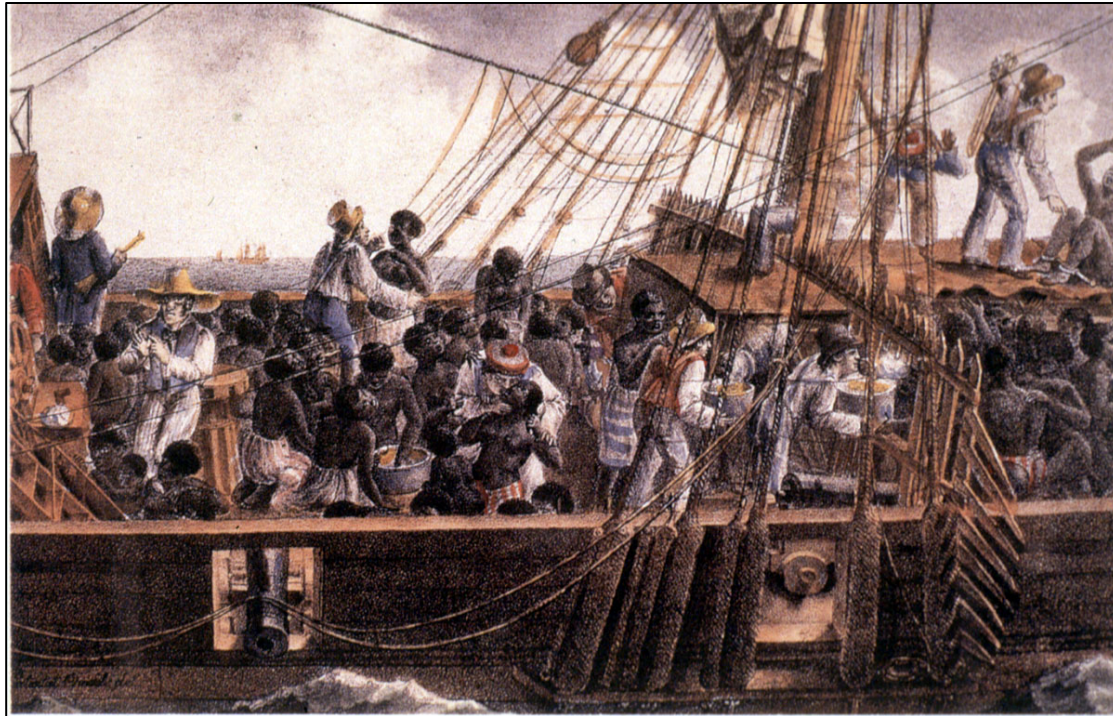


Slavery in the Atlantic World

An Online Professional Development Seminar



AMERICA *in* CLASS[®]

from the National Humanities Center

Image Credit: “Transport des Negres dans les Colonies,”
Image Reference E009, as shown
on www.slaveryimages.org,
compiled by Jerome Handler and
Michael Tuite, and sponsored by
the Virginia Foundation for the
Humanities and the University of
Virginia Library.

UNDERSTANDING

Slavery arrived in the British colonies of North America in the 17th century because of the complex inter-workings of economic, political, and social forces in the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and North America.

FROM THE FORUM

Challenges, Issues, Questions

- What are we talking about when we speak of the “Atlantic world”?
- How did African political and institutional structures and economic developments make slavery possible?
- What role did the slave trade play in the world economy during the 18th and 19th centuries?
- What role did New England play in the slave trade?
- How can we relate slavery to place?



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*Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the
Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*
(2011)

The African Diaspora and Disciplines
(2010)

FRAMING QUESTION

Why and how did the first “20. and odd negroes” arrive in Virginia in 1619?

But first . . .

