DARK BULLION

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion is a historical audio series project that explores the Atlantic slave trade. Rather than revisiting the well-documented horrors of the trade, the project examines lesser-known themes and contradictions. The series begins in mid-17th century in West Africa.
AI-generated voices proved instrumental in developing this particular project.

Research Note

The content of *Dark Bullion* is drawn from historical records, traveller accounts, and European enslavers' reports from the Atlantic Slave Trade period. Every effort has been made to ensure the narrative is as historically accurate as possible, while also taking into account conflicting interpretations among historians. The project does not aim to simplify the past but to present its complexity and contradictions with care.

Editorial Note

For accessibility, the pronunciation "Voodoo", more familiar to general audiences is used. However, in the context of West African religious traditions, the appropriate spellings are Vodou or Vodún.

*Please consult **Dark Bullion Study Guide** or **Dark Bullion Quick Reference** for further information:* calvinwalker.cc/dark-bullion

EPISODE DESCRIPTIONS

Dark Bullion EP01: **A PORTAL TO OBLIVION** *(14 minutes)*
This episode explores **Ouidah, Dahomey in 1685**, a key West African trading port deeply involved in the **Atlantic slave trade**. It details the dynamics between European powers like the **Royal African Company** and African rulers. Key aspects include the trade of captives for weapons, **the Tree of Oblivion ritual**, and the extensive involvement of various European empires in the trade... The episode also touches on the symbolic depiction of Black figures in European art.

Dark Bullion EP02: **WEST AFRICAN PEOPLES** *(10 minutes)*
This episode examines 17th-century **European stereotypes about West African peoples**, contrasting them with the rich diversity of cultures like the **Yoruba, Fon, and Mandé**... It details their political systems, economies, traditions, and clothing... The narrative highlights the **complex reality of West African kingdoms**, their internal trade networks, linguistic diversity, and varying degrees of resistance to the **Atlantic slave trade**...

Dark Bullion EP03: **CAPTIVE MARKETS** *(15 minutes)*
This episode investigates the developing mechanics of the **Atlantic slave trade**, emphasizing the immense suffering involved. It details methods of capture, including warfare, kidnappings, and false **accusations of witchcraft**... The episode explores the market **dynamics of assessing and trading captives**, the roles of African and European traders, and the evolution of violence... It also notes efforts by communities, like the **Tofino**, to evade enslavement.

Dark Bullion EP04: PAPER BULLS *(13 minutes)*
This episode explores how religion shaped the Atlantic slave trade. It traces the Church's reinterpretation of the "**Curse of Ham**" as justification for slavery, contrasts it with biblical passages against enslavement, and highlights the **complicity of popes** and the **Church of England**. Alongside, it examines African **spiritual traditions such as Vodou**, their survival in the Americas, and the Church of England's recent admission of its historic ties to slavery.

Dark Bullion EP05: WOMEN OF WEST AFRICA *(22 minutes)*
This episode examines the **complex and multifaceted roles of women** during the Atlantic slave trade period in West Africa. It profiles the **Mino (Agojié)**, Dahomey's all-female military regiment, and explores women's positions as **traders, political advisors, and warriors**.
It highlights three remarkable figures: **Queen Agontimé**, who rose from captivity to become a Candomblé priestess in Brazil; **Queen Nzinga Mbande** of Ndongo and Matamba, a diplomatic and military leader who resisted Portuguese colonization; and **Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita**, a religious visionary challenging both church authority and the slave trade.

The episode also details the unique practice of **woman-to-woman marriage in Dahomey**, emphasizing how women navigated survival, power, and legacy in a society where they could be simultaneously victims, traders, and architects of their own destinies.

Dark Bullion EP06: INVENTORY *(23 minutes)*
This episode examines the **barracoons** and other holding facilities where captives awaited transport across the Atlantic. It details the **systematic assessment**, categorization, and commodification of enslaved people through European traders' documentation practices. The episode draws on historical accounts like **Alexander Falconbridge's testimony** to reveal the clinical brutality of the sorting process, while exploring how the financial infrastructure developed for the slave trade (**ledgers, insurance policies, and banking systems**) would shape modern commerce. The episode also draws **parallels between gold mining and human extraction**, and contrasts European and African concepts of time.

Dark Bullion EP07: MEANWHILE IN EUROPE *(30 minutes)*
This episode examines how the Atlantic slave trade became democratized across 17th-century Europe, focusing on the **Dutch Republic**, **France**, and **Britain**. It details the evolution from royal monopolies to common investment, revealing how **ordinary citizens** :clerks, shopkeepers, artisans, and widows, purchased shares in slave trading companies.

The episode explores **Amsterdam's** financial innovations, **Nantes'** merchant dynasties, and **Liverpool's** dominance through supporting industries in **Birmingham** and **Manchester**. It highlights the economic infrastructure, institutional wealth, and Age of Enlightenment contradictions that enabled mass participation in the trade across all levels of European society.

Dark Bullion EP08: ATLANTIC - In 3 Parts *(56 minutes total)*
Drawing on Professor Bruce L. Mouser's transcription of **Captain Samuel Gamble**'s **logbook**, Episode 8 follows the **Sandown**'s slave trading voyage from the **Thames** to **Jamaica** across 1793 and 1794. Gamble's **meticulous record** of provisions, weather, deaths, and cargo counts reveals the trade not as an abstraction but as a daily practice of bureaucratic precision, carried out against a backdrop of war, disease, and relentless attrition. The episode traces the full circuit: preparation in **London**, months of stagnation on the **West African coast**, the **Middle Passage**, and the sale of human beings in **Kingston**.

— Part 1: Outward Bound *(18:09 minutes)*
January 1793. As **France declares war on Britain**, Captain **Samuel Gamble** takes command of the **Sandown** on the **Thames** and prepares for a slave trading voyage to the **West African coast**. Delayed by embargoes, stripped of crew by the **Royal Navy**, and

stalked by **French privateers**, the Sandown makes its way south past Madeira, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde, arriving at the Isles of Los in June, late, and already losing men to fever.

— Part 2: On The Coast *(18 minutes)*
Stranded on the **Rio Núñez**, Gamble waits for captives that are painfully slow to arrive. **Yellow fever, dysentery, and malaria** tear through his crew. The young seamen die one after another, buried, their clothes auctioned, their trunks nailed shut. The French privateer Renaud prowls the coast. The **Fula people**, who control the slave paths from the interior, halt supply in a price dispute. Month after month, the climate, disease, and the mechanics of the trade grind everyone down, crew and captives alike.

— Part 3: The Crossing *(20:30 minutes)*
The **captives are finally** loaded, 250 in all, plus a girl given as a "present." But deaths have already begun before the Sandown leaves African waters. An **insurrection** costs ten lives. The **Middle Passage** brings leaking water casks, sickness, and a dwindling crew. At **Barbados**, most of the remaining seamen desert. Gamble slips out of port ahead of the courts and limps into **Kingston** with six men managing 226 captives. The **market is glutted**. Gamble, broken by gout and fever, sells his cargo, secures passage home, and sails for England. His mission is, as he sees it, accomplished, and apparently permitted by God.

EP01: A PORTAL TO OBLIVION

DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion EP01: **A PORTAL TO OBLIVION** *(14 minutes)*
This episode explores **Ouidah, Dahomey in 1685**, a key West African trading port deeply involved in the **Atlantic slave trade**. It details the dynamics between European powers like the **Royal African Company** and African rulers. Key aspects include the trade of captives for weapons, **the Tree of Oblivion ritual**, and the extensive involvement of various European empires in the trade... The episode also touches on the symbolic depiction of Black figures in European art.

[00:00:11.980] - Akissowa

His remembrance shall perish from the Earth, and he shall have no name in the street.

[00:00:27.720] - Harriet

Episode 1: A portal to oblivion.
October, 1685. We're in **Ouidah**, in **Dahomey**, on the Coast of West Africa. The birthplace of Vodou. The **Kingdom of Dahomey**, covers only about 10,000 square kilometers, running down from Abomey in the north, home of the Royal Palace, to the South, where the Port of Ouidah greets the black Atlantic Ocean. The north of Dahomey borders onto future Burkina Faso, the west onto future Ghana, and the east onto future Nigeria.

[00:01:31.780] - Christopher

Strategic trading ports-wise, Liverpool in England is 6-8 weeks away, depending on wind conditions, the number of stops, and perils of the sea. Kingston, Jamaica, and Havana, Cuba, in the Caribbean, are 5-7 weeks away, and New Port, Rhode Island, in the Americas, is 7-9 weeks away.

[00:01:57.690] - Harriet

Ouidah’s location and its trade networks makes it an ideal commercial center. It's well known for fish, salt, and sundry commodities. What will really put Ouidah on the map, though, is its infamous involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.

[00:02:14.940] - Christopher

The three European slave trading powers, **Portugal**, **England**, and **France**, are firmly established in Ouidah, seemingly maintaining amiable, although extremely complex working relations with the African rulers, but power struggles among the Europeans are weakening their overall authority.

[00:02:36.940] - Harriet

At the market square in Ouidah.

[00:02:39.320] - Akissowa

While the women are selling their wares, captives of war and slave raids are being auctioned and traded, some for cowry shells, some for rum and tobacco, many for weapons.

[00:02:53.450] - Christopher

These days, 15 young male Africans can be acquired in exchange for a solid European cannon.

[00:03:07.830] - Akissowa

The Europeans have clearly identified the twofold benefit as they see it, of trading weapons with Africa.

[00:03:18.080] - Harriet

First, an instant supply of enslaved people. *Divide*.
Second, arming warring tribes to fight more efficiently. *Control*.
Thereby guaranteeing an endless stream of future captives for their trade. *Conquer*.

[00:03:35.220] - Akissowa

The world powers will continue interfering in Africa, supplying more efficient weapons to warring communities, to divide, to control, to conquer. And when the slavery abolition period finally begins, they will take possession of the African continent. They will slice it up and colonize it, prolonging enslavement under a more acceptable name for a further 150 years.

[00:04:09.690] - Christopher

Back here in the market square in Ouidah, some of these poor captives are destined for a swift and perhaps merciful end. For according to Dahomey tradition, a significant number of captives are required to be sacrificed, ceremoniously beheaded in honor of the ancestors. This auction square will, some 30 years hence, become the site of the Portuguese Fort, **o Forte de São João Baptista de Ajudá**, built in collaboration with the king of Ouidah.

[00:04:54.840] - Akissowa

And on this same spot in the 1960s, the Ouidah Museum of History, dedicated to exploring the legacy of enslavement, will aptly be established at the Fort.

[00:05:09.430] - Harriet

Back to the captives. They will be marched, manacled together the 4 kilometers from the square to the barracoon, in readiness to be canoed out to the waiting slave ship. But first, they are made to participate in a Vodou ritual.

[00:05:28.840] - Akissowa

They are forced to circle around a giant tree with its branches like arms reaching up into the skies. Nine times around the tree for men and seven for women. The enslavers call it the tree of forgetfulness. The tree. The tree of oblivion.

[00:05:55.620] - Christopher

The intention of this outlandish ritual is to erase all memory of their family, all memory of their identity and their homeland, thereby rebranding them, as it were.

[00:06:10.650] - Akissowa

And as the captives stagger in circles around the tree, it appears to steal their memories, drawing them in through its bark, up through its roots, into its very core. The tree has become a vault.

[00:06:28.300] - Harriet

Of memories and mementos. And after death, the captive's amnesiac spirits are condemned to wander for eternity, lest they try to return to Dahomey to wreak vengeance on those who sold them. If the people of Ouidah could gaze into the future, this is what they would see. On the second day of June, in **the year 2024**, war. The Tree of Oblivion still stands unbowed. Night swiftly falls on Ouidah, and in the darkness comes the sudden spatter of raindrops on the leaves, and down crashes the rain. The caked Earth soon turns to dark, swirling mud.

[00:07:30.490] - Christopher

An angry, relentless river of rain pouring down on Ouidah throughout the night.

[00:07:36.650] - Akissowa

As though summoned by Hevioso, the Vodou god of thunder, lightning, and rain, to manifest his wrath.

[00:07:51.140] - Harriet

And the next morning, the tree will be found, the tree of oblivion, uprooted, torn asunder, and rent in twain.

[00:08:04.080] - Christopher

“This is no ordinary fall”, will declare a town official.

[00:08:08.180] - Harriet

He will say, “The tree literally split in two, revealing male and female parts”. And a local Vodou religious dignitary, will still be in shock 10 days after the dramatic end of the tree of Oblivion (which had been replanted in the twentieth century to commemorate the original tree ... but no less sacred).

[00:08:23.790] - Christopher

He will describe it as an incomprehensible phenomenon because the tree was supposed to live forever.

[00:08:38.350] - Harriet

We return to 1685.

[00:08:44.290] - Akissowa

The slave ship, named, ironically, **the Prosperous**, awaits at the Port. It is commanded by slave trader captain, Henry Clarke, on behalf of the Royal African Company.

[00:08:58.000] - Christopher

The Royal African Company. They will hold the distinction of having shipped the greatest number of enslaved Africans to the Americas during the Atlantic slave trade.

[00:09:11.130] - Harriet

You're probably wondering why such God-fearing people as the British Royal family haven't stepped in and put a stop to this, this abhorrence. Well, the company's governor and chief stockholder happens to be none other than...

[00:09:25.640] - Christopher

King James, the second of England.

[00:09:31.270] - Harriet

In his prior role as the **Duke of York**, he had many enslaved people branded with the initials D-O-Y. However, now as the **King of England**, it might not be quite as acceptable to brand people with one's initials.

[00:09:46.600] - Christopher

No, perhaps not.

[00:09:51.870] - Akissowa

Dark, El Dorado. Black, Bullion.
In the mid-1600s, the **Royal African Company** set up along the West Coast of Africa, better known to them as the Gold and Slave Coasts, to trade in both commodities.
Dark Bullion.
They installed six forts on the Gold Coast and a post in Ouidah.
Dark Black Bullion.
In 30 years, their income from slave trading has exceeded gold.

[00:10:34.260] - Harriet

At this stage of the slave trade, British slave owners back home in England are seemingly blissfully unaware of the extent of the atrocities perpetrated by their king on on their behalf.

[00:10:47.770] - Christopher

While King James II strengthens England's grip on the slave trade, other major European powers are doing the same.

[00:10:56.020] - Harriet

France: King Louis XIV establishes the **Code Noir**, the Black Code, creating regulations for slavery in the French Caribbean. In the interest of maintaining control and attempting to discourage uprisings, the code authorizes slave owners to punish or mutilate their human chattel.

[00:11:17.930] - Christopher

It also defines enslaved people as movable property. Other European empires present in the West African trade.
Spain: they outsource slave trading to English and Portuguese traders, allowing them to sell Africans in the Spanish Caribbean.
Portugal: they transport captives from mainland West Africa to slave hubs in Sao Tomé, a volcanic island, some 500 kilometers away, and Cape Verde, further afield before shipping them to Brazil.

[00:12:01.580] - Christopher

The Dutch Republic: From their forts along the Gold Coast, they export captives to their slave hub in Curaçao. **Denmark**, **Sweden**, **Brandenburg**, **Prussia**, all partners in crime. They set up slave trading companies and forts along the Gold Coast, from where they ship captives to plantations in the Caribbean.

[00:12:24.670] - Harriet

In fact, it's simpler to mention the European countries not involved in the trade. The slave rush is truly underway… Meanwhile, back in Europe, a noble woman, **Françoise Marie de**

Bourbon, the youngest illegitimate daughter of **King Louis XIV**, in sumptuous attire, stands outdoors near a fountain. She is dressed in a rich green and gold gown with elaborate lace and embroidery and a sash draped across her body. She gazes outward with a poised and serene expression, her left hand resting on the head of the young page boy beside her.

