

# Africa and the Africans in the Age of the Atlantic Slave Trade



# Pre-Existing Slave Trade

- Trans-Saharan trade routes (Red Sea and East African) had been trading slaves for centuries throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa
  - Mostly women: traded as concubines for harems; domestic servants
  - Some men: soldiers, field workers (salt production and gold mines), caravan laborers
- Europeans tapped into existing routes and supplies of slaves.
  - Used this to justify their own enslavement of Africans in New World
  - Mid 1400s: Europeans begin to utilize slaves in Europe as household servants
- Other forms of servitude used by Europeans:
  - Indentured servitude: Required to work for a master for “X” years in exchange for journey to European colony
  - Impressment: Taking men, usually other sailors, into a navy by force

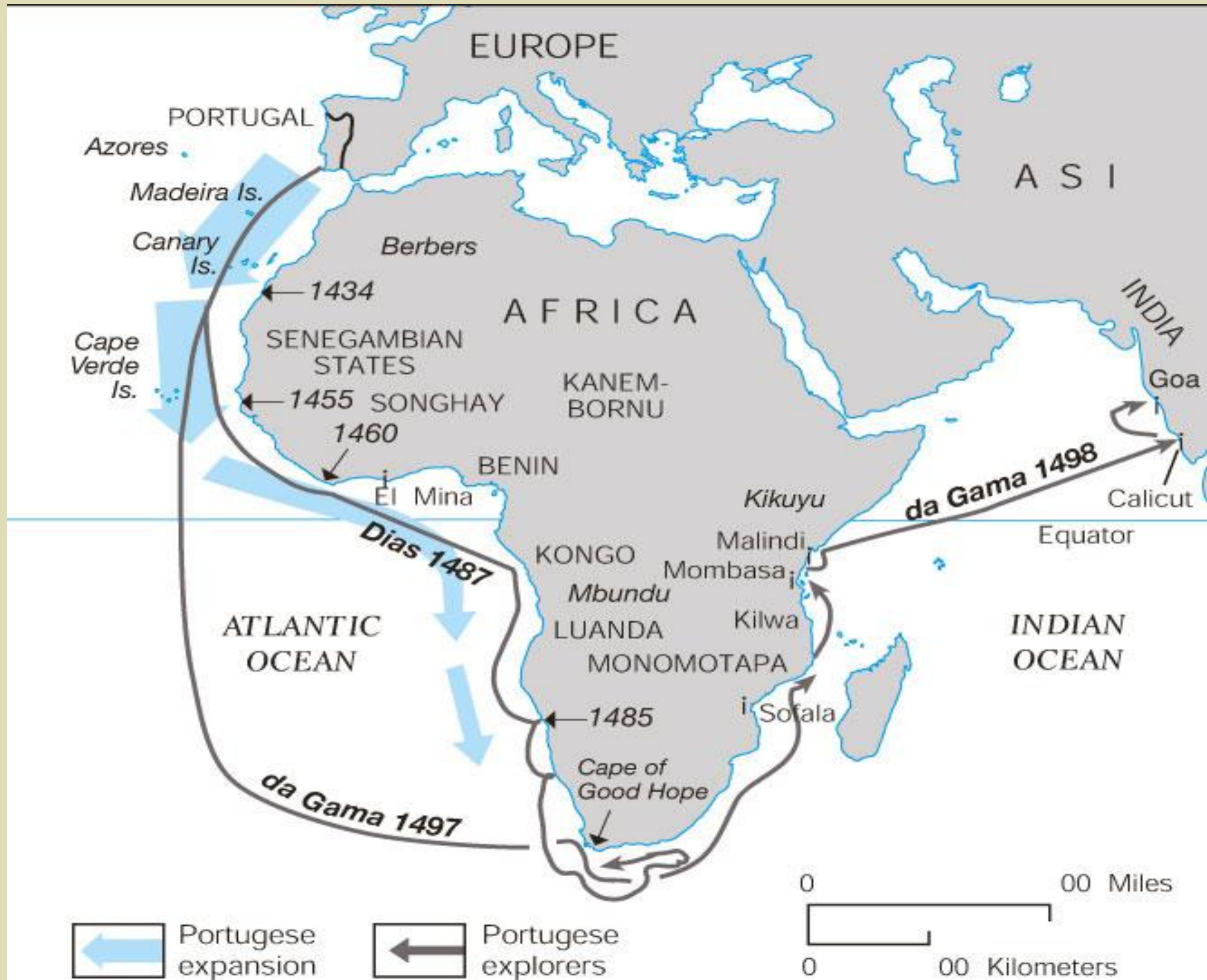
# Portuguese Exploration

- Portugal needed slaves for cash crop islands
  - Success with slaves prompts further participation by Portugal in slave trade
  - 1441: First slaves brought to Portugal from Africa
- Established outposts (factories) at El Mina, Luanda, Mozambique Island, Kilwa, Mombasa.
  - Also searching for gold, spices, pepper
- Had to work with consent of local African rulers
  - Impressed with organization of African kingdoms (Kongo, Benin, Mali, Songhay)
- Missionary efforts undertaken to convert African kingdoms
  - Nzinga Mvemba of Kongo made the region Christian with Portuguese support





