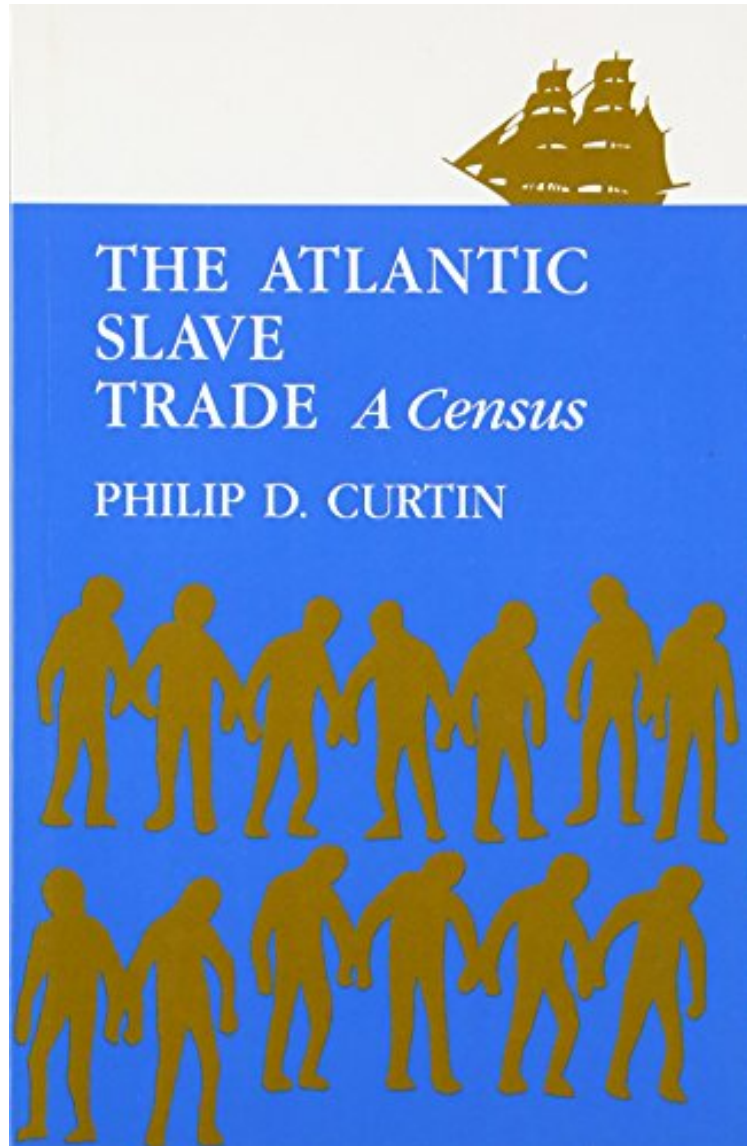


(Library ebook) The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census

The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census

Philip D. Curtin

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Philip D. Curtin : The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Landmark on the Slave Trade Atlantic HistoryBy ChimonsoAs the first systematic study of the Atlantic slave trade based on thorough examination of manuscript sources, "TAST" deserves 5 stars. Its importance in providing reliable statistics, and influence in spurring later research, ensures its permanent value. Unlike Curtin's other books, e.g. "Rise of the Plantation Complex", this is a close (not narrow),

focused counting exercise rather than a broad socioeconomic study at which he excelled. Subsequent scholarship has inevitably revised some findings, primarily by raising the number of Africans. "TAST" concludes that approximately 9,500,000 slaves were transported. The currently accepted number is probably 12,00,000+, likely rising further as more evidence is tapped. But Curtin welcomed revisions; his enduring contribution is a method also employed by successors. Paul Lovejoy's 1982 and 1989 articles in the *Journal of African History* trace the course of upward revision, and his "Transformations in Slavery" contains necessary context. D. Eltis et al, "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM" presents the current figures, and is a great boon to scholars. Curtin helped pioneer "tropical" history and Atlantic studies, but Atlantic history has moved on from the framework he devised. Now this book might better be titled "The African Atlantic Slave Trade." This odious commerce also entrapped non-Africans: Amerindians were sold within the Americas and to the West Indies, and convicts and indentured servants exiled from Europe (especially Britain) were also human chattel in the Atlantic system. Curtin's work, including training dozens of skilled historians such as Lovejoy, significantly advanced understanding and debate on this topic, and the world owes him a debt of gratitude.²⁴ of 26 people found the following review helpful. Overall, I liked this book.

