Africa and the Africans in the Age of the Atlantic Slave Trade (1450 – 1750)
Africa's Slaves

Written Source Document 5

Ibn Khaldun’s theory about Africans

“They are found eager to dance whenever they hear a melody. They are everywhere described as stupid. The real reason for these [opinions] is that, as has been shown by philosophers in the proper place, joy and gladness are due to expansion and diffusion of the animal spirit. Sadness is due to the opposite, namely, contraction and concentration of the animal spirit. It has been shown that heat expands and rarefies air and vapors and increases their quantity.”

- Ibn Khaldun seems to be saying it is the environment that determines differences in basic human nature of one group compared with another. Apart from his specific views about Africans, do you agree or disagree with him on this? Why?

- Do you think Johannes de Grevenbroek would agree with Ibn Khaldun? Why or why not?
Portuguese in Africa

- In 1487, Portuguese ships sailed down the west African coast and rounded the Cape of Good Hope and began establishing trading outposts in Africa. El Mina, in the heart of the gold-producing region, was the most important of these.

- Africans acquired goods from the Portuguese, who sometimes provided slaves from other regions along the coast. In return, the Portuguese were supplied with ivory, pepper, animal skins, and gold.

- Eventually, the Portuguese mulatto traders followed the existing trade routes into the interior to trade directly with Mande and Soninke merchants from Mali and Songhai.

- Missionary efforts were made to convert the rulers of Benin, Kongo, and other African kingdoms. Nzinga Mvemba of Kongo, with the help of Portuguese missionaries brought the whole kingdom to Christianity and sought to “Europeanize” the kingdom.

- Eventually, the Portuguese established an outpost on Mozambique and bases at Kilwa, Mombasa, and Sofala to control trade in the Indian Ocean & Red Sea.
The African Slave Trade

- The Atlantic slave trade was started in the 1500s to fill the need for labor in Spain’s American empire.
- Each year, traders shipped tens of thousands of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to work on tobacco and sugar plantations in the Americas.
- Europeans relied on African rulers and traders to seize captives in the interior and bring them to coastal trade posts and fortresses.
- The slave trade intensified as the demand for slaves increased in the Americas and the demand for luxury goods increased in Africa.
- The slave trade led to the fall of some African states and the rise of others.
The Atlantic Slave Trade

- A three legged trade network known as the **triangular trade** developed.
- Merchants brought goods from Europe to Africa to trade for slaves.
- Then slaves were transported to the West Indies along the **Middle Passage**, and exchanged for goods such as sugar, molasses, and other goods.
- Finally, this goods were transported back to Europe.
Destinations of Enslaved Africans, 1500–1870

- Portuguese Brazil: 37%
- British North America: 15%
- Other Caribbean islands: 41%
- Spanish America, including Spanish Caribbean: 2.5%
- Europe and Asia: 4.5%

Source: Albert M. Craig, *World Civilizations*
Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade

By the 1800s, an estimated 11 million enslaved Africans had reached the Americas. Another 2 million probably died during the Middle Passage.

The slave trade caused the decline of some African states. In West Africa, the loss of countless numbers of young women and men resulted in some small states disappearing forever.

At the same time, new African states arose whose way of life depended on the slave trade. The rulers of these new states waged war against other Africans in order to gain control of the slave trade in their region.
Document 1

Document 2
African Leaders Resist

- King Affonso I or Nzinga Mvemba, ruler of the Kongo, had solicited the Portuguese to help him turn his country into a modern, Christian state.

- He later appealed to the king of Portugal to end the slave trade, but it had no affect.

- In 1788, the Almamy of Futa Toro in northern Senegal, tried to halt the slave trade in his lands by outlawing the transportation of slaves through his land.

- Slave traders soon found other routes to by pass his country.
An image depicting Portuguese encounter with Kongo Royal family
Rise of New African States

- Osei Tutu won control of the trading city of Kumasi and created the Asante empire in the late 1600s by controlling the gold-producing zones and trading slaves for firearms with the Dutch.

- Officials chosen by merit managed royal monopolies on gold mining and the slave trade.

- By the end of the 17th century, the slaves comprised 2/3s of his trade.
Rise of New African States (cont.)

- The kingdom of Benin was at the height of its power when the Europeans arrived and traded textiles, pepper, and ivory, rather than slaves.

- Nearby the kingdom of Dahomey developed and traded slaves from Benin for firearms, allowing them to create an autocratic and sometimes brutal regime by the 1720s which lasted well into the 19th century.

- The growing divine authority of African rulers paralleled the rise of absolute monarchies in Europe leading to new political forms with the power to limit the king.

- In the Yoruba state of Oyo a governing council shared power with the ruler.
African Art

- African art also became popular and skilled artisans were commissioned to produce decorative objects for Europeans, including sculpture and textiles.

Men with ivory tusks, Dar es Salaam, c. 1900.

Carving in ebony

One edge of Mammoth Ivory tusk carved with Elephants & Lions.
Usman dan Fodio in northern Nigeria, denounced corruption of local Hausa rulers and called for religious and social reforms based on Sharia, or Islamic law.

He inspired Fulani herders and Hausa townspeople to rise up against leaders.

He and followers set up a powerful Islamic state in West Africa.

Literacy increased, local wars quieted, trade increased.

Other Muslim reform movements led to new Islamic states in western Sudan.
Battles for Power in Southern Africa

- The Zulus had migrated into southern Africa in the 1500s.
- In the 1800s, they emerged as a major force under a ruthless and brilliant leader, Shaka.
- In 1652, Dutch immigrants arrived setting up Cape Town to supply ships sailing to or from West Indies.
- Dutch farmers, called Boers, settled around Cape Town and enslaved Khoisan herders living there.
- In 1815, the Cape Colony was taken over by the British, so the Dutch Boers migrated north coming into contact with the Zulus.
- Between 1818 and 1828, the Zulus under Shaka waged relentless war. Shaka’s wars disrupted life across southern Africa. Displaced groups migrated north, conquering other peoples and creating their own powerful states.
- In the late 1830s, the Boers came into contact with the Zulus and fighting broke out.
- At first, the Zulu regiments held their own. But in the end, they were defeated by the Boers’ superior military technology.
The Impact of the Printing Press

Visual Source Documents 3 & 4

Section 3

Bell Work