

# UNIT SIX

## AFRICA AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD: 1500-1880S

### Africa and the Outside World: 16th to 19th Centuries

This unit explores the dynamic interactions between Africa and the outside world from the 16th to the 19th centuries, setting the stage for European colonization. Key themes include pre-colonial African states, the arrival of European powers, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, legitimate commerce, explorations leading to the Scramble for Africa, and the partition of the continent in the 1880s.

#### Key Terms and Concepts

- **Arma Morocco:** Moroccan military presence in the Niger bend.
- **Usman dan Fodio:** Fulani cleric who led the jihad and established the Sokoto Caliphate.
- **Slave Trade:** The forced movement of Africans to the Americas and elsewhere.
- **Manikongo:** The title for the king of the Kongo Kingdom.
- **Legitimate Trade:** Trade in goods like palm oil and gold, as opposed to the slave trade.
- **Mwene Mutapa:** Title for the ruler of the Mutapa Empire.

### 6.1 Medieval African States

#### 6.1.1 North East and Northern Africa

##### The Funj Sultanate:

- **Origin:** The Funj Sultanate emerged in Nubia in 1504, founded by the Funj people, who originally practiced indigenous religions but later converted to Islam.
- **Conflict and Expansion:** The Funj Sultanate expanded its territory and faced invasions from the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. Despite several defeats, the Funj Sultanate remained a dominant force until its conquest by Egypt in 1821.

## The Rise of the Moroccan Sultanate:

- **Sa'dids Dynasty:** Under Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur (r. 1578-1603), Morocco rose to power, driving out the Portuguese and seizing parts of the Songhay Empire.
- **Decline:** After Ahmad al-Mansur's death, Morocco faced internal struggles and division into rival sultanates. The Alawid Dynasty later restored Moroccan unity in the 17th century

## 6.1.2 Benin, Oyo, Dahomey, and Ashante

### Benin:

- **Peak:** By the late 15th century, the Empire of Benin was flourishing due to its trade with Europeans. Its capital, Benin City, was notable for its advanced urban planning and bronze sculptures.
- **Decline:** The empire began to decline in the 17th century.

### Oyo:

- **Formation:** The Empire of Oyo emerged from Yoruba chieftaincies in the 17th century.
- **Decline:** The empire fell due to invasions and internal rebellions in the 19th century.

### Dahomey:

- **Power:** Established in 1625, Dahomey became a significant player in the transatlantic slave trade. It was known for its female military regiments, the Abomey Amazons.
- **Resistance:** The kingdom resisted French colonialism until its conquest at the end of the 19th century.

### Ashante:

- **Expansion:** By the late 17th century, the Ashante Empire, centered in what is now Ghana, had grown wealthy from gold trade and became a significant power.
- **Decline:** The empire faced challenges due to the decline in gold trade and internal conflicts.

### 6.1.3 Eastern Africa

#### Buganda:

- **Growth:** The Buganda kingdom expanded significantly in the 18th century, with agriculture and trade as key economic activities.

#### Rwanda:

- **Structure:** The Tutsi and Hutu peoples established the kingdom of Rwanda, with the Tutsi forming the ruling class.

### 6.1.4 West and South-Central African Kingdoms

#### The Kingdom of Kongo:

- **Development:** Founded around 1400, Kongo was a centralized kingdom with a strong administrative structure.
- **Decline:** The kingdom suffered due to Portuguese slave raids and internal strife.

#### Torwa, Mutapa, and Rozwi:

- **Torwa:** Emerged in the 15th century, with Khami as its capital. It continued the stonewalling traditions of Great Zimbabwe.
- **Mutapa:** Founded by Mutota, dominated the gold and ivory trade until subjugated by the Portuguese.
- **Rozwi:** Established by Changamire in the 1670s, rivaled the Mutapa Empire until destroyed by Nguni and Ndebele tribes.

### 6.1.5 Southern Africa: The Zulu Kingdom

#### Zulu Kingdom:

- **Formation:** The Zulu Kingdom, under Shaka Zulu (r. 1818-1828), rose to prominence in the early 19th century.
- **Conflict:** The kingdom fought against Boer settlers and later British colonizers but was eventually subdued by the British.