By cindizaradich@hotmail.com

There are many aspects to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. There is the issue of the African diaspora, where many Africans were taken from their homes to another completely different country. There are the moral issues about slavery and who was involved and to what extent. Also, there are the horrors of the middle passage and the life of the slaves after they reached their destination. In the book *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, published by the The University of Wisconsin Press in 1969, the author Philip D. Curtin focuses on the number of slaves that were taken across the Atlantic. Throughout the book the author uses different research methods to express how many Africans were shipped across the Atlantic, from what parts in Africa, and the destination where they were shipped. He uses other historians' estimates and either tries to prove them correct or prove them incorrect. The author's intent on writing this book was to explore old knowledge on the slave trade and not to present new information. His intent was to use old data and publications and come up with his own theories or "synthesis". He does this by using documents and estimations that have already been written. With this information he then tries to correlate them with previous documentation to prove or disprove them. Also, he states that his numbers are not precise and should not be considered exact but only estimations. He did not intend the book to be a definitive study, but a challenge to others, who can, to correct or complete his findings. He also knew that in time with new data and more sophisticated forms of calculation his work might be modified. Another area he did not want to discuss was the morality of the slave trade. This book was not intended to blame any one person or country nor did it discuss the evils of the slave trade. He felt these aspects of the trade have already been proven and in his opinion is no longer disputed. I felt the author did an adequate job presenting and explaining the material. He discusses in detail where he found the information, the name of the historian who first presented the information, and how he proved or disproved the information. He did a great deal of research in finding accurate information and when there was none given he explains how he came to his conclusions and the methods in which he used. However, I would recommend taking a statistics class before reading this book. It goes in depth with various methods and a great deal of numbers. This can be quite confusing at times. It also warrants the reader to re-read certain areas of the book. However, this was his intention because he wanted his readers to think about what he has written and possibly challenge it. The organization of the chapters are in a manner in which the reader can first review some of the previous literature about the numbers of Africans shipped during the slave trade. The first chapter also examines the major players and when they were involved. The other chapters are organized by certain areas or by centuries. The centuries are in chronological order so that the reader does not go from one century to the next back to the previous. It is easier to follow this way. The second to last chapter is a summary and also explains the major trends within the slave trade. It explains when it was at its peak and when it started to diminish. The final chapter was about European mortality and how many European sailors died while involved in the trade. This chapter really did not fit in with the other chapters and would have been better left out. Also the author uses various techniques in which to prove his calculations and assumptions. Though they are only estimations they give the reader a sense of credibility. At times he uses several historians' estimates and compares them to each other. Sometimes they are similar, but when they are not he explains both of their theories and where they could have been incorrect. This gives the reader the ability to either agree or disagree with his assumptions. After he discusses all the inaccuracies then he explains his own theories and backs them up by population records, shipping records, or other data that was documented during the time period. This also adds to the author's credibility. At other times when he can not find any information due to loss or some other reason, he then uses information from other areas and correlates them with the area he's discussing. He then uses this information to estimate the numbers of slaves imported. Overall, the author does a good job of discussing his intentions. His work is well researched and highly credible. However, his methods and overwhelming amount of numbers may confuse the average reader. In this case a reader may want to choose to read about a different aspect of the Atlantic slave trade.

Curtin combines modern research and statistical methods with his broad knowledge of the field to present the first book-length quantitative analysis of the Atlantic slave trade. Its basic evidence suggests revision of currently held

opinions concerning the place of the slave trade in the economies of the Old World nations and their American colonies. Curtin's work will not only be the starting point for all future research on the slave trade and comparative slavery, but will become an indispensable reference for anyone interested in Afro-American studies. *Journal of American History* Curtin has produced a stimulating monograph, the product of immaculate scholarship, against which all past and future studies will have to be judged. *Journal of American Studies* Professor Curtin's new book is up to his customary standard of performance: within the limits he set for himself, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* could hardly be a better or more important book. *American Historical Review*

Curtin has written a brilliantly provocative book that should lead to a range of new inquiries. *Hispanic American Historical*