[00:13:05.590] - Harriet

The page boy, dressed in an ornate pink and gold outfit, carries a small basket of flowers and looks up at the noblewoman admiringly. His posture and placement in the composition, establishing a physical as well as a racial hierarchy, suggest a subservient role. Typical of how black servants are often depicted in European aristocratic portraits of the period, such as the one we are looking at now. The presence of black figures asserts the wealth, status, global power, and exoticism of the sitter.

[00:13:54.280] - Christopher

These paintings quite literally reframe the reality of child slaves during the slave trade. *Gilt*, yet lacking of guilt.

EP02 : WEST AFRICAN PEOPLES

DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion EP02: **WEST AFRICAN PEOPLES** *(10 minutes)*

This episode examines 17th-century **European stereotypes about West African peoples**, contrasting them with the rich diversity of cultures like the **Yoruba, Fon, and Mandé**... It details their political systems, economies, traditions, and clothing... The narrative highlights the **complex reality of West African kingdoms**, their internal trade networks, linguistic diversity, and varying degrees of resistance to the **Atlantic slave trade**…

[00:00:19.230] - Harriet

The weeks, months, necessary to cover the distances between continents in the 17th century make Africa and the Americas seem, to some European minds, like parallel worlds. This perhaps contributes to the thinking that African people are limited to traders and captives and very little else, with certainly no culture or acceptable religion. European slave traders now feel they have identified or rather stereotyped, the traits and temperaments of enslaved people captured from different parts of Africa. This, in turn, influences their market value.

[00:01:12.280] - Christopher

For instance, the **Yoruba people**.

[00:01:15.830] - Harriet

Perceived traits.

[00:01:18.150] - Christopher

Religious, spiritual, somewhat resistant, but generally more compliant than other slaves.

[00:01:26.130] - Harriet

Usage.

[00:01:27.410] - Christopher

A variety of tasks, including field work and skilled labor.

[00:01:36.670] - Harriet

The Coromantee people from the Gold Coast, which becomes Ghana.

[00:01:41.620] - Christopher

Perceived traits.

[00:01:43.080] - Harriet

Considered strong, brave, and resilient. However, they are rebellious and prone to resistance and uprisings.
Usage: Hard labor due to their perceived physical strength for which planters also fear them. They require harsher punishments and efforts to divide and conquer them to prevent troublemaking.

[00:02:05.560] - Christopher

The **Igbo people**: perceived traits more submissive and less physically strong.

[00:02:10.730] - Harriet

Less physically strong, prone to melancholy and suicide.

[00:02:14.960] - Christopher

Usage because of their perceived docility, preferred for domestic work or non-arduous tasks. However-

[00:02:22.060] - Harriet

"However, their high rate of suicide is a real problem."

[00:02:26.130] - Christopher

Complain the European slave traders.

[00:02:35.390] - Christopher

We know that the European traders apply their own grossly simplified ethnic categorizations, but we don't know who the peoples of West Africa really are.

[00:02:53.440] - Harriet

In reality, West Africa in the 17th century is a vast, complex region of Kingdoms, city States and profound traditions.

[00:03:03.290] - Christopher

The Yoruba, for example, are a cultural and linguistic group whose heartland lies in present day Southwestern Nigeria, with communities extending into Benin and Togo. They speak

dialects of the Yoruba language with highly developed oral traditions. Their divination systems and complex art forms are already profoundly entrenched.

[00:03:30.800] - Akissowa

The Yoruba are not a single tribe, but rather a network of closely related policies, bound by language, spiritual belief, and cultural heritage.

[00:03:44.590] - Harriet

Before the Atlantic slave trade reaches its peak, these societies thrive, each with its own political systems, economies, and beliefs.

[00:04:07.220] - Christopher

We see many images by Dutch, Portuguese, and English traders depicting Africans, but we have to wonder how accurate they are.

[00:04:17.910] - Harriet

These depictions present exaggerated features based on stereotypes where the enslaved are naked or minimally dressed to justify their subjugation. Indigenous art and sculpture like Ife Bronzes, Akan Gold weights, and Benin Plaques offer more precise representations of hairstyles and adornments.

[00:04:47.770] - Christopher

And what about clothing?

[00:04:50.090] - Harriet

That depends on status, occasion, and trade access. For instance, coastal elites have access to imported textiles, while inland groups rely on local weaving traditions.

[00:05:04.670] - Christopher

We mostly hear about the **Fon people**.

[00:05:07.310] - Harriet

They are from Dahomey in the Southernmost part of West Africa. They speak Fon. Their traders, warriors, and rulers of emerging coastal Kingdoms. Their clothing, indigo-dyed cotton wraps, embroidered tunics for the elite, gold jewelry, cowry shells woven into hair.

[00:05:36.390] - Christopher

And what about further north?

[00:05:39.290] - Harriet

To the north, we have **the Mandé peoples**, which includes the **Mandingo**, descendants of the Mali Empire. They are merchants, blacksmiths, and scholars, spreading Islam and trade across West Africa. The Mandé mostly wear long tunics and silver jewelry.

[00:06:01.480] - Christopher

The Mandé are prominent in the gold and kola nut trade and resist large-scale European enslavement longer than many other communities. By now, it should be clear that there is a fair amount of gold in the region.

[00:06:17.780] - Harriet

Which was one of the key attractions for the Europeans, the Portuguese in particular, in the first place.

[00:06:30.890] - Christopher

And what about the Wolof and Serer ethnic groups?

[00:06:37.710] - Harriet

These groups control the West coastal areas of Senegambia, present day Senegal, and the Gambia. They're farmers, warriors, and fishermen, balancing Islamic influences with ancestral traditions. Wolof nobles wear braided hair woven with beads, flowing robes and gold earrings.

[00:07:02.910] - Christopher

Then we have the Hausa people from city states in present day Niger and Nigeria.

[00:07:11.050] - Harriet

They are merchants and metal workers connected to the trans-Saharan trade. They can be recognized by their richly embroidered caftans and turbans and trademark ornate shields.

[00:07:26.050] - Akissowa

Their warrior **queen Amina** reigned until the beginning of the 17th century. She refused to marry, preferring instead to choose temporary husbands from the legions of vanquished foes after battle.

[00:07:44.660] - Christopher

As for the **Fulani people**, they are tall, slender, and of distinctly lighter skin color.

[00:07:53.120] - Akissowa

They're nomadic herders and travel with their cattle and homes, dome-shaped houses that are easy to set up, dismantle, and load onto donkeys and horses. Local rulers often allow them access to their land for grazing. The Fulani are among the first ethnic groups in West Africa to widely adopt Islam.

[00:08:16.010] - Harriet

And this is where it becomes a little complex.

[00:08:19.750] - Akissowa

Some Fulani people begin to actively participate in the Atlantic slave trade while drawing the line at trading Muslim people.

[00:08:31.900] - Christopher

The **Kru people** of the Ivory Coast, seafarers and traders fiercely resisting the slave trade.

[00:08:39.500] - Harriet

The **Akan people** of the Gold Coast. They're predominantly gold miners and traders warriors. Their kings enrobe themselves in kente cloth, a textile of brightly-colored, handwoven strips of silk and cotton.

[00:09:00.250] - Akissowa

The peoples of West Africa, referred to by the Europeans simply and wrongly as Africans, speak dozens of different languages and hundreds of dialects. No single tongue unites them. And yet they understand each other. Multilingual traders move between Kingdoms, speaking Hausa in the Sahel, Diula along the Mandai roots, Fon, Akan, or Yoruba. In the market towns. Some speak five or six languages. Others trade in gestures, tone, or ritual. Meaning is not just spoken. It is bartered, signalled, interpreted, like value itself.

[00:09:52.060] - Christopher

All of these communities, as yet unaware of the full extent of the devastation to befall them.

[00:09:58.800] - Harriet

Some will resist and others will reshape their kingdom to meet the new demand.

EP03: CAPTIVE MARKETS

DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion EP03: **CAPTIVE MARKETS** *(15 minutes)*

This episode investigates the developing mechanics of the **Atlantic slave trade**, emphasizing the immense suffering involved. It details methods of capture, including warfare, kidnappings, and false **accusations of witchcraft**... The episode explores the market **dynamics of assessing and trading captives**, the roles of African and European traders, and the evolution of violence... It also notes efforts by communities, like the **Tofino**, to evade enslavement.

[00:00:17.330] - Akissowa

No words.

[00:00:19.690] - Harriet

No words. Our story will attempt to avoid terms like cruelty and brutality. They fall short.

[00:00:28.630] - Akissowa

No. No words.

[00:00:31.060] - Harriet

They belong to lesser slaveries, far removed from the systematic protracted torture that transpires throughout the Atlantic slave trade.
No. Words.
There are no words yet created to capture the magnitude of that suffering. Opening.

[00:00:52.080] - Christopher

European enslavers will sometimes give African traders goods, such as weapons and alcohol, often destined for the king in advance of receiving captives. To minimize the risk of traders failing to come up with the goods, the Europeans demand pawns.

[00:01:09.390] - Harriet

In response, the traders will leave a relative or associate on the slave ship as a pawn. When or if the traders keep their part of the bargain, their pawn will be freed before the ship departs.

[00:01:32.720] - Christopher

In Dahomey and West Africa in general, kidnappings are commonplace. Motivations include political conflicts, religious practices, and economic pressures, etc. Warfare has been the

primary means of capturing people for forced labor and/or ransom as bargaining ships in negotiations between rival tribes and Kingdoms. The state also sponsors bounty hunters, bandits, and brigands to carry out kidnapping raids.

[00:02:06.440] - Harriet

The European demand for enslaved Africans continues to rise, and so do the many justifications for capturing and selling people into slavery. Kidnapping alone is no longer enough. Accusations of witchcraft are particularly effective. Witchcraft and Vodou are often mistakenly interchangeably used. The European notion of witchcraft or sorcery is tied to wrongdoing, evil acts, curses, and malicious intent. It is something to be feared, condemned, and punished.

[00:02:46.970] - Akissowa

Vodou, on the other hand, is a religion, complex and deeply woven into the lives of West African societies. It can be a force for harm, retribution and spiritual warfare, but more often for good, healing, Guidance, protection.

[00:03:02.950] - Harriet

But for those seeking captives to sell, the distinction doesn't matter. A simple accusation of witchcraft is often enough to condemn the innocent to slavery. Any misfortune, such as illness, a failed harvest, hair loss, business loss, and of course, death, can be blamed on sorcery.

[00:03:39.640] - Akissowa

Enslavers organize elaborate trials that ensure the accused have little or no chance to prove their innocence. There are poison tests where the accused must drink a substance. If they die, their guilt is confirmed and their family is sold.

[00:04:01.310] - Harriet

If they survive proving their innocence, the accuser's family faces enslavement instead. There are water ordeals where the accused is flung into a river or lagoon.

[00:04:13.990] - Akissowa

If they float, they are guilty.

[00:04:17.610] - Harriet

If they sink, they are innocent.

[00:04:20.630] - Akissowa

But more often than not, they drown, and their kin are sold into slavery. There are fire ordeals where the Accused must walk across hot embers or hold a burning iron. If they are really and truly innocent, they will supposedly not be burned. Some accused are simply ostracized, leaving them without protection until they are captured and sold.

[00:04:58.940] - Harriet

A system with only one true winner.
Women are particularly vulnerable to being accused of witchcraft. Their roles as healers or midwives make them easy targets when things go wrong.

[00:05:15.620] - Christopher

Coincidentally, across the Atlantic in late seventeenth century **Massachusetts**, where slavery is on the rise, the **Salem village witch hunts** and trials intensify. The goals there, too, are power, revenge, and settling grudges.

[00:05:31.790] - Harriet

The same Puritans who hunt American women as witches also adopt the chattel enslavement of Africans, assigning both to a status of subjugation. They reinterpret the Bible passage, *Leviticus 25:46*.

[00:05:48.960] - Christopher

"You can bequeath them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life."

[00:05:57.110] - Harriet

Massachusetts codifies slavery, not just as a condition, but as movable property, a permanent hereditary legal status.

[00:06:14.120] - Akissowa

Back in West Africa, many begin to see the slave trade itself as a form of witchcraft, a dark sorcery through which European witches and their local collaborators enrich themselves. In addition to theft, adultery, or treason, new crimes are invented, and the unwary are drawn, sometimes tricked, into committing them. Fines are imposed, which the accused cannot pay, and so are sold into slavery, sometimes for the profit of the very judges who condemned them.

[00:06:52.380] - Christopher

In West Africa, the **trans-Saharan slave trade** operated for centuries before the arrival of the Atlantic or trans-Atlantic slave trade. Caravans transported captives on long, perilous journeys across the Sahara to North Africa, where they were enslaved and shipped to the Mediterranean Coast, Europe, Arabia, and the Western hemisphere.

[00:07:20.200] - Harriet

Additionally, local enslavement existed within West Africa. This system differed from chattel slavery, sometimes resembling forms of indentured servitude attitude, allowing for a degree of social mobility, with the possibility of children of the enslaved being born free, and some slaves even having slaves of their own.

[00:07:43.850] - Christopher

Slave of my slave, of my slave, of my slave.

[00:07:49.230] - Harriet

But let's not minimize or romanticize this lighter shade of slavery. It also involves harshness and coercion.

[00:08:03.810] - Christopher

In the slave markets of the 17th century, trade is brisk. Men, women, and children are assessed, bargained over, purchased or exchanged.

[00:08:13.670] - Harriet

For instance, a young man with battle scars. He's assumed to be strong, experienced, useful for the punishing labor ahead, and therefore is priced higher. A child clinging to its mother, the mother's value is often set by whether to be sold alone or as part of a lot.

[00:08:40.090] - Christopher

Children provide for a stock of trained from the ground up future slaves. The cost of a child is based on size, weight, and perceived age. Thus, a young child purchased cheaply will become a highly profitable commodity.

[00:08:59.920] - Harriet

Skilled weavers, blacksmiths. These types of captives may be reserved, and they're worth debating because the traders know they could fetch a better deal elsewhere.

[00:09:12.610] - Christopher

Competition isn't solely between Europeans. It also exists among African traders incited by them. Some African traders operate independently, freelancing in the trade. They navigate shifting alliances, trying to outmaneuver established merchant families who dominate the most lucrative ports.

[00:09:33.250] - Harriet

The currency of the trade, European cloth, firearms, beads, or iron bars, is as varied as the captives. The value of a person depends on who is trading, what's in demand, and which port they arrive at.

[00:09:50.760] - Christopher

A European trader who bought enslaved Africans at the market and resold in the Americas for an obscene profit can later be challenged by the buyer if they are dissatisfied with their investment. For instance, a buyer discovers one of his enslaved is mentally ill.

[00:10:16.290] - Harriet

Mental illness which arises in the first place from the trauma of capture and inhumane treatment in captivity.

[00:10:22.350] - Christopher

That enslaved person is therefore non-productive. The buyer will be within his legal rights to claim compensation against his trader for having knowingly sold him damaged goods. You will notice we tend to use the masculine here. This is a male dominated world.

[00:10:47.510] - Harriet

Because of the long, treacherous voyages and the rough conditions of coastal forts, European women are rarely seen on the African Coast, and certainly not at the markets. They participate remotely.