## 6.1.6 The Ottoman Conquest of North Africa

### Ottoman Expansion:

- **Conquest:** The Ottomans conquered Egypt in 1517 and expanded into North Africa, controlling Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia by the end of the 16th century.
- **Administration:** North Africa was governed by Turkish Pashas and Janissaries, with local Arab and Berber rulers exercising practical independence by the 18th century.
- **Decline:** The Ottomans' control weakened, and by the 19th century, various regions saw the rise of local powers and European colonization, including the French in Algeria.

This period marked significant interactions between Africa and external powers, leading to changes that set the stage for the European colonization of the continent.

## Contacts of Africa with the Outside World

### 1. Early Contacts Along the Western and Central African Coasts

#### 1.1. Portuguese Exploration and Expansion

- **Early Portuguese Exploration:** The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore the African coast extensively, starting in the 15th century. This was motivated by a desire to access the gold resources of West Africa directly and bypass Arab and Turkish middlemen who controlled the trade routes to the Far East.
- **Key Discoveries and Settlements:**
  - **1415:** Portugal captured Ceuta (modern-day Morocco) and reached the Canary Islands, which were already claimed by Spain.
  - **1418:** The Portuguese reached Madeira and established a colony at Porto Santo.
  - **1430-1490:** Portuguese explorers mapped the coast from Tangier in Morocco to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa and began accessing the Swahili trading states on the eastern coast.

## 1.2. Portuguese in Central Africa

- **Exploration:**
  - **1482:** Diogo Cão reached the Congo River and claimed the area for Portugal.
  - **1497-98:** Vasco da Gama sailed around Africa to the Swahili ports, paving the way for further Portuguese exploration.
- **Colonial Influence:**
  - **Angola:** The Portuguese established a foothold in Angola, forming alliances with local leaders like the Ngola of Ndongo. Queen Nzinga Mbande led significant resistance against Portuguese colonization until a peace treaty in 1656.
  - **Kongo:** Initially allied with the Portuguese, the Kingdom of Kongo suffered from internal unrest and Portuguese invasions, leading to its decline by the late 17th century.

## 1.3. Swahili Coast and Mozambique

- **Swahili Coast:** Vasco da Gama's discovery of the wealth of Swahili cities led to Portuguese control over several coastal cities, which they later lost to Arabs from Oman in the late 17th century.
- **Mozambique:** Portuguese attempts to control gold mines in Zimbabwe and establish influence in Mozambique were only partially successful. They faced significant resistance from local powers.

## 2. Slavery and Slave Trade in Africa

### 2.1. Indigenous Slavery in Africa

- **Historical Context:** Slavery existed in Africa long before European involvement. Slaves were obtained through warfare, raiding, and kidnapping.
- **Uses of Slaves:**
  - Domestic work, agricultural labor, trade, mining, and military service.
  - Slaves could integrate into families and could sometimes gain freedoms and rights.

### 2.2. Slave Trade Routes

- **Trans-Saharan Trade:** Operating from the 8th century AD, this trade involved the movement of slaves across the Sahara Desert to North Africa and the Mediterranean.
- **Red Sea Trade:** Slaves from the Ethiopian region and Nubia were exported to the Middle East and India.

- **Indian Ocean Trade:** Slaves from East Africa were shipped to the Middle East and plantation islands in the Indian Ocean.

### 2.3. Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

- **Emergence:** Starting in the 16th century with Portuguese involvement, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade became prominent with European colonization of the Americas.
- **Phases:**
  - **Piratic Phase (15th-16th centuries):** Individual traders and adventurers carried out the trade.
  - **Monopolistic Phase (1580s-17th century):** European governments supported trading companies that monopolized the slave trade.
  - **Free Trade Phase (17th century onwards):** Increased competition and individual participation in the trade.
- **Impact:** The trade devastated African societies, with slaves experiencing horrific conditions during capture, transport (Middle Passage), and in plantations in the Americas.

### 2.4. Abolition of the Slave Trade

- **Resistance and Abolitionist Movements:** African resistance and European abolitionist efforts eventually led to the decline of the slave trade.
- **Economic Factors:** The Industrial Revolution made the slave trade less profitable, leading to its abolition by various European countries in the 19th century.
- **Continued Slavery:** Although the Trans-Atlantic slave trade ended, slavery persisted in some regions until the early 20th century.

These early contacts and the slave trade had profound impacts on Africa, shaping its interactions with the outside world and influencing its social, economic, and political landscapes.

