

Introduction

Sylviane A. Diouf

BETWEEN THE EARLY 1500S AND the late 1860s, an estimated twelve million African men, women, and children were forcibly transported across the Atlantic Ocean.¹ About seven million were displaced through the Sahara desert and the Indian Ocean, in a movement that started in the seventh century and lasted until the twentieth.² If the idea that the deported Africans walked quietly into servitude has lost ground in some intellectual circles, it is still going strong in popular culture; as are the supposed passivity or complicity of the rest of their compatriots and their lack of remorse for having allowed or participated in this massive displacement. In recent years, a few works have investigated the feeling of guilt apparent in some tales and practices linked to the Atlantic slave trade, but the Africans' actions during these times, except in their dimension of collaboration, have hardly been explored (Iroko 1988; Austen 1993; Shaw 2002).

This collection of essays seeks to offer a more balanced perspective by exploring the various strategies devised by the African populations against the slave trade. It is centered on the Atlantic trade, but some chapters cover strategies against the trans-Saharan and domestic displacement of captives, and these analyses suggest that strategies against the slave trade were similar, irrespective of the slaves' destination.³ The book focuses on a single area, West Africa, in order to provide a sense of the range of strategies devised by the people to attack, defend, and protect themselves from the slave trade. This evidences the fact that they used various defensive, offensive, and protective mechanisms cumulatively. It also highlights how the contradictions between the interest of individuals, families, social orders, and communities played a part in feeding the trade, even as people fought against it. Therefore, this book

is not specifically about resistance, which is arguably the most understudied area of slave trade studies—with only a few articles devoted to the topic (see Wax 1966; Rathbone 1986; McGowan 1990; Inikori 1996). Resistance to capture and deportation was an integral part of the Africans' actions, but their strategies against the slave trade did not necessarily translate into acts of resistance. Indeed, some mechanisms were grounded in the manipulation of the trade for the protection of oneself or one's group. The exchange of two captives for the freedom of one or the sale of people to acquire weapons were strategies intended to protect specific individuals, groups, and states from the slave trade. They were not an attack against it; still, they were directed against its very effects. Some strategies may thus appear more accommodation than resistance. Yet they should be envisioned in a larger context. Strategic accommodation does not mean that people who had redeemed a relative by giving two slaves in exchange were not at some other point involved in burning down a factory; or that the guns acquired through the sale of abductees were not turned directly against the trade. Resistance, accommodation, participation in the trade and attacks against it were often intimately linked.

But what precisely did people do to prevent themselves and their communities from being swept away to distant lands? What mechanisms did they adopt to limit the impact of the slave-dealing activities of traders, soldiers, and kidnapers? What environmental, physical, cultural, and spiritual weapons did they use? What short- and long-term strategies did they put in place? How did their actions and reactions shape their present and future? What political and social systems did they design to counteract the devastation brought about by the slave trade?

These are questions the literature has not adequately addressed. A large part of the studies on the Atlantic slave trade have focused instead on its economics: volume, prices, supply, cargo, expenses, profitability, gains, losses, competition, and partnerships. Because the records of shippers, merchants, banks, and insurance companies provide the most extensive evidence, economic and statistical studies are disproportionately represented in slave trade studies. But a great number, if not most, envision the Africans almost exclusively as trading partners on the one hand and cargo on the other. Viewed from another perspective, research based entirely or primarily on slavers' log books and companies' records are almost akin to studying the Holocaust in terms of expenses incurred during the transportation of the "cargo," profits generated by free labor, quantity and cost of gas for the death chambers, size and efficiency of the crematoria, and overall operating costs of the death camps. In the difference in historical treat-

ment between the Holocaust and the slave trade, words may play a larger role than readily perceived.

If the word *Holocaust* is a fitting and immediately understood description of the crime against humanity that it was, the expression *slave trade*, by contrast, tends to let the collective consciousness equate this crime with a business venture. Naturally, genocide and other crimes against humankind are not commercial enterprises but, one may argue, the slave trade was only partially so. The demand for free labor in the Americas resulted in the purchase, kidnapping, and shipment of Africans by Westerners who entered into commercial relations with African traders and rulers. The violent seizure of people, however, did not entail any transaction; the affected African communities were not involved in business deals. Although important to our understanding of the events, the literature that focuses on the commercial part of the process does not capture the experience of the vast majority of the affected Africans. It is no stretch to assume that the tens of millions who suffered, directly and indirectly, from this immense disaster were primarily concerned with elaborating strategies to counter its consequences on themselves, their loved ones, and their communities.