[00:11:04.920] - Christopher

Wealthy women in Europe invest in slave trading ventures, inherit shares in companies like the Royal African Company, and manage estates that depend on enslaved labor, they can reap the benefits of the trade without ever setting foot on an African shore.

[00:11:27.080] - Harriet

In contrast, female African merchants are very much present at the markets. Some belong to powerful trading families that control the flow of captives to European buyers.

[00:11:39.530] - Akissowa

At the auction blocks, these women and their male counterparts haggle over prices with European buyers based on age, health, and skills. The sellers inflate the value of their captives by exaggerating their strength. While the buyers attempt to lower prices by pointing out imperfections.

[00:12:02.740] - Christopher

The European traders now tend not to venture beyond the Coast. They prefer to rely on African merchants to bring them captives to market.

[00:12:15.810] - Akissowa

The coastal areas are becoming déserted as more people are sold into slavery. Entire villages are relocating inland to reduce the risk of being captured.

[00:12:34.110] - Harriet

One ingenious example of evading kidnapping is that of the Tofinu people, part of the Ajitado group. And so taking advantage of the Fon people's religious fears of water. They have been constructing, since the 16th century, the **water village of Ganvié**, to escape the Fon warriors slave raids.

[00:12:54.080] - Christopher

The name Ganvié, in the Fon language, loosely translates to we survived or we are saved.

[00:13:12.980] - Akissowa

To satisfy the European traders' growing hunger for slaves, African warrior enslavers are also venturing further inland to hunt down their victims.

[00:13:22.890] - Christopher

The upshot is that damage and diseases are caused by marching captives longer distances to the Coast, making it increasingly difficult for traders to obtain what they consider slaves in decent condition.

[00:13:41.990] - Akissowa

As the slave trade period progresses and the slave numbers increase, enslavers, ever fearful of uprisings, increase the violence, which in turn makes them more fearful, thus setting a vicious circle into motion. Into perpetual motion.
And so... Violence.

[00:14:05.590] - Harriet

Violence. Begets fear.

[00:14:06.760] - Akissowa

Begets fear. Begets violence. Begets fear. Begets violence. Begets fear.

EP04: PAPER BULLS

DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion EP04: PAPER BULLS *(13 minutes)*

This episode explores how religion shaped the Atlantic slave trade. It traces the Church's reinterpretation of the "**Curse of Ham**" as justification for slavery, contrasts it with biblical passages against enslavement, and highlights the **complicity of popes** and the **Church of England**. Alongside, it examines African **spiritual traditions such as Vodou**, their survival in the Americas, and the Church of England's recent admission of its historic ties to slavery.

[00:00:16.620] - Akissowa

The Church and European theologians reinterpret the Bible...

[00:00:23.160] - Harriet

Holier than thou

[00:00:24.970] - Akissowa

...to argue that slavery of Black people was part of a divine plan, thereby reinforcing the notion of African inferiority, of hierarchy, and of the slave master's racial supremacy.

[00:00:49.240] - Harriet

The so-called **Curse of Ham** comes from the Book of Genesis, Genesis 9: 20-27, to be exact. It's important to be precise here. After Noah becomes drunk and falls asleep, his son Ham, who should have averted his eyes, looks at him naked and makes the mistake of telling his brothers. When Noah awakened and finds out, he curiously curses not Ham, but Ham's son, Canaan.

[00:01:30.000] - Christopher

Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants, shall he be unto his breatheron? Unto his breatheron. You see, no mention of skin color or of Africa. Although one might consider the Bible to be myth or metaphor, this story is still of the utmost importance.

[00:02:00.000] - Harriet

Because the Church's retelling of the Curse of Ham became a divine endorsement, a sacred excuse for slavery. In the early centuries of Christianity, the passage was mostly interpreted as a moral story of family respect.

[00:02:23.140] - Christopher

But beginning in the Middle Ages and accelerating with the rise of the transatlantic slave trade, the Church falsely claims that Ham was the ancestor of African peoples, and that his supposed curse justifies the perpetual enslavement of black people.

[00:02:42.400] - Harriet

This interpretation, later widely discredited, allows Christian empires to present slavery as not only acceptable but beneficial to the souls of the enslaved who could now be converted.

[00:02:56.360] - Akissowa

By contrast, the Bible passage, Exodus 21: 16, speaks with stark clarity.

[00:03:05.920] - Akissowa

Whoever steals a man and sells him.

[00:03:14.340] - Akissowa

Or is found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

[00:03:19.560] - Akissowa

This verse, regarded as hostile to the institution of slavery, is banned from public reading in many British colonies. It does not serve the narrative perspective.

[00:03:51.320] - Christopher

In the early stages of the Atlantic slave trade, the Roman Catholic Church plays a pivotal, yet contradictory role. On one hand, it issues papal bulls, explicitly endorsing the subjugation of non-Christian peoples. On the other, it sporadically appears to condemn certain forms of slavery, typically with narrow geographic or ethnic limits.

[00:04:18.920] - Harriet

In the late 15th century, we find **Pope Innocent VIII**, who, it has to be said, does not live up to his name. He personally receives enslaved Africans as a gift from the Spanish monarchy and distributes them among his Cardinals and Roman elites, thereby sanctioning human chattel.

[00:05:01.160] - Akissowa

His successor, **Pope Alexander VI**, a man not of virtue, but of vice. Before being elected Pope, he is known for his affairs, including one with a girl of noble origin who is only 15 years old, while he himself is 58. He openly acknowledges children he fathered with his mistresses...

[00:05:25.120] - Harriet

including the infamous Lucrezia Borgia

[00:05:28.220] - Akissowa

... and advances his family's fortunes through papal power, a thoroughly corrupt and immoral person.

[00:05:36.780] - Harriet

Although Alexander VI's **Papal Bulls** do not explicitly endorse the institution of slavery, they are routinely interpreted by colonial powers to reduce people to lifelong bondage in the Americas and thus validate the colonisation of the new world.

[00:06:08.440] - Christopher

Not all voices within the Church accept slavery without question. Some clerics, missionaries, and later theologians begin to question the morality of a system that claims to save souls while destroying lives. But these voices are often marginal. The Church of England becomes more prominent in the 18th century as Britain dominates the transatlantic trade. Anglican clergy and bishops reap rich economical benefits from enslaved people farmed out to plantations in the colonies.

[00:06:54.480] - Harriet

Whether Catholic or Protestant, the message is the same. Slavery can be tolerated, even sanctified, if it serves the purposes of faith and empire.

[00:07:12.240] - Akissowa

Woe unto you, Scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within, full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within, ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

[00:07:44.520] - Harriet

While the Church issues paper bulls and distributes enslaved Africans among the elites. The people of Dahomey have their own Vodou gods. For example, Hevioso, God of Thunder, Lightning, and Rain. Remember, the tree of forgetfulness? ... And Sackpata, the divinity of smallpox, who can either heal or inflict both insanity and disease on humans.

[00:08:16.300] - Akissowa

However, even in Vodou, there is a single great creator. In Fon belief, she is **Mawu** or **Mawu-Lisa**, moon and son, mother and father in one. But people don't pray to them directly.

Instead, they call on Legba, **Papa Legba**, the gatekeeper between the creator and humanity. Papa Legba stands at a spiritual crossroads and gives... or denies permission to speak with the spirits. He is believed to speak all human languages.

[00:09:02.360] - Christopher

In colonial reframing, missionaries and scholars interpret Vodou through a Christian lens, attempting to remap each spirit onto a saint or deity. They come with their scripture, their schools, their medicine, and brute force. They declare, "Our God is stronger than yours, for he commands Kings, builds ships, and conquers empires".

[00:09:30.000] - Harriet

Enslaved Africans carry more than their labour across the Atlantic. They bring with them spiritual traditions. In the Americas, these beliefs reappear as Vodou in Haiti, **Santerio in Cuba**, and **Condomble in Brazil**.

[00:09:55.080] - Christopher

Appearing to adopt Christianity serves as a protective strategy, a way to preserve their own gods behind the appearance of orthodoxy. They reinterpret the Catholic saints as representations of their own African deities and use processions to mask their possession rituals. In this way, a fusion emerges. Part survival, part resistance, part reinvention.

[00:10:28.340] - Harriet

And centuries later, the **Church of England** begins to examine its past. In 2019, it launches an internal investigation into its financial ties to the slave trade. What follows is a formal admission of guilt, but not a full one. The Church acknowledges a specific case, where in the 18th century, **Queen Anne's Bounty**, a Church fund set up to support poor clergy, invested heavily in the South Sea Company, a company trading in enslaved people.

[00:11:01.920] - Akissowa

Some argue that the company's ventures in slavery were unprofitable or short-lived, but over 34,000 Africans were transported by the **South Sea Company**. And to investors, the venture offered the same motivation as any other enterprise, return on capital, whatever the cost. The Church of England does not mention its broader entanglement and complicity with the institution of slavery as a whole.

[00:11:32.060] - Harriet

As a gesture of repair, the Church first proposes a £100 million fund. That figure is quickly revised to £1 billion, which is a wish, not an allocated sum. And still, historical revisionists attempt to minimize, deny, or dilute the Church's historical responsibility, often with selectively used data and unsourced claims. They question the research and downplay the

connections. They claim that the ties were too distant, the involvement too minor, and the damage done too long ago.

[00:12:14.300] - Akissowa

Whoa, Unto you, Scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind-thou blind pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you.

EP05: WOMEN OF WEST AFRICA

DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion EP05: WOMEN OF WEST AFRICA *(22 minutes)*
This episode examines the **complex and multifaceted roles of women** during the Atlantic slave trade period in West Africa. It profiles the **Mino (Agojié)**, Dahomey's all-female military regiment, and explores women's positions as **traders, political advisors, and warriors**.
It highlights three remarkable figures: **Queen Agontimé**, who rose from captivity to become a Candomblé priestess in Brazil; **Queen Nzinga Mbande** of Ndongo and Matamba, a diplomatic and military leader who resisted Portuguese colonization; and **Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita**, a religious visionary challenging both church authority and the slave trade.

The episode also details the unique practice of **woman-to-woman marriage in Dahomey**, emphasizing how women navigated survival, power, and legacy in a society where they could be simultaneously victims, traders, and architects of their own destinies.

[00:00:09.160] - Dawn

Mother, daughter, trader, fighter, Queen,

[00:00:18.880] - Dawn

Women of West Africa, during the Trade.

[00:00:24.020] - Dawn

Throughout the Atlantic slave trade period, West African women are involved in all aspects of daily life. Unconfined to traditional gender roles, they may also be traders, political figures ... Or warriors.

[00:00:42.740] - Christopher

At the crack of dawn, they begin training in the palace courtyards.

[00:00:51.480] - Dawn

Come closer now.

[00:00:52.700] - Christopher

They master the cutlass, the club, the razor-sharp machete.

[00:00:57.500] - Dawn

Their silent footfalls.

[00:01:02.900] - Christopher

Their exercises include scaling thorn walls, climbing over barriers of acacia branches that can tear skin and cloth.

[00:01:12.900] - Dawn

Listen.

[00:01:17.400] - Christopher

In battle, they advance in formation, some carrying muskets acquired through trade, others wielding traditional weapons with precision. European observers describe them moving like shadows through tall grass, [Dawn: And ... as if out of ... thin air] appearing suddenly and surrounding the enemy's camp.

[00:01:52.780] - Dawn

In Dahomey tradition, women have long been hunters and guardians. These particular women, extremely disciplined fighters, are known as **Mino, Our Mothers**, also referred to as **Agojié**. They are an all-female military regimen serving Dahomey from the 17th to 19th centuries.

[00:02:22.860] - Christopher

These women are recruited from sources such as foreign captives, free Dahomean women, and the **king's wives, known as Ahosi**. Some volunteer, others are forcibly enrolled.

[00:02:40.260] - Dawn

Yes, well, particularly if males complain to the king about their behaviour.

[00:02:46.720] - Christopher

Later European accounts exaggerate these roles into exotic myths of Amazons. But these women, warriors of West Africa, aren't mere curiosities. They're part of societies where survival demands every available strength.

[00:03:11.160] - Dawn

When Dahomey falls under French protection at the end of the 19th century, the women's regiment is dissolved, fading out a long line of female military tradition.

[00:03:32.360] - Dawn

Along the Coast, women help to sustain the trade, selling food, cloth, and water to departing ships. In some cases, they act as intermediaries, connecting European merchants with local chiefs. A few enter strategic unions, such as temporary marriages, giving foreigners access

to local networks in exchange for goods and influence. Some women inherit or exchange enslaved people through marriage and dowries.

[00:04:15.040] - Dawn

In the palaces, they may be queen mothers, princesses, or advisors influencing wars, the fate of captives, and entire communities. In the markets, women remain the central figures of authority. They establish the price of goods and negotiate with both African and European buyers, at times competing with one another in the trade.

[00:04:56.360] - Christopher

Their influence extends far beyond the stalls affecting the flow of goods and of people.

[00:05:05.580] - Christopher

Thus...

[00:05:06.680] - Dawn

thus, the paradox.

[00:05:09.340] - Christopher

During the Atlantic Trade Period, a woman, at different stages of her life, can be victim or trader.

[00:05:18.380] - Dawn

And in times of crisis, they take up weapons themselves.

[00:05:22.340] - Christopher

In certain communities, the women become warriors, defending their towns and villages when the men are away at war.

[00:05:33.960] - Dawn

Among the Yoruba people, women may also accompany armies as camp defenders or suppliers. Their presence in battle isn't symbolic. It is crucial.

[00:05:48.060] - Dawn

In precolonial Dahomey, **male and female equality** is apparent in all facets of society. In politics, economics, religion, military, and of course, enslavement. This surprisingly progressive, gender-equal society is clearly inspired by the **importance of Mawu-Lisa** to the Dahomeans.

[00:06:17.920] - Christopher

According to Dahomean legend, in the beginning, there was Mawu-Lisa, the God-goddess of two faces. Mawu, the female side.

[00:06:28.120] - Dawn

Whose eyes are the moon.

[00:06:29.460] - Christopher

Whose eyes are the moon. And Lisa, the male side.

[00:06:33.060] - Christopher

Whose eyes are the sun. Whose eyes are the sun. The duality Mawu-Lisa...

[00:06:38.620] - Dawn

... represents the central balance of the universe.

[00:06:53.060] - Dawn

Female servants, field-hands, and carriers are often deemed more valuable than their male counterparts arts.

[00:07:00.560] - Christopher

They're especially prized as porters, believed to be able to endure heavier loads over longer distances than men.

[00:07:09.940] - Dawn

In Abomey, the capital of Dahomey, princesses and noble women barter enslaved captives.

[00:07:16.900] - Christopher

But here, fortunes can be dramatically reversed.

[00:07:20.120] - Dawn

And a woman can find herself in diametrically opposing roles in society.

[00:07:24.580] - Christopher

Let us meet three of the most remarkable female heroes of West Africa from the Atlantic slave trade period.

[00:07:40.240] - Dawn

First, we have **Agontimé**.

[00:07:44.080] - Christopher

During a war with the Northern territories, she is captured and brought to Dahomey. Her expertise in ritual and medicine quickly becomes renowned, enabling enabling her to rise up through Dahomean society.

[00:08:10.620] - Dawn

Dahomean nobility prefer Outlander women of **the Mahi people** from the north, they believe they make better wives and healthier mothers.

[00:08:19.920] - Christopher

When the reigning **king, Agonglo**, learns of her, he makes her one of his wives. Thus, she becomes **Queen Agontimé**, mother of the **future King Ghezo**. But her position at the palace will not last

[00:08:38.860] - Dawn

We can find no surviving portrait of Agontimé, but oral histories describe her as adorned in indigo cloth and coral beads, with hair beautifully braided in the royal style. However, we know her more for her legacy than for her look.

