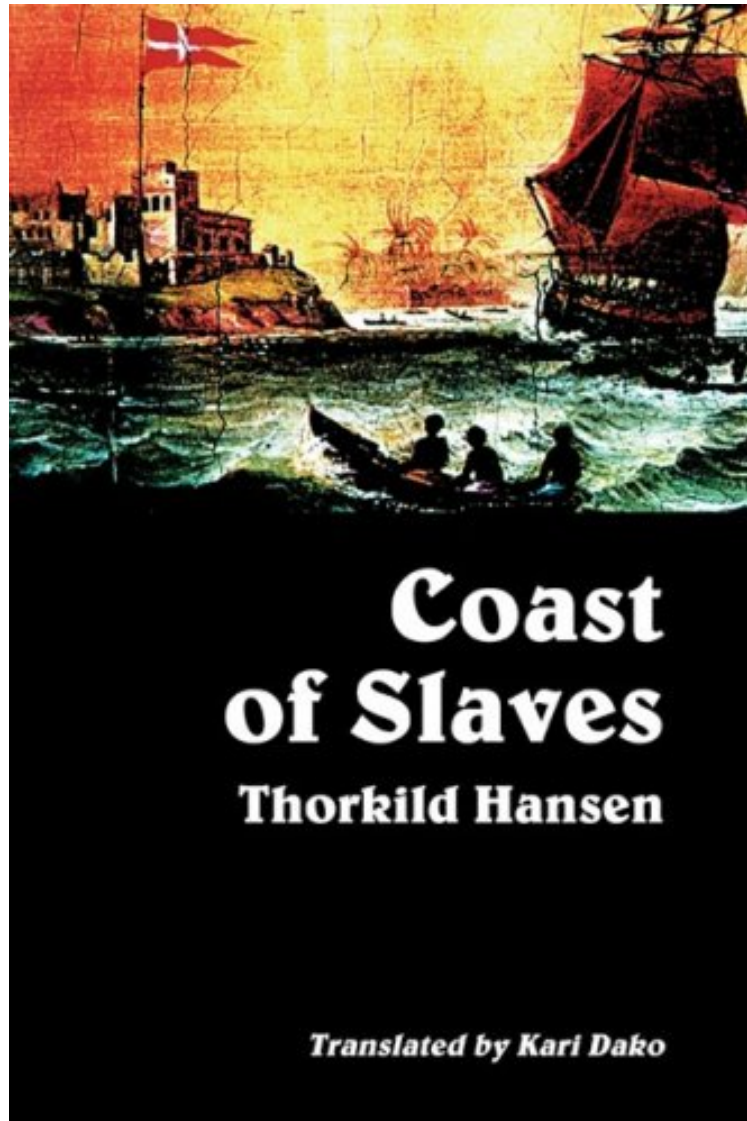


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Coast of Slaves

Thorkild Hansen

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Thorkild Hansen : Coast of Slaves before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Coast of Slaves:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Historic tour de force By Henning Schwarz In The Danish Literary Magazine (Autumn 06), Marianne Stecher-Hansen of the University of Washington, writes: "Prior to the publication of Hansen's trilogy, Denmark's role in the slave trade was a point of national pride, supported by the disputable claim that Denmark was the first nation in the world to abolish slave trading in 1792. In producing a compelling documentary narrative dealing with a dark chapter in Denmark's imperialist past, Hansen made his mark as an intellectual

provocateur and popular historian. Over thirty-five years ago, Thorkild Hansen published a monumental trilogy which brought to life Denmark's past as a colonial power participating in the atrocities of slave trading and slave labor. *Slavernes Kyst* (The Slave Coast, 1967), *Slavernes Skibe* (The Slave Ships, 1968) and *Slavernes øer* (The Slave Islands, 1970) constitute Thorkild Hansen's well-researched, masterfully written and most ambitious documentary project, winning him the prestigious Nordic Council's literary award in 1971. *The Slave Coast*, the first volume of the trilogy, offers a history of "Danish Guinea" (south-eastern Ghana), where the Danish state maintained five forts for the purpose of employing Africans as slave labour for its West Indian colonies. The second volume, *The Slave Ships*, describes the infernal conditions aboard the slave ships which transported African prisoners from the forts to the colonies in the West Indies, where they were sold on the auction block to Danish plantation owners. Of the tens of thousands of Africans transported, Hansen estimates that one fifth perished in the packed holds of the ships which drifted across the windless 'Middle Passage'. *The Slave Islands*, the final volume, is a tour de force, which dramatizes the entire history of the Danish West Indies, which included the islands of St. Croix, St. Jan, and St. Thomas (now the US Virgin Islands), from the arrival of the first colonists in 1671 to the sale of the islands to the United States in 1917 for 25 million dollars. *The Slave Islands* is the masterpiece in Hansen's trilogy (and arguably in his entire literary oeuvre). In it, the author casts new light on significant historical events on the islands: the St. Jan uprising of 1733 led by an African chieftain; the influential role of the Pietistic missionaries; and the role of Governor Peter von Scholten in bringing about the Emancipation Act of 1848. In addition to the imaginative reconstruction of key historical events and historic figures, Hansen provides a chillingly accurate depiction of the barbarous working conditions on the sugar plantations and in the sugar mills, the profitable state-supported industry which perpetuated the enslavement of Africans for forced labor until 1848. Hansen lays bare the economic structures behind the demand for slave labor, demonstrating that the introduction of sugar beet in Northern Europe in the early 1800s meant an abrupt decline in the Danish demand for West Indian sugar cane and hence a loss of political support for slavery. Thorkild Hansen is neither a conventional historian nor a traditional historical novelist; his documentary narratives fall into the alluring grey area between history and fiction known as "documentary fiction". Hansen ranked alongside pioneering literary giants such as P.O. Enquist. Always clever and manipulative, often ironic and sardonic, Hansen holds a wealth of historical secrets at his command and makes use of all the rhetorical devices of literary fiction."

This is the third volume in Hansen's classic slave trade trilogy. When America was discovered and plantations established, slave labour became the principal export commodity from the Gold Coast. This book is about the history of Danish/Norwegian participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It describes the organisation of the trade, the participants, the challenge, and the link with the West Indies to where the slaves were transported for work on the sugar plantations. It describes Danish purchase of islands in the West Indies, and traces how the decline in Dutch and British trade, and the abilities of the Danish administration led to a golden age in the Danish slave trade in the 1770s and 1780s. In that period, the Danish share in the total slave trade exceeded ten percent; and the decline in the trade with the growth of a new European consciousness, heralded abolition. *Coast of Slaves*, the first volume of the trilogy, was originally published in Danish in 1967. This English translation is edited to provide explanations about inaccessible references as well as established factual misrepresentations.