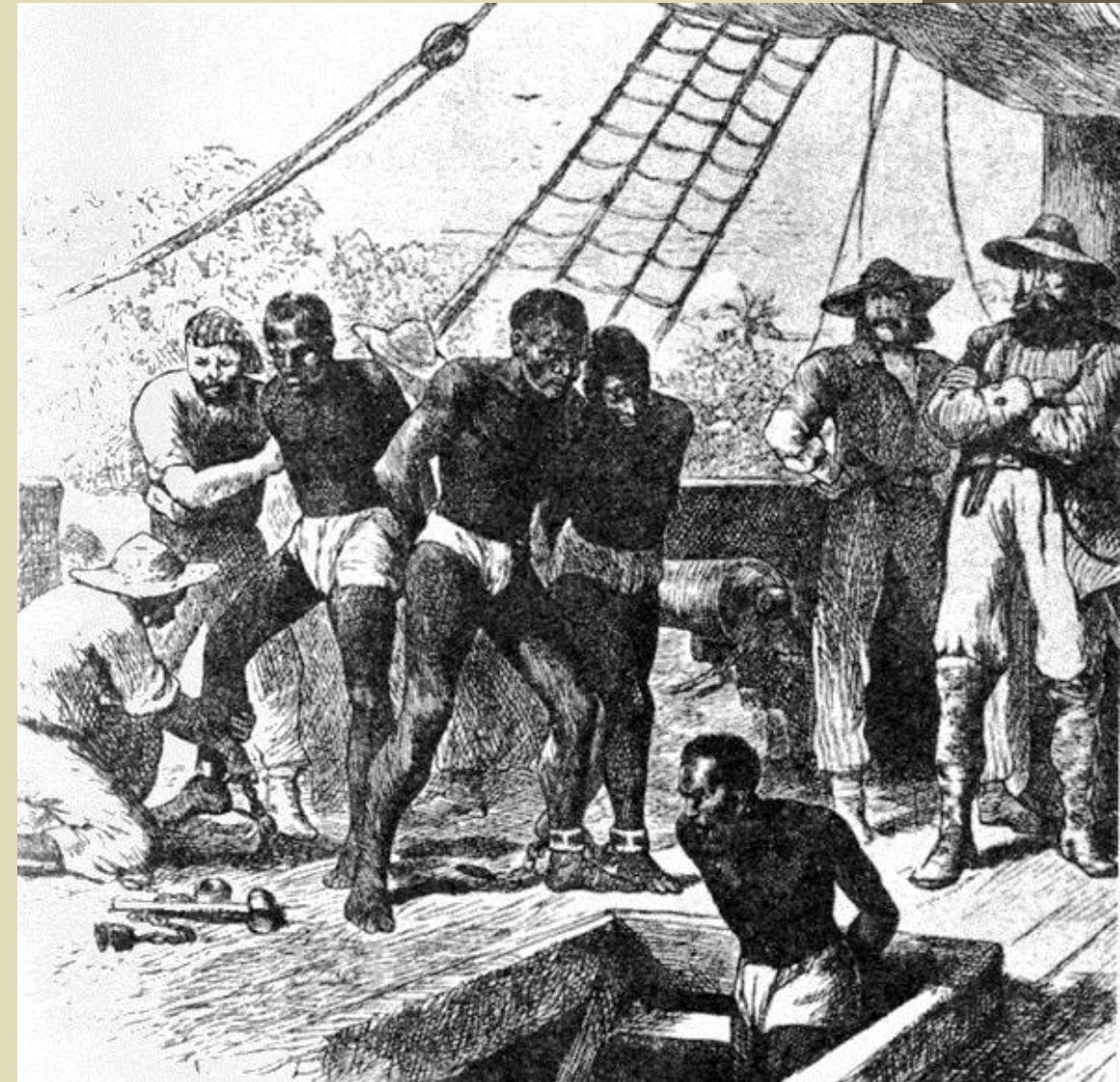
# Portuguese Expansion and Major African Kingdoms