[00:09:03.500] - Dawn

Time passes at the palace, and...

[00:09:07.860] - Christopher

A conspiracy leads to the assassination of King Agonglo. His son, born of another wife, ascends to the throne. The newly crowned son rounds up suspects in his father's assassination and sells them as slaves to Portuguese traders.

[00:09:32.660] - Dawn

Among them is Queen Agontime, who, beaten, banished, and back to square one, is sent to Brazil.

[00:09:43.200] - Dawn

Now considered fallen nobility, Na Agontimé, arrives in **Salvador de Bahia**. But once again, thanks to her spiritual powers, she, like the proverbial Phoenix, rises.

[00:10:00.000] - Christopher

No longer a Queen nor a slave, but now a priestess. She establishes a center for **Candomblé**. A blending of Portuguese Roman Catholicism, and traditional religions. Brought to Brazil by enslaved Africans. Candomblé will endure to the present day.

[00:10:28.980] - Dawn

But, what do we know of Agontimé's life following her rebirth in Brazil?

[00:10:34.680] - Christopher

Well, there are conflicting reports of her escape back home to Dahomey.

Nzinga

[00:10:55.680] - Dawn

Agontimé is not alone as a powerful female figure of the slave trade period. We also have Nzinga or **Nginga Mbande**.

[00:11:10.500] - Christopher

Far from Dahomey, on the West central Coast of Southern Africa...

[00:11:14.460] - Dawn

In present day Angola.

[00:11:15.610] - Christopher

... lie the territories **Ndongo and Matamba**. Here Nzinga Mbanda or Nzinga Anna de Souza Mbanda, to use her full Christian baptism name, is born into the ruling class.

[00:11:29.460] - Dawn

As a child, Nzinga is favouered by her father. She is not considered a rival heir, so she can therefore receive his full attention, including military training. He teaches her to fight, and she shows early skill with the battle axe, the weapon of choice of Ndongo warriors.

[00:11:56.300] - Christopher

Nzinga is taught to read and write in Portuguese by visiting missionaries. She later becomes Queen Nzinga Mbanda of Ndongo and Matamba. At this stage, the Portuguese colonists are continually advancing inland from their coastal base at Luanda.

[00:12:20.940] - Dawn

However, Nzinga isn't a simple consort or lesser queen dependent on male authority. She is a respected sovereign. And Portuguese records even refer to her as King, a title she embraces to assert her authority in a male dominated world.

[00:12:49.620] - Christopher

Accounts, mainly from Portuguese chroniclers and Jesuit missionaries, describe her maintaining a harem of young men.

[00:12:59.380] - Dawn

All dressed as women.

[00:13:04.840] - Dawn

In European engravings, Nzinga is depicted as tall and slender with an upright bearing and sharp gaze. She is shown in feathered headdress, bow or spear, in hand, dressed both as warrior and queen. In council, she appears robed in rich fabrics and shimmering gold.

[00:13:37.420] - Christopher

She proves herself a formidable diplomat, negotiating treaties while also waging war... When necessary. At her first recorded audience with the Portuguese governor in 1622, it is said she refused to sit on a mat placed at his feet.

[00:13:55.700] - Dawn

A position of submission. Instead, she orders one of her attendants to kneel using his back as a chair, enabling her to meet the governor, eye to eye.

[00:14:12.360] - Dawn

And so, Nzinga plays a long political game. She converts to Christianity and adopts the name **Dona Ana De Souza** in honour of her Portuguese godparents, when it suits her diplomacy. But she later allies with the Dutch against Portuguese.

[00:14:31.400] - Christopher

She reorganises Matamba into a refuge for escaped captives and continues fighting for decades. Her reign shows the impossible choices African rulers face, trading captives for weapons, resisting European encroachment when possible, and adapting to survive.

[00:15:07.000] - Dawn

Our next African female hero is **Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita**.

[00:15:13.140] - Christopher

We are in the Kingdom of Kongo (present day Angola).

[00:15:21.080] - Dawn

In 1684, Beatriz Kimpa Vita is born into a noble family. Her father is a regional commander the standard of the King's army.

[00:15:33.040] - Christopher

In the fractured Kingdom of Kongo, weakened by decades of civil wars that feed captives into the slave trade machine, Beatriz Kimpa Vita as a young woman, is regarded as a religious visionary.

[00:15:51.120] - Christopher

Her nobility status allows her to study, and she receives Catholic teachings from the local Capuchin missionaries.

[00:16:00.000] - Dawn

By this stage of the slave trade, Portuguese missionaries have largely succeeded in converting the Kingdom of Kongo population to Catholicism. Kings are crowned with Christian rights. Nobles bear Christian names and churches are widespread.

[00:16:18.640] - Christopher

After experiencing visions, Beatriz Kimpa Vita declares,

[00:16:23.580] - Dawn

Santo Antonio de Pádua, fala através de mim.

[00:16:30.540] - Dawn

Saint Anthony of Padua, speaks through me.

[00:16:37.340] - Christopher

As a preacher in the early 1700s, she calls for the reunification of Kongo's rival factions and condemns the enslavement of fellow Congolese as a sin.

[00:16:49.220] - Dawn

Her movement, known as Antonianism, mixing Christian and Kongo beliefs, gathers followers across the kingdom.

[00:16:57.100] - Christopher

She proclaims that Jesus and the saints are African and are located in Kongo itself. Her aim is to end the civil wars that have been plaguing the kingdom since the arrival of the Portuguese.

[00:17:19.820] - Dawn

But while on missionary work with a man she looks upon as her protector and guardian angel, she, despite her teachings of chastity, has a relationship with him, and she becomes pregnant.

[00:17:34.180] - Dawn

Thus, she begins to doubt the validity of her possession by St. Anthony, and therefore of her **Antonianism movement**. Kimp Vita believes that this sin has stripped her of virtue and could lead to her eventual downfall.

[00:17:57.260] - Dawn

Her Antonianism movement is supporting supported by important people such as the King's wife. But one fears that things might not go well for Beatriz Kimpa Vita.

[00:18:09.840] - Christopher

Things do not go well for her. To her opponents, she is a dangerous heretic running around loose, challenging both church authority and local rulers who profit from the trade.

[00:18:27.080] - Dawn

Kimpa Vita's political influence is a threat to King Pedro IV and the Portuguese administration that support him. At the age of just 22, she is arrested, along with her partner and their newborn child, The order comes from the king, urged on by Portuguese Capuchin monks.

[00:18:52.240] - Christopher

Kimpa Vita is burned at the stake for heresy. Her child is also required to be destroyed, but its life is spared. It is baptized and given to the church.

[00:19:11.500] - Dawn

According to missionary reports, her message attracted entire villages. Her words were spreading fast. Unfortunately, far too fast for her own good.

[00:19:24.260] - Dawn

There are no existing portraits, but later depictions imagine her clothed in white, head covered, slender and youthful.

[00:19:38.300] - Christopher

Beatriz Kimpa Vita is one of the few female voices remembered from this period. A Prophetess seeking to counter the disintegration of her people at the height of the slave trade.

Woman to Woman Marriage

[00:19:55.560] - Dawn

We return to Dahomey. One of the particularities here is the practice where a woman takes another woman as a wife.

[00:20:12.420] - Christopher

These marriages are more common among wealthy women of noble and royal families.

[00:20:18.940] - Dawn

They do not necessarily imply homosexual relations. In a society where lineage and inheritance are essential, **woman to woman marriage** enables women to ensure ensure their family name survives, their property remains secure, and their influence endures.

[00:20:37.700] - Christopher

A prosperous but childless woman can pay bride dues for a wife, or in some cases, for several wives. That wife might then bear children fathered by a trusted male (a relative or companion). Those children would not belong to him. They would be considered the offspring of the woman-husband. Husband and heirs to her compound and her wealth.

[00:21:07.780] - Dawn

There is no discredit attached to such unions. On the contrary, the woman husband is respected for the size of her household and the people under her authority. This is another example of how in a world governed by survival of the fittest, Dahomean women found ways to adapt and thrive.

[00:21:37.320] - Dawn

Warriors, priestesses, Queens negotiating with foreign powers or woman-husbands, creating their own dynasties. These exceptional women, were architects of their own survival.
However, most women of West Africa, during the slave trade ... had no such power, no such choices. Yet, they too, left their mark.

EP06 : INVENTORY

DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion EP06: INVENTORY *(23 minutes)*

This episode examines the **barracoons** and other holding facilities where captives awaited transport across the Atlantic. It details the **systematic assessment**, categorization, and commodification of enslaved people through European traders' documentation practices.

The episode draws on historical accounts like **Alexander Falconbridge's testimony** to reveal the clinical brutality of the sorting process, while exploring how the financial infrastructure developed for the slave trade (**ledgers, insurance policies, and banking systems**) would shape modern commerce. The episode also draws **parallels between gold mining and human extraction**, and contrasts European and African concepts of time.

[00:00:00.000] - Robinson

Inventory: an itemized list of current assets such as, one, a list of goods on hand, two, a catalog of the property of an individual or estate.

[00:00:19.100] - Robinson

Episode 6, Inventory.

1685. We return to the Port of Ouidah, in Dahomey. Here, enslaved people captured further inland encounter a multitude of troubling and unfamiliar sights, sounds and sensations. The infinite expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, the booms and rumbles from across the water as if from some far-off, restless creature. A massive vessel as imposing as a fortress, inexplicably managing to float on the waves. Men with straight hair and faces white as though their skin has been removed. The fierce barking of these pale men in incomprehensible foreign tongues.

[00:01:20.640] - Robinson

And rumour has it, highly likely spread by the pale men themselves, that they are known to cook and eat their victims. Out there, across the water, at a safe distance from the sandbanks, slave ships watch and wait. Due to insufficient quotas of captives, departures must often be postponed. The captives collected so far must therefore remain longer in storage, in limbo, in the barracoons.

[00:02:01.720] - Rosemary

From the Portuguese barracão and the Spanish barracón. Barracoon: a large shed or barrack. Such a simple word. These fortified enclosures dot the Coast. Some are attached to European forts and built of stone with thick walls and iron gates. Others are simpler structures of wooden palisades with thatched roofs, constructed inland near trading posts.

[00:02:37.940] - Robinson

Here in Ouidah, barracoons stand within walking distance of the sea. At Anomabo, on the gold Coast to the west, they cluster near Cape Coast Castle, one of the largest fortresses on the African Coast.

[00:02:55.280] - Rosemary

What began in 1653 as a Swedish timber trading post, modest and provisional, has become, 30 years later, a formidable British stronghold. Stone walls of imported brick, governor's apartments. First captured from the Swedish by the Danes before being seized by the British.

[00:03:20.490] - Robinson

The British have been here 20 long years already, long enough to rebuild, to expand, to make themselves at home.

[00:03:30.760] - Rosemary

As the slave trade intensifies, they adapt the architecture accordingly. Dungeons that once stored gold and goods now store people. Space beneath the bastions, dark, dark, and hairless. Redesigned for maximum capacity, the British will hold thousands of enslaved people here before transporting them to the Americas, the industry of waiting, where trading posts become prisons. Cape Coast Castle will remain standing in present day West Africa, a testament to European permanence.

[00:04:27.300] - Robinson

At Bonny, in the bite of Biafra, To the east, barracoons line the River Delta.

[00:04:35.100] - Rosemary

Inside the barracoon, the captives are divided up. Men separated from women, women from children. Some women are permitted to continue nursing infants. Men are shackled together in groups.

[00:04:50.320] - Robinson

The spaces are cramped, shrouded in darkness, with faintest shafts of daylight skittering through gaps in the walls and roofs, like a grotesque painting. The floors of bare earth and stone grow filthy.

[00:05:13.040] - Robinson

Lizards.

[00:05:14.160] - Rosemary

The orange-headed agama lizard.

[00:05:16.900] - Robinson

Scuttle…

[00:05:17.540] - Rosemary

A sign...

[00:05:18.120] - Robinson

..hither and thither.

[00:05:19.410] - Rosemary

...of fortune or of ill omen.

[00:05:23.380] - Robinson

Disease spreads at an alarming rate. The guards are African, lured and corrupted by European remuneration. Some are hardened soldiers of the local royalty. Others are hired hands, mercenaries who understand enough Portuguese or English to take orders. They are armed with whips and keys.

[00:05:55.080] - Rosemary

Inside the barricoon…

[00:05:57.280] - Robinson

Languages collide. A Yoruba woman may find herself attached next to a Mandé woman.

[00:06:06.080] - Rosemary

An Igbo child might call out for a mother who speaks a Akan.

[00:06:11.280] - Robinson

Communication passes through gestures and randomly shared words. But mostly there is confusion inside the barricoon.

[00:06:21.380] - Rosemary

And the only understanding fully shared is that of... Captivity.

[00:06:40.420] - Robinson

The waiting can last days, weeks, or months. Each day, the captives are taken outside briefly and forced to exercise to remain strong enough for the arduous voyage ahead.

[00:07:00.000] - Rosemary

They are fed once, perhaps twice a day. Yam's boiled into mush, sometimes cassava, occasionally dried fish, rank with age.

[00:07:14.400] - Robinson

Water is scarce and often foul. The food portions are calculated to sustain just enough strength for the voyage… No more.
The greater the number of captives brought over to the Americas, alive, the greater the bonus for the captain.

[00:07:38.080] - Rosemary

During the moments of exercise, some will attempt to escape.

[00:07:44.140] - Robinson

If a man breaks free and scrambles toward the forest, he may be lucky or be quickly caught and made an example of as a warning to the others. Some resist in in quieter ways, a direct gaze at the captor, forcing them to guiltily look away, a refusal to eat, choosing to starve sooner than submit.

[00:08:14.740] - Rosemary

They share their names, repeating them over and over and over. Repeating them *like prayers*. In the hope that someone will remember them Some will not survive the barricoon.

[00:08:39.680] - Robinson

Children succumb to feavers. The weak sicken first, and the elderly cannot endure the months of waiting. The remaining captives understand that they, too, could be next. The traders log these losses in tidy columns of their ledgers and make adjustments. Slave ship departures are postponed. More captives are brought from inland, and the barracoons fill, the space inside shrinks, and the time stretches.

[00:09:26.560] - Robinson

This, dear listener, is the waiting ground, neither home nor destination. Limbo.

[00:09:42.980] - Rosemary

The Business.

[00:09:53.020] - Rosemary

Outside the barracoons and the holding fortresses, the sorting process is underway. European factors move among the captives, assessing each body as they would livestock, height, weight, visible scars, teeth, eyes, the sorting, muscle tone, the assessment, the calculations.

[00:10:15.980] - Robinson

These practices, here in 1685, will remain unchanged for a hundred years. A century later, a surgeon named Alexander Falconbridge who served on multiple slaving voyages, will describe them in precise detail in his account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa.

[00:10:40.720] - Amy

Falconbridge writes… *When the Negroes whom the black traders have to dispose of are shown to the European purchasers, they first examine them relative to their age*.

[00:10:53.020] - Rosemary

Men are valued highest. Between 15 and 30, good for plantation labor.

[00:11:00.980] - Robinson

Women are next. Childbearing age is preferred, obviously. Then come the children. The very young are risky investments. If they don't survive, they represent a loss.

[00:11:14.390] - Rosemary

But if they do, they symbolize decades of unpaid labor for each of their successive owners.

[00:11:22.760] - Robinson

They are worth their weight in gold.

