

# CHAPTER 26

## AFRICA AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD

### INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, sub-Saharan Africa was a remote and isolated region, cut off from much of the outside world by vast oceans and the Sahara Desert. In the eighth century Muslim caravans reached west Africa, and in the tenth century Arab merchant ships began trading with the Swahili city-states of east Africa (see Chapter 19). These contacts were, for the most part, mutually beneficial to both African rulers and Muslim merchants. Traders sought gold, ivory, exotic foods such as kola nuts, and slaves. Africans, in turn, gained horses, salt, and other manufactured goods and were also introduced to the religion, law, and culture of Islam. Several African societies, such as the Songhay, the Kongo, and the Ndongo, shifted from band level units to larger, more formal kingdoms.

This political evolution was disrupted after the fifteenth century, when Portuguese mariners reached the west coast of Africa. Direct European contact brought rapid and dramatic changes, which profoundly affected all sub-Saharan societies. Some dimensions of that change are

- Political upheaval. In the Kongo, for example, the Portuguese undermined the authority of the king and even assassinated uncooperative rulers.
- Outright conquest and settlement. Kongo, Ndongo, and south Africa became European settlements that had Africans as the servant class. The Swahili city-states were seized and forced to pay tribute.
- Intertribal warfare. Portuguese slave traders encouraged African slavers to make raids on their neighbors and to resist their own rulers. Coastal Dahomey profited from the slave trade, while inland peoples suffered.
- Economic exploitation. Indigenous economies were corrupted by the trade, exchanging slaves for manufactured goods such as guns and rum.
- Social disruption. Sixteen million, able-bodied young Africans were enslaved between 1600 and 1800, two-thirds of them men. This disruption seriously impacted village and family life, especially in west Africa.

### OUTLINE

#### **I. African politics and societies in early modern times**

##### **A. The states of west Africa and east Africa**

1. The Songhay empire was the dominant power of west Africa, replacing Mali
  - a) Expansion under Songhay emperor Sunni Ali after 1464
  - b) Elaborate administrative apparatus, powerful army, and imperial navy
  - c) Muslim emperors ruled prosperous land, engaged in trans-Saharan trade

2. Fall of Songhay to Moroccan army in 1591
    - a) Revolts of subject peoples brought the empire down
    - b) A series of small, regional kingdoms and city-states emerged
  3. Decline of Swahili city-states in east Africa
    - a) Vasco da Gama forced the ruler of Kilwa to pay tribute, 1502
    - b) Massive Portuguese naval fleet subdued all the Swahili cities, 1505
    - c) Trade disrupted; Swahili declined
- B. The kingdoms of central Africa and south Africa
1. Kongo, powerful kingdom of central Africa after fourteenth century
    - a) Established diplomatic and commercial relations with Portugal, 1482
    - b) Kings of Kongo converted to Christianity sixteenth century; King Afonso
  2. Slave raiding in Kongo
    - a) Portuguese traded textiles, weapons, and advisors for Kongolesse gold, silver, ivory, and slaves
    - b) Slave trade undermined authority of kings of Kongo
    - c) Deteriorated relations led to war in 1665; Kongo king decapitated
  3. Kingdom of Ndongo (modern Angola) attracted Portuguese slave traders
    - a) Queen Nzinga led spirited resistance to Portuguese, 1623–1663
    - b) Nzinga able to block Portuguese advances but not expel them entirely
    - c) By end of the seventeenth century, Ndongo was the Portuguese colony of Angola
  4. Southern Africa dominated by regional kingdoms, for example, Great Zimbabwe
  5. Europeans in south Africa after the fifteenth century
    - a) First Portuguese, then Dutch mariners landed at Cape of Good Hope
    - b) Dutch mariners built a trading post at Cape Town, 1652
    - c) Increasing Dutch colonists by 1700, drove away native Khoikhoi
    - d) South Africa became a prosperous European colony in later centuries
- C. Islam and Christianity in early modern Africa
1. Islam popular in west Africa states and Swahili city-states of east Africa
    - a) Islamic university and 180 religious schools in Timbuktu in Mali
    - b) Blended Islam with indigenous beliefs and customs, a syncretic Islam
    - c) The Fulani, west African tribe, observed strict form of Islam, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries
  2. Christianity reached sub-Saharan Africa through Portuguese merchants
    - a) Also blended with traditional beliefs