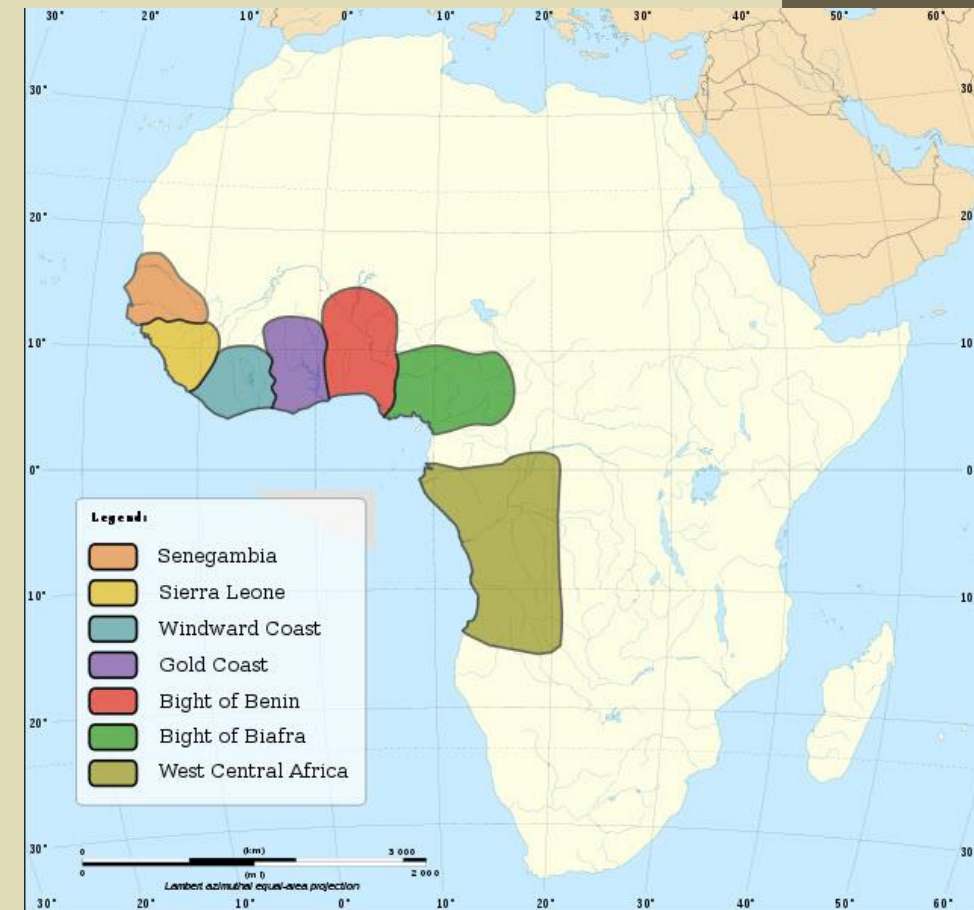
# Competition in the Slave Trade

- Slave trade became increasingly important as plantations (especially sugar and tobacco) demanded constant labor.
- By 1600: the slave trade predominated over all other kinds of commerce on African coast.
- Portugal controlled most of African coastal slave trade until 1637 when the Dutch seized El Mina in 1637
  - Portuguese no longer monopolize slave trade
- By 17th c., Dutch, English and French competed with the Portuguese.
- Trans-Saharan slave routes continued during this period.



# Obtaining Slaves

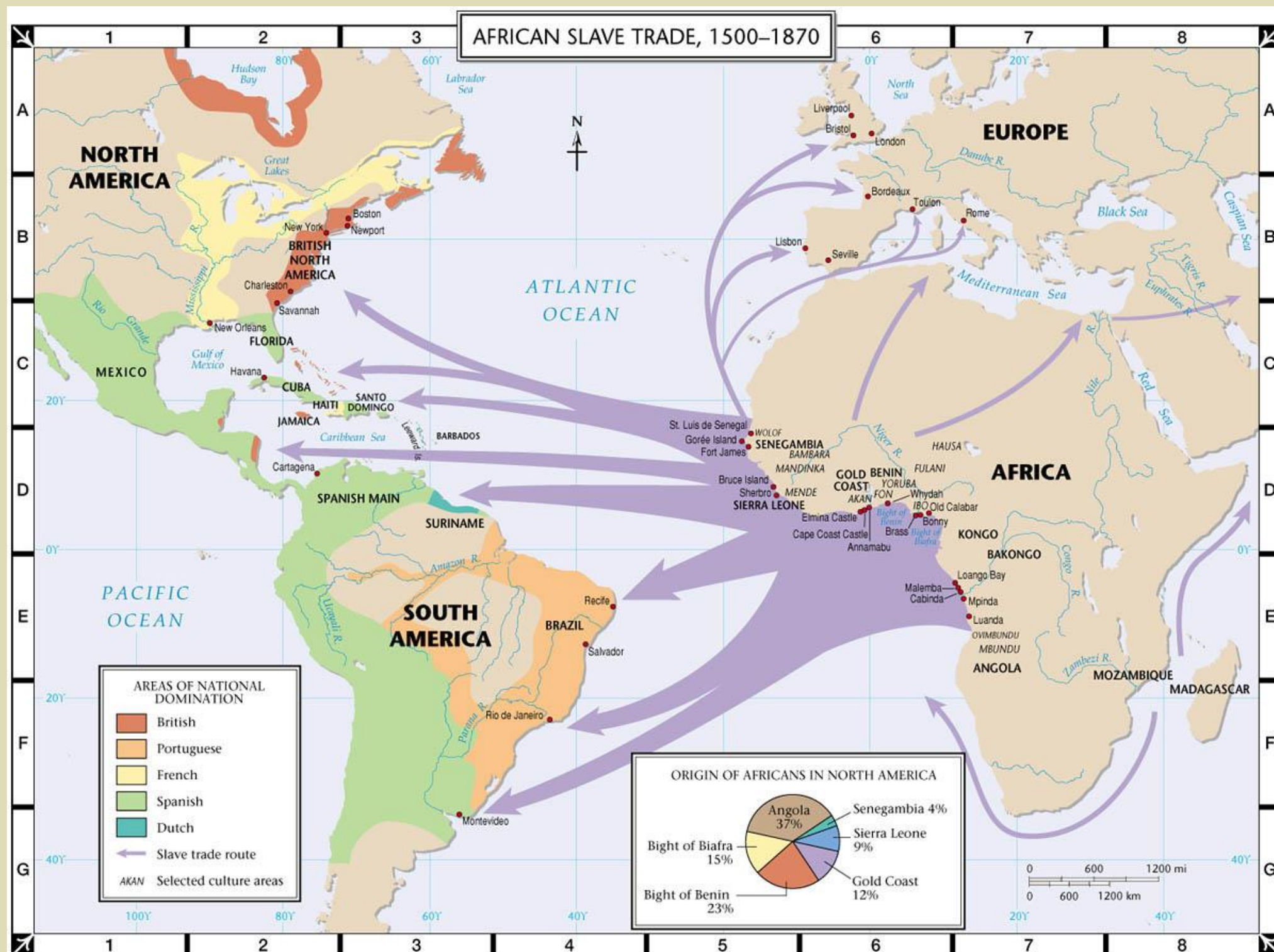
- Slaves were usually prisoners of war or captives from African slave raids against neighboring African kingdoms or villages.
  - African rulers generally did not enslave their own people, but enslaved neighboring peoples.
  - Once Europeans traded for Africans, slaves were forced to march to trading towns, and often separated from families
    - 25-33% died making this journey
- Initially, slaves were taken from the Senegambian region, but later were taken primarily from west central Africa.
  - Simultaneously, over 3 million slaves were taken by Muslim traders for Trans-Saharan trade.