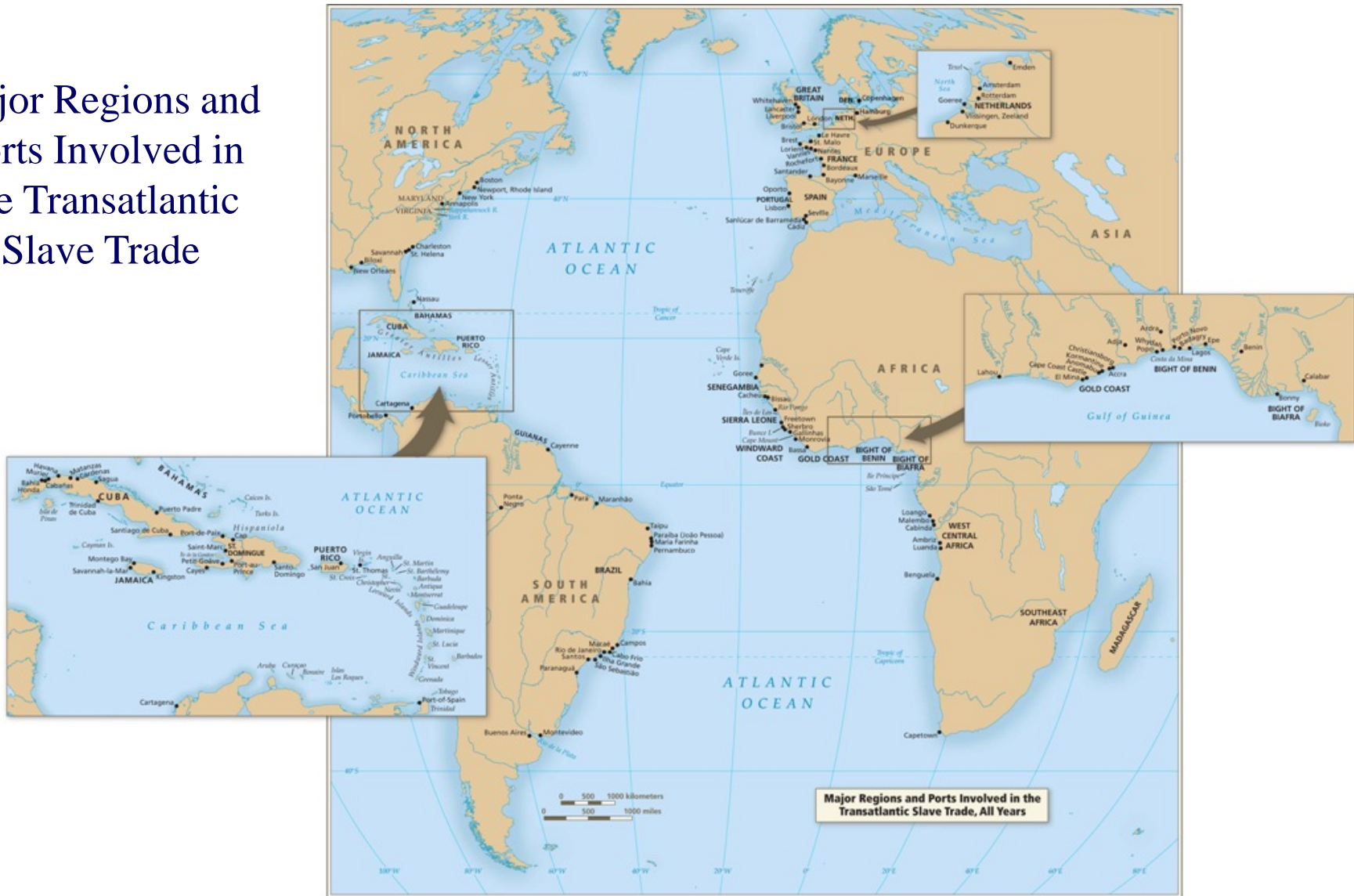
What do we mean by the “Atlantic world”?

DEFINING THE ATLANTIC WORLD

- NATO influences post WWII
- Began with emphasis on European contact with North America
- Regional system with shared sphere of economic and cultural influences
- Within the last decade Atlantic history has expanded to the south to include the study of sub-equatorial regions
- Major themes: migration, trade, colonialism, slavery

Slavery in the Atlantic World

Major Regions and Ports Involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade



The Path to the Dock at Jamestown

- Led through Africa, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Britain
- Involved imperial rivalries
- Depended on the economics of empire

