Introduction: The Transatlantic Slave Trade, Part 1

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These three papers were among those presented at a conference entitled "The Atlantic Slave Trade: Who Gained and Who Lost?" held under the auspices of the Frederick Douglass Institute of the University of Rochester in October 1988. Other papers from this conference will be published in Social Science History over the next several issues, and the full set of papers will be published by Duke University Press.

The conference papers all dealt with the magnitude and impact of the transatlantic slave trade and its meaning for the peoples transported. Studies dealing with social, economic, and medical history detailed the relation between the slave trade and developments in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The three papers in this issue indicate the range of topics and geographic areas covered. Joseph C. Miller expands upon his earlier work to estimate the number of slaves sent from Angola in the eighteenth century and their destinations in the New World, issues of importance for understanding demographic patterns in Africa and the Americas, and provides a basis for examining cultural transfers.

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and developments in the areas receiving slaves. Joseph E. Inikori uses data on British trade to examine one of the major questions posed by Eric Williams, the role of slavery and slave trade in the expansion of the British cotton industry in the period known as the Industrial Revolution. In a paper dealing with the determinants of mortality in the slave trade, Kenneth F. Kiple and Brian Higgins examine the literature on the nature of the trade and the provisioning of vessels and conclude that “dehydration was by far the biggest cause of slave mortality during the middle passage.” Papers in subsequent issues will deal with such topics as the effects of the Atlantic slave trade on Senegambia, mercantilist thought on the slave trade, the rise of racism, possible relations between mortality in the slave trade and current health conditions of blacks in America, and sugar and the rise of European consumerism.