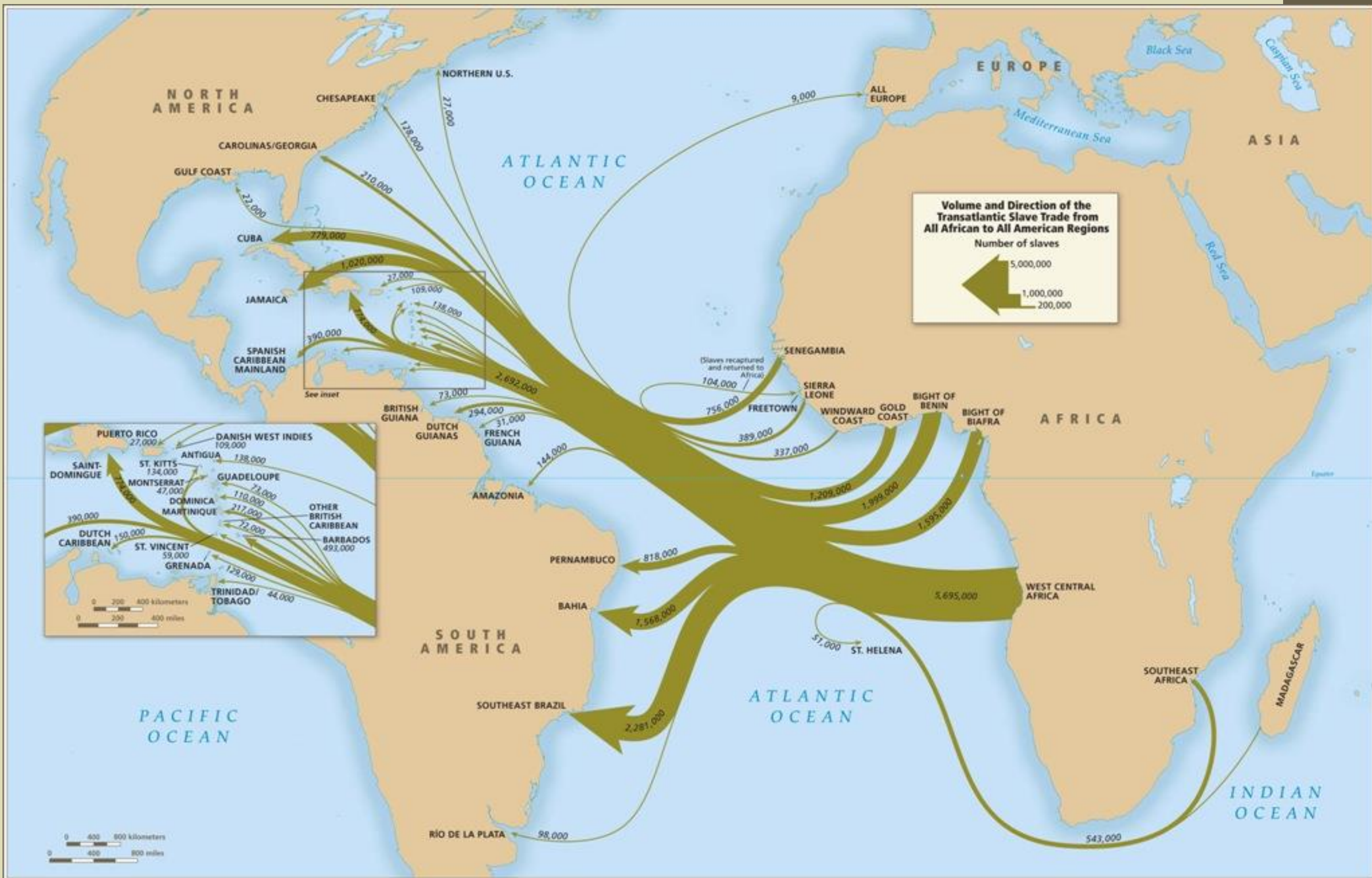


# African Diaspora

- Dispersion of Africans across globe; accomplished primarily by slave trade
  - African cultures adapt to the location in which they were placed
  - Retain unique African elements