- b) Antonian movement of Kongo, a syncretic cult, addressed to St. Anthony
  - c) Charismatic Antonian leader, Doña Beatriz, executed for heresy, 1706
- D. Social change in early modern Africa
- 1. Kinship and clans remained unchanged at the local level
  - 2. American food crops, for example, manioc, maize, peanuts, introduced after the sixteenth century
  - 3. Population growth in sub-Sahara: 35 million in 1500 to 60 million in 1800

## II. The Atlantic slave trade

- A. Foundations of the slave trade
- 1. Slavery common in traditional Africa
    - a) Slaves typically war captives, criminals, or outcasts
    - b) Most slaves worked as cultivators, some as administrators or soldiers
    - c) With all land held in common, slaves were a measure of power and wealth
    - d) Slaves often assimilated into their masters' kinship groups, even earned freedom
  - 2. The Islamic slave trade well established throughout Africa
    - a) Ten million slaves may have been shipped out of Africa by Islamic slave trade between eighth and eighteenth centuries
    - b) Muslim slave merchants sometimes raided villages to capture individuals then forced into servitude
    - c) Europeans used these existing networks and expanded the slave trade
- B. Human cargoes
- 1. The early slave trade on the Atlantic started by Portuguese in 1441
    - a) By 1460 about five hundred slaves a year shipped to Portugal and Spain
    - b) By fifteenth century African slaves shipped to sugar plantations on Atlantic islands
    - c) Portuguese planters imported slaves to Brazil, 1530s
    - d) Spanish settlers shipped African slaves to the Caribbean, Mexico, Peru, and Central America, 1510s and 1520s
    - e) English colonists brought slaves to North America early seventeenth century
  - 2. Triangular trade: all three legs of voyage profitable
    - a) European goods traded for African slaves
    - b) Slaves traded in the Caribbean for sugar or molasses
    - c) American produce traded in Europe
  - 3. At every stage the slave trade was brutal

- a) Individuals captured in violent raids
  - b) Forced to march to the coast for transport
  - c) The dreaded middle passage, where between 25 percent and 50 percent died
- C. The impact of the slave trade in Africa
- 1. Volume of the Atlantic slave trade increased dramatically after 1600
    - a) At height—end of the eighteenth century—about one hundred thousand shipped per year
    - b) Altogether about twelve million brought to Americas, another four million died en route
  - 2. Profound impact on African societies
    - a) Impact uneven: some societies spared, some societies profited
    - b) Distorted African sex ratios, since two-thirds of exported slaves were males
    - c) Encouraged polygamy and forced women to take on men's duties
  - 3. Politically disruptive
    - a) Introduced firearms; fostered conflict and violence between peoples
    - b) Dahomey, on the "slave coast," grew powerful as a slave-raiding state

### III. The African diaspora

- A. Plantation societies
- 1. Cash crops introduced to fertile lands of Caribbean early fifteenth century
    - a) First Hispaniola, then Brazil and Mexico
    - b) Important cash crops: sugar, tobacco, rice, indigo, cotton, coffee
    - c) Plantations dependent on slave labor
  - 2. Plantations racially divided: one hundred or more slaves with a few white supervisors
    - a) High death rates in the Caribbean and Brazil; continued importation of slaves
    - b) Only about 5 percent of slaves to North America, where slave families more common
  - 3. Resistance to slavery widespread, though dangerous
    - a) Slow work, sabotage, and escape
    - b) Slave revolts were rare and were brutally suppressed by plantation owners
    - c) 1793: slaves in French colony of Saint-Domingue revolted, abolished slavery, and established the free state of Haiti
- B. The making of African-American cultural traditions
- 1. African and Creole languages
    - a) Slaves from many tribes; lacked a common language

- b) Developed creole languages, blending several African languages with the language of the slaveholder
  - 2. African-American religions also combined elements from different cultures
    - a) African-American Christianity was a distinctive syncretic practice
    - b) African rituals and beliefs: ritual drumming, animal sacrifice, magic, and sorcery
  - 3. Other African-American cultural traditions: hybrid cuisine, weaving, pottery
- C. The end of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery
  - 1. New voices and ideas against slavery
    - a) American and French revolutions encouraged ideals of freedom and equality
    - b) Olaudah Equiano was a freed slave whose autobiography became a best-seller
  - 2. Slavery became increasingly costly
    - a) Slave revolts made slavery expensive and dangerous
    - b) Decline of sugar price and rising costs of slaves in the late eighteenth century
    - c) Manufacturing industries were more profitable; Africa became a market
  - 3. End of the slave trade
    - a) Most European states abolished the slave trade in the early nineteenth century
    - b) British naval squadrons helped to stop the trade
    - c) The abolition of slavery followed slowly: 1833 in British colonies, 1848 in French colonies, 1865 in the United States, 1888 in Brazil