Slavery Comes to Virginia 1619

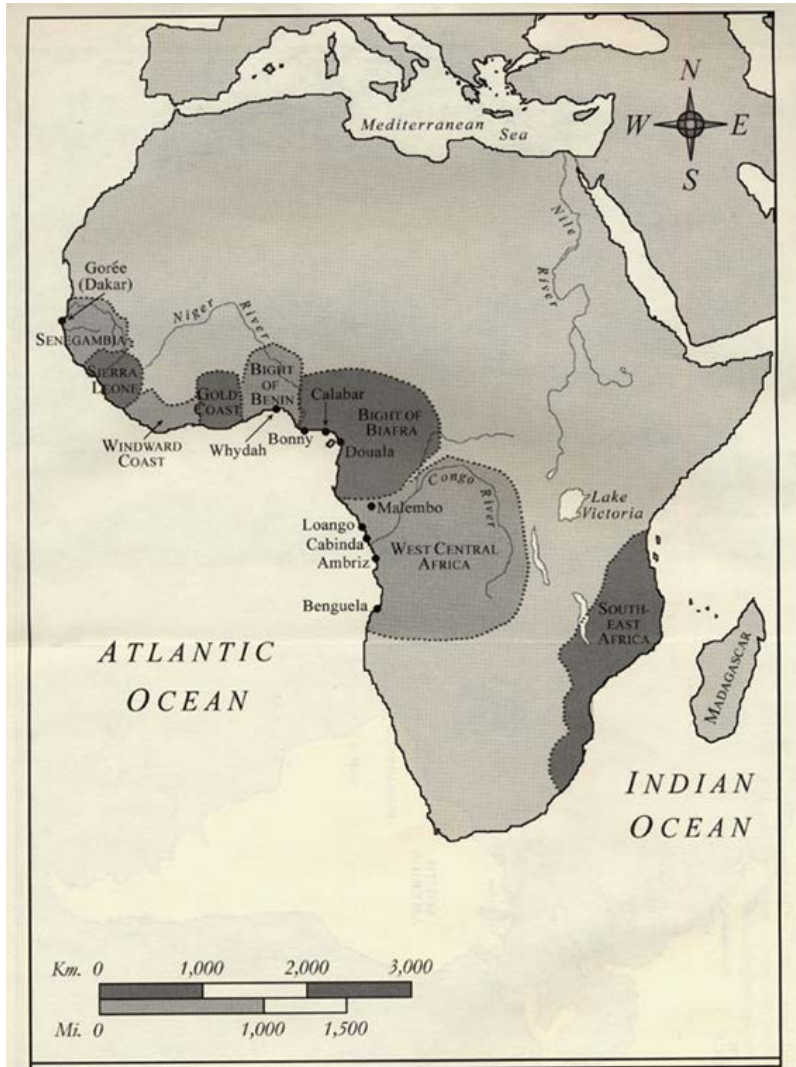
- Portuguese ship *Sao Joao Bautista*: Angola to Veracruz with 350 slaves on board
- Dutch and English privateers capture ship in Caribbean
- Pirates confiscate 50 slaves, carrying them to Virginia and Bermuda
- Remaining slaves continue on to Mexico

- Absence of private property
- Wealth building through property in people: wives, children, pawns, adoptees, slaves
- Slave status just one of many forms of dependency
- Outsiders might integrate kin network but not necessarily

Discussion Question

Was slavery a peculiar form of dependency or was it simply one in a spectrum of dependent statuses?

Slavery in 15th and 16th Century Europe



Map II: West Africa in the Era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, showing the eight principal regions of activity and ports of embarkation, based on David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999). Map drawn by Rebecca Wrenn.

- First African slaves via Atlantic went to Portugal in 1440s
- Between 1440s and 1518, more than 150,000 Africans went to Europe and Atlantic islands
- Most of these Africans came from Senegambia and were familiar with Islam

Discussion Question

How might contemporary understandings of Islam be reconfigured through histories of Islamic slaves in Europe and the Americas?

Central Lisbon in the 1550s



O Chafariz d'El-Rei, 16th century. Artist unknown. Colecao Berardo, Lisboa.

Discussion Questions

- What can learn about the city's population?
- How are Africans depicted in the painting?
- What are these Africans doing?
- What can we discern about Africans' social standing through this image?

Lisbon and Slavery



Lisbon: nearly 10% of population in 1550 was enslaved, buried in common grave, congregated in neighborhood called Mocambo

Corner of Rua do Poço dos Negros (Street of Blacks' Pit) and Travessia do Judeu in the contemporary Lisbon neighborhood of Santa Catarina. The old slave burial pit existed there in the sixteenth century. In 1515, Portuguese King Dom Manuel I ordered the opening of the burial ground to combat the health hazards caused by rotting African corpses abandoned in various places across the city. The cross street is "Jewish Crossing," yet another remnant of the neighborhood's cosmopolitan, marginal, and laboring past.

Lisbon and Slavery



Though slavery in places like Lisbon allowed for some social flexibility, it is abundantly clear that African slaves were also the most socially abject category of laborers in Lisbon. One only needs to look to the ways Africans were buried to recognize their supposed inferior status.