Violence was an intrinsic—but not exclusive—component of these strategies, whether on the part of the direct victims or of the larger population. If nothing else, the need for shackles, guns, ropes, chains, iron balls, whips, and cannons—that sustained a veritable European Union of slave trade–related jobs—eloquently tells a story of opposition from the hinterland to the high seas. As explained by a slave trader, “For the security and safekeeping of the slaves on board or on shore in the African barracoons, chains, leg irons, handcuffs, and strong houses are used. I would remark that this also is one of the forcible necessities resorted to for the preservation of the order, and as recourse against the dangerous consequences of this traffic” (Conneau 1976). Western slavers were indeed cautious when taking people by force out of Africa. Wherever possible, as in Saint-Louis and Gorée (Senegal), James (Gambia), and Bance (Sierra Leone), slave factories were located on islands to render escapes and attacks difficult. In some areas, such as Guinea-Bissau, the level of distrust and hostility was so high that as soon as people approached the boats “the crew is ordered to take up arms, the cannons are aimed, and the fuses are lighted. . . . One must, without any hesitation, shoot at them and not spare them. The loss of the vessel and the life of the crew are at stake” (Durand 1805, 1:191).⁴ Violence was particularly evident throughout the eighteenth century—the height of the slave trade—when numerous revolts directly linked to it broke out in Senegambia.⁵ Fort Saint-Joseph, on the Senegal River, was attacked and all commerce was interrupted for

six years (Durand 1805, 2:273). Several conspiracies and actual revolts by captives erupted on Gorée Island and resulted in the death of the governor and several soldiers. In addition, the crews of several slave ships were “cut off” (killed) in the Gambia River (Pruneau de Pommegorge 1789, 102–3; Hall 1992, 90–93; Guèye 1997, 32–35; Thilmans 1997, 110–19; Eltis 2000, 147). In Sierra Leone people sacked the captives’ quarters of the infamous trader John Ormond (Durand 1807, 1:262).⁶ The level of fortification of the forts and barracoons attests to the Europeans’ distrust and apprehension. They had to protect themselves, as Jean-Baptiste Durand of the *Compagnie du Sénégal* explained, “from the foreign vessels and from the Negroes living in the country” (263). Written records of the attack of sixty-one ships by land-based Africans—as opposed to the captives on board—have already been found for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Eltis 2000, 171).

The acts—or fear—of armed struggle may have seemed the most dreadful to the Europeans, but the Africans’ struggle encompassed more than a physical fight. It was based on strategies in which not only men who could bear arms, but women, children, the elderly, entire families, and communities had a role. As exemplified in the following chapters, to protect and defend themselves and their communities and to cripple the international slave trade that threatened their lives, people devised long-term mechanisms, such as resettling to hard-to-find places, building fortresses, evolving new—often more rigid—styles of leadership, and transforming the habitat and the manner in which they occupied the land. As a more immediate response, secret societies, women’s organizations, and young men’s militia redirected their activities toward the protection and defense of their communities. Children turned into sentinels, venomous plants and insects were transformed into allies, and those who possessed the knowledge created spiritual protections for individuals and communities. In the short term, resources were pooled to redeem those who had been captured and were held in factories along the coast. At the same time, in a vicious circle, raiding and kidnapping became more prevalent as some communities, individuals, and states traded people to access guns and iron to forge better weapons to protect themselves, or in order to obtain in exchange the freedom of their loved ones. As an immediate as well as a long-term strategy, some free people attacked slave ships and burned down factories. And when everything else had failed, a number of men and women revolted in the barracoons and aboard the ships that transported them to the Americas, while others jumped overboard or let themselves starve to death.

People adopted the defensive, protective, and offensive strategies that

worked for them, depending on a variety of factors and the knowledge they possessed. Although a culture of “virile violence” tends to place armed struggle at the top of the pyramid, it is rather futile to rate those strategies. They worked or not, depending on the circumstances, not on intrinsic merit, and they each responded to specific needs. Some people may have elected to attack the slave ships first and then resettle in hard-to-find places as circumstances changed. Others may have relocated as a first option. And, naturally, because the conditions could not have existed at the time, Africans did not use other mechanisms that contemporary hindsight believes would have been more efficient.

