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In this image we see a trading post as it appeared in Angola between 1786-7. Slave captives were held in the ground-level enclosure until they could be processed and sold. The caption, in English translation, says: "Quibangua [a type of house] and the interior of a European trading post on the coast of Angola, in Africa." To [learn more about it](#), click on the top link in the "Media Stream" for this chapter.

[Thomas Clarkson](#) - who first thought about the evils of slave-trading when he was a student at Cambridge University's [St. John's College](#) - wrote an award-winning [essay](#) about the topic in 1785.

To better understand his subject, he conducted fact-finding trips. Traveling throughout Britain, on horseback, he obtained firsthand information about the slave-trade.

Later [writing a history](#) of slave-trading - an industry so massive that [its scope can be compared](#) to the modern housing industry - Clarkson relates (in [Chapter 2](#) of his 1839 *History*) how European slave-trading began:

So early as in the year 1503, a few [slaves had been sent](#) from the [Portuguese settlements](#) in Africa into the Spanish colonies in America. In 1511, Ferdinand the Fifth, king of Spain, permitted them to be carried in great numbers. Ferdinand, however, must have been ignorant in these early times of the piratical manner in which the Portuguese had procured them.

Britain joined the slave-trade in 1562, during the reign of Elizabeth I:

The first importation of slaves from Africa, by our countrymen, was in the reign of Elizabeth, in the year 1562.

Clarkson notes [the Queen](#) was greatly concerned about these events:

She [Elizabeth I] seems to have been aware of the evils to which its continuance might lead, or that, if it were sanctioned, the most unjustifiable means might be made use of to procure the persons of the natives of Africa.

Summoning [Captain John Hawkins](#), to brief her regarding his voyage to Africa, the Queen:

expressed her concern lest any of the Africans should be carried off without their free consent, declaring that "it would be detestable, and call down the vengeance of heaven upon the undertakers."

Disregarding Her Majesty's directive, Hawkins commenced centuries of British slave-trade:

Captain Hawkins promised to comply with the injunctions of Elizabeth in this respect, but he did not keep his word; for when he went to Africa again, he seized many of the inhabitants and carried them off as slaves, which occasioned Hill, in the account ['Naval History'] he gives of his second voyage, to use these remarkable words: "Here began the horrid practice of forcing the Africans into slavery, an injustice and barbarity which, so sure as there is vengeance in heaven for the worst of crimes, will some time be the destruction of all who allow or encourage it."

During the ensuing centuries, 'injustice and barbarity' was inflicted on approximately 12 million Africans.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SLAVE-TRADE-BEGINNINGS-Amazing-Grace>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/SLAVE-TRADE-BEGINNINGS-Amazing-Grace>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Large Was the Slave-Trading Industry?

From 1503 (when the Portuguese first began their slave-trading) and 1562 (when the British joined the business), to the 19th century (when laws permitting the practice were finally changed), slave-trading became such a large industry that its size resembled today's housing market.

British slave-trading began in 1562, during the reign of Elizabeth I. Thomas Clarkson, a colleague of William Wilberforce, tracked its history to that start date. Summoning Captain John Hawkins, a ship captain, the Queen cautioned him not to carry-off anyone "without their free consent."

Elizabeth went further, telling Hawkins "it would be detestable, and call down the vengeance of heaven upon the undertakers" if anyone "carried off" Africans without their consent.

Hawkins did not keep his word. A Naval account of his second voyage, by an officer named Hill whom Clarkson quotes, describes the forcible taking of people against their will:

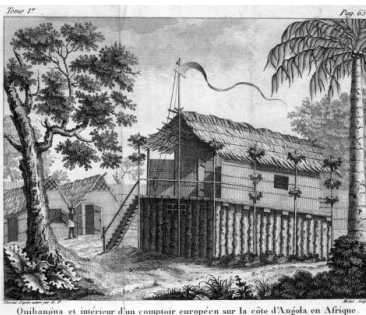
Here began the horrid practice of forcing the Africans into slavery, an injustice and barbarity which, so sure as there is vengeance in heaven for the worst of crimes, will some time be the destruction of all who allow or encourage it.

Queen Elizabeth I was worried about the very types of slave-trading abuses which soon followed its inception. Yet ... can you think of any African who would be "carried off" with "their free consent?" Explain your answer.

If it is highly unlikely anyone would agree to be carried-off, was the Queen tacitly encouraging slavery, turning a blind eye toward it or just not understanding how human beings are capable of harming each other?

Historians liken the size of the slave-trading business to the size of today's housing market. Does that seem possible, or not possible, to you? Explain your answer.

Media Stream



European Trading Post in Angola - Slave Trade

Image from "Voyage a la cote occidentale d'Afrique, fait dans les années 1786 et 1787" ("Journey to the West Coast of Africa, in the Years 1786 and 1787"), by Louis de Grandpre (Paris, 1801), vol. 1, image facing page 65.

Houses and European Trading Post, Angola, 1786-87; Image Reference LCP-06, as shown on www.slaveryimages.org, compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library.

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Portrait of Thomas Clarkson

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Clopton Portrait of Queen Elizabeth

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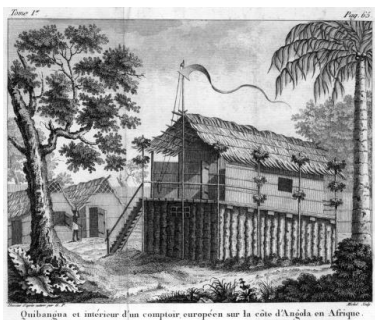


Captain John Hawkins

Image online, courtesy the [Chronicles of America](http://www.chroniclesofamerica.com) website.

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