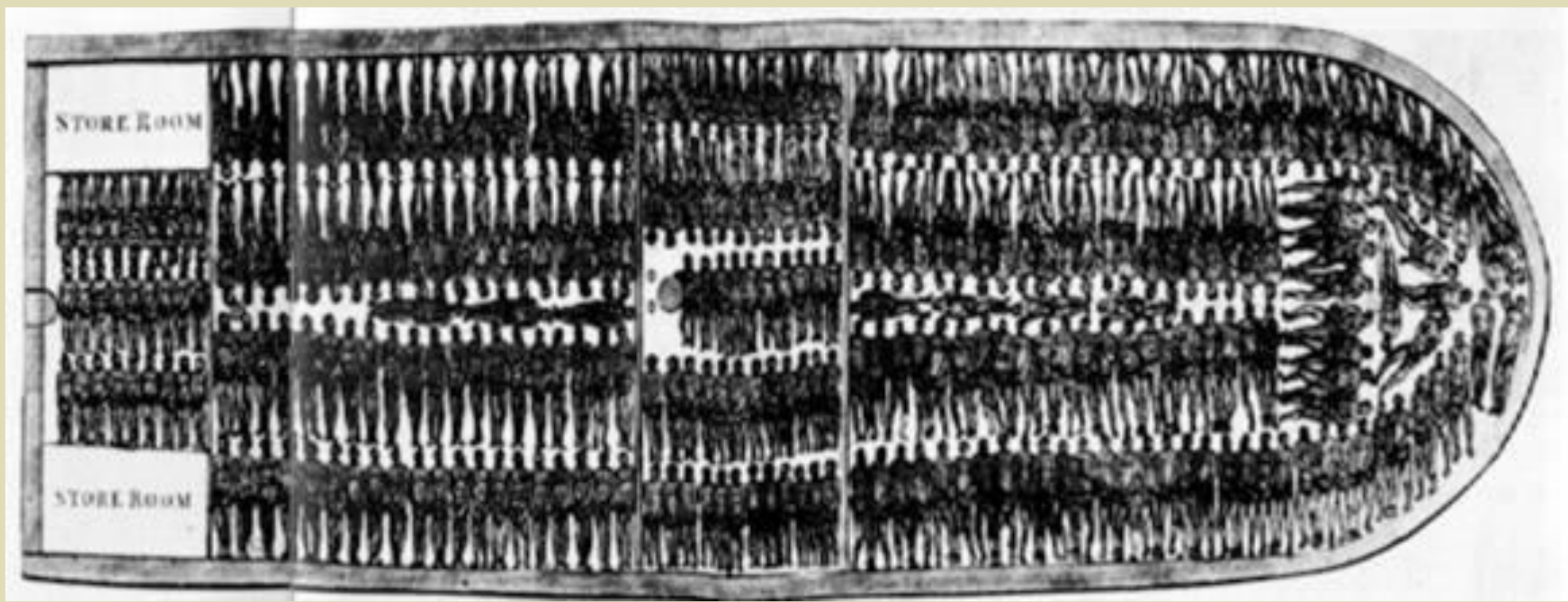






# Journey Across the Atlantic

- 1450-1850: 12 million Africans shipped across the Atlantic
  - Highest volume traded in 18<sup>th</sup> century
- Mortality rate on slave ships around 15-20%.
- Mortality was high and fertility was low
  - Only way to keep large numbers of slaves in the Americas was to import more and more.



