

Enslaving the millions: the African slave trade

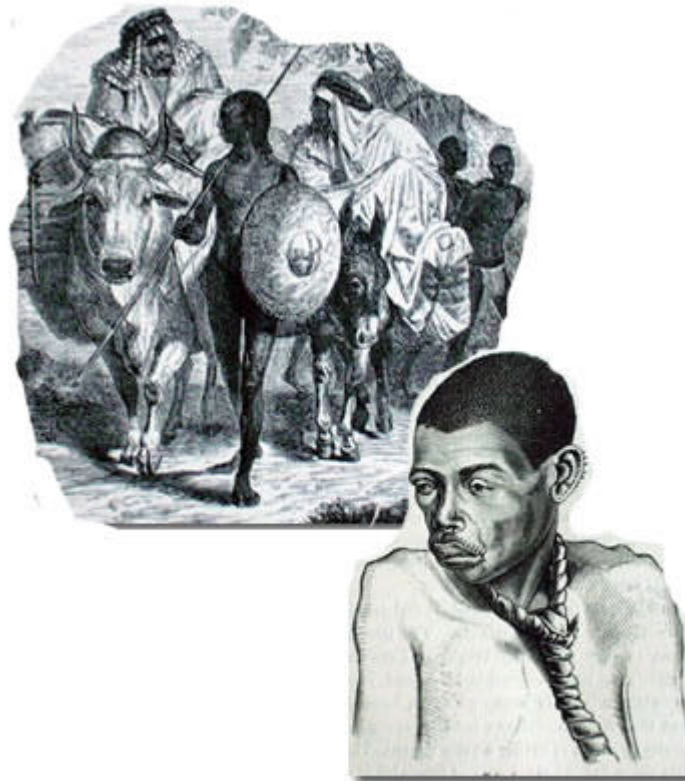
