The Slave Trade, 1519-1800

The Nature, Role, and Consequences of the Transportation of Africans to the Western Hemisphere
The Problem of Slavery

• Southern History: Distinctive
  – The region that developed slavery most completely
  – The region that succeeded from the Union and had to be subjugated in a bloody four year war
  – The region that developed a formalized system of racial discrimination after the civil war
  – The region that lagged behind the rest of the nation in economic growth and development until after WW II
  – The most solidly one-party region in the union
  – Hence, politically, socially, and economically the south has been different from the rest of the nation
History of Slavery in Ancient World

- Slavery is an old institution found in ancient times
- Slavery was recognized by law
- Not a racial system
- Not producers
African Slavery

- Three major commercial slavery systems
  - Oriental Slave Trade
  - Internal Slave Trade
  - Occidental Slave Trade
    - Portugal and Spain
      - Europe
      - East Atlantic Islands
    - European Latecomers
      - Caribbean and Mexico
      - North America
African Slaver Kingdoms
Occidental Slave Trade

THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE, 1500-1800
Sources and Destinations
Caribbean Sugar Island
Organization of the Slave Trade
In North America

- Role of Dutch
- Role of English
  - Royal Trading Company and the Royal African Company monopolies
  - Embrace of Competition

“A Slave Chain,” Frederick Forbes, *Dahomey and the Dahomeyans*, 1851
Slave Trade Within the Atlantic System
Economic Implications

- Slavery was central to the development of the Atlantic commercial system
- Slavery provided the super exploited labor enabling the production of commercial agricultural staples in the Western Hemisphere, which satisfied a new additive consumer culture in Europe
- Slavery produced the capital surpluses used to finance the industrial revolution in England and France
- Hence, slavery is central to the making of the modern World
Demographic Implications

- As native populations declined, opening lands for European settlement, Africans provided the manpower to work the new commercial enterprises native depopulation opened up
North American slave trade in comparative perspective

  - Spanish America and Brazil 7M
  - British West Indies 1.6M
  - French West Indies 1.6M
  - Dutch 28K
  - North America, 1619-1808 345K to 575
    - North America, 1808-1860 1k x 54 years = 54K
- W.E.B. DuBois Institute: 27K Ship records (x 500) 13.5M
- Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: slavevoyages.org 35K Ship records 10M
- How important is North American slave trade in comparative perspective
## Slave Population and Percentage of Total Population, 1620-1780

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
<th>Maryland</th>
<th>South Carolina</th>
<th>North Carolina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1680</td>
<td>6,000</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1690</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td></td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>&lt;40,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>220,000 (47%)</td>
<td>80,000 (33%)</td>
<td>97,000 (70%)</td>
<td>91,000 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New York: 17% (50% in NYC)
Pennsylvania: 8%
New England: 2 to 4%
Regeneration

- Africans achieve 1:1 sex ratio, and a rate of population increase equal to whites by 1750
- In Colonial period, Africans primarily clustered in 5 southern colonies; In Antebellum period, African primarily clustered in 10 southern states
- Only Slave Population to grow in captivity, reach 4M by 1860
- What explains growth?
Ethnicity of the African Population

Old World Origins of North American Slaves, 1690–1807
## Origins and Patterns of Importation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegambia</td>
<td>13.5% to 14.5%</td>
<td>Early, declines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>15.8% to 16.6%</td>
<td>Late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>13.1% to 14.1%</td>
<td>Early, then Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bight of Benin</td>
<td>3% to 4.3%</td>
<td>Mainly Louisiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bight of Biafra</td>
<td>24.4% to 25.6%</td>
<td>Major in 18th Century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central Africa</td>
<td>25.3% to 26.1%</td>
<td>Always important, even after 1808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>2% to 3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum Eras, 1619-1830

- **Afro-American Ethno-genesis**
  - Multiple African Ethnicities=>Black Race Identity
  - Problem: How to bridge differences?

- **Nature of Analysis: External and Internal forces**
  - External: two realms
    - World of Masters: a culture of coercion, race; Africans don’t think of themselves as members of the same race
    - World of slaves: a poly-cultural world
  - Internal: Complex African backgrounds; complex social formations: family/kin, villages, scattered lives
Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum Eras, 1619-1830

Assumption:
Fewer “Saltwater Slaves” means easier to assimilate waves of population to common values/behavior norms: but whose?
Sources of Information on Africans in Colonial America

• Historical Archeology
  – Africans don’t leave a written record, like Indigenous peoples
  – Africans do leave an archeological record
  – Irony of southern history: the mansions of the white elite have been perfectly preserved or rebuilt; but slave quarters were not generally preserved
  – To find African’s past, go underground
  – Reveals the hidden world of Africans
    • Parallel to Indigenous experience
    • What whites were not allowed to know
Some Early Archeological Sites

More recent sites include:
Mount Vernon, Montecello, Lower Manhattan, the Hermitage, Maryland, and off the coast of Florida (the Henrietta Marie Slave Ship)
What do Sites Reveal? Material Culture

Tools for cooking and shelter

**homes**: Wattle and daub clay walls. Wattle are sticks, daub is mud plaster, post and beam foundations, mudfloors, pits under floorboards for root cellars, food storage like in Africa; outside hearths; thatched roofs, Porch additions

If I build an African hut it is an act of cultural independence. But if my master makes me tear it down, it shows the tension in culture and power relationships

Africans **cook** with **clay pots** called “**colono ware**”

Cook at low temps so simmer better, make use of spicy sauces like in Africa

African Americans cook with iron pots, cook faster

**Serveware**

Also distinct from whites, who eat on platters and plates

Africans use clay bowls; after closure of slave trade, decline in clay bowls and increase in glazed ceramic bowls

**Theory**: These artifacts served as symbols that reinforced a people's views of themselves as culturally distinct from others; Masters did try to take these practices away
What do Sites Reveal? Spiritual Values

- **New York Site**
  - Grave goods
    - Burial is autonomous
    - Buried with beads (111 found on old woman), an African tradition
    - Tooth filings suggest ethnic affiliations with Ghana

- **Hermitage**
  - Slave quarters found in 1985
    - Reveal numerous charms—spoon handles, and charms in shape of a fist (3)
    - Charms are an African spiritual practice
Conclusions

• Archeology reveals persistence of Africanisms
• But eventually, an African-American culture emerged in North America based on five new pre-conditions
  – Balanced sex ratios making possible stable family units
  – Low percentages of new African immigrants to total population
  – High density of Africans and African Americans in the total population
  – Large plantations
  – Degree of control by whites
• By 1800 these conditions are in place for rapid acculturation