[00:11:31.460] - Rosemary

The elderly, the visibly ill, and the disabled are a problem.

[00:11:37.400] - Amy

Falconbridge: *they* (the European purchasers), *then minutely inspect their persons and inquire into the state of their health. If they are afflicted with any infirmity or are deformed or have bad eyes or teeth, if they are lame or weak in the joints or distorted in the back*.

[00:11:58.140] - Robinson

In short... They are rejected. This does not bode well for them.

[00:12:05.860] - Amy

Falconbridge: *The traders frequently beat those Negroes which are objected to by the captains and use them with great severity and have frequently been known to put them to death*.

[00:12:34.140] - Robinson

Once the selections have been made, inventory and verified by the chief factor, property must be marked. One wonders how the trauma of this moment and the absolute uncertainty of what lies ahead impacts the psyche of the captives.

[00:12:53.460] - Amy

Falconbridge: *it frequently happens that the Negroes on being purchased by the Europeans become raving mad, and many of them die in that state, particularly the women*.

[00:13:08.000] - Robinson

Falconbridge continues.

[00:13:09.980] - Amy

While I was one day ashore at Bonny, I saw a middle-aged stout woman who had been brought down from affair the preceding day, chained to the post of a black trader's door in a state of furious insanity.

[00:13:25.460] - Robinson

The barbarism involved is considered a mere byproduct of the process. Ownership has to be clear at all costs. Each trader has his mark, his ensign.

[00:13:46.100] - Rosemary

The timing of departures from the coasts is carefully calculated. The peak of the Yam harvests in West Africa falls between August and November. Slave ship captives favour this season to depart with their stock of captives and provisions for the long voyage ahead.

[00:14:18.460] - Robinson

European management of the trade is ruthlessly efficient. In correspondence between factors and company directors in Europe, captives are not people. They are units. Inventories contain such dry information as…

[00:14:36.540] - Amy

… estimated values, losses to date, net value after losses, etc, and evoke challenges such as dysentry, fever, and attempts to escape. And they define measurements such as a healthy young man, one prime unit, the standard, a woman, three quarters value of the male unit, a child, one third…

[00:14:58.600] - Robinson

These meticulous records…

[00:15:00.000] - Amy

... to one-half, depending on age,

[00:15:02.380] - Robinson

... will one day serve to condemn the trade they so conscientiously condoned. The ledgers being kept at Cape Coast Castle and Ouidah are among the earliest systematic records of the Atlantic slave trade to survive the centuries.

[00:15:24.380] - Rosemary

The Royal African Company's documentation, which began in 1684, just a year ago, will be held for posterity at the National Archives in Britain. They include inventories, wage records, and lists of the living and the dead. A Royal African Company record entry (dated 1708) on the subject of the falsities and mischiefs of the private trader will read:

[00:16:00.120] - Amy

'tis alleged by the company that the natives on the Coast enjoy the whole benefit of the trade, taking advantage of different traders to advance the prices of Negroes and their own goods, and to depreciate our merchandises. And they add in discourse, the price of Negroes is now about £10 per head in Africa, whereas formerly, it was not above three.

[00:16:31.780] - Robinson

The company clearly did not recognise the irony of their report.

[00:16:38.420] - Rosemary

The report will also note :

[00:16: 38.420] - Amy

the product of negroes, then Purchased on the Coast for £29,360 is £4,083, out of which take off the common mortality during the time of purchase and term of the voyage, which in this time of open trade by delays, is seldom less than 15%, which is 732 negroes.

[00:17:16.060] - Rosemary

During the voyage, common mortality, seldom less than 15%.

[00:17:30.000] - Robinson

The Richard Rawlinson Correspondence is a collection of documents from these same forts containing over 3,000 letters detailing disputes and daily operations. These records survived because they had to. Official company documents were required by shareholders, insurers, and the Crown.

[00:17:58.680] - Rosemary

Journals, thickly bound in leather to protect them from time and the elements.

[00:18:04.220] - Robinson

They are preserved not as historical testimony, but as corporate records.

[00:18:09.900] - Rosemary

The names, numbers, transactions, iniquities in beautiful handwriting. To protect their financial interests and investments, trading companies establish insurance policies against all manner of eventualities, the storing period, dead captives, the crossing and beyond.

[00:18:37.820] - Robinson

The traders recover their investment either way through delivery or through insurance claims.

[00:18:46.360] - Rosemary

The financial instruments being perfected here, such as ledgers to track human cargo, mortality rates, and profits, will be used on all sides of the Atlantic.

[00:18:59.180] - Robinson

Insurance underwriting for enslaved people will become one of America's earliest forms of industrial risk management. The meticulous bookkeeping required to track captives as commodities will inform accounting practices for generations to come.

[00:19:20.140] - Rosemary

Over in London, the Bank of England, founded in 1694 to finance Britain's Wars, will provide commercial facilities for the Atlantic Trade, such as current accounts for slave traders, overdrafts, loans to Britain's trading enterprises, the East India Company, Royal African Company, and South Sea Company. At one point, the bank will own two plantations in the Americas, including their enslaved workforce, held as security on an unpaid debt.

[00:20:10.440] - Robinson

The bank's governors and directors include slave traders and plantation owners. Their wealth generated from slavery, becomes bank stock, the capital that underwrites Britain's military operations, protecting these selfsame trade routes.

[00:20:33.660] - Robinson

Do you remember? We spoke about how the British and the Portuguese, after initially being attracted by the discovery of gold along the Coast, eventually find slave trading more profitable? The correlation between both trades is profound.

[00:20:51.680] - Rosemary

On the gold Coast, gold dust is panned from rivers, alluvial mining, grain by grain, and measured with brass weights.

[00:21:00.000] - Robinson

These raw materials are extracted, stored temporarily, and shipped to Europe for refinement into coins, into bullion.

[00:21:11.400] - Robinson

On the slave Coast, human beings are also extracted, measured, valued, stored temporarily in barracoons, and then shipped abroad. Raw material refined for labor, for productivity.

[00:21:27.840] - Rosemary

Both trades use the same infrastructure, the same forts, the same ledges, the same careful accounting. Insurance policies for human cargo use the same language as those covering gold shipments. The Bank of England's records make no distinction.

[00:21:46.120] - Robinson

Both are assets.

[00:21:47.410] - Rosemary

Both generate returns. Even the coins bear witness to the connection.

[00:21:53.400] - Robinson

The Guinea minted from Gold Coast gold.

[00:21:56.370] - Rosemary

Marked with the Royal African Company's elephant symbol. The same company shipping both commodities.

[00:22:04.160] - Robinson

Gold transformed into currency.

[00:22:06.700] - Rosemary

Human beings transformed into wealth. The same alchemy, the same meticulous documentation The same, the same, the same, the same, the same.

[00:22:32.360] – Rosemary : Time.

[00:22:35.820] - Rosemary

The European traders and colonisers speak constantly of the future, far-flung future markets, contracts, and profits. Future lands to confiscate and colonise.

[00:22:48.060] - Robinson

Time for them is a grid extending endlessly forward.

[00:22:52.160] - Rosemary

For the captives, time is the past and the now, rooted in what is experienced or the immediate future, the coming harvest.

[00:23:01.040] - Robinson

The next moon, the rains.

[00:23:04.980] - Rosemary

For them, soon means when circumstances allow, not a fixed point on a European trader's pocket watch. Here, the traders impose their timeline, the crossing time, the decades and centuries time.

[00:23:22.260] - Robinson

The new world time.

[00:23:26.120] - Rosemary

This is all meaningless to the captives, and so they wait... In limbo time.

EP07 : MEANWHILE IN EUROPE

DESCRIPTION

Dark Bullion EP07: MEANWHILE IN EUROPE *(30 minutes)*

This episode examines how the Atlantic slave trade became democratized across 17th-century Europe, focusing on the **Dutch Republic**, **France**, and **Britain**. It details the evolution from royal monopolies to common investment, revealing how **ordinary citizens** :clerks, shopkeepers, artisans, and widows, purchased shares in slave trading companies.

The episode explores **Amsterdam's** financial innovations, **Nantes'** merchant dynasties, and **Liverpool's** dominance through supporting industries in **Birmingham** and **Manchester**. It highlights the economic infrastructure, institutional wealth, and Age of Enlightenment contradictions that enabled mass participation in the trade across all levels of European society.

[00:00:02.420] - Robinson

In the 17th century, we are halfway through 400 years of Atlantic slave trade. For centuries, European powers have been fighting each other at home and abroad for religion, for territory, for trade routes, for colonial dominance.

[00:00:30.000] - Robinson

Their revolts, rebellions, and forever wars, bringing poverty, destruction, and great plagues propagated by wars... upon themselves. And now they compete for control of the Atlantic slave trade, waging a war of enslavement upon Africa.

[00:01:00.000] - Robinson

The trade evolves from royal monopolies to common investors. The Dutch Republic, France, and Britain: three nations, three systems, thousands upon thousands of ordinary people Clerks, shopkeepers, artisans, widows, investing in, working for, and consuming the fruits of the triangular trade.

[00:01:32.720] - Rosemary

Episode 7: Meanwhile in Europe.

[00:01:38.660] - Rosemary

The Dutch Republic. Officially, the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. **Amsterdam, 1635**.

[00:01:55.020] - Robinson

Water laps against barges unloading cargo. Their goods come from ships anchored in the nearby harbor, timber from the Baltic, spices from the East Indies, and sugar barrels, stamped with the West India Company seal. The brick facades (sometimes four stories high), are fitted with hoisting beams and gables.

[00:02:24.840] - Rosemary

In the narrow alleys and passages, merchants in black cloaks and white roughs negotiate in a babble of languages. And near the Rokin Canal, where the new stock exchange stands, an excited queue of investors awaits. This is the so-called golden age of the Dutch Republic, a cultural and economic flowering made possible by global networks such as their West India Company Slave Trade.

[00:03:09.340] - Robinson

The rising middle and lower classes can now afford investments once reserved for the wealthy.

[00:03:17.940] - Rosemary

Rembrandt's settings and Vermeer's domestic scenes do not reveal the connection between slavery and wealth. And the landscapes and seascapes that celebrate Dutch prosperity are carefully sanitized.

[00:03:40.880] - Robinson

The Dutch Republic refined medieval Italian banking innovations and the experiments of earlier trading companies.

[00:03:54.320] - Rosemary

In 1635, a small investor, a clerk in Rotterdam, a shopkeeper in The Hague, or a widow in Amsterdam, can all purchase shares in the Dutch West India Company.

[00:04:08.780] - Robinson

And own their little piece of the slave trade cake.

[00:04:15.960] - Robinson

Our little Dutch widow can attend shareholder meetings, vote on company policy, and she need never worry about the details of how the money was produced.

[00:04:30.000] - Rosemary

But she can't really be blamed, can she?

[00:04:36.800] - Rosemary

Can she?

[00:04:40.840] - Robinson

The Dutch Republic does not need religious tricks like Portugal's Papal Bulls or Britain's Curse of Ham. They have pioneered something more enduring... the separation of profit from morality.

[00:05:07.940] - Robinson

Dutch ships carried 500,000 enslaved people during the trade, a relatively small number compared to, for example, the Portuguese. But Dutch merchants in Curaçao, the slave trade's central warehouse, brokered the sale of hundreds of thousands more for Spanish, French, and British buyers.

[00:05:33.020] - Rosemary

In the Republic, to the Reformed commoner, success in business is a sign of God's favor. For example, a shareholder can attend church services on Sunday and collect their divine dividends on Monday.

[00:06:00.000] - Rosemary

The Republic requires an extensive workforce for the trade. For example, gunsmiths to produce custom firearms for the African market.

[00:06:15.760] - Robinson

Dutch muskets, renowned for their reliability in damp conditions, become a preferred trade good along the Guinea Coast.

[00:06:30.000] - Robinson

The Good Life: Coffeehouses proliferate across Amsterdam. Exotic spaces where merchants gather to strike deals, drive hard bargains, and consume vast quantities of plantation coffee, and tobacco from Suriname.

[00:06:56.580] - Rosemary

Suriname, the Dutch colony on South America's northeast Coast. Over 300,000 black Africans are shipped to Suriname for work on plantations under notoriously brutal conditions, often in infested swamps.

[00:07:20.700] - Robinson

Tobacco leaves from Suriname, an altogether milder flavor than the Virginia variety, becomes the preferred smoke of the Dutch. In Amsterdam alone, hundreds are employed in cutting and curing the leaves that arrive by the barrel.

[00:07:43.940] - Rosemary

Colonial goods are all over Amsterdam. Mahogany from Suriname, rare ebony torn from diminishing forests in the East Indies. Dark, dense timber that Dutch craftsmen shape into elaborate furniture and inlay with ivory from West African elephants.

[00:08:11.020] - Robinson

By the 1670s, the golden age has burnt out. The Dutch Republic's grand design to dominate the Atlantic slave trade has failed.

[00:08:30.000] - Rosemary

In Amsterdam, the directors reorganize. Their new strategy is practical. They administer Curaçao's slave depot, their plantations, and lucrative Asiento contracts. They transport a further 350,000 enslaved Africans, and Amsterdam becomes a financial capital of Europe that will outlast the trade... by centuries.

[00:09:15.000] - Robinson

France, Nantes, **mid-18th century**. Inside the hub of France's colonial trade, ships crowd the Loire River and merchant houses jostle for space along the quays. In the warehouses, sacs of green coffee beans, barrels of brown sugar, leek molasses, and indigo casks stain the floorboards.. blue.

[00:09:51.740] - Rosemary

Prosperity flows from Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), across the Atlantic to France. The ship owners who organize these voyages divide the cost into bite-size portions. A triangular voyage from Europe to Africa to the Americas and back home to Europe takes 14 to 18 months.

[00:10:19.040] - Robinson

The returns on investment are often modest and are comparable to government bonds. But boring old bonds offer no hope of fortunes made over night. No possibility of transforming a lowly shopkeeper into a man of means.

[00:10:37.840] - Rosemary

The slave trade offers rags to riches, merchant to magnate... dreams.

[00:10:47.730] - Robinson

Magnates. Like the Montaudouin family in Nantes. René Montaudouin outfits L'Hercule, Nantes' first slave voyage. Over the decades, they outfit 357 slave ships and become one of the city's wealthiest dynasties.

[00:11:11.120] - Rosemary

But Nantes' merchants are small fry compared to Antoine Crozat, the wealthiest man in Paris, in fact, in France. He directs the Compagnie de Guinée, one of the largest slave trading companies operating between Nantes and Saint-Domingue. He also supplies enslaved people to the Spanish colonies.

[00:11:40.920] - Robinson

Crozat, using slave trade money, builds a magnificent home for his daughter. That building will later become Le Palais de l'Élysée, official residence of France's President.

[00:11:58.900] - Robinson

The French slavery investment model is intimate, direct.

[00:12:02.480] - Rosemary

The system is nigh bulletproof. Each risk is spread across multiple investors.

[00:12:12.280] - Robinson

But Nantes involvement is not limited to investors. It provides an entire army of artisans that France's slave trade relies on. The city's boat yards expand dramatically. In 1700, they covered just over 3,000 square meters. Sixty years later, they cover over 50,000. Nantes becomes France's first merchant shipbuilder. Carpenters, caulkers, sailmakers, rope makers, all find steady work building the ships that cross the Atlantic.

[00:12:56.960] - Robinson

These are the carpenters...

[00:12:57.980] - Robinson, Rosemary

These are the carpenters. Who shape the hulls. Who shape the hulls that carry the sails.

[00:13:02.720] - Robinson

That catch the wind...