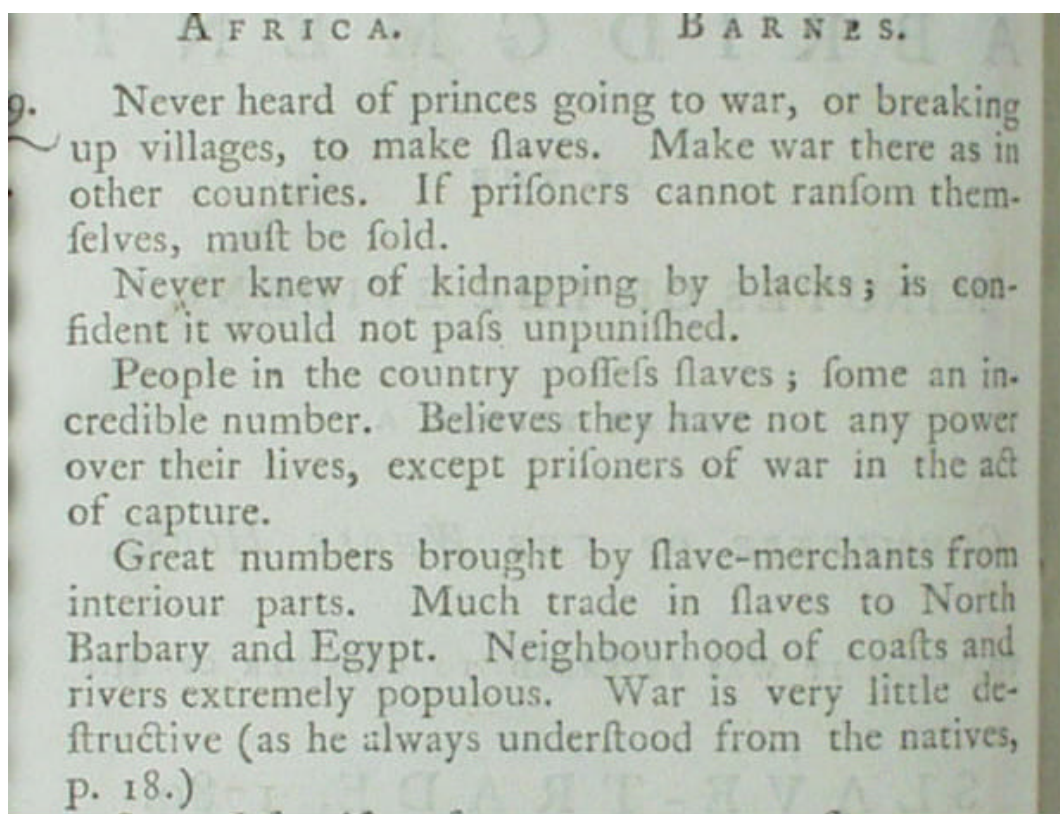
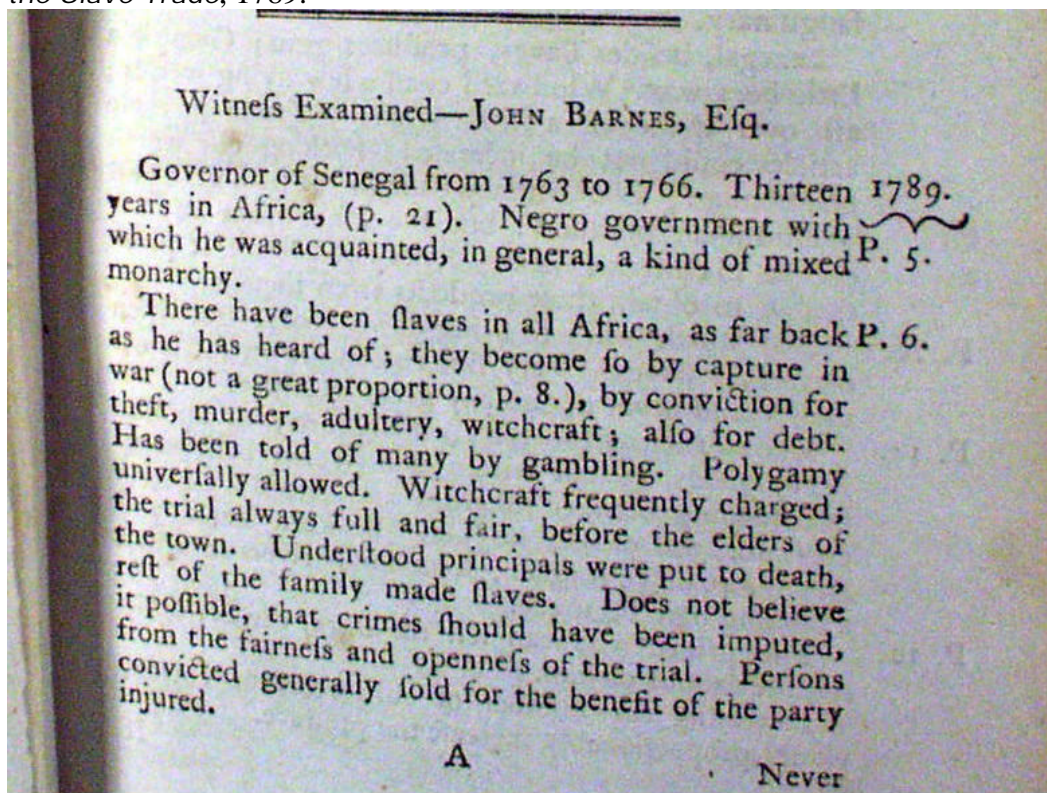


