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Chapter 15 Research & Writing

The vast majority of both the bulk and the value of network trade, however, consisted not of long-distance luxury goods but more staples items traded in bulk over shorter subcircuits of the network, creating the dense local networks so valuable to the hierarchies that usually arose over them. Cities concentrated people on a sometimes vast scale (though still far less than the Industrial Era; cities of over million people were almost nonexistent outside china before 1750) and these people had to be fed.

There were many categories of commodities traded on the global network, like potatoes, wheat, and Cattle. But they also sold humans. Slavery was as old as a complex hierarchical societies-slaves appear in the Mesopotamian Code of Hammurabi- and indeed was a product of a combination of hierarchy, warfare, and the subordination of economics to politics that underlay agrarian hierarchies. Slavery in other words simply the most extreme version of the various forms of coerced labor common to much of the Agrarian world. But slavery was both economically and socially inefficient, as coercion cost more and produced less than labor ideologically convinced to work within the system. Slavery, therefore, tended to appear where demographic or cultural factors made other forms of labor scarce.

In the agrarian era there were two types of slaves. The rule meant that in the high agrarian era, the most common form of slavery was small-scale and domestic: slaves served as household servants. Domestic slavery, often of young women, reduced the problem of coercion compared to mass agricultural labor and allowed the substitution of “family ideology”, ties of personal relationship and adoption, for the cultural and religious ideologies of social control necessary for replacing coercion among mass labor.

Depiction of slaves packed on a slave ship as commodified cargo, clearly not human beings. Many west african societies practiced this form of domestic slavery, which was connected to a culture of war that encouraged the taking of captives to bolster the prestige of warrior kings. This produced more slaves than African societies themselves needed, and for centuries Africans had entered the islamic world as domestic slaves. Henry's settlement of

Azores and Madeira and their development as sugarcane-growing economies pointed to a new source of demand, which led the island of the Caribbean to fall into Europe's hand. But due to the high demand and small laborers, many were rapidly dying from disease and harsh exploitation, and for cultural reasons did not work well in the totally new form of agriculture. Labor shortage opened the door to slavery. The result was the emergence of a growing trade in African people who were shipped to the Caribbean and parts of the mainland Americas to work agricultural plantations. Little or no attempt was made, especially on the islands, to substitute cultural mechanisms of control for raw coercion. It was also, at least through 1700, on a small enough scale that the effect of the trade within Africa were relatively minor, though the effects on those captured and sold were obviously tragic.