# Journey Across the Atlantic, cont.

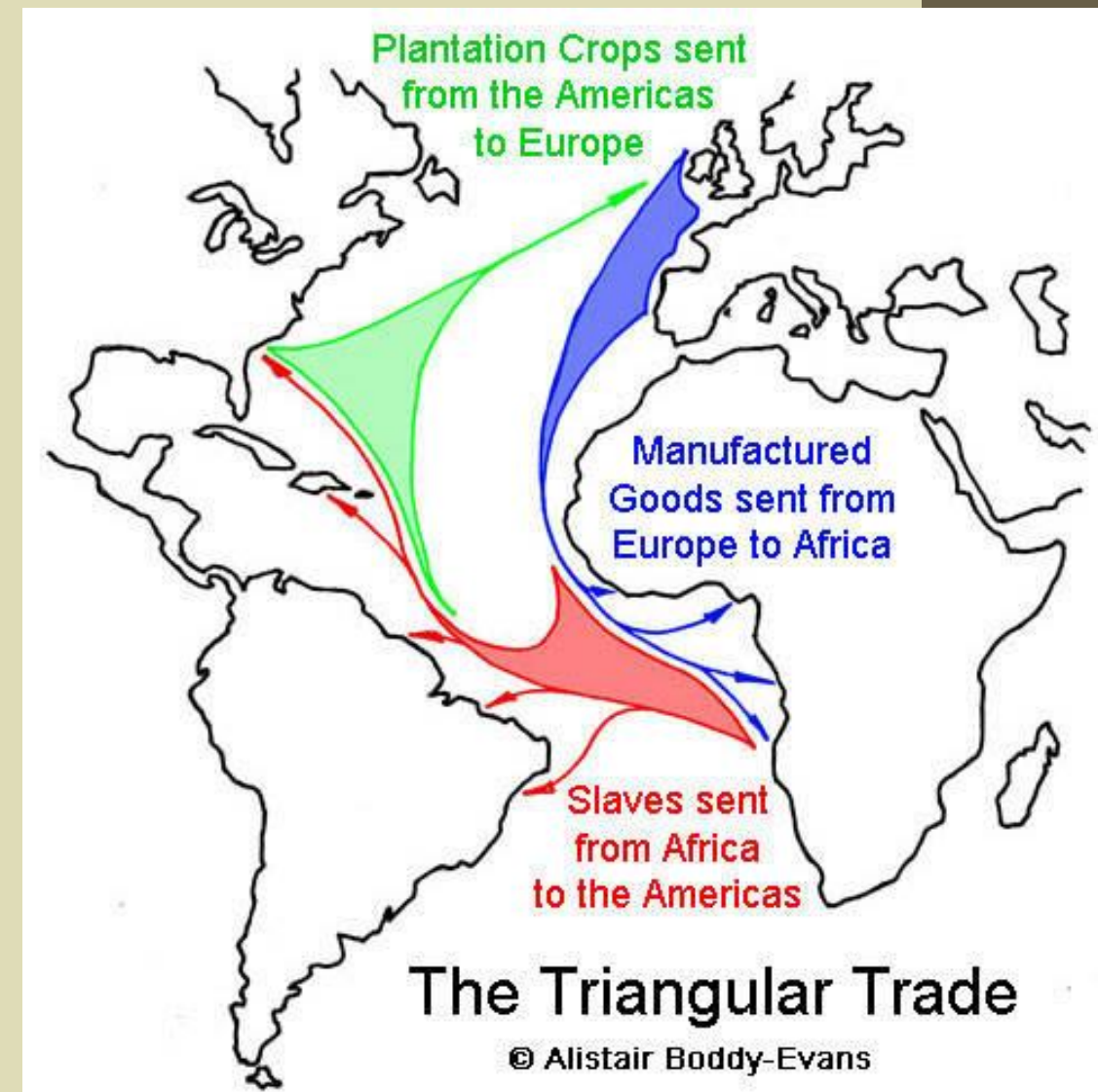


- Cargo sizes varied; sometimes as high as 800 slaves in one ship
- Middle Passage (slave voyage to America) was traumatic
  - Slaves were taken, branded by hot irons, shackled, abused throughout journey
  - Slave ships were dirty, unsanitary; many suffered from poor hygiene, dysentery, disease
    - Extreme anxiety, illness, suicide, resistance
  - When supplies ran low, the weakest slaves were thrown overboard



# Profitability of Trade

- Triangular Trade: made emerging capitalism central to Atlantic world
  - European manufactured goods (esp. guns) traded to Africans for slaves
  - Slaves transported from Africa to Americas (Middle Passage)
  - Slaves produce sugar, tobacco, molasses, rum; goods are traded to Europe
- Royal African Company
  - English wanted their own source of slaves for growing plantations in Caribbean colonies
  - Establish trade forts in Africa to obtain slaves







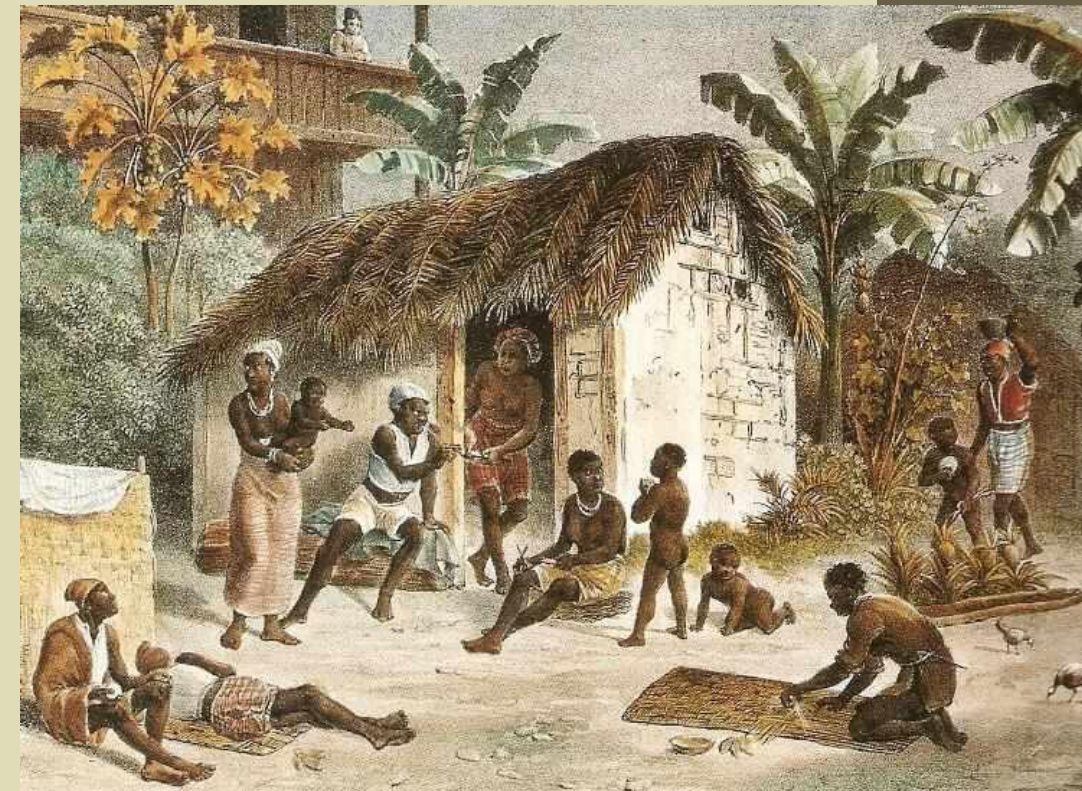
# Plantations

- Plantations became the focus of African slave life
- Atlantic slaves were mostly men and used for plantation labor.
  - Sugar plantations in Brazil and Caribbean
  - Cotton and tobacco fields in British North America
- Slaves performed many occupations: shop helpers, street vendors, household servants