Image of Kordofan slave traders and a Babuckur slave.

Case Study 1: How did so many Africans become slaves?

Source 1. Evidence of John Barnes, ex-Governor of Senegal. Taken from *Abridgement of the Minutes of Evidence taken before a Committee considering the Slave Trade, 1789.*



Source 2. Extract describing how enslavement is used as a punishment.

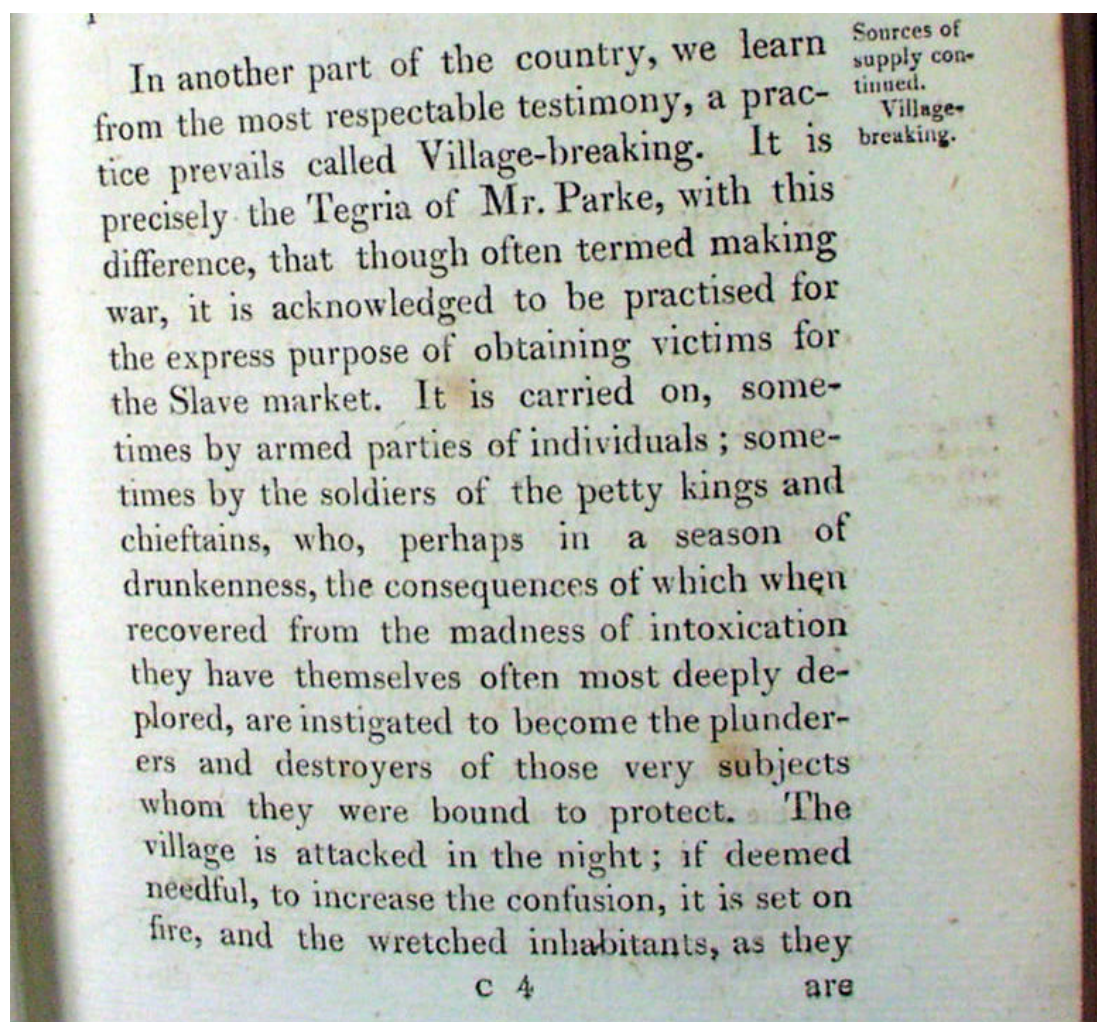
Taken from Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, London, 1788.

The third class consists of such, as have been said to be convicted of crimes. The Africans, before they were visited by the Europeans, punished their delinquents much in the same manner as other people in the same stage of society; but, since the introduction of the slave-trade, all crimes have been punished with slavery.

But this change, though it greatly increased the number of slaves, was found insufficient either to answer the demands of the Europeans, or the avarice of the African princes. They were reduced therefore to the difficulty of inventing *new* crimes, that a greater number of criminals might be made and sold. Nor did the princes stop here. *New distinctions* began to be made in crimes, that a still greater number of punishments might succeed. The offender, in the first stage or degree of his offence, now forfeits his own freedom; in the second, that of the male part of his family together with his own; in the third, the whole family suffer; and, in the fourth, the relations of the offender as far as they can be traced.