The idea that the slave trade would have stopped if a continental armed movement had been launched persists in contemporary popular culture and has negative repercussions on the relations between some African Americans and a growing community of African immigrants whose ancestors they accuse of collective passivity. The fact that Africans did not constitute one population but many whose interests and needs could be vastly divergent has not reached the general public. Although it seems acceptable that the French and the English, or the English and the Irish, fought one another for dozens of generations and did not see themselves as being part of the same people—not even the same race—such a notion is still difficult to grasp for many when it comes to peoples in Africa.⁷ Their conflicts based on land, religion, politics, influence, dynastic quarrels, expansion, economy, territorial consolidation—which they considered as serious as the French and English did theirs when they launched, and doggedly pursued, their Hundred Years’ War—appear trivial to many in the face of the onslaught of the slave trade and the rise of racism. Reflecting this idea, Guyanese poet Grace Nichols writes:

But I was traded by men
 the colour of my own skin
 traded like a fowl like a goat
 like a sack of kernels I was
 traded
 for beads for pans
 for trinkets?
 No it isn’t easy to forget
 What we refuse to remember
 Daily I rinse the taint
 Of treachery from my mouth. (1990, 18)

Although she expressively exposes a wound that aches in contemporary African Diaspora, the sentiments she describes are anachronistic because they could not

have reflected the deported Africans' point of view. Their autobiographies and interviews clearly evidence that they did not think they had been sold by "black brothers and sisters." Omar ibn Said writes that he was captured in war by "infidels"; Ibrahim abd al-Rahman Barry was made a prisoner by "Heboes" and sold to "Mandingoes"; Job ben Solomon was kidnapped by "Mandingoes"; Ali Eisami Gazirmabe by "Fulbe"; Muhammad Ali ben Said by "Kindills"; Olaudah Equiano was abducted by "two men and a woman"; Abu Bakr al-Siddiq was captured by "Adinkra's army"; Joseph Wright was made a prisoner by "the enemies"; Samuel Ajayi Crowther by an army of "Oyo Mahomedans, Foulahs and foreign slaves"; William Thomas was sold by "people belonging to Pedro Blanco's slave barracoon"; Ottobah Cugoano—the only one who at one point refers to betrayal by "some of my own complexion"—was abducted by "great ruffians"; and Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua was made a prisoner by "enemies" (see Alryyes 2000, 91; Griffin 1828b, 365; Curtin 1967a, 40; 1967b, 326; Smith, Last, and Gubio 1967, 211; Said 1873, 40; Jones 1967, 85; Wilks 1967, 162; Ajayi 1967, 299; see also *Anti-Slavery Reporter* 4 [8 February 1843]: 22–23, cited in Blassingame 1977, 227; Cugoano 1999, 13; Moore 1834, 35).

Nowhere in the Africans' testimonies is there any indication that they felt betrayed by people "the color of their own skin." Their perspective was based on their worldview that recognized ethnic, political, and religious differences but not the modern concepts of a black race or Africanness. With time, when an encompassing African—no longer an ethnic—consciousness developed in America, the story passed on still was not that people had been sold by other Africans but that they had been individually tricked and abducted by whites enticing them from the slave ships with European goods.⁸ For the most part these were not descriptions of actual events—although some certainly were—but allegorical tales that assigned blame where the Africans and their descendants thought it belonged: with the people who came to take them away not with their own. These "memories" of the elders turned into solid truths for their descendants, even though they mostly were, in an objective sense, symbolic constructions not the reflection of reality. Later generations developed the black betrayal model. It is no more historically true than the one it replaced. As has been evidenced elsewhere, the concepts of Africa, Africans, blackness, whiteness, and race did not exist in Africa, and they cannot be utilized today to assess people's actions at a time when they were not operative (Eltis 2000, 150; Inikori, this volume). In addition, for this paradigm of continental Africans' collective culpability—quite a dangerous and devious concept anyway—to make sense, it has to be based on the (inaccurate) belief that the slave trade removed only people who had no parents, spouses, children,

and friends; that it did not kill, wound, or mutilate more people in Africa than it deported overseas; that there were never any shifts in the military balance of power; that only certain populations were victimized to the exclusion of others; and that those who became captives had never been involved in wars, raids, or abductions that had resulted in the deportation and enslavement of others.

