

Triangle Trade

Definition

Triangle trade entailed shipping goods from Britain to West Africa in exchange for enslaved people who were afterward moved to the West Indies to be exchanged for rum and sugar, among other commodities.

Timeline of the Triangle Trade

Date of Event 1

Between 1441 – 1637 Rise of the Slave Trade

The first enslaved Africans were shipped to the New World during this period. Additionally, the Dutch merchants began to ship enslaved people regularly, and slave trading in Brazil became a regular activity (Thompson, 2019). The importance of this event was to offset trade imbalances that existed between different nations. Moreover, trade would ease the transport of goods, individuals, and moving ideas worldwide.

Date of Event 2

Between 1641 – 1685 Sugar Years

British merchants began to capture and transport enslaved people to increase cheap labor on the colonial plantations, particularly in the Caribbean, which had started to export sugar. Sugar was an important aspect of the Atlantic economy. It was used to create classes of wealthy planters, traders, and political interest groups with more authority in the European regime. This is why many enslaved people were moved from the African community to America and Europe to cultivate the crop.

Date of Event 3

Between 1783 – 1788 Birth of the Abolition Movement

During this time, French abolitionist society was set up in Paris, and British society became an important factor in the abolition. The abolitionists championed the union cause, which forced President Lincoln to declare the enslaved people free in most parts of the south. The Abolishment of slavery made countries such as America more productive and hence wealthier.

Date of Event 4

Between 1791 - 1820 Emergence of the French Revolution

During this time, most countries, including Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, and the United States, abolished slave trading. The Americans and Britain began guarding the triangular trade, seizing all ships from any country they found shipping slaves. Similarly, Spain, French, and Portugal ships began to trade legally per the legislation of their nations. The importance of the French revolution is that it helped many countries to abolish the slave trade and bring democracy.

Date of Event 5

Between 1830 – 1888 Ending of the Slave Trade

Brazil started to enforce its laws on abolishing the slave trade, with the triangle trade dropping hastily. Being the largest importer of slaves, Brazil was pressured by Britain to sign an accord to end the slave trade. In addition, Britain passed legislation to ban slavery in its colonies, and as a result, enslaved people were to be released in phases, with the final release scheduled for 1840. Ending the slave trade prevented the continuation of profoundly cruel commerce, set free blacks, and brought the idea of voluntary labor.

Three Legs to the Triangle Trade

The trade consisted of three routes; the first leg involved European merchants exporting manufactured commodities, including tobacco, textiles, metal tools, and beads, to Africans in exchange for enslaved people. In the second leg, enslaved Africans were shipped to the West Indies, and the route was terrible for the enslaved people. As a result, about fifty percent of the enslaved people died on their way from diseases and brutal maltreatment (de Almeida, 2022). The survivors would be forced to work on plantations to harvest raw materials. In the third leg, European traders would take the harvested raw materials from the farms back to Europe and later process them into finished goods in European factories (Fortes-Lima & Verdu, 2021). In general, triangular trade heavily impacted the way the economy of the British Empire and its colonies was built and greatly influenced global politics.

References

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