# American Slave Societies

- Terminology
  - Saltwater slaves (African-born)
  - Creole slaves (American-born descendants of African slaves)
    - Some were mulattos as result of sexual exploitation of slave women
- Hierarchy of slaves created by slave-owners
  - Creoles and mulattos given more opportunities to acquire skilled jobs, such as house-hold servants
- Family formation was difficult for slaves as families may be separated at any time
  - Male to female ratio sometimes 3:1





# Religion and Rebellions

- African Religion in the Americas
  - Conversion to Christianity by Europeans
  - African religions continued despite attempts by slave owners to suppress them
    - Often Christianity and African religions (including Islam) were fused
    - Some African nobles and religious leaders still exercised authority within African community
- Rebellions
  - Palmares, 1605-1694: runaway slave kingdom in Brazil that resisted Portuguese and Dutch attempts to destroy it for 100 years
  - Suriname: plantation colony where large numbers of slaves ran off in 18<sup>th</sup> c. and waged war against captors



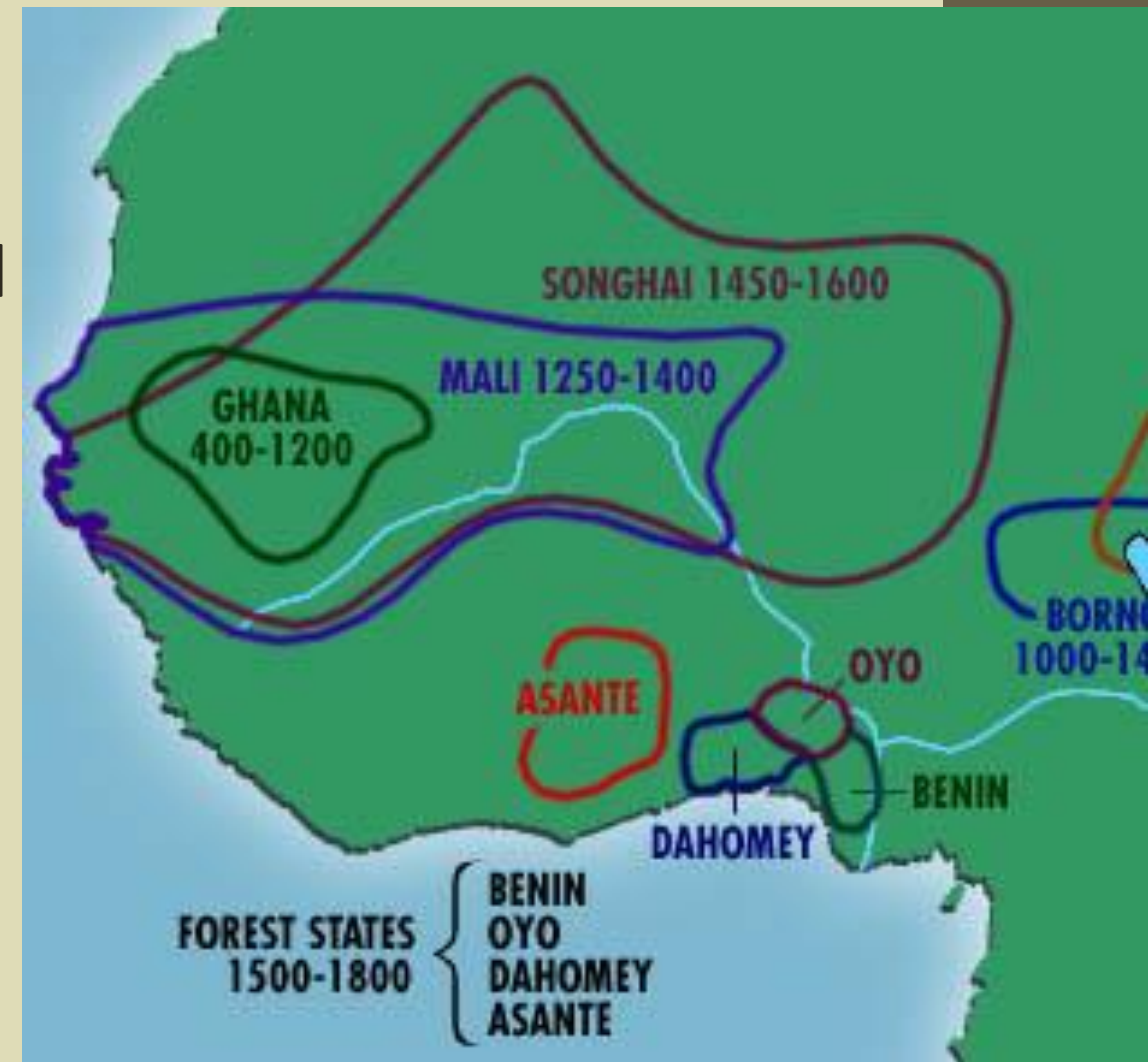
# Effects of Slave Trade on Africa

- Endless wars between African kingdoms and tribes promoted the importance of weaponry → sale of captive Africans was a way to obtain European gunnery
- Most powerful African communities quickly became those who were willing to trade slaves with Europeans
  - Obtained in exchange: firearms, iron, horses, cloth, tobacco
- Result: Gun and Slave Cycle
  - Increase firepower allowed African states to expand over neighbors, producing more slaves, which they traded for European guns
  - Result: unending warfare and disruption of societies through slave trade
- Europeans intensified African enslavement that had already existed.