These refinements in judiciousness and in

Source 3. A description of 'village-breaking'. Taken from William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, addressed to the freeholders and other inhabitants of Yorkshire*, London, 1807.



are flying naked from the flames, are seized and carried into slavery. This practice, especially when conducted on a smaller scale, is called *panyaring*; for the practice has long been too general not to have created the necessity of an appropriate term. It is sometimes practised by Europeans, especially when the ships are passing along the coast, or when their boats, in going up the rivers, can seize their prey without observation; in short, whenever there is a convenient opportunity of carrying off the victims, and concealing the crime: and the unwillingness which the natives universally shew to venture into a ship of war, until they are convinced it is not a Slave ship, contrasted with the freedom and confidence with which they then come on board, is thus easily accounted for*. But these depredations are far more commonly perpetrated by the natives on each other; and on a larger or a smaller scale, according to the power and number of the assailants, and the resort of ships to the coast, it prevails so generally, as, throughout

the whole extent of Africa, to render person and property utterly insecure.

Source 4. Examples of Africans being kidnapped for the purpose of enslavement. Taken from Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, London, 1788.

conducted to the ship.
The next person that caught his attention was a pregnant woman. He wished to be made acquainted with the history of her situation; but, not knowing any language which she could understand, he applied to a black interpreter, of the name of Afou, who was then on board. By means of this man he was informed, that she had visited a friend in a neighbouring village, but that, returning in the night, she was seized by a party of ruffians, who sold her to a black trader the next day. That this trader sold her to another; and that, being passed through various hands, she came at length to the water-side, where she was sold to the ship.

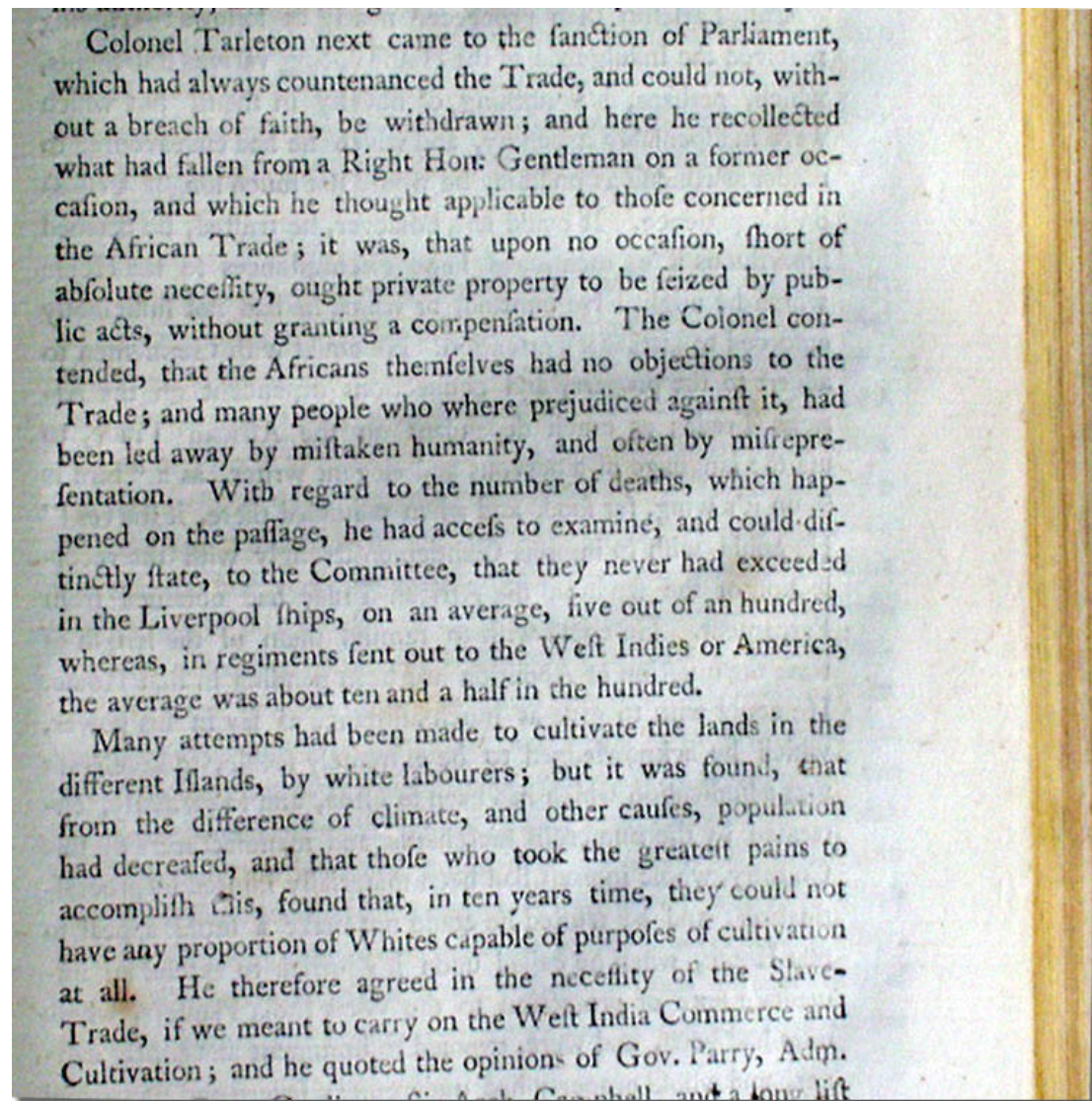
The third person, with whose history he became acquainted, was kidnapped in his own sight. A black trader