#### IDENTIFICATION: PEOPLE

What is the contribution of each of the following individuals to world history? Identification should include answers to the questions *who, what, where, when, how, and why is this person important?*

Thomas Peters

Sunni Ali

Afonso I

Nzinga

Doña Beatriz

Olaudah Equiano

## IDENTIFICATION: TERMS/CONCEPTS

State in your own words what each of the following terms means and why it is significant to a study of world history. (Terms with an asterisk are defined in the glossary.)

Songhay

Ndongo (Angola)\*

Fulani\*

Antonianism\*

Triangular trade\*

Middle passage

Maroons\*

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Compare the decline of Songhay with the decline of the Swahili city-states of east Africa.
2. How was the kingdom of Kongo transformed by its contacts with the Portuguese?
3. What were the objectives of Dutch colonists in South Africa? What kind of colony did they establish? Compare these objectives to the Portuguese objectives in colonizing Angola.
4. In what ways did Islam adapt to the customs and traditions of sub-Saharan Africa? Consider Songhay as an example. Where had strict Islam taken root by the end of the seventeenth century?
5. Besides religion, what other changes came to sub-Saharan Africa as a result of increased contact with the outside world?
6. Compare the institution of slavery within traditional African society with slavery as practiced in Europe and the New World.
7. What was the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on the societies of west Africa? Consider social, political, and demographic effects.
8. Compare the experience of slaves in the Caribbean, in Brazil, and in North America.
9. What are some of the enduring elements of African-American culture? What elements of a culture can survive the ordeal and disruption of slavery?
10. What factors ultimately led to the abolition of the slave trade and ultimately to the abolition of slavery itself?

## INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. Did any African states or kingdoms benefit from their contacts with European traders? Who would be the likely beneficiaries? Who would suffer the most?
2. State the arguments for and against slavery in American colonies in strictly *economic* terms. Can you suggest a more economical alternative to slave labor? (This question, of course, ignores the moral debate over slavery.)
3. Why was it so difficult for slaves to revolt once they reached the New World? What were some of the obstacles to a successful revolt?

## STUDENT QUIZ

1. Sunni Ali's administration of the Songhay was strengthened by
  - a. a system of provincial governors.
  - b. an effective chain of military command.
  - c. an imperial navy to patrol the Niger River.
  - d. the profitable trans-Saharan traffic.
  - e. all of the above.
2. Which of the following was *not* conquered or defeated by the Portuguese?
  - a. Angola
  - b. Kilwa
  - c. Kongo
  - d. Songhay
  - e. Zimbabwe
3. Although relations between Portugal and the Kongo were initially friendly, the Kongo was ultimately destroyed because
  - a. the royal family resisted the efforts of Catholic missionaries.
  - b. the Kongo had no trade goods of any value to the Europeans.
  - c. King Afonso converted to Islam.
  - d. Portuguese slave traders undermined the authority of the kings.
  - e. all of the above.
4. Queen Nzinga resisted the Portuguese conquest of Angola by
  - a. marriage to Dutch aristocracy.
  - b. mobilizing military resistance to the Portuguese.
  - c. entering into a trading alliance with Portugal.
  - d. forging a military alliance with neighboring Kongo.
  - e. none of the above.
5. The indigenous religions of sub-Saharan African were essentially
  - a. polytheistic, recognizing numerous local gods as well as a single creator god.
  - b. monotheistic, worshipping a supreme creator.
  - c. messianic, worshipping a personal savior.
  - d. universal, affirming that all religions are essentially the same.
  - e. syncretic, taking the best from a variety of religions.

6. An example of a syncretic cult combining elements of Christianity and African beliefs is
  - a. the Antonian movement.
  - b. the Coptic church.
  - c. the Fulani movement.
  - d. King Afonso.
  - e. all of the above.
  
7. One significant difference between the Portuguese settlement of Angola and the Dutch settlement of Cape Town was that
  - a. the Dutch had better relations with the local Africans.
  - b. the Portuguese had better relations with the local Africans.
  - c. the Portuguese came to Angola as traders while in South Africa the Dutch settled on the land as farmers.
  - d. the Portuguese sent farmers to Angola, while the Dutch came to South Africa primarily as merchants and traders.
  - e. the Khoikhoi resisted Dutch colonization, while the people of Angola accepted Portuguese rule without resistance.
  
