the same time, the Atlantic traffic provided the corrupt authorities a pecuniary opportunity for disposing of people who fell under a wide spectrum of offense
 - Ranged from the most minor that would have attracted minimal punishment in pre-Atlantic trading days to major ones that would attract capital punishment
- Culture was a determinant of who was enslaved, how payment was made, and even the application of proceeds
- Africans saw themselves as belonging to their respective communities or states, not as Africans
 - This view tries to fit African processes into the Early Modern European culture of slaving that limited enslavement to outsiders
- The prohibition of enslaving only outsiders would apply to only raiding that was structured or legal.
 - Great many raiding was illegal, clandestine, and unstructured; people indulging in them did not follow the rules

Slavery in Africa

- Also, insider enslavement prohibition does not appear to be commonplace
 - apparent instances of such prohibition can be misleading
- Instead, Atlantic Africans generally regulated it, only in ways different from their regulation of the enslavement of outsiders
- Gender

Effects of the Slave Trade

- Effects of the Slave Traffic
- Economic and demographic
 - Destabilization incompatible with economic progress
- Domestic industries
- Dependency ratio
- Social and Cultural
 - Mentality
 - Tribalism, but based on defending self from outsiders.
 - Culture of warring