trader had invited a countryman to come and see him, and, when the repast was over, to see a ship. The countryman consented. He stepped into the trader's canoe, and was conducted to the side of the vessel. He was looking up to her with wonder and surprize, when two or three other traders, who were then on board, and in the secret, jumped instantly into the canoe, seized him, brought him up, and sold him. He bore his captivity with great fortitude and resignation.

... that could be traced

Case Study 2: Why were so many Africans enslaved?

Source 1. A defence of the slave trade by Colonel Tarleton. Taken from *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 1791.

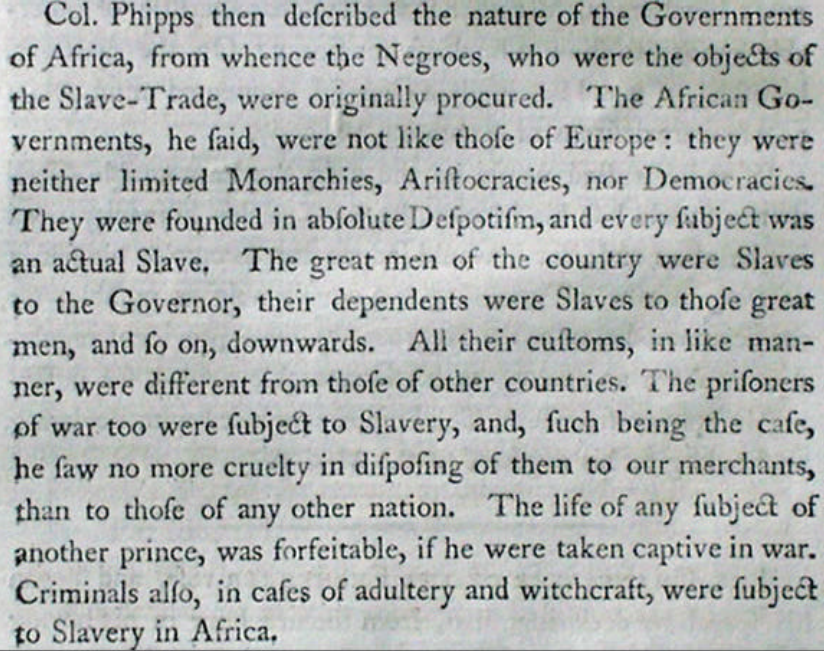


Colonel Tarleton next came to the sanction of Parliament, which had always countenanced the Trade, and could not, without a breach of faith, be withdrawn; and here he recollected what had fallen from a Right Hon. Gentleman on a former occasion, and which he thought applicable to those concerned in the African Trade; it was, that upon no occasion, short of absolute necessity, ought private property to be seized by public acts, without granting a compensation. The Colonel contended, that the Africans themselves had no objections to the Trade; and many people who were prejudiced against it, had been led away by mistaken humanity, and often by misrepresentation. With regard to the number of deaths, which happened on the passage, he had access to examine, and could distinctly state, to the Committee, that they never had exceeded in the Liverpool ships, on an average, five out of an hundred, whereas, in regiments sent out to the West Indies or America, the average was about ten and a half in the hundred.