# Asante and Dahomey

- Two major empires rose to prominence in the Slave Trade period.
- Asante: dominant state on Gold Coast
  - Osei Tutu: supreme civil and religious leader
  - Controlled gold-producing zones (1/3 of total trade) and traded slaves (2/3 of total trade)
  - Dominant slave trading state of Gold Coast until 1820s
- Dahomey
  - Gain access to firearms in 1720s: creates autocratic and brutal political regime based on obtainment of slaves to trade to Europeans
  - Over 1.8 million slaves exported



# East Africa

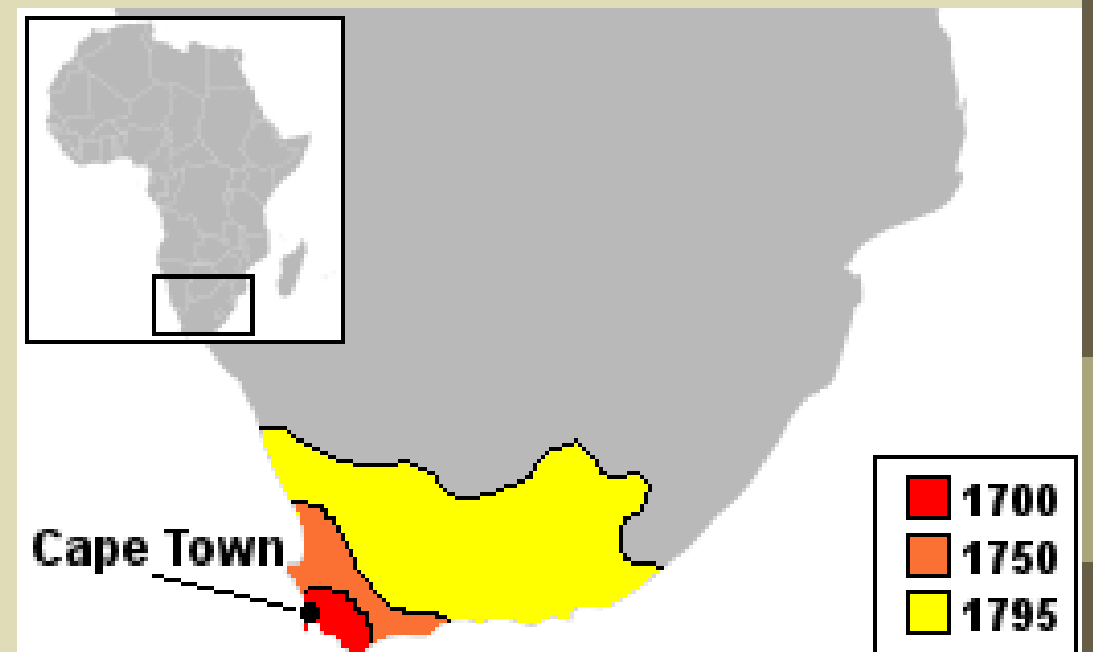
- Swahili trading cities continued commerce in Indian Ocean, adjusting to military presence of Portuguese and Ottoman Turks
- Plantation colonies quickly established along eastern coast of Africa and on Indian Ocean islands
- Trade brought ivory, gold, slaves for harems and households of Arabia
- Process of Islamization continues across Western Sudan
  - In some societies, Islam is still confined to upper classes
  - Other communities see Islam accepted at all levels





- 16th c.: Bantu-speaking peoples occupied eastern regions of southern Africa.
  - Agriculture, herding, work with iron and copper
- 1652: Cape of Good Hope established as a Dutch colony for ships sailing to Asia
  - Initially dependent on slave labor brought from Asia but quickly turn towards African labor
  - Competition and warfare with indigenous Africans
  - By 1800: 17,000 settlers, 26,000 slaves

# White Settlers and Africans in Southern Africa



# The Zulu Kingdom

- 1795: Great Britain seized Cape Colony from Dutch
- Zulu Kingdom
  - Shaka Zulu (rules 1816-1828): Nguni leader of Zulu Kingdom who began African unification process in 1818
  - Militaristic kingdom; absorbed neighbors to build resistance against British
- Mfecane (1815-1840): period of chaos amongst indigenous African communities in southern Africa; multiple civil wars and chaos between tribes
- Anglo-Zulu Wars of 1879: Battle between British Empire and Zulu Kingdom
  - Despite some Zulu wins (Isandlwana), the war resulted in a British victory and the end of the Zulu Kingdom's independence





# The Abolition of Slavery

- Economic, political and religious changes are occurring in Europe and the colonies that prompt changes in attitudes towards slavery.
- Opponents of slavery and brutality of trade appeared into the mid-18th century.
  - Response to Enlightenment thinkers
  - Slavery seen as backward, immoral, inhumane, cruel
- 1807: British slave trade was abolished
  - Abolitionists: John Wesley and William Wilberforce
- 1865: U.S. abolishes slavery with 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- 1888: Brazilian slave trade was abolished