[00:13:04.620] - Robinson, Rosemary

That power the ships...

[00:13:07.100] - Rosemary

That cross the Atlantic.

[00:13:15.620] - Rosemary

Textile workshops are also in high demand. In the mid-18th century, the city's workshops begin producing Indienne printed textiles.

[00:13:27.180] - Robinson

But these textiles aren't for French consumers. They're made specifically for the African market, with patterns and colors chosen to appeal to African traders who exchange them for captives. Although Indienne were initially imported from India, as the name indicates, French merchants soon learned how to re-appropriate them locally.

[00:13:52.960] - Rosemary

They account for at least half the value of a slave ship's cargo. In the workshops, women's hands do much of the detailed work. Their labor, paid less than men's, helps keep costs down, and profits up.

[00:14:13.500] - Robinson

The pattern maker, the printer, the packer. All contribute their skill to the trafficking machine.

[00:14:33.880] - Robinson

The city's economy has completely reorganized itself around the trade. The French government not only permits slavery, it actively rewards it. The state pays a bounty on each captive sold to the colonies. The slave trade, therefore, becomes both profitable and patriotic.

[00:15:02.780] - Rosemary

Despite, or perhaps because of, the city's dominance in the trade, black people appear in France.

[00:15:10.560] - Robinson

At this time, 700 black people are counted in Nantes. Many work as domestic servants for bourgeois tradespeople.

[00:15:20.440] - Rosemary

This leads King Louis XVI to complain. In 1777, he publishes...

[00:15:27.560] - Amy

La Déclaration pour la Police des Noirs.

[00:15:31.160] - Rosemary

He says...

[00:15:32.010] - Amy

"Their numbers in the cities, especially in the capital, are causing the greatest disorders."

[00:15:38.200] - Rosemary

And he continues...

[00:15:39.390] - Amy

"We expressly forbid all our subjects to bring into our kingdom any black mulatto or other people of color of either sex."

[00:15:50.540] - Rosemary

But the declaration immediately creates exceptions. It allows colonial elites to be accompanied by one black servant on their voyage home. The said servant must then be stored at the port of arrival until the first available vessel to return them.

[00:16:10.260] - Robinson

A deposit of 1,000 livres will be recovered when the servant is returned to their country, which, of course, rarely occurs.

[00:16:20.140] - Rosemary

The king cannot stop slave traders from bringing home their exotic servants, nor cute little black children as pets for their household. So instead, he taxes the practice and profits from it.

[00:16:41.400] - Robinson

New mansions rise, their facades decorated with carved stone masks evoking the sea, the trade, and Africa.

[00:17:03.040] - Robinson

By 1789, 12% of the entire French workforce makes a living in trades connected to slavery.

[00:17:12.480] - Robinson

Footnote: 1789.

[00:17:15.420] - Amy

The French Revolution begins, declaring that all men are born free and equal.

[00:17:23.820] - Robinson

End of footnote.

[00:17:27.640] - Rosemary

The Atlantic ports boom while the rest of France starves, while peasants can't afford bread. The state is drowning in debt from wars while colonial trade reaches record profits.

[00:17:46.140] - Robinson

When revolutionaries raise the question of abolishing slavery, Nantes, reacts with alarm.

[00:17:53.980] - Rosemary

They seek to prolong the slave trade by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul, for they have become addicted to the taste of slavery.

[00:18:18.140] - Robinson

Britain, Liverpool, 1755. The Mersey River runs thick with commerce. Ships crowd the docks. Some are being fitted out for Africa. Others have newly returned.

[00:18:42.520] - Robinson

Along the waterfront, warehouses emerge.

[00:18:47.620] - Rosemary

Inside them, cotton from Manchester, crates of metal objects from Birmingham, barrels of spirits destined for the Guinea Coast.

[00:18:59.580] - Robinson

And a soundscape of soaring, hammering, and orders shouted above the din.

[00:19:06.520] - Robinson

Outside, a forest of masts.

[00:19:11.740] - Rosemary

In 1700, Liverpool was a modest town of just 5,000. By the end of the century, it will reach 80,000.

[00:19:30.000] - Robinson

The city's wealth is manifested in stone. New churches rise, their steeples piercing the sky. They are supported by donations from merchants whose fortunes derive from the triangular trade.

[00:19:48.660] - Robinson

Footnote?

[00:19:49.740] - Amy

Footnote: The triangular trade describes a system, not an individual ship's route. Slave ships were purpose-built, to carry human cargo and not well adapted to regular goods. Therefore, after delivering African captives to the Americas, they often return to Europe partially empty or with ballast. Sugar, tobacco, and cotton were typically shipped by a separate fleet of cargo vessels. End of footnote.

[00:20:27.980] - Robinson

Grand townhouses, like the new streets, the Haywoods, the Earls, the Cunliffes, all respected slave merchant families whose names appear again and again in the port's records. They have each made immense fortunes, outfitting dozens, sometimes hundreds, of slaving voyages.

[00:20:56.260] - Robinson

They will leave behind them perpetual legacies of affluence and privilege.

[00:21:06.200] - Rosemary

In 1698, the infamous Royal African Company's monopoly breaks. Private traders, called separate traders, can now operate freely. Britain's system has matured and the trade has moved north. Liverpool dominates.

[00:21:29.520] - Rosemary

At this stage, the end of the 17th century, Liverpool ships have transported one and a half million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. More than any other British port. More than Bristol and London combined.

[00:21:49.940] - Robinson

In London, Lloyd's coffee shop covers the risks, keeping the industry afloat. The Flying Post Journal of the 12th of December 1702 reads: "A Negro maid..."

[00:22:08.140] - Amy

"A Negro maid, aged about 16 years, much pitted with the smallpox, speaks English well. Having a piece of her left ear bit off by a dog. She hath on a striped stuffed waistcoat and petticoat. Absented herself from her master, Captain Benjamin Quelch. If anyone brings her to Mr. Lloyd's coffee house in Lombard Street, they shall have a guinea reward and reasonable charges."

[00:22:37.060] - Robinson

Footnote.

[00:22:38.320] - Amy

Footnote: Lloyd's coffee house. Present day, Lloyds Insurance's website *Mea Culpa* page states, "From 1640 to the early 19th century, an estimated 3.2 million enslaved African people were transported by Britain's vast shipping industry. Lloyds was the global center for ensuring that industry." They say, "We are deeply sorry for the Lloyds market's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. It is part of our shared history that caused enormous suffering and continues to have a negative impact on black and ethnically diverse communities today." End of footnote.

[00:23:28.380] - Robinson

Britain offers a wide range of mechanisms, company shares, voyage partnerships, insurance syndicates, and direct licenses. The most comprehensive system of mass participation in the trade.

[00:23:43.680] - Rosemary

In Anglican Britain, there is no shortage of justifications for investing in the trade. The monarchy and the church both sanction and participate in it.

[00:23:55.500] - Rosemary

In 1713, Queen Anne declares, "I We have insisted and obtained that the Asiento for furnishing the Spanish West Indies with Negroes shall be made with us, for the term of 30 years, in the same manner as it hath been enjoyed by the French for 10 years past."

[00:24:20.040] - Robinson

Her successors, George I and II, hold substantial shares in the trade. And if it's good enough for the king and queen, well...

[00:24:34.380] - Robinson

You are perhaps, quite rightly, sick of hearing of the church's own particular brand of callousness. However, this specific instance should not go unnoted.

[00:24:47.220] - Rosemary

The *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* is the Church of England's Missionary Organization. The 300 enslaved people working on the missionaries' plantations in Barbados are branded with the word SOCIETY, indicating they are church property. The fruits of their labor trickle back to England to fund the society's missionary work. News from the colonies is slow, expensive, and carefully controlled. The SPG manages its own narrative through sermons and published reports.

[00:25:33.600] - Robinson

Up in Liverpool, the slave trade is akin to a civic faith, and Liverpool's dominance requires more than ships and merchants. It demands an entire support system and finds it in Birmingham, the workshop of the slave trade.

[00:25:52.100] - Rosemary

In the cramped manufactories of Birmingham and the Black Country, metalworkers diligently produce the tools of the trade... the shackling, neck iron, and chain.

[00:26:09.060] - Robinson

The Midland's metal industries expand throughout the 18th century. Birmingham's population explodes from 15,000 in 1700 to 70,000 by the end of the century. The Trade provides steady demand and reliable contracts year after year after year.

[00:26:32.900] - Rosemary

Throughout the trade, the demand for and thus the price of slavery-produced commodities varies. Markets evolve and consumers desire change. Sugar remains high throughout. But cotton is what really puts the north of England on the map.

[00:26:58.840] - Robinson

Raw cotton arrives arrives, first from plantations in the Caribbean and then progressively from the cotton kingdom of the dark, deep south. It travels to Lancashire to the new mill towns rising along the rivers. Manchester, Rochdale, Oldham, Bolton.

[00:27:26.100] - Robinson

In these mills, thousands of workers, men, women, children, spin and weave the cotton into cloth. Some of the cotton remains in Britain. Cloth, once expensive, is now affordable to the working people. The rest is bundled and shipped to the African Coast as trade goods to be exchanged for more captives who will grow more cotton, which will produce more cloth.

[00:28:00.580] - Rosemary

And the wealth this generates transforms the north of England. Mills multiply, railways connect the factories, canals carry the cotton. And so the fortune made from slave-grown cotton build libraries, town halls, and universities. Manchester evolves from a modest town into an industrial metropolis.

[00:28:30.000] - Robinson

The *Age of Enlightenment* glows brightly across Europe. Philosophers denounce enslavement as morally reprehensible, yet introduce creative caveats and conditions. John Locke, for example, proclaims that one person cannot, or rather should not, enslave another. Yet he owns stock in slave trading companies.

[00:29:14.240] - Robinson

The *Enlightened* avoid the thorny subject of European colonialism, like the plague.

EP08: ATLANTIC — Part 1: OUTWARD BOUND

DESCRIPTION

January 1793. As France declares war on Britain, Captain Samuel Gamble takes command of the Sandown on the Thames and prepares for a slave trading voyage to the West African coast. Delayed by embargoes, stripped of crew by the Royal Navy, and stalked by French privateers, the Sandown makes its way south past Madeira, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde, arriving at the Isles of Los in June, late, and already losing men to fever.

[00:00:02.670] - Robinson

The Great Western Ocean, better known as the Atlantic Ocean, represents a quarter of the world's water surface. During the Age of Discovery, it separates the Old World of Afro-Eurasia from the New World of the Americas, or connects the two worlds, depending on one's objectives. Norsemen were the first to cross the Atlantic in the 10th century. However, it was the voyages of Christopher Columbus centuries later that ushered in the new age of exploration and the colonization of the New World by the old.

[00:00:58.220] - Robinson

Episode 8: Atlantic.
Part 1: Outward Bound.

[00:01:18.380] - Rosemary

January 1793.

[00:01:24.990] - Rosemary

The Sandown merchant ship is moored on the River Thames at the hamlet of Ratcliffe, commonly known as Sailor Town, a place of ill repute that Charles Dickens described as a harbor of everlasting mud oozing into the streets. It is, however, the closest practical landing spot to the City of London.

[00:01:56.240] - Robinson

Samuel Gamble, an experienced ship captain, takes possession of the Sandown on behalf of a syndicate of investors who have chartered the vessel. Gamble's mission is to sail to the Isles of Los, a key trading hub on the windward coast of Africa. And then exchange goods for 250 captives and transport them to Jamaica.

[00:02:28.160] - Robinson

The recent Act to Regulate the Carrying of Slaves, passed by Parliament, is in theory supposed to limit the number of captives that can legally be carried on a ship. The Sandown, based on its size, has a captive cargo capacity of 280.

[00:02:51.780] - Rosemary

Gamble will maintain a detailed logbook of his voyage on board the Sandown.

[00:02:58.920] - Gamble

The logbook is entitled *A Journal of an Intended Voyage by God's Permission from London Towards Africa, from Hence to America, In the Good Ship Sandown, by me, Samuel Gamble, Commander*.

[00:03:14.620] - Rosemary

Note the mention of "by God's permission" in the title. Gamble isn't concerned about documenting the potentially incriminating details of the voyage, because he apparently has God on his side.

[00:03:35.340] - Robinson

As a result of Professor Bruce L. Mouser's painstaking work deciphering and annotating Gamble's log, we have a unique view of the Atlantic crossing. The logbook is preserved at the Royal Museum Greenwich in England. To begin at the beginning.

[00:04:02.180] - Gamble

Wednesday the 23rd of January, year 1793.

[00:04:10.010] - Gamble

Fine, pleasant weather. Received on board: 40 large barrels of beef, 20 barrels of pork, 19 small wooden casks of butter.

[00:04:22.740] - Robinson

Gamble also receives 980 kegs of gunpowder, naturally of inferior quality, but considered adequate for the African traders.

[00:04:37.350] - Rosemary

Over the following weeks, Gamble receives further provisions and equipment such as firearms, large iron handcuffs, neck chains, and collars. A slave hearth and a furnace are also loaded on board... The enslaved must cook their own food.

[00:05:03.420] - Rosemary

During this period, Gamble begins recruiting. The crew prepares for the long voyage ahead and adapt the ship, which will be carrying captives for the first time. By cutting holes in the

woodwork for ventilation. *The Shipping and Carrying Slaves Act* also stipulates that a captain must provide sufficient and wholesome food to, ironically, the crew. And it lists the quantities of meat, etc., expected in a daily diet.

[00:05:41.940] - Robinson

The 1st of February, 1793.

[00:05:46.830] - Robinson

Following the beheading of Louis XVI just a week ago, and the French ambassador being expelled from Britain, France declares war on Britain. The voyage therefore will unfold under heightened risk.

[00:06:13.100] - Robinson

The River Thames is now teeming with Royal Navy warships and French schooners seized as prizes of war. There are also merchant ships waiting for letters of royal permission to recruit seamen and to set sail. The British vessels are facing constant danger from roaming French privateers and naval forces.

[00:06:39.430] - Rosemary

Insurance costs are constantly rising, and the government is tightening restrictions on trade and recruitment. Of course, fewer ships in the Atlantic means higher prices for those that succeed. The greater the risk, the bigger the bounty.

[00:07:01.430] - Gamble

Tuesday, the 19th of February.

[00:07:04.830] - Rosemary

At 8 PM, a Royal Navy frigate comes alongside and impresses (requisitions) several of Gamble's freshly recruited seamen.

[00:07:14.780] - Robinson

Gamble does not yet have permission to recruit. Therefore, he loses both the seamen and the month's advance wages he paid them.

[00:07:26.780] - Rosemary

Trade, at present, appears totally at a standstill, due to the embargo. When the embargo is finally lifted, along with the risk of losing more men to the Navy, Gamble begins the slow departure down the Thames.

[00:07:46.440] - Gamble

Sunday, the 7th of April.

[00:07:50.000] - Gamble

At 10 AM got underway, in company of the Annabella for St. Kitts and the Nigia for the Straits.

[00:08:02.070] - Robinson

And so the Sandown wends its way down the Thames, around the coast, past Ramsgate, past the White Cliffs of Dover, past Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

[00:08:20.920] - Gamble

Very dull and hazy, saw a strange sail. One of the men-of-war gave chase.

[00:08:36.810] - Robinson

Early May, Gamble decides to risk moving the Sandown away from the protection of the convoy and proceed toward Africa alone. He moves southwards, past Madeira, past the Canary Islands. Near the Barbary Coast, Gamble comments on the importance of being extremely careful...