8. In spite of the ravages of the slave trade, the population of Africa actually increased in the eighteenth century due to
  - a. European settlement of Africa.
  - b. resettlement of Asian workers in parts of Africa.
  - c. the introduction of new staple foods from the Americas.
  - d. improved health and life expectancy.
  - e. the cessation of intertribal warfare in Africa.
  
9. Factors in the decline of slavery included all of the following *except*
  - a. the anti-slavery movement.
  - b. the frequency of slave revolts.
  - c. the declining profitability of slaves.
  - d. the realization that wage labor in factories was cheaper than slave labor on plantations.
  - e. all of the above.
  
10. All of the following are characteristics of slavery in Africa *except*
  - a. slaves in Africa had opportunities to earn their freedom.
  - b. slaves in Africa were the primary source of wealth and power.
  - c. slaves in Africa were frequently assimilated into their owners' kinship groups.
  - d. slaves in Africa had certain civil rights and could appeal to the law for justice.
  - e. occasionally slaves worked as soldiers or as advisors.
  
11. The Portuguese slave trade began in the mid-fifteenth century with Portuguese raiders capturing African men and selling them in Europe. How had this trade changed by the mid-sixteenth century?
  - a. Portuguese raiders captured slaves and sold them in the Americas.
  - b. Portuguese raiders captured slaves and sold them to British merchants.
  - c. The Portuguese no longer participated in the slave trade.
  - d. Portuguese merchants bought slaves from African raiders and sold them to Europe and the Americas.
  - e. The Portuguese bought slaves from Dutch raiders and sold them in the Americas.



12. Which of the following could *not* be a leg of the triangular trans-Atlantic trade?
- African slaves delivered to the Americas
  - Barbados rum sold to England
  - Mexican silver delivered to Manila
  - manufactured goods sold to Africans
  - Barbados rum sold to North America
13. African slaves were in demand for the New World because
- so many Native Americans died from imported diseases.
  - native peoples frequently escaped into the hinterlands.
  - sugar plantations in the Caribbean required considerable labor.
  - Spanish and Portuguese conquerors disdained manual labor.
  - all of the above.
14. The middle passage of the slave trade was
- the forced march of slaves through central Africa from their homelands.
  - the holding pens where African captives were held before sale to plantation owners.
  - the ship voyage across the Atlantic in the cargo decks.
  - the public auction of slaves in the Caribbean.
  - none of the above.
15. Olaudah Equiano's experience contributed to the abolishment of slavery because he
- served as a legal representative for slaves in the United States.
  - established the underground railroad.
  - returned to Africa as a Christian missionary.
  - exposed the horrors of slavery, particularly the middle passage, to a European audience.
  - all of the above.
16. Slavery's impact on Africa
- fell most heavily on the societies of west Africa.
  - was limited to the eastern shores of Africa.
  - was felt on the entire continent.
  - was barely noticeable by the end of the eighteenth century due to demographic growth.
  - was offset by the advances that came with European trade.
17. Most African slaves went to
- the tropical and subtropical plantations of the Americas.
  - tobacco plantations on Chesapeake Bay.
  - rice and sugar plantations in the southern United States.
  - the silver mines of Mexico and Peru.
  - work as domestic servants in upper-class homes throughout the New World.
18. On the plantations of the Caribbean and Brazil, slaves
- thrived because climate and diet were similar to Africa.
  - suffered heavy losses due to tropical diseases and brutal conditions.
  - quickly intermarried with the indigenous populations.
  - formed families and re-created kinship ties similar to those in Africa.
  - none of the above.

19. Maroons were
- slaves who had intermarried with Indians.
  - the descendants of slaves and white slave-owners.
  - the revolutionary force that led the Haitian rebellion.
  - slaves who ran away and formed their own communities in remote areas.
  - slaves who collaborated with their owners and gained power within the plantation system.
20. African culture in the Americas included all of the following *except*
- distinctive language and dialect.
  - syncretic African-American religions.
  - traditional kinship ties.
  - distinctive foods and cuisine.
  - distinctive handicrafts.

MATCHING

Match these groups or individuals with the statements that follow.

- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| A. Fulani    | F. Thomas Peters   |
| B. Dutch     | G. Olaudah Equiano |
| C. Portugal  | H. Doña Beatriz    |
| D. Sunni Ali | I. Antonians       |
| E. Nzinga    | J. Afonso I        |

- \_\_\_ Sixteenth-century king of the Kongo, a devout Catholic, who tried to convert all his subjects to Christianity.
- \_\_\_ Songhay ruler who conquered Ghana and Mali and established a powerful central African empire in the fifteenth century.
- \_\_\_ Defiant Ndongo queen who resisted Portuguese intrusions into her kingdom for forty years.
- \_\_\_ Freed slave whose account of capture and life under slavery helped fuel the European abolitionist movement.
- \_\_\_ European power that dominated the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century.
- \_\_\_ Europeans who came to Africa more as settlers than as raiders and traders.
- \_\_\_ A charismatic religious prophet who advocated an Africanized form of Christianity.
- \_\_\_ Islamic purists who sought to establish strict Islamic states in central Africa.
- \_\_\_ West African leader, a former slave, who helped establish the free colony of Sierra Leone as a haven for free blacks.
- \_\_\_ A syncretic African-Christian cult that believed Jesus was a black man and the Kongo was the true Holy Land.

## SEQUENCING

Place the following clusters of events in chronological order. Consider carefully how one event leads to another, and try to determine the internal logic of each sequence.

A.

- \_\_\_ Dutch settlers
- \_\_\_ Bantu cultivators
- \_\_\_ Islamic traders
- \_\_\_ Portuguese raiders and traders

B.

- \_\_\_ Portuguese traders introduce the first African slaves to Virginia.
- \_\_\_ Slaves are imported to sugar plantations in the Caribbean after the Taino Indians die off.
- \_\_\_ African slaves are taken from west Africa to work on Atlantic island plantations.
- \_\_\_ Importation of slaves to the North American colonies remains small, but those slaves are more likely to form families and raise children.
- \_\_\_ Portuguese mariners reach west Africa, seize a dozen men, and sell them in Europe.

C.

- \_\_\_ Inspired in part by the ideals of the Enlightenment, westerners begin to question the morality of slavery.
- \_\_\_ In the 1880s, Cuba and Brazil are the last states in the New World to abolish slavery.
- \_\_\_ Gradually the nations of Europe outlaw the slave trade and begin policing the Atlantic to stop the human traffic.
- \_\_\_ Most Europeans accept the rationale that slavery is consistent with Christian values.
- \_\_\_ Olaudah Equiano describes the horrors of the slave trade and middle passage from an African perspective.