Discussion Question

What can we discern from sources in “plain sight” such as street names?

Economic Imperatives

The economic imperatives that drove slavery in the US were already well developed in sugar, mining, and less well-known industries such as pearl diving.

Economic Imperatives

Prior to 1619, almost 400,000 Africans had already arrived in Latin America and the Caribbean

What did these thousands of Africans do in the Americas?

Economic Imperatives—Sugar Production

NIGRITÆ EXHAUSTIS VENIS METALLICIS II
conficiendo faccharo operam dare debent.



Nigritarum ergo opera vsi sunt Hispani initiò in scrutandis venis metallicis: verùm postquam illæ fuerunt exhaustæ, horum ministerio vt cœperunt ad molas trufatiles quæ facchariferas cannas comminuunt, ad faccharum coquendum & cogendum: in quo ministerio etiamnum hodie magna ex parte occupantur. Nam cum ea Insula humida sit & calida, minimo negotio facchariferæ cannæ siue arundines succrescunt; ex quibus contusis, deinde in lebetes coniectis, & decoctis, postremum ritè repurgatis & in faccharum concretis, magnum quæstum facere solent. Vtuntur præterea istorum Nigritarum opera in pascendis armentis, & reliquis rebus administrandis quæ necessariae sunt ad suos vsus.

A 3

Nigritæ

Discussion Question

What does this image tell us about the work of slavery?

"Nigritæ exhaustis venis metallicis conficiendo saccharo operam dare debent . . . II." ("The veins of gold ore having been exhausted, the Blacks had to work in sugar").

Economic Imperatives—Mining



Discussion Question

What does this image tell us about the work of slavery?

"How the Negro slaves work and look for gold in the mines of the region called Veragua [Panama]" *Histoire naturelle des Indes*: the Drake manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library [a full color facsimile edition with English translations]

Economic Imperatives—Pearl Diving



Histoire naturelle des Indes: the Drake manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library [a full color facsimile edition with English translations]; preface by Charles E. Pierce; forward by Patrick O'Brian; introduction by Verlyn Klinkenborg; translations by Ruth S. Kraemer (New York, 1996), folio 57, translation, p. 261.

How the Threads Come Together to Bring Slavery to Virginia

- 350 slaves departed from Angola on the Portuguese ship *São João Bautista*
- Bound for a sugar plantation region in Veracruz, Mexico
- Captured in Caribbean by a combined force of Dutch and English privateers
- Pirates confiscated around 50 slaves
- Dutch man-o-war brings the to Jamestown
- Sold in Jamestown as slaves of slaves of English colonists to meet the demand for labor

Were Virginia's First Africans Slaves?

Some scholars argue no legal precedent for slavery in Great Britain; thus, Africans may have been treated as indentured servants. Allegedly, chattel slavery does not emerge in North America until 1705. Does evidence support such conclusions? Does the absence of law defining slavery preclude the treatment of Africans as slaves?

Were Virginia's First Africans Slaves?

- No contracts of indenture for Africans
- Word “negro” synonymous with “slave”
- 1624 Virginia census: 22 Africans, none with surname. Nearly half were listed with no first name, but rather just “negro man” or “negro woman.” Why would these people be so clearly distinguished in the census if their social status was not different from landholders and servants?
- 1639 Maryland statute reads: “all Inhabitants of the Province being Christians (Slaves excepted) Shall have and enjoy all such rights liberties immunities priveledges and free customs within this Province as any naturall born subject of England.” Who are these “slaves” and why are they “excepted” if Africans were indentured servants?

The Importance of Angola

- More than four out of every five Africans arriving in the Americas in the first decades of the seventeenth century hailed from Angola.
- African immigrants outnumbered European immigrants by a similar rate of 4:1
- Angolan culture dominated immigrant communities across the Americas

Discussion Questions

- How would the culture of Brazil differ from the culture encountered by the handful of Angolans that arrived in Virginia?
- Would the Angolans in Virginia have been able to re-create calundu in the same ways? Why or why not?
- Where in the British colonies of mainland North America would slave population densities have most closely approximated those of Brazil?



Calundu—an Angolan ritual of spirit possession used for healing and communicating with ancestors

What kinds of historical conclusions can we draw from the assertion that John Punch was from Cameroon?

Do these have any bearing whatsoever on President Obama? Should they?

Final slide.

Thank You