Many attempts had been made to cultivate the lands in the different Islands, by white labourers; but it was found, that from the difference of climate, and other causes, population had decreased, and that those who took the greatest pains to accomplish this, found that, in ten years time, they could not have any proportion of Whites capable of purposes of cultivation at all. He therefore agreed in the necessity of the Slave-Trade, if we meant to carry on the West India Commerce and Cultivation; and he quoted the opinions of Gov. Parry, Adm.

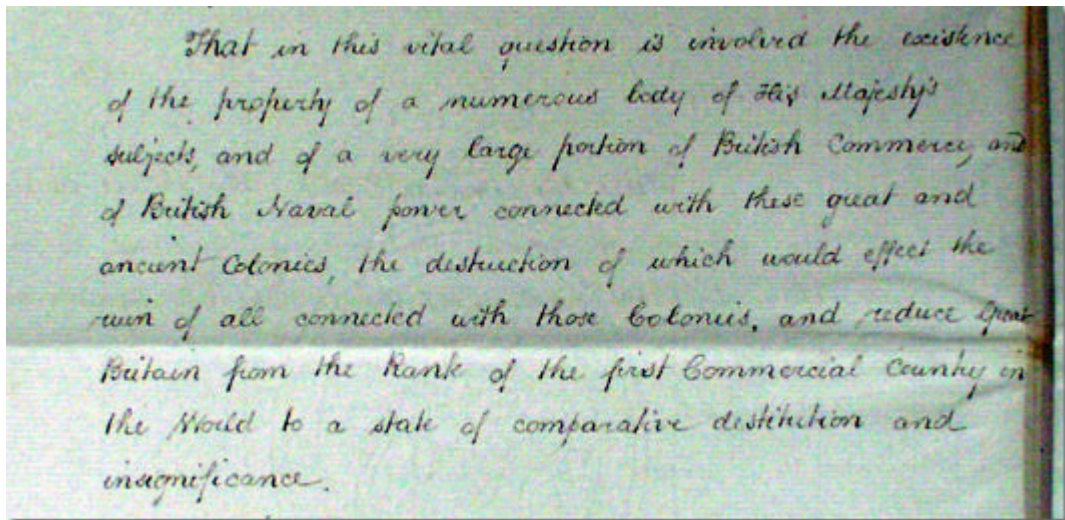
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Source 2. Colonel Phipps defends the Slave Trade. Taken from *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 1791



Col. Phipps then described the nature of the Governments of Africa, from whence the Negroes, who were the objects of the Slave-Trade, were originally procured. The African Governments, he said, were not like those of Europe: they were neither limited Monarchies, Aristocracies, nor Democracies. They were founded in absolute Despotism, and every subject was an actual Slave. The great men of the country were Slaves to the Governor, their dependents were Slaves to those great men, and so on, downwards. All their customs, in like manner, were different from those of other countries. The prisoners of war too were subject to Slavery, and, such being the case, he saw no more cruelty in disposing of them to our merchants, than to those of any other nation. The life of any subject of another prince, was forfeitable, if he were taken captive in war. Criminals also, in cases of adultery and witchcraft, were subject to Slavery in Africa.

Source 3. Extract from a list of resolutions sent to Earl Grey by West Indian planters on the subject of slavery, April 1831.



That in this vital question is involved the existence of the property of a numerous body of His Majesty's subjects, and of a very large portion of British Commerce, and of British Naval power connected with these great and ancient Colonies, the destruction of which would effect the ruin of all connected with those Colonies, and reduce Great Britain from the Rank of the first Commercial Country in the World to a state of comparative destitution and insignificance.