

LESSON NOTE FOR WEEK TWO (FAMVAR INTERNATIONAL SEC. SCHOOL)

SUBJECT: HISTORY

CLASS: JSS3

TOPIC: TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE

Trans-Saharan trade was trade that existed between the North African Arabs and the West African traders of Mali, Songhai, Ghana etc. It can also be seen as the long distance trade that existed between North and West Africa across the Sahara desert many years before the advent of Europeans. It is believed to have started around the 4th and 5th century and to have begun as a desert trade around 3000 BC. The Trans-Saharan trade existed in prehistorical times but reached its peak between the 8th and 17th century. During this period, the most powerful and wealthy states in Egypt, Maghreb and across the Sahel Sudanic zone were engaged in trade with each other .

The spread of the Islamic religion during this period also accelerated the Trans-Saharan trade or caravan trade. With time, even Ghana's capital of Kumbi-Saleh developed trade relations with North Africa and the caravan trade expanded due to the gold trade in the Middle-East and other areas. Moreover, Islamic religion which was new to the region transformed the culture of the Sahara and Sahel Sudanic regions as time went by . During the 17th and 18th century, slaves became a major trade commodity.

Commodities of trade during the Trans-Saharan trade

Many commodities were traded during the Trans-Saharan trade and among these were: gold, salt, slaves, spices, textiles, ostrich feathers, leather goods, ivory, sugar, brass ware, copper, iron tools, woven cloth, turbans , perfumes, cloaks, semi precious stones, camels, horses, kolanuts, guns and ammunition.

Trade Routes during the Trans-Saharan Trade

At the beginning of the 19th century, there were many trade routes along which the various trade commodities were transported. The major routes which were used include:

1. The Western route which extended from Fez in Morocco via Sijilmasa, Taghaza and Taode up to Timbuktu. It was famous because of the salt mines at Taghaza and the gold mines at Wangara.
2. The Central route which extended from Tunis in Tunisia via Tuat , Taotek, Tadmekket, Timbuktu, Gao and Kano up to Katsina.
3. The Eastern route which extended from Tripoli in Libya ,Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt to Bilma via Murzuk , Ghat and Agades. This route was famous because of the salt mines in Bilma.

In Nigeria, the most important Trans-Saharan trade routes were:

- ❖ Tripoli to Borno
- ❖ Sudan to Kanem Borno
- ❖ Fezzan to Kano

SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF THE TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE

Some of the most significant effects of the Trans-Saharan trade include:

- A. The establishment of trade between the North African Arabs and West Africa.
- B. It also facilitated the spread of Islam and Islamic/Arab culture from Northern Africa to West Africa.
- C. It also enriched both West Africa and North Africa due to the tolls and taxes collected by African kings from European traders who bought salt, copper, diamond and gold from them.
- D. It also had an effect on transportation in the West African states e.g the Sudanic people who copied the use of horses from North Africa.
- E. It enhanced international relations between North Africa and West Africa.
- F. It also facilitated the spread of Islamic education, philosophy and law. Islamic schools and libraries were built in West African cities such as Timbuktu.

DECLINE OF THE TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE

The Trans-Saharan trade declined as a result of many factors which included:

1. Political instability which led to a decline in trade . For instance, the defeat of the Songhai, the Tuaregs, and the Fulanis by Morocco affected the trade route in Western Sahara.
2. The stringent and unfavourable laws made by the Fulani rulers also led to decline in trade along the Tripoli-Fezzan-Borno route.
3. The loss of commercial links due to Italian occupation of Cyrenaica and French occupation of Wadai, Tibesti And Borku also contributed to the decline of Trans-Saharan trade.
4. European penetration from the coast into the Western Sudan gold trade from the Sahara to North African countries.
5. The abolition of Trans-Saharan trade and Trans-Atlantic slave trade which contributed to its ultimate end.

HOMEWORK

1. Write a short note on the origin and nature of the Trans-Saharan trade.
2. State the three major trade routes during the Trans-Saharan trade.
3. State three significant effects of the Trans-Saharan trade.