With the sharp increase in African immigration, the African betrayal model has found new vigor. Contemporary Africans are frequently accused by some African Americans of having “sold us” and are expected to apologize.⁹ Henry Louis Gates Jr. pursued the idea in his television series *Wonders of the African World* and went on to state that “others have wondered and I am thinking here of Yambo Ouologuem’s great novel *Bound to Violence* (1971) if Africa was cursed because of the apparent willingness of so many African societies to participate in the slave trade, bartering what, to us here, appear to be their sisters and brothers, for a mess of pottage” (2001, 3). As explored by Joseph E. Inikori in this volume, medieval Europeans were also involved in bartering their own “brothers and sisters”—actions for which no divine curse is invoked—and the present is not exempt from similar attitudes. According to the U.S. State Department’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* for 2002, traffickers throughout the world buy, sell, and transport between seven hundred thousand and four million individuals (mostly young women and children) every year for prostitution and slave labor. Twenty-six nations in Europe and the former Soviet Union, nineteen in Asia, ten in the Americas, sixteen in Africa, and six in the Middle East are involved as source, transit, or destination countries. It would be surprising if Africans from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries had been more politically, “racially,” socially, and morally enlightened than any other people in the past, the present, and (probably) the future. As for their massive collaboration that many believe had been necessary to displace twelve million people, the current traffic in human beings yields some informative hints. The United States alone receives—as transit and destination country—about fifty thousand victims of the sexual traffic annually. Within 370 years—the length of the transatlantic slave trade—if the present rates were to be sustained, 18.5 million women and children could be introduced by networks that manifestly do not involve most Europeans, Asians, Africans, Middle Easterners, and Americans.

The destruction brought by the Atlantic slave trade was unprecedented, its impact on three continents has been enormous, and its consequences on African peoples have been devastating: it was unique. But its uniqueness should not hide the fact that some people’s reactions to it (their participation in particular) were not exclusive to the continent; and that the Africans’ various acts against deportation and enslavement were not frequently seen on other shores, even on a

smaller scale commensurate with the lesser assaults other peoples faced. England's—and to a lesser extent France's—deportation and sale into indentured servitude of her own abducted indigent children, prisoners of war, prostitutes, and convicts is a case in point. Moreover, the idea that the British poor should be enslaved was passionately defended by distinguished intellectuals up to the mid-1700s (Rozbicki 2001). Aware of these parallels, a king in Dahomey remarked to a British governor, “Are we to blame if we send our criminals to foreign lands? I was told you do the same” (Durand 1807, 1:291). The English and French deportation policies did not elicit protest. There were no recorded attempts at freeing the convicts marching to the vessels bound for America and Australia, no assaults on ships to liberate the abducted, no moral outrage expressed at the evil of sending away other “whites” or brethren, no political attack on the institution of forced—quite distinct from voluntary—indenture itself, and virtually no rebellions on the ships. But, as shown in this volume, many of these actions were recorded in Africa. They were part of the reality not, evidently, all of it. Reality, over such an extended period of time and the breadth and length of a continent, was convoluted. As in other areas of the world, it was made of greed, tyranny, exploitation, abuse, and self-interest on the part of some; and of organized struggle, rebelliousness, selfishness, altruism, willing collaboration, fear, heroism, apathy, forced participation, panic-induced reactions, cowardice, and defiance on the part of others. Thus, the chapters in this volume explore a complex story of successes, failures, and contradictions.

In the end, the strategies had a positive effect: they did not stop the slave trade but certainly reduced it. Slave traders had to go further inland to look for captives whose offensive, defensive, and protective mechanisms resulted in more time spent to locate them; more casualties among the raiders; extra time en route to the coast, with greater risks for escape, injury, and death; and additional costly measures to ensure control over the barracoons and the ships. Resistance “held down the numbers entering the trade by raising the costs of carrying on the business” (Eltis 2000, 192). There is little doubt that millions were spared, although in some cases, it means that slave dealers turned their attention to more vulnerable peoples and areas (see Eltis 2000, 170–92; Richardson, this volume).