[00:09:11.000] - Gamble

NB: It is absolutely necessary for everyone bound to the southward to be very careful of making allowances for the indraft into the straits, for fear of the Barbary Coast and of being sold for slaves...

[00:09:27.370] - Rosemary

and the hunter be captured by the prey.

[00:09:37.030] - Gamble

Thursday, the 23rd of May.

[00:09:39.630] - Gamble

Fine, steady breezes, the sky clear and of a beautiful azure. Till near sunset, when clouds begin to rise to the westward, and a gentle dew descends...

[00:09:52.730] - Rosemary

Well, well, Captain Gamble, quite the poet.

[00:10:03.070] - Rosemary

In late May, the Sandown drops anchor at Cape Verde, where Gamble spends a week provisioning. He enters copious notes into the logbook, describing the scenery and commenting disparagingly on the local people.

[00:10:24.550] - Gamble

The island is ruled chiefly by a Portuguese bishop who is sole judge and jury throughout the Cape Verde. The priests are in general here a detestable set, some of them soliciting the doctor for relief in a "certain disorder".

[00:10:45.670] - Robinson

He is quite likely referring to venereal diseases. The Sandown leaves Cape Verde, and so begins the perilous part of the voyage.

[00:11:13.480] - Gamble

Monday the 3rd of June.

[00:11:15.570] - Gamble

The weather, very warm. Several of the ship's company bad with biles.

[00:11:20.730] - Robinson

He is speaking of malaria.

[00:11:22.290] - Gamble

Two in the doctor's list feverish.

[00:11:26.320] - Robinson

Incubation ranges from 7 to 14 days. The patient suffers from periods of chills, shaking, and headaches, followed by nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, high temperature, exhaustion, and a painfully slow recovery.

[00:11:48.000] - Rosemary

Over the next few days, the Sandown advances towards the Isles of Los, the first stage of Gamble's mission.

[00:11:57.860] - Rosemary

It is now June, the beginning of the rainy season. Gamble had intended to arrive here earlier, but the outbreak of war delayed the Sandown's departure from Britain. The month of June brings tornadoes and a multitude of parasites and fevers.

[00:12:24.370] - Gamble

Wednesday, the 12th of June.

[00:12:29.630] - Rosemary

The Sandown arrives at Factory Island, the most easterly of the Isles of Los and the closest to the African continent. The Isles are a center of intense commercial activity, and Factory Island functions as a major logistical base for repairs, supplies, and skilled labor.

[00:13:00.940] - Robinson

The local slave trade is mediated by resident European and African merchants. Ship captains must operate through these intermediaries rather than trade directly. Coastal traffic is dense in these waters, with the war adding another level of confusion.

[00:13:22.730] - Gamble

Found everything in confusion. They thinking us to be a French ship of war called the Liberty of Bordeaux that had captured 4 Liverpool vessels.

[00:13:36.890] - Robinson

Gamble's instructions are to meet Dr. James Walker, a principal slave trader on the Rio Núñez, and strike an agreement with him for obtaining a cargo of captives.

[00:13:49.190] - Rosemary

He decides to find a safer spot for the Sandown, up a coastal river, hidden from marauding privateers. He prepares the ship's longboat with provisions for 10 days.

[00:14:03.260] - Gamble

Went myself with Mr. J. Kennedy, 4 seamen, and a black boy, to try what success might attend us.

[00:14:19.710] - Rosemary

After several days, Gamble's longboat arrives at Dr. James Walker's trading factory on Rio Núñez.

[00:14:30.680] - Robinson

Walker has lived here for more than 30 years. He arrived on the coast as a slave ship's surgeon and established a factory settlement that the locals call Walkeria.

[00:14:46.990] - Rosemary

Gamble strikes a barter with Walker. The Sandown's entire cargo in exchange for 280 captives to be delivered to the Sandown by the **1st of December**, Walker loans Gamble a sloop and some of his own men, familiar with the local waters, to return to the Isles of Los to fetch the Sandown.

[00:15:21.700] - Gamble

Sunday the 23rd of June arrived safely back on board the Sandown.

[00:15:29.900] - Robinson

And so Gamble learns of an attempt by a French privateer during his absence to take control of the Sandown. He begins to move the ship posthaste from its currently exposed position.

[00:15:52.850] - Gamble

At 4 PM, paid the anchorage fee and got underway.

[00:16:02.140] - Gamble

Tuesday, the 2nd of July.

[00:16:04.500] - Gamble

Progressed up the river past the sandbars.

[00:16:07.700] - Rosemary

Following the Sandown's arrival on the coast, violent storms have struck every 24 hours. Thunder, lightning, torrential rain. The Deluge.

[00:16:22.870] - Gamble

From the first of our arrival till the middle of July, the whole of the ship's crew continued very healthy. When a general complaint made its appearance, all about in the course of 2 nights, 16 were down in a raging fever.

[00:16:41.290] - Robinson

Yellow fever. The disease can kill you within 72 hours. First the fever and yellowing skin, then black vomit, delirium, and death. Treatments like bleeding off copious amounts of blood,

blistering the scalp and stomach, or doses of opium generally hasten death rather than preventing it.

[00:17:13.410] - Robinson

Walker finds a building to serve as a hospital. He has fires lit inside to dry it out and sets his African workers to clearing the surrounding bush.

[00:17:26.440] - Gamble

Tuesday, 30th of July.

[00:17:28.380] - Gamble

Still continues, very disagreeable weather. 18 in the doctor's list, some very dangerously ill and delirious.

[00:17:41.200] - Gamble

At 11 PM...

[00:17:43.430] - Robinson

(the first death)

[00:17:44.730] - Gamble

...departed this life, mr. James McKee, second mate.

[00:17:52.240] - Robinson

The next morning, Gamble goes ashore to bury the second mate, then returns to inventory his clothes and nail his trunk shut.

EP08: ATLANTIC — Part 2: ON THE COAST

DESCRIPTION

Stranded on the Rio Núñez, Gamble waits for captives that are painfully slow to arrive. Yellow fever, dysentery, and malaria tear through his crew. The young seamen die one after another, buried, their clothes auctioned, their trunks nailed shut. The French privateer Renaud prowls the coast. The Fula people, who control the slave paths from the interior, halt supply in a price dispute. Month after month, the climate, disease, and the mechanics of the trade grind everyone down, crew and captives alike.

[00:00:20.920] - Gamble

August.

[00:00:25.350] - Rosemary

The weather remains miserable. Continuous rain day and night. The crew, already decimated, continues to deteriorate. Two seamen, aged 18 and 23, die on the same day. A third, aged 25, follows 2 days later. For each death, Gamble must pay the local ruler a duty. Every man on board is now sick except Gamble and the doctor.

[00:01:07.650] - Gamble

Got 4 natives from the shore, employed them in scraping and washing betwixt decks, got fires fore and aft, and smoked the vessel with tobacco.

[00:01:21.760] - Robinson

By mid-August, the Sandown is effectively stranded. With his crew incapacitated, Gamble cannot receive enslaved cargo or prepare the ship for the Atlantic crossing. Gamble helps Walker load a sloop with goods to be exchanged for 10 captives. Walker is bound for the Rio Pongo, some 60 miles to the south, where another ship awaits. The rest of August continues with tornadoes, thunder, and sickness.

[00:02:10.960] - Rosemary

Gamble is now on his third bout of fever since entering the river. The only interruption of note is a message that a prowling French privateer intends to seize Walker's sloop containing the goods to be exchanged for 10 captives. And news that—

[00:02:32.760] - Gamble

4 of the whites, a little further up the river, dead. This last week.

[00:02:45.160] - Gamble

September.

[00:02:49.870] - Rosemary

Walker has been using his workers to unload the Sandown's cargo, enticing manufactured goods from England into his store.

[00:02:59.120] - Robinson

But he cannot fill the order from the Rio Nuñez alone. So he sends the ship *Venus*, flying American colours to avoid French or British privateers, 200 miles south along the coast to a place named Cape Mount to collect 120 enslaved people.

[00:03:24.710] - Gamble

This day, the wild bees took possession of the afterpart of the ship, got large fires, and smoked them away with tobacco. They are so numerous here that they often drive every person out of the towns, killing goats, fowls, and every domestic animal that comes in their way. Their vengeance sometimes continues 3 or 4 days.

[00:03:54.060] - Rosemary

The atmosphere is so tainted that a hog killed at 7 in the morning is rotten by 2 in the afternoon, and half of it has to be thrown overboard. Nothing holds. Nothing keeps. Everything is falling apart.

[00:04:21.240] - Gamble

Friday the 13th of September.

[00:04:28.110] - Rosemary

The worst of the weather is ending, but a new illness has appeared among the crew. The flux, a bloody dysentery causing severe dehydration, which unless stopped quickly means death.

[00:04:46.060] - Robinson

Along with Gamble's copious botanical descriptions and a detailed drawing, appears the phrase, "Received on board one boy, 4 feet 4 and a half inches." Gamble names him Adam. He is the first enslaved person recorded in the Sandown's manifest and, curiously, the only one given a name.

[00:05:15.340] - Robinson

Word arrives from the Rio Pongo that the French privateer Renaud has seized an English ship and two schooners, and he has been reinforced by a cutter ship from France. He is determined to take the Sandown when she comes out of the river.

[00:05:35.000] - Gamble

Friday the 20th of September.

[00:05:38.970] - Gamble

A schooner arrived from the Isles of Los with news that Mr. Horrocks was dead, being sick only 2 days, and that he turned quite black immediately after his death, from which there is every reason to suspect his having been poisoned.

[00:06:02.300] - Rosemary

Resident traders along this coast live in constant fear of it. They make their servants taste their food, and they never eat alone.

[00:06:16.300] - Rosemary

Horrocks had many enemies. He recently tried to sell African workers who claimed free status, thus provoking a crisis across the region. How ironic that Horrocks should die with a black body.

[00:06:42.810] - Rosemary

Using Walker's ship, the *Venus*, Gamble heads off again to collect captives. They head downriver, anchoring and moving with the tides and moonlight. Gamble and his crew of misfits proceed several miles up a creek. To a small town inhabited by Baga Sitem people, major salt producers, supplying the interior and the coastal trading factories. They also grow vast quantities of rice, used to feed captives during the Middle Passage. Their salt production is so strategic that the Fula people do not raid them for captives.

[00:07:29.760] - Robinson

The Fula control the slave paths. Captives cannot be taken from the interior to the coast without their validation. Gamble's party stays until nightfall. They begin making their way back to the Sandown throughout the night and the following day.

[00:07:55.180] - Rosemary

During Gamble's absence, Peter Fraser, 17 years old, died aboard the Sandown. Gamble buries him with the usual ceremony and the usual death duty payment to the King. There are

no white men able to assist with the burial, so he pays the black workers with extra brandy to help.

[00:08:37.430] - Gamble

Monday the 30th of September.

[00:08:40.110] - Gamble

Went up the river and got 2 white and 1 black carpenters to come and do the necessary duty wanted. Ship's carpenter, very ill.

[00:08:49.300] - Rosemary

The black carpenter is a free tradesman. Gamble sees no contradiction in hiring him to prepare the ship for transporting other black people. The carpenters build the necessaries and a barricado, a heavy wooden barrier across the deck.

[00:09:11.620] - Robinson

The barricado is fitted with holes for blunderbusses. Netting is sometimes added to prevent captives from jumping overboard in desperation. The carpenters also clear a part of the cabin to house women and young children separately from adult men.

[00:09:34.860] - Robinson

Contrary to other recorded accounts, such as those of ship surgeon Alexander Falconbridge, Gamble does not mention any acts of debauchery by his men against the female captives. This could be explained by the fact that such acts on slave ships were par for the course and therefore not noteworthy, or because his crew was so sick they had neither the strength nor the inclination for debauchery.

[00:10:06.440] - Rosemary

The preparation of the ship is plagued by problems. Carelessly assembled, Water barrels have leaked half their contents and must be hauled out and redone. Because during the Middle Passage, every drop of fresh water will count.

[00:10:34.550] - Robinson

The weather is relentlessly hot, sultry, broken only by violent tornadoes with heavy rain.

[00:10:45.670] - Rosemary

At night, leopards, wolves, and other wild beasts howl in the woods close to the riverside.

[00:10:55.470] - Gamble

A leopard last night at 7 o'clock was so audacious as to take a dog from out of Mr. Walker's house near the table when at supper.

[00:11:05.750] - Rosemary

By early October, Only 2 or 3 white seamen are fit for duty. The rest are on the doctor's list.

[00:11:19.730] - Gamble

Sunday the 6th of October.

[00:11:22.450] - Gamble

All the white gentlemen on the river dined on board.

[00:11:26.990] - Robinson

The ship's carpenter is brought back on board from his sick lodgings ashore. He is delirious.

[00:11:36.230] - Gamble

Saturday the 12th of October.

[00:11:41.220] - Gamble

At 5 PM, departed this life after a tedious illness of 11 weeks, Marshall Fair, carpenter, aged 32.

[00:11:53.560] - Rosemary

Throughout, 3 hired African sailors are keeping the ship running, doing the work of the incapacitated crew.

[00:12:04.000] - Rosemary

Gamble receives intelligence that the French privateer Renaud is now offering 10 slaves for a pilot willing to guide him to the Sandown on the Rio Nuñez. He is determined to take or destroy the ship.

[00:12:21.420] - Robinson

In response, Gamble brings 4 carriage guns from the shore onto the Sandown.

[00:12:33.040] - Gamble

The 15th of October.

[00:12:36.190] - Rosemary

There are 3 captives now on board. One boy, one woman, one woman-girl. British captains are categorizing their human cargo by size. Man, man-boy, boy, woman. Woman-girl, or girl. These classifications determine how many bodies a ship of a given tonnage is allowed to carry. They're also used by planters to calculate their workforce requirements.

[00:13:16.440] - Gamble

Sold the deceased people's clothes, great part of which was damaged and rotten, paid the two carpenters their wages for 14 and a half days each. The white one, 15, and the black, 10 bars.

[00:13:34.420] - Robinson

The bar is the standard currency of the coast. Originally the price of an iron bar, now just a unit of accounting. Everything here, labor included, is measured in bars.

[00:13:53.730] - Gamble

Sunday, the 25th of October.

[00:13:57.590] - Rosemary

The first substantial lot of captives is delivered. 5 men sent by local British slave trader John Tilly, the arch rival of Renault, the French privateer.

[00:14:12.600] - Gamble

Thursday, the 31st of October.

[00:14:14.920] - Gamble

Fine, pleasant weather. Have been ill myself, for this several days past, but find myself a great deal better. Went on shore and dined with Mr. Walker.

[00:14:28.970] - Gamble

At 2 AM, James Rutherford, seaman, aged 32 years, departed this life. Interred him, paid the river custom, and sold his clothes by auction.

[00:14:45.420] - Rosemary

The ritual is now grimly familiar.

[00:14:59.320] - Robinson

Two African women are received on board, accused of witchcraft and condemned to enslavement. In total, there are now 8 captives. The Sandown is rigged and ready, but there are no new captives.

[00:15:26.670] - Robinson

The price paid for a captive has dropped by 25%. The Fula people are refusing to send captives to the coast until prices improve. On the other hand, the coastal traders, squeezed by their own rising costs, are refusing to pay more.

[00:15:45.370] - Rosemary

The result is that trading on the Rio Nuñez is now at a standstill.

[00:15:54.950] - Robinson

Word comes that the Nancy, slave ship from Liverpool, has arrived at the Isles of Los after a 2-month passage. During which her captain, the doctor, and a passenger all died.

[00:16:13.650] - Gamble

Saturday, the 9th of November.

