

CHAPTER 4

THE INDIAN OCEAN TRADE OR TRADE ALONG THE EAST AFRICAN COAST (1000-1500AD)

ORGANIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TRADE (1000-1500AD)

1. This was trade that was carried out along the East African Coast, that is to say it was between the East Africa People, traders from the Far East Arabia and Europeans.
2. The trade was in, around and across the Indian Ocean.
3. The trade was between East Africa people and traders from Far East Arabia and Persia though even Europeans participated.
4. The trade also passed through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.
5. The trade was based on the prevailing monsoon winds which blew the dhows Southwards towards East Africa between November and April and back to Arabia between May and October.
6. Participants from East Africa included Yao, Nyamwezi, Buganda, Swahili and others.
7. Participants from other countries included Arabs, Persians, Chinese, Indians, Malaysians and others.
8. Major market centres included Mombasa, Mogadishu, Kilwa, Malindi, and Zanzibar among others.
9. Main imports from the Far East included silk, Bowls, guns, cowrie shells, clothes, Swords, beads and many others.
10. Exports from East Africa included ivory, slaves, gold, copper, iron, animal skins and many others.
11. Head portorage was very important. The traders carried commodities on their heads since means of transport was not available.
12. From the interior, goods reached the coast through middle men like Nyamwezi, Yao and others.
13. Barter trade was the major medium of exchange, that is to say goods were exchange for goods.
14. Later cowrie shells were used for buying and selling because barter trade was found to be disadvantageous to some traders.

15. But some towns minted their own coins that they used, for example Mombasa, Kilwa and others.
16. The trade was conducted by powerful Arab families like Busaidi and Mazrui.
17. The dhows were the most common sailing vessels in Indian Ocean trade.
18. African chiefs played a major role in organising Indian Ocean trade.
19. Arabs never traveled into the interior for fear of hostile tribes.
20. Ivory was mainly taken to China from where it was used to make women bangles and ornaments.
21. Important exports like copper and gold came from the interior, for example gold came from the Kingdom of Mwenomotapa.

EFFECTS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TRADE UPON THE PEOPLE OF EAST AFRICA

1. The effects of Indian Ocean Trade were social, economic and political in nature. They were also positive and negative in nature.
2. There was the growth of towns like Malindi, Kilwa, Mombasa and many others.
3. Islamic culture was like dressing, eating habits and others were adopted.
4. Arabic architecture was also adopted, for example building using stones.
5. It also led to introduction of Islam in East Africa.
6. Those who participated in the trade became wealthy, for example the Nyamwezi.
7. East Africa came into contact with the outside world through this trade. There was international recognition of East Africa.
8. It promoted slave trade within several parts of East Africa which led to insecurity.
9. New crops were introduced like rice, Barley, mangoes, cloves, guavas.
10. New methods of eating food of Arabs and Persian origin were introduced, for example using spoons and forks.
11. There was increase in the population of East Africa especially at the coast.
12. Sharia law became the basis of power and administration at the east African coast.
13. The trade encouraged permanent Arab settlement at the coast.
14. Sultans became leaders of the coastal settlements hence loss of independence.

15. It promoted rivalry and conflicts between towns like Malindi and Mombasa over the trade control
16. There was emergence of small-scale industries like minting of coins at Kilwa.
17. The trade benefited several Kingdoms and chiefs. Kingdoms expanded after acquiring wealth from the trade. Chiefs also became wealthy from the trade.
18. New commodities were introduced at the coast and in the interior of East Africa, for example cups, clothes, guns and others.
19. Quranic schools were constructed by the Arabs who participated in the trade.
20. Inter marriages between Africans and Arabs took place. This led to the emergence of Swahili people, language and culture.
21. At first the Africans left or abandoned farming, fishing and concentrated on trade. Famine therefore resulted.
22. The trade attracted the Europeans, especially from Portugal, who later came and conquered the people of East African coast.

Revision questions

- i. Describe the organization of the Indian Ocean trade.
- ii. What were the effects of the Indian Ocean trade to the people of East Africa?
- iii. Describe the trade on the East African Coast before A.D 1500.
- iv. What were its results?
- v. Describe the trading activities between East Africa and Asia up to 1500 A.D.
- vi. How were the coastal people affected by this trade