ABOUT THE SOURCES

Because they appear in written records rather infrequently, the Africans' actions against the slave trade have been more difficult to track than the commercial

transactions. However, the slaving records themselves provide suggestive information, not only on what transpired on the ships, such as conspiracies and revolts, but also on the attacks led on shore by the local populations (see Eltis 2000, 170–92; Inikori 1996; Richardson, this volume). In addition, as illustrated in most chapters, the testimonies of European slavers and travelers are an appreciable source on the Africans' actions—starting with the descriptions of individuals' and groups' attacks directed against the first Portuguese who sailed down the coast in 1441 and organized systematic abductions and continuing with the depositions and memoirs of slavers well into the nineteenth century (Gomes 1959; Zurara 1960).¹⁰ Archeology is also of help. D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa's study of earthworks in the Birim Valley of southern Ghana revealed their role "as deterrent to small-scale attacks, petty slave-hunting forays and kidnappings" (1982, 73). E. J. Alagoa (1986) has detailed the manipulation of the environment, such as the diverting of rivers as well as the setting up of villages far from them in order to avoid the river traffic. Settlement patterns and distribution of population yield valuable clues. Hill settlements and regrouping—as well as the social cost of these defensive strategies in terms of epidemics and malnutrition—in the Middle Belt of Nigeria have been shown by Michael Mason (1969) and M. B. Gleave and R. M. Prothero (1971) as being a direct consequence of slave raiding. Following these early leads, several papers in this volume use archeology, demography, and settlement patterns to explore communities' responses.

The autobiographies, biographies, and interviews of Africans are another valuable source. The ransoming of captives is mentioned by Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, Ayuba Suleiman Diallo (Job ben Solomon), Mohammed Said, Muhammad Kaba, and Olaudah Equiano. Baquaqua also describes fortified towns. Ibrahim abd al-Rahman Barry refers to people who used to burn down the ships that traded with Futa Jallon, a provider of captives to the Atlantic market. Barry fought them, and, interestingly, they beat his army with guns, most likely acquired from the Europeans in exchange for captives (Griffin 1828a, 79). This represents another example of the ambiguity of some strategies, of how resistance and participation in the trade could overlap and thus of how the concept of strategies against the slave trade rather than resistance *per se* gives a more accurate image of the African reality of the time. Ayuba Suleiman Diallo refers to the Islamic enclave scheme that provided protection from enslavement; and Olaudah Equiano, whether he observed them himself or was informed by others, mentions young men's militias.

Much has been made of oral tradition's supposed lack of memory about the slave trade or of its purely allegorical nature. As recently commented, "Most of the oral traditions concerning the slave trade that have survived among African

and African-American communities cannot be used as empirical evidence because their narrative content is, by any modern standards, patently implausible.” (Austen 2001, 237). But several studies have shown that African oral tradition can be, on the contrary, quite prolific, detailed, and clinical rather than symbolic. Revealing information on a wide range of African practices and actions has come to light. Oral tradition pinpoints forgotten caravan routes, markets, and escapees’ villages; it has recorded—and used as a dating system—the spread of diseases and the rise of alcoholism due to the slave trade; it has kept the detailed memory of occult activities and practical exercises used to season the detainees before departure (Niane 1997; Guèye 2001; I. Barry 2001). Oral accounts reveal that in some barracoons, people were taught how they would have to sit and lie down in the slave ship they were going to board. We learn that on the Upper Guinea Coast, some Western slavers maintained occult centers, staffed by men they paid to “work on” the captives, in some cases with medicinal plants (Lefloche 2001). The objective was to kill any spirit of rebellion, to “tame” the detainees, and make them accept their fate. The existence of these centers shows the extent of the precautions taken to insure the slavers against rebellions: shackles and guns safeguarded the body, while the spirit was broken in. Oral tradition has also recorded the occurrence of attacks on caravans, often by members of the captives’ age groups to free them; the recourse to occult means to protect villages; the use of plant camouflage to escape the slavers; the rituals that made the escapees who fled to the freedom enclaves officially free men and women; and the strategy of banditism, which pushed some groups to kill indiscriminately anyone who ventured close to their territory so as to discourage any incursion (Guèye 2001, 20). The Diola of Casamance remember the ransoming of captives, the establishment of work teams for protection, the paths left intentionally overgrown, the armed groups that guarded the vulnerable points, the construction of fortresses, and the covering of roofs with dry leaves to detect the footsteps of would-be kidnappers (Baum 1999, 71). Making provision for the usual shortcomings of oral tradition, it is clear that certain communities deliberately passed on the memory of the slave trade through discursive narratives, drum language, rituals, songs, proverbs, place names, migration stories, genealogies, name changes, chieftaincies, and so on. In eastern Nigeria, the fact-based—not symbolic—memory of the slave trade and enslavement has remained fresh, as Carolyn A. Brown explores in this volume. Not surprisingly, it appears that the people whose areas were most closely associated with the trade as providers—such as Futa Jallon—are the less loquacious. Informants in southern Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Rio Pongo, and eastern Nigeria, by contrast, have either more to say or are more