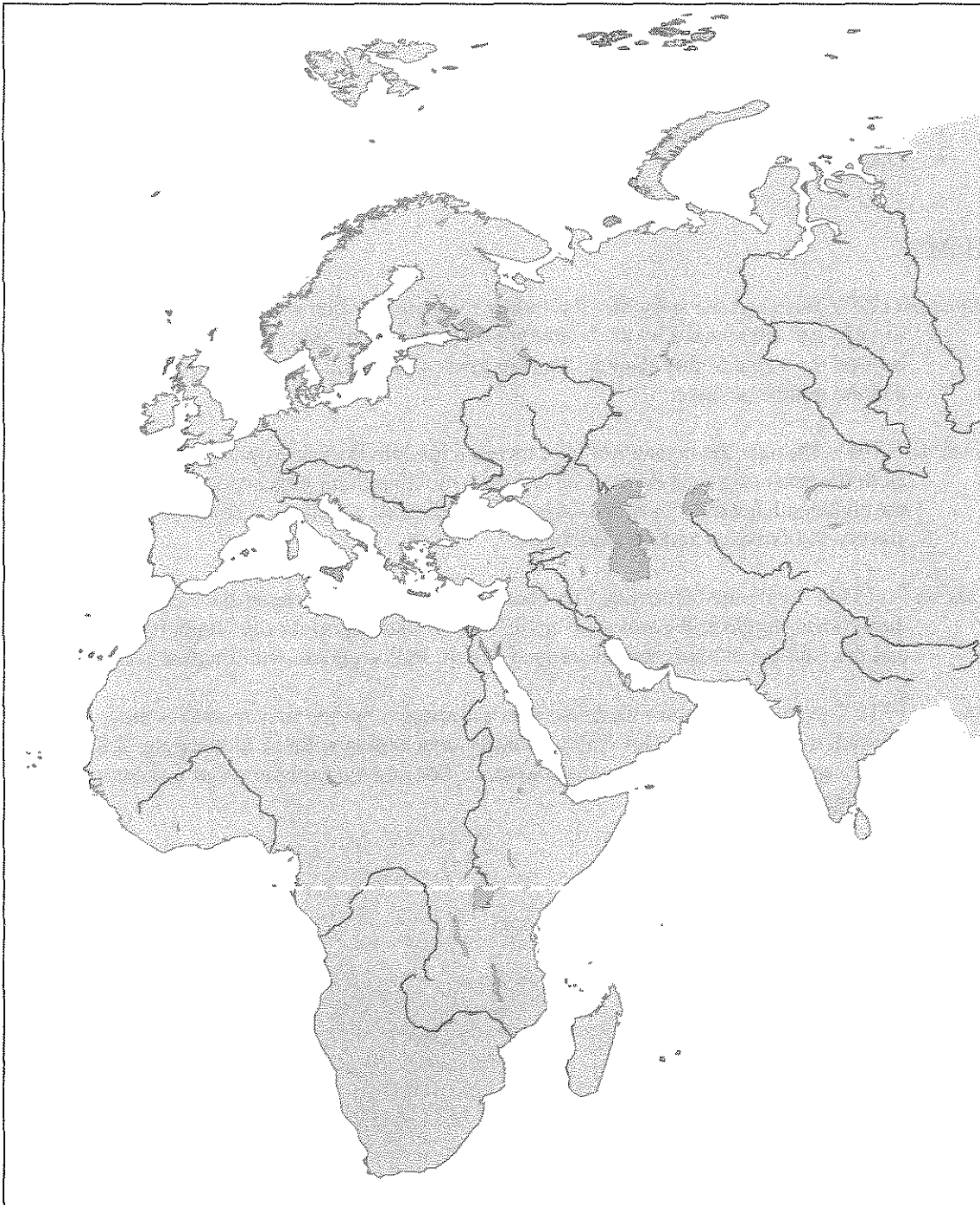
## QUOTATIONS

For each of the following quotes, identify the speaker, if known, or the point of view. What is the significance of each passage?

1. "Moreover, Sir, in our Kingdoms there is another great inconvenience which is of little service to God, and this is that many of our people, keenly desirous as they are of the wares and things of your Kingdoms, which are brought here by your people, and in order to satisfy their voracious appetite, sieze many of our people, freed and exempt men, and very often it happens that they kidnap even noblemen and the sons of noblemen, and our relatives, and take them to be sold to the white men who are in our Kingdoms."
2. "I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that with the loathsomeness of the stench and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but . . . on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and laid me across I think the windlass and tied my feet while the other flogged me severely."

MAP EXERCISES

1. Locate all the following on an outline map (see Map 26.1, page 698 in the textbook).  
Bodies of water: Atlantic Ocean; Indian Ocean; Mediterranean Sea; Nile, Niger, Congo, Zambezi rivers  
States: Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sierra Leone, Dahomey, Kongo, Ndongo, Mozambique  
Cities: Cape Town, Kilwa, Gao, Great Zimbabwe, Timbuktu



2. Create a poster that graphically represents the triangular trans-Atlantic trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Include a map of the Atlantic regions, icons, and colors to represent the items traded and the countries that profited from this trade (see Map 26.2, page 709).

### CONNECTIONS

In fifty words or less, explain the relationship between each of the following pairs. How does one lead to or foster the other? Be specific in your response.

- Olaudah Equiano and the Enlightenment
- Capitalism and the middle passage
- Doña Beatriz and Nzinga

### FILMS

*Amistad* (1997). Based on the story of a slave ship, the *Amistad*, that was taken over by the slaves in 1838 and later seized by the United States government. Although these events fall beyond the scope of this chapter, the film gives a powerful description of the slave trade and the middle passage.

*Sankofa* (1996). Through the mystery of time travel, a modern African-American model journeys from the ruins of a west African slave fortress to a French Louisiana sugar plantation in the eighteenth century. In spite of the fanciful pretext, a realistic account of plantation slavery in Louisiana and the Caribbean.

*Quilombo* (1984). Acclaimed Brazilian film about a community of escaped slaves hiding in the Amazonian jungle in the sixteenth century. A realistic portrait of the brutality of slavery and the courage of resistance in colonial Brazil. In Portuguese with English subtitles.

*Roots* (1977). The entire ten-hour miniseries is extraordinary, but the first episode is most relevant to this chapter. Alex Haley's family saga begins with the kidnapping of Kunta Kinte from his village in west Africa in the 1700s and his experiences as a slave in the American colonies.