



## Scholarship

**The following excerpt is taken from Professor Mann's book on the history of Lagos:**

“During the seventeenth century, Lagos became an important center of the expanding local and regional trade, thanks to its central location on the water route linking Benin, Ijebu, and Allada, as well as Oyo’s southern commercial termini. The town’s emerging obas and chiefs furthered this development by providing security for trade.

What accounts for Lagos’s sudden and dramatic rise to pre-eminence as a slave port in the first half of the nineteenth century? Part of the explanation lies in developments outside the region. Brazil continued to be the largest market for slaves exported from Africa throughout the first half of the nineteenth century...

The slave trade had already begun to decline, moreover, from many parts of West Africa, such as the Bight of Biafra and the Gold and Windward Coasts in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and the Senegambia in the second quarter. Only in West-Central Africa, South- East Africa, and the Bights of Benin and, to a lesser extent, Biafra did it remain robust...

Warfare and internal instability drove foreign slave traders away from Badagry in the 1780s and 1790s, while Porto Novo’s pre-eminence in the commerce was short-lived...



Developments inland from the coast also played a part in Lagos's rise as a slave port. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century the balance of power that had maintained order among the Yoruba states and, for the most part, protected their peoples from becoming victims of the slave trade fell apart. A long series of wars commenced that yielded tens of thousands of Yoruba-speaking captives for sale first abroad and then, after the final suppression of the illegal trade, within Africa itself.

By the early nineteenth century, Lagos's rulers had established conditions conducive to trade at the port. On the one hand, the town's merchants were proving themselves effective middlepeople capable of buying large numbers of slaves in markets on the mainland, transporting them across the lagoon, and smoothly selling them to foreign exporters. On the other hand, despite periods of intense domestic political instability, its rulers maintained the order and provided the services necessary to attract both foreign buyers and interior sellers to the town."

**Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Indiana University Press, 2007).**



Professor Kristin Mann

**Questions**

1. How did Lagos become a trade centre?
2. Name three factors that caused an increased in the trade in enslaved African people in Lagos.
3. Were traders or political rulers more significant in the increase in the trade in enslaved African people?

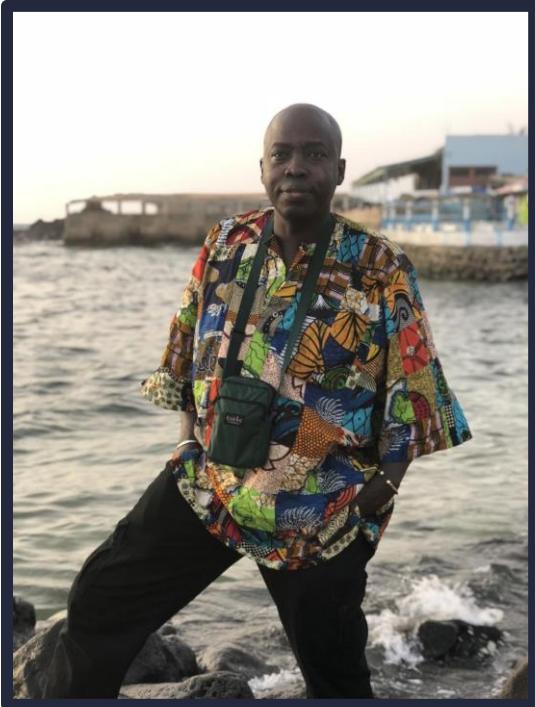


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**The following excerpt is taken from Professor M'Baye's article on the impacts of the slave trade on African societies:**

“The Atlantic slave trade had drastic impacts on African societies. Initially conceived by both Europeans and Africans on a small-scale for the exchange of goods and a few slaves, it later became a ruthless and demonic machine that drained Africa’s human and economic resources. By massively responding to Europe’s growing demand for slaves, African societies started up a process that hampered their economic, political and social developments. The trade inflated Africa’s economy by reducing it to a monoculture based on the sale of human beings. As a result, the once strong and developed African states lost their stability and broke apart due to internal and external conflicts that still affect the continent today. Surely, the current economic and social problems that plague contemporary Africa have their roots in the Atlantic trade. The unprecedented violence among African societies, ethnic groups and states, and the changing of social and gender roles which resulted from such anarchy would never have taken place had the Atlantic trade, followed by imperialism and colonialism, not taken root in Africa.”

**Babacar M'Baye, “The Economic, Political, and Social impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa.” (2006)**



Professor Babacar M'Baye

### **Questions**

1. What does the term 'monoculture' mean?
2. Why is having a monocultural economy a negative impact?
3. According to M'Baye, why did the African states lose their stability and break apart?
4. Based on this source and your prior knowledge, what was the most significant impact on African societies of the slave trade?