willing to express it.¹¹ Without discounting its allegorical references — including among the Africans and their immediate descendants enslaved in America — it is obvious, as several chapters attest, that oral tradition, when adequately mined, is quite helpful when it comes to providing detailed information about the Africans' strategies against the slave trade.

DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

Several essays in this volume examine, in depth or in passing, the role of the environment in the strategic response of the Africans. Research in the lacustrine villages of Benin, conducted by Elisée Soumonni, shows that people took advantage of the only ecological feature available: they built small towns on stilts at the edge of or in the middle of lakes. This innovation enabled them to clearly see approaching raiders and to take the appropriate measures.

Thierno Bah examines the defensive strategies devised by populations who were raided for enslavement in the Sokoto Caliphate (Nigeria) and the Ottoman Empire. A landscape of mountains, caves, underground tunnels, and marshes was cleverly used for protection and reinforced with the building of ramparts, fortresses, and other architectural devices and the planting of poisonous and thorny trees and bushes. These refuge sites enabled people to maintain their existence, their cultures, and their religions.

Dennis Cordell explores parts of the same region, as well as today's Central African Republic. Cordell revisits the myth of the inevitability of capture and the invincibility of slave raiders to show that resistance was highly organized and that migration and the regrouping and fortifying of settlements proved effective in many cases. While the strategy of relocation, he stresses, did not confront slave raiders and slave traders straight on, it hit at the very core of their activity by depriving them of people to capture and sell.

Another line of defense against the domestic and international slave trades was the habitat itself. Adama Guèye illustrates how people used their habitat as a safeguard by reconfiguring the disposition, size, and architecture of their houses, villages, and capital cities. Guèye's archeological research and the oral traditions she collected in Kayor and Baol, Senegal, give indications on how the aristocracy utilized the existence of relationships of domination and submission for its own protection by imposing new forms of habitat and land occupancy whose functions were to shield the powerful.

Focusing on Wasulu and Masina, Martin A. Klein examines how these

societies evolved differently, in part to counter the devastation of the domestic slave trade, a pattern also observed in societies decimated by the Atlantic slave trade. Decentralized Wasulu made a concerted effort to erase all traces of social and professional hierarchy, a move meant to stimulate cohesion and facilitate resistance. Masina, on the contrary, developed a strong state based not only on the reinforcement of Islam as a liberating force but also on slave raiding, slave trading, and slave using that helped support its army and the state structure.

PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES

One strategy adopted throughout the continent to protect people from local enslavement or deportation was to redeem those who had been captured, as analyzed in my chapter. Redemption was a complex, difficult strategy that often failed and may appear, with hindsight, detrimental and controversial since it often deported two persons in the place of one; but it rested on the very human and universal rationale that people would protect their relatives from deportation and enslavement, even if it meant sacrificing strangers.

Protecting themselves and family members was also a major preoccupation of the African traders who were in business with Westerners. The mechanisms they used are analyzed by Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, who focus on the port of Old Calabar. Ethnic, cultural, political, and institutional mechanisms were essential to the stability of the trade because they attempted to ensure that the African partners of the European traders could not be “legally” deported.

OFFENSIVE STRATEGIES

Drawing on oral tradition, John N. Oriji examines a series of defensive and offensive strategies against slavers in Igboland. The mass mobilization of the populations and the various defensive and offensive strategies they designed, he contends, question the views of some scholars who argue that the slave trade was a normal commercial transaction, conducted in the hinterland largely by peaceful methods.

Focusing on the Balanta of Guinea-Bissau, Walter Hawthorne examines the defensive strategies of stateless and decentralized societies and their offensive movements that often consisted in raids on European vessels and in attacks on slave entrepôts. What enabled some groups to defend themselves and strike the

slavers was the production and sale of captives in order to obtain guns or the iron bars needed to forge powerful weapons and tools.

