

LESSON NOTE FOR WEEK ELEVEN (FAMVAR INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL)

SUBJECT: HISTORY

CLASS: JSS3

TOPIC: THE LEGITIMATE TRADE

LEGITIMATE TRADE

After the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade by the British government, and its gradual demise in other European nations, there was the need for an alternate form of trade with the Africans. Attention was shifted to a non-human trade in palm oil and other commodities. This trade in more legally accepted commodities between the Europeans and the Africans is what we refer to as the **legitimate trade**.

COMMODITIES TRADED DURING THE LEGITIMATE TRADE

A number of commodities were traded during the legitimate trade. These commodities included:

1. Palm oil
2. Ivory
3. Timber
4. Bees wax
5. Camwood
6. Hats
7. Gold dust

Palm oil and palm kernels were the most important of all the trade commodities and were at the core of European trade with Nigeria from 1830 onwards. In exchange for palm oil, the Europeans supplied articles such as basins, beads, cotton cloths, guns, gun powder, hats, knives, and spirits. Palm oil was essential for the Europeans because it was used to make soap and as a lubricant for machinery before petroleum products were developed for that purpose.

A large portion of this trade occurred around the Niger Delta rivers, hence the rivers were called **"Oil Rivers"**. the rivers mostly used were the Benue, Brass, Bonny, Calabar, Forcados and the Imo rivers. The trade brought places such as Brass, Bonny, New Calabar and Old Calabar into the limelight.

FEATURES OF THE LEGITIMATE TRADE

The following were among the features of the legitimate trade:

1. It involved African traders who made huge investments in order to acquire canoes, palm oil containers, personnel and defence. The canoes and containers were used to carry oil from the hinterlands to the coast for possible transportation to Europe.
2. It involved much labour force for collating oil from different producers and for paddling canoes carrying the oil.
3. The palm oil trade was mainly controlled by the African chiefs who served as middlemen. The middlemen were mostly from the Eastern and Western Delta including the Ijaw(Izon) Brass and Bonny, the Itsekiri and Efik people of Calabar. Some of these middlemen became very powerful and

influential and even became kings in their states e.g King Jaja of Opobo and Nana of Itsekiri who was governor of the Benin river.

4. There was also a **trust system** in place. This was a special kind of trade by barter where the European merchants gave African middlemen various kinds of foreign goods worth thousands of pounds and allowed them to pay for them later with oil.

5. There was also some element of direct trading in which cowries, shells, manila and the dollar were used to purchase African goods although it was less common than the trust system.

HOMework

1. The legitimate trade refers to _____
2. The major commodities traded during the legitimate trade were _____ and _____
3. One major feature of the legitimate trade was _____
4. The trust system could be described as _____