## The Effects of Slave Trade on Africa

### 1. Overview

The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the largest and most documented form of slave trade in Africa, transporting an estimated 12 million Africans between 1500 and 1900. This was part of a broader context that included different slave trades. The impacts of this trade were profound and multifaceted, affecting various aspects of African societies.

## 2. Consequences of the Slave Trade

- **Population Impact:**
  - **Extermination of Ethnic Groups:** Some African communities were completely eradicated due to the slave trade.
  - **Expulsion and Displacement:** Certain groups were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands.
  - **Family Disruption:** The trade led to the loss and dislocation of families, with many individuals being torn from their homes.
- **Economic Impact:**
  - **Economic Decline:** The trade drained Africa's productive potential, as manpower was diverted to serve foreign traders rather than developing local economies.
  - **Agricultural Disruption:** Frequent conflicts and warfare hindered local agricultural activities and food production.
- **Political and Social Impact:**
  - **Political Instability:** Societies like the Yoruba and Wolof experienced significant political upheaval due to the trade.
  - **State Development:** The slave trade contributed to the rise of some African states such as Dahomey, Ashante, and Oyo, which capitalized on the trade for their own benefit.
  - **Military and Social Change:** The constant warfare against slave traders fostered a strong fighting spirit and led to the consolidation of tribal confederations and military organizations.

## The Legitimate Trade

### 1. Transition to Legitimate Trade

- **End of Slave Trade:** As the trans-Atlantic slave trade was outlawed, Europeans began focusing on what they termed the "Legitimate Trade." This involved the export of African commodities instead of slaves.
- **New Commodities:**
  - **Gum Arabic:** Used in the European textile industry.
  - **Groundnuts and Palm Oil:** Major exports included groundnuts from Guinea and palm oil from coastal forest zones, with palm oil becoming a key export by the mid-19th century.

## 2. Economic and Social Impact

- **Limited Benefits for Africans:**
  - **Economic Disparity:** The benefits of this trade were concentrated among a few wealthy rulers and merchants, with little overall improvement in the general population's well-being.
  - **Imports from Europe:** Goods like cloth, alcohol, and firearms did not enhance local economies.
- **European Control:** European traders increasingly sought to control internal trade in West Africa, contributing to the "Scramble for Africa" in the late 19th century.

## White Settlement in South Africa

### 1. Early Dutch Settlement

- **Establishment:** In 1652, the Dutch East India Company established a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope to support European ships and protect against rival European powers and indigenous Khoisan.
- **Expansion:**
  - **Boers:** Dutch settlers, known as Boers, were given land to farm. Initial conflicts with the Khoisan resulted in wars and the eventual loss of Khoisan lands.
  - **Slave Labor:** Slaves from West Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Indonesia were imported to work on farms.

### 2. Conflicts and Expansion

- **Khoisan Wars:** The Khoisan faced multiple conflicts with the Dutch, leading to significant loss of land and population.
- **Great Trek:** In the 1830s and 1840s, dissatisfied with British rule, the Boers moved north, creating new Boer colonies.

### 3. Impact on Indigenous Peoples

- **Displacement:** The settlement of Europeans led to the displacement of indigenous Bantu and Khoisan populations, who were pushed into less favorable lands and became a source of cheap labor.

## European Explorers and Missionaries (1770-1870)



## 1. Exploration

- **Objective:** European explorers sought to understand Africa's geography and resources to facilitate trade and exploitation.
- **Notable Explorers:** Richard Burton, John Hanning Speke, James Grant, David Livingstone, and Henry Morton Stanley made significant contributions to the mapping of Africa's major rivers.

## 2. Missionary Activities

- **Early Missions:** Missionaries from various European countries worked in Africa, often among communities already engaged with Europeans through trade.
- **Impact on Colonization:** Missionaries sometimes played a role in advancing European colonial interests, appealing for protection and support from their home governments.

## 3. Legacy

- **Colonial Preparation:** The work of explorers and missionaries laid the groundwork for the eventual colonization of Africa, with European powers seeking to control the continent's resources and establish colonial rule.

## Summary

From 1500 to the late 19th century, Africa experienced significant transformations due to European interactions. The trans-Atlantic slave trade had devastating impacts on African societies, economies, and political structures. The transition to "legitimate trade" did not significantly benefit the majority of Africans. European settlement in South Africa and exploration further reshaped the continent, setting the stage for extensive colonization and exploitation.