Ismail Rashid relates and analyzes a series of domestic slave revolts that took place on the Upper Guinea Coast and illustrates how domestic slavery and the Atlantic slave trade were closely linked. The author asserts that antislavery and anti-slave trade discourses manifested themselves *concretely* in the rebellions, the creation of maroon villages, and “the appropriations and creative interpretations of hegemonic ideas by the enslaved.” This analysis goes against the widely held notion that Africans did not challenge the institution of slavery.

Joseph E. Inikori presents the argument that political fragmentation facilitated the slave trade because small decentralized entities had difficulty protecting their members from capture and deportation. He notes that the European traders intervened in the political process to prevent the rise of the African centralized states that would have hampered their operations.

Using detailed data on slave ship voyages, David Richardson explores the unknown relationship of shipboard revolts to the structural characteristics of the slave trade and to the political economy of slavery within Africa. Richardson’s study shows that reasons for the higher incidence of revolts aboard ships leaving from a particular region are to be found not in European management failure but in African political and social realities.

As an epilogue, Carolyn Brown describes an oral history project that seeks to document the ways that communities in the Biafran hinterland remember the slave trade. Some interviews show how involvement in the trade is called upon to explain present misfortunes and how enslavement was sometimes a reaction to social resistance by women. This project also reveals that memories of resistance play an important role in the consciousness of these communities.

As they were faced with a multidimensional assault, Africans tested various approaches to protect themselves from deportation and enslavement and to attack the slave trade. They sought immediate answers in situations of emergency and, at the same time, they devised long-term solutions, developed innovative plans, pondered difficult alternatives, and made choices that twenty-first-century hindsight may judge questionable. They succeeded and they failed, but all along they engaged in valiant and heroic acts to survive and stay free.

NOTES

1. Estimates of the number of Africans deported and lost during the Middle Passage continue to produce controversy among scholars. Numbers proposed range from

about 12 million to 15.5 million. Curtin 1969, 1976; Eltis 1990, 2000; Eltis and Richardson 1997; Inikori 1976a,b, 1996; Inikori and Engerman 1992; Klein 1999; Lovejoy 1982, 1989; Richardson 1989; Eltis et al. 1999; Solow 2001.

2. For estimates on the numbers of Africans deported through the Saharan and Indian Ocean trades, see Austen 1979, 1989, 1992; Manning 1990.

3. In West Africa, people could be dispatched through the Atlantic or the Sahara, or be kept locally. In consequence, their strategies against displacement and enslavement applied to all the slave trades, not one in particular.

4. In 1785, M. de Lajaille saw, on one of Bissau's islands, one Constantine, a French sailor who had been enslaved for 28 years after his ship had been burnt down and the crew massacred.

5. For a tentative explanation of the reasons for this upsurge in violence against the slave trade, see David Richardson, this volume.

6. An account of the events published by Carl Bernhardt Wadström in *Essay on Colonization* presents a different story: "The buildings were all burnt, and the goods in them, amounting, it is said to the value of 12 or 1500 slaves (near 30,000 [pounds] ster.) were either destroyed or carried away" (88).

7. Indeed, as late as the 1920s, the U.S. Immigration service considered the Italians, the Jews and the Irish a separate, nonwhite race. For the formation of whiteness and integration into whiteness, see Roediger 1994, 1999; Ignatiev 1995.

8. For examples of these tales, see WPA 1986, 29, 76, 121, 145, 163, 164, 176, 184. For attempts at analyzing their meaning, see Piersen 1993, 35–52; Gomez 1998.

9. Research I conducted among West Africans in New York has revealed how widespread these accusations are. Many Africans believe that African Americans are expressing genuine feelings that reflect a deep wound, and although they generally reject the accusation, some showed understanding. However, others believe it is little more than a facade. People who resent the immigrants' success, they stress, or want to dissociate from the Africans because of the internalization of anti-African stereotypes use "you sold us" as a moral justification to their hostility, anti-immigrant feelings, or shame at being linked with Africa and the Africans. For discussion of this phenomenon, see Arthur, 2000, 83–85; Holtzman 2000, 15; Perry 1997, 250–51.

10. Also see the numerous testimonies gathered between 1789 and 1791 by the House of Commons in Lambert 1975–76.

11. For the reluctance to talk about the slave trade in Futa Jallon, see I. Barry 2001, 60–62.

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