[00:16:16.010] - Gamble

Very hot, sultry weather. I have reason to expect that yesterday's tornado will be the last this season, the harmattans having set in.

[00:16:26.850] - Robinson

The harmattan weather brings heavy dew all night, thick fogs at dawn, scorching heat by day, followed by bitter cold.

[00:16:40.350] - Rosemary

Not a single officer has done as much as 10 days' duty since they first arrived in the river. Gamble declares, in what would seem an understatement, that he is fairly tired of his situation. It has to be said, though, that Gamble's current situation is entirely one of his own making, unlike the captives, and unlike some of his own crew.

[00:17:09.900] - Robinson

Many of the young men who signed on to slave ships were lured by false promises, plied with drink, or simply pressed aboard by captains and agents who knew full well what awaited them.

[00:17:22.560] - Robinson

Gamble had made this voyage before. They had not. Other accounts of slave voyages tell of captains and crew brutalising one another as readily as they brutalise the captives. On this voyage there is no need. The climate and disease are taking care of the brutality for them.

EP08: ATLANTIC — Part 3: THE CROSSING

DESCRIPTION

The captives are finally loaded, 250 in all, plus a girl given as a "present." But deaths have already begun before the Sandown leaves African waters. An insurrection costs ten lives. The Middle Passage brings leaking water casks, sickness, and a dwindling crew. At Barbados, most of the remaining seamen desert. Gamble slips out of port ahead of the courts and limps into Kingston with six men managing 226 captives. The market is glutted. Gamble, broken by gout and fever, sells his cargo, secures passage home, and sails for England. His mission is, as he sees it, accomplished, and apparently permitted by God.

[00:00:19.360] - Gamble

Monday, the 11th of November.

[00:00:23.330] - Gamble

Arrived here a schooner belonging to Mr. Walker with slaves on board.

[00:00:33.070] - Robinson

Walker gives Gamble: 1 woman, 3 boys, and 3 girls. These, plus the previous captives, brings the total to 17.

[00:00:50.440] - Gamble

Sunday, the 24th of November.

[00:00:54.600] - Rosemary

A single male captive is delivered. The next day, more captives, bringing the total to 22.

[00:01:05.570] - Robinson

A group of Fula people arrive with news that plenty of captives are on their way down from the interior.

[00:01:11.930] - Rosemary

But Gamble and crew are far too feverish to be enthusiastic.

[00:01:19.320] - Gamble

Wednesday, the 11th of December.

[00:01:23.590] - Rosemary

A man named Philip Beaver arrives. Until some days ago, he was the governor of an abolitionist colony on the island of Bulama along the coast. A brief explanation is in order...

[00:01:42.190] - Rosemary

By the 1790s, a number of British abolitionists are not only campaigning against slavery, the slave trade. They are trying to prove it unnecessary. Their idea is to establish colonies on the West African coast where tropical crops can be grown for the British market, using paid labor rather than enslaved workers.

[00:02:12.910] - Rosemary

Bulama, present-day Bolama, and Freetown are among these experiments.

[00:02:24.500] - Robinson

The settlers are freed Africans, previously enslaved. They have been taken by force from Africa to the Americas, to Britain, and in some cases Nova Scotia, and back again to the African coast.

[00:02:45.150] - Rosemary

The free versus freed distinction matters. The freed are people who have lived inside the system of Atlantic slavery and come out the other side, and are now resettled within sight of the rivers where captives are still being bought and sold.

[00:03:07.390] - Robinson

The full story of these abolitionist colonies, their ambitions, their tangled racial politics, and why they ultimately fail, is too complex to explore here. They require time... And space to unpack...

[00:03:28.850] - Robinson

But without knowing they exist, the passages that follow will make little sense.

[00:03:35.800] - Rosemary

Philip Beaver... He arrives in a cutter, his settlers having abandoned him, and the local people having forced him to flee with what little property he could save. Gamble greets him with a 7-guns salute.

[00:03:54.090] - Gamble

Thursday the 12th of December.

[00:03:56.880] - Gamble

What part of the ship's crew that are able, are employed at sundries. Received on board: 5 men, 1 woman, 1 girl, 1 boy. Total on board: 40.

[00:04:11.430] - Gamble

Rice received.

[00:04:13.390] - Rosemary

A delivery of over 18,000 pounds of rice. Enough, at a pound and a half per person per day, to feed a full cargo for roughly 45 days at sea.

[00:04:31.170] - Gamble

Friday, the 20th of December.

[00:04:34.940] - Rosemary

Dennis McCarthy, age 36, dies... After 5 months of lingering illness.

[00:04:42.650] - Gamble

Begin to be very uneasy, there being no prospect of soon getting away, and all hands very sickly. The medicines nearly expended.

[00:04:53.090] - Rosemary

Old Gamble, has good reason for unease. He has been on this mission for almost a year, with little progress. Most of his crew may not even make it to Jamaica, let alone back home to Britain alive. Will it all have been worth it?

[00:05:19.460] - Robinson

The trading season is well advanced, and Gamble's goal of reaching the Jamaican market at the start of the selling season is slipping away. On top of that, he is stretching his welcome with Walker and running short on goods he can turn into cash.

[00:05:38.990] - Rosemary

Word filters in that a few more captives have been brought down from the interior. And the king of the Fula people is coming to settle the price.

[00:05:51.320] - Gamble

Wednesday the 25th of December.

[00:05:54.490] - Gamble

This being Christmas Day, all the white gentlemen in the river came down and dined. Received on board one man-boy, one woman-girl.

[00:06:11.420] - Gamble

Sunday, the 29th of December.

[00:06:15.980] - Robinson

Gamble sets off down the coast towards Sierra Leone for arms, provisions, and more captives. Two days later, he sights the Isles of Los and drops anchor at the promontory of Factory Island.

[00:06:33.160] - Robinson

It is New Year's Eve. Here endeth the old year.

[00:06:46.580] - Gamble

Wednesday, the 1st of January, 1794.

[00:06:52.280] - Robinson

At the Isles of Los, Gamble finds the Pearl, the vessel he had watched sail away with a large number of captives when his crew was too weak to receive them. It turns out that the Pearl's captives had risen up, killed the captain, and run the ship aground.

[00:07:17.770] - Gamble

Friday, the 3rd of January.

[00:07:20.520] - Rosemary

Gamble stops near the abolitionist settlement of Freetown. He describes the population as about 2,500, mostly colored people. Freetown is in fact populated by the black poor from London

[00:07:38.220] - Robinson

and black loyalists of the American Revolutionary War, to whom the British had promised land in return for their support. However, the land promised is a far cry from the promised land evoked by the colonizers.

[00:08:00.310] - Robinson

News arrives (yes, the news is constantly arriving along this part of the coast) that the ship Venus, meant to bring Gamble 105 captives, has been cut off down at Cape Mount. From Freetown, Gamble makes his way slowly back to the Sandown. Along the way, he secures promises of more captives.

[00:08:29.600] - Gamble

Friday the 17th of January.

[00:08:32.060] - Rosemary

Back at the Sandown, he discovers there has been an insurrection. 7 men and 1 woman have drowned. 2 have run away. 57 captives remain.

[00:08:44.700] - Robinson

New captives, water and firewood, are loaded at a steady pace over the following days.

[00:08:55.270] - Rosemary

There are now 176 captives on board, increasing to 220 by late February.

[00:09:04.900] - Gamble

The 27th of February to March the 8th, 1794.

[00:09:11.140] - Gamble

Hot, scorching, sultry weather. The whole complement of slaves received from Mr. Walker viz. 250... And a girl he made me a present of.

[00:09:26.170] - Rosemary

Some captives are already dying. Two men and one woman of fever, another man of flux. The total is now down to 234, and the Sandown has not even left African waters yet.

[00:09:47.060] - Robinson

Gamble finally begins the journey downriver, but receives word that a French privateer with 20 guns is waiting near the river mouth. He beats a hasty retreat in the opposite direction.

[00:10:06.800] - Robinson

Do you remember the Venus... that was supposed to bring Gamble 105 captives but was cut off down at Cape Mount? Well, the captives, all Wolof people, took the opportunity to seize the vessel, kill the captain, both the mates, and 7 seamen.

[00:10:27.020] - Rosemary

Following that, after a day-long battle with a passing schooner, the weakening captives escaped by swimming ashore. The schooner was able to seize the captive-less Venus as a prize.

[00:10:43.850] - Gamble

The 16th of March.

[00:10:46.300] - Gamble

Received information that Mr. Walker's place was all burned down, but for the fireproof store.

[00:10:55.530] - Rosemary

Gamble decides it's high time he left.

[00:11:00.530] - Gamble

The 27th of March.

[00:11:03.470] - Rosemary

The Sandown is finally at sea, bound for Jamaica.

[00:11:10.790] - Gamble

Tuesday, the 1st of April, 1794.

[00:11:13.840] - Robinson

The ship crawls westward in light, baffling winds. A strong current pulls it south. The trade wind does not settle.

[00:11:24.460] - Rosemary

Sharks circle the vessel. The captives are poorly.

[00:11:29.640] - Gamble

Departed this life... man-slave number 9.

[00:11:39.300] - Gamble

Thursday, the 3rd of April.

[00:11:41.090] - Rosemary

The doctor amputates a man's finger which had become mortified after being bitten by another captive. The cramped conditions are breeding fights among them.

[00:11:52.950] - Robinson

The man dies. That evening.

[00:11:56.950] - Rosemary

Water casks continue to leak. One puncheon is two-thirds empty and another is a third gone.

[00:12:08.560] - Gamble

Sunday the 6th of April.

[00:12:11.730] - Robinson

Some captives have been able to free their hands from their irons. Gamble has them all resecured. Many are suffering from bilious complaints and worms. And becoming emaciated.

[00:12:25.300] - Rosemary

Over the next 10 days, more captives die.

[00:12:39.900] - Gamble

Sunday, the 20th of April.

[00:12:43.340] - Gamble

At 10 AM, counted the slaves, viz., 86 men, 29 man-boys, 30 boys, 40 women, 13 women-girls, and 28 girls. Total on board: 226. 10 lost in the insurrection and 14 dead makes 250. The whole complement received.

[00:13:21.730] - Gamble

Tuesday the 22nd of April.

[00:13:25.050] - Robinson

The chief mate dies of dropsy and a complication of other disorders, aged 27. He has not had 6 weeks of good health since leaving London.

[00:13:38.170] - Gamble

Friday the 25th of April.

[00:13:41.420] - Rosemary

Gamble, decides to divert to Barbados for fresh water, vegetables, and fruit.

[00:13:49.800] - Gamble

Tuesday the 29th of April.

[00:13:53.100] - Robinson

The Sandown drops anchor at Carlisle Bay, Barbados. Here, sundry crew members leave the ship without permission. By the next morning, 11 seamen have absconded. 9 of them had joined the Sandown at the Rio Nuñez.

[00:14:14.600] - Gamble

Received an attorney's note that several of the people had made application for them to recover their wages.

[00:14:21.660] - Rosemary

He also learns that French privateers from Martinique, Saint Lucia, and Guadeloupe are prowling nearby. He is effectively stranded.

[00:14:36.150] - Gamble

Buried 2 women girl slaves... numbers 21 and 22.

[00:14:47.050] - Gamble

Thursday, the 1st of May, 1794.

[00:14:50.570] - Rosemary

A panicked Gamble tries desperately to raise cash, asking his employer's permission to sell 2 or 3 captives to cover his costs.

[00:15:00.670] - Robinson

Nothing works. The absconded crew's lawyers threaten to seize the Sandown in the Court of Admiralty, to remove her rudder and carry her sails ashore.

[00:15:16.610] - Robinson

Two more captives: a woman-girl and a boy, are buried.

[00:15:23.830] - Gamble

Friday, the 2nd of May.

[00:15:25.330] - Rosemary

5 more crew abscond. All of them employing attorneys to recover their wages. 16 of 21 crew have now deserted.

[00:15:38.570] - Gamble

Saturday the 3rd of May.

[00:15:41.000] - Robinson

At 1 in the morning, with the help of a Liverpool ship's crew, Gamble slips out of Carlisle Bay before the court can serve papers. The ship is in great distress. Only Gamble himself and 5 others remain to manage the vessel and 226 captives.

[00:16:00.540] - Gamble

The 4th of May.

[00:16:02.940] - Rosemary

They pass Saint Lucia and Martinique, but are unable to stop for want of hands to manage the sails.

[00:16:10.090] - Robinson

The captives are very sickly, complaining of gripes and looseness. Nothing on board gives them relief. The dead continue.

[00:16:19.780] - Rosemary

They sight Hispaniola and then Jamaica.

[00:16:25.650] - Gamble

The 12th of May.

[00:16:27.910] - Robinson

They anchor at Port Royal, where HMS Powerful has already buried half her crew. Gamble goes to Kingston to present himself to his employers, Messrs. Kennedy, to whom the cargo is consigned.

[00:16:46.000] - Robinson

He returns to find 9 captives on the doctor's list.

[00:16:51.060] - Rosemary

He is informed that upwards of 3,000 captives are in the harbor for sale, and that 60,000 have been sold in the past 12 months.

[00:17:02.990] - Robinson

The market is glutted.

[00:17:08.580] - Gamble

Wednesday, the 14th of May.

[00:17:11.920] - Robinson

Fresh beef and vegetables are brought aboard the Sandown, for the first time in months. Captives are delivered to the Kennedys and sent to sick quarters ashore.

[00:17:25.390] - Rosemary

Spanish buyers come to inspect the human cargo.

[00:17:33.350] - Robinson

Gamble, now very ill with gout and rheumatism, goes ashore to sick lodgings. Kingston is overwhelmed. Yellow fever rages, killing Europeans within 24 hours of reaching the hospital. The city is overrun with French refugees from Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Saint Lucia, driving up prices for all provisions.

[00:18:03.600] - Rosemary

Planters complain that they cannot feed the captives they want to buy. A ship, "the Jemmy", arrives from the Isles of Los with 237 captives. There has been an insurrection during the Middle Passage. 4 were killed and several wounded.

[00:18:27.010] - Gamble

Tuesday, the 27th of May.

[00:18:29.440] - Robinson

Gamble hands over the Sandown's papers and disbursements to the Kennedys. He is bedridden for much of June and July with gout, cramp, rheumatism, followed by fever, sometimes delirious.

[00:18:48.760] - Gamble

Monday the 21st of July.

[00:18:51.210] - Robinson

Gamble secures a passage home aboard the ship, "the Benson", bound for Liverpool.

[00:18:58.590] - Rosemary

He pays his doctor's bill and goes down to Port Royal.

[00:19:02.750] - Robinson

By late July, all but 4 of the Sandown's captives are sold.

[00:19:13.610] - Gamble

Friday the 25th of July, 1794.

[00:19:21.840] - Robinson

Gamble will continue to record the homeward-bound journey on the Benson in his logbook, but that part of the journey will be of no great interest to us. And so the Benson gets underway and joins a convoy of 143 vessels escorted by warships.

[00:19:44.430] - Rosemary

They head for England along Jamaica's western coast, past Bluefields Bay, and out, out into the Atlantic.

[00:19:57.300] - Robinson

Gamble's mission is devastatingly accomplished and apparently permitted by God.

[00:20:12.030] - Robinson

The Sandown slave trade voyage demonstrates the persistence of the trade despite war, disease, labor shortages, and the staggering number of deaths among the captives... And the crew.

Sources and Further Reading

A work in progress, not exhaustive, but representative of the research behind each episode.

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Episode 2: West African Peoples

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