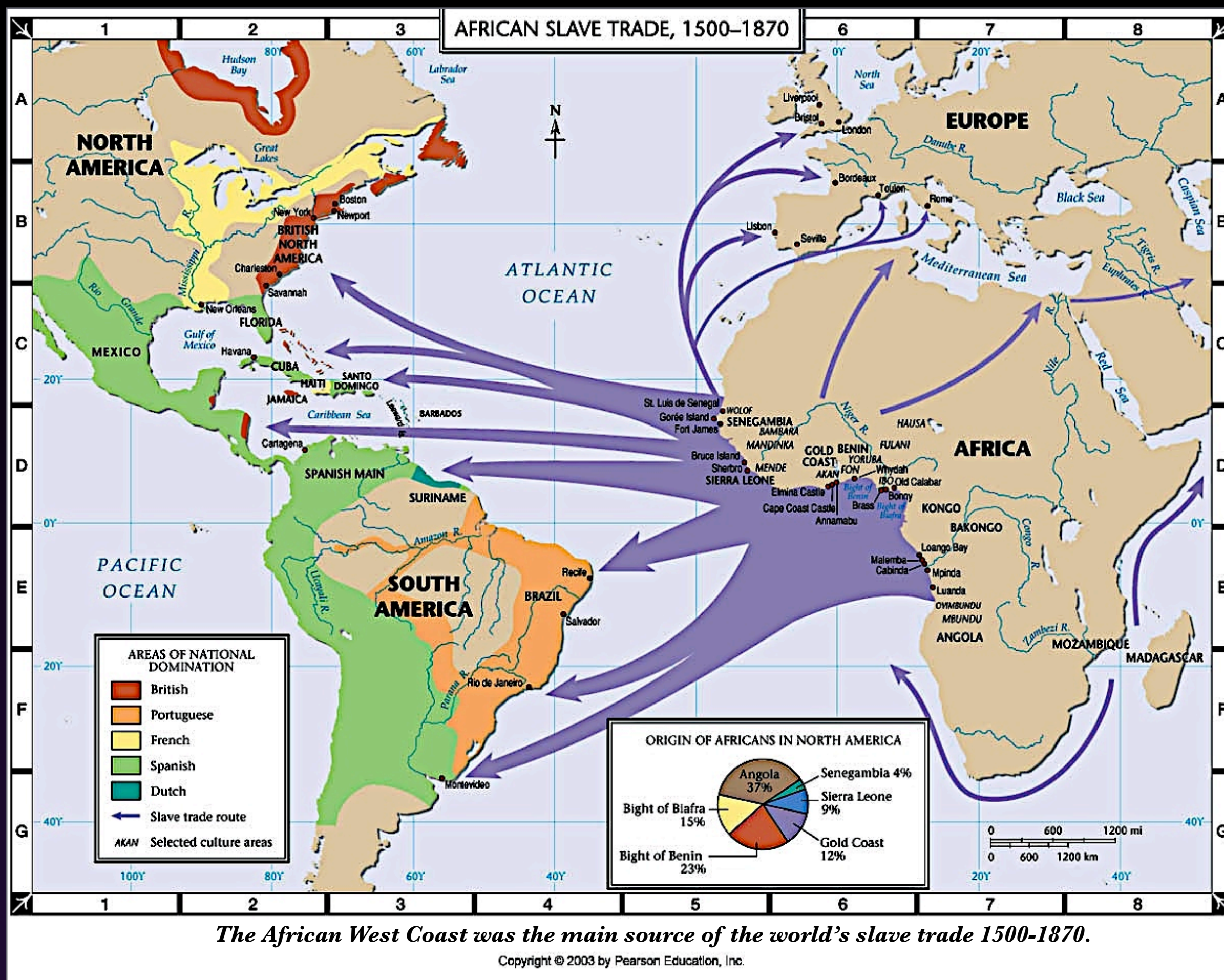


THE RISE OF THE SPIRITUAL

THE JOURNEY FROM THE WEST COAST OF AFRICA TO THE WORLD CONCERT STAGE



THE "PORT ROYAL EXPERIMENT" & THE FIRST BOOK OF SLAVE SONGS

In 1861, the Union Army invaded the South Carolina coastline at Port Royal. These coastal sea islands and plantation properties were abandoned by the Southern plantation owners fearing the Union soldiers, consequently leaving over 10,000 of their enslaved workforce behind. The Port Royal Experiment (also referred to as the Great Reconstruction Rehearsal) was spearheaded in a cooperative effort between the Union Government and abolitionist charity workers. Their goal was to help them become self-sufficient (in advanced hope of emancipation) by setting up schools, churches and training them to live and support themselves, eventually granting them small parcels of land and to found the new town of Mitchelville on Hilton Head Island.

It was during the Port Royal Experiment that we have our first documented manuscripts of written spirituals. In the Port Royal area, William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware and Lucy McKim Garrison collected and wrote down the very first book of spirituals, *Slave Songs of the United States*, which was published in 1867.

In 1865, President Andrew Johnson eventually returned the land to the original owners.

POINTS OF NOTE:

- ▶ African persons were imported into the Virginia Colonies by Dutch traders as early as 1619, following the first permanent English settlement in the Americas (Jamestown) by only 8 years.
- ▶ Christianity had been introduced into African society far more than the the Western World suspected at the time. By the time the enslaved people arrived in the Americas, they already had thorough knowledge of the Bible and Bible stories, although they were often incorporated into and combined with their regional folklore.
- ▶ They were monotheists, believing in one God, contrary to the belief held and promulgated by some plantation owners in an effort to portray their enslaved as ignorant and backward. **Why would they do this?** It was to help justify and insure the practice of slavery and continuation of profit.
- ▶ Surprisingly, slaveowners encouraged singing and the practice of Christian religion amongst the slaves. The hymnody of the 18th century, as transmitted through its Southern branches (Kentucky, Missouri, Columbian, Union, and Southern Harmony) inserted itself into the slave culture, resulting in a fusion of African and quasi-European musical ideas.
- ▶ Consider technology's impact on slavery...in 1790, the US Census counted about 700,000 people enslaved present in the United States. The cotton gin was invented by Eli Whitney in 1793, increasing the global demand for cotton and consequently, also the need for field workers to harvest the cotton. By 1860, there were four million souls working in the US to meet the demand in the States and abroad.

MUSIC & MANUSCRIPT

- ▶ Not much is known about the music of the enslaved people in the Unites States prior to the Civil War and their resulting emancipation because nobody documented it. The spirituals were an oral tradition and largely improvisatory. It's nearly impossible to know exactly what the music of the first slaves was like.
- ▶ **The first written documentation of spirituals (in terms of musical manuscripts) was in 1867, during the Port Royal Experiment, when William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware and Lucy McKim Garrison, a group of Northern Abolitionists, collected and wrote down the songs as they were sung to them by the slaves. They also included the singers' names with each tune.**
- ▶ **The first organized performance on a concert stage of African American spirituals came in 1871, as the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Nashville, Tennessee embarked on their United States tour.**

