

Spice trade around indian ocean



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Europeans imported spices from Asia this is highly expensive for the reason that the routes from Europe to Asian countries are very lengthy, so Europeans like to find a route to the east by sea through Africa, this raise Africa to become an important center for spice trade. African significance is increased by the strategic importance of Indian Ocean.

The Dark Continent, which is unexplored in to its deep geographical regions for centuries, but developed as a center for trading purposes between the Europeans and Asians through exchange of their raw materials and products. Africa as a center had only managed to build a link to the European traders and Asian producers in around the Indian Ocean World (IOW). Vascode Gama took 6 years to reach Goa in India from Lisbon. He came to know the richness and high productivity of spices in this region. One local ruler said to Gama, “ My country is rich in cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper and precious stones.”[1]The main issue is whether spice trade identified Africa as a center for business around Indian Ocean?

Here some sources to explain Africa’s importance as a center.

Importance of Spice trade:

Spices are the good smelling parts of the humidity plants. Spices are used traditionally to flavor food. The dry fruits and dried seeds of hot plants are also called spices used in similar manner. Some spices get from the roots or bark of the certain plants, but the more spices are seeds, dry fruits and berries. Well know spices are cloves, ginger, pepper, cinnamon and nutmeg. These are common to the Asian atmosphere.

Spices have been important in human history virtually since its beginning. In early times spices were used for miraculous rites and spells, sanitization ceremonies, embalming, cosmetics and perfumes, therapeutic benefits and even toxin as well as food preparation, preserving and flavoring food. In the Bible, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers to spice merchants[2].

The historiographical aspects of spice trade:

A profitable activity of ancient source is spice trade, which involves the goods of spices. Asian people were settled in spice trade since ancient times. Along the Incense route and the Roman-India routes Greco-Roman started trading quickly. The Roman-Indian routes are depending upon method developed by the maritime trading power, Aksumite Empire which had found the Red Sea route before the 1st century. They shared the Roman merchant's facts of traveling the seasonal monsoons of the Arabian Sea when they meet Rome (circa 30 BCE – 10 CE). Until the mid-seventh century they keep strong relationship with one another.

The rise of Islam closed off the routes through Egypt and the Suez, the European trade community from India and Axum was closed. In the late and high medieval stage Muslim merchants dominated maritime spice seller's paths all over the Indian Ocean.

Researchers of the earlier period daring the big oceans are in search of costly and foreign spices. Andrew Dalby found the emergence of spice searching and trade through the present routes of Asia and the New World. Ginger, cinnamon, musk, frankincense and cloves are spices along with the initial products that have crossed the world in trade networks. Spices are

divided as added to food, used in festivals, aromatics, and habitually arranged for long storage and far-away travel.

In 1498, Vasco de Gama found the sea way to India to come across a shortest way to the species of the East. He found the sea way around Africa, the way to source of Cameroon cardamom, Ashanti pepper and the well named grains of paradise.[3]

In Medieval and Ancient worlds the Spice Route was the new large trading route. On the Silk Road also the spices are passed, although the major source of spices was fine in south of China, India, the Spice Islands (Indonesia), and the Malabar (East African) coast. The center world of spice trade is India. By ocean routes the spices are brought to India from the Spice Islands. The Arabs bought spices from the Indians and from Japanese and Chinese sellers who traveled by ocean to Indian ports. At last Italian boats brought the spices to Europe[4].

Importance of spice trade:

Several suggestions to spices can be found in the early histories and in the Bible. These prove how greatly the spices are regarded in olden period by princes, kings, and emperors, and by all powerful and wealthy persons.

In medieval period, Arabia is the address of the wealthy spice merchants and the worlds large spice markets are maintained there. Spice trade was so essential in those days, in presently years it become more important, and has lot to do with the creation of European and colonial history.

In 1581 English merchants prepared into the Merchant Adventures and decided to sent men to gather information that what can be get and sold in Asia. Portuguese and Spanish regularly used religion as a support preventing English merchants that tried to start their business in Spice Island. At the Island of Ormuz, at the entrance of the Arabian Sea the Merchant Adventures are stopped. They were sent to prison as heretics in Goa, the capital of the Portuguese Indies[5].

Spices are not just used to flavor food; spices are used in medicines and cosmetics. Spices are good source to earn money among the population. Spice trade is the important part of human history. There are many spice sellers around the world. It remains mystery that why spices have high price during middle ages.

Routes of spice trade:

Roads are the important trade routes used in olden days, but later naval routes were developed. In ancient times luxury goods like spice and silk are imported by Europeans from Asia. This is highly expensive to pass these goods through many hands to reach Europe. The rising of the Ottoman Empire leads to seal several trade routes, so that Europeans would like to find a route to the east by sea. Indian merchants used the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt ports to transport the powdered spices. Early European development was limited to Portuguese outposts planned to guard convoys transporting spices in the region of Africa[6].

The Portuguese were the first surveyor of the ocean routes. The West African coast was explored by the Portuguese sea captains. In the year 1487

Bartolomeu Dias reached the African south-west tip, the cape, opening the way to the Indian Ocean. He visited the trading places of East Africa. One of them was Malindi. A few years later a sea route was found between Europe to Asia.

The Indian Ocean is one of the busiest Oceans in trade activity and maritime. From the days of spice trade, for Euro-Asian communication; the routes around Africa are important to the industrial revolution. A quarter of Britain's trade is virtually carried by the Indian Ocean in 1970. African significance is increased by the strategic importance of Indian Ocean[7].

Overland routes helped the spice trade originally, but maritime trade routes led to remarkable increase in commercial actions. East Africa made a considerable early spot on the spice trade. To shorten their journey, Hippalus the navigator discover a window in the Indian Ocean; their voyage could decrease to one year. In ancient Egyptian times spices have arrived across the Indian Ocean to this region and it become a significant part of the spice route in the late 12th century. Ethiopia starts trading along with Swahili and Arab merchants along the cost of East Africa. European spice mixture complication is evidence to the extent of successive trade: Ajwain, cardamom, paper and ginger came from India, the allspice and chilli from the Americans, the coriander fennel from eastern Mediterranean.

The economically important Silk Road and spice trade routes became blocked by the Ottoman Empire ca. 1453 with the fall of the Byzantine Empire, soon spurring exploration motivated initially by the finding of a sea route around Africa and triggering the Age of Discovery.

Africa as a center of spice trade:

Africa played a significant role in the world Spice trade system. People's interest in these amazing substances (spices) began early-the earliest proof points to their custom even in 50, 000 B. C. The spice trade initially developed from about 2000 BC in the Middle East. Now the Portuguese had complete control of the African sea routes. The majority of the humid spices come from hemisphere but West Indies and Central America contributing high quality spices to the world. The other huge trading route is spice route of early and medieval worlds, but the main basis of spices was the Malabar (East African) coastline. In Zanzibar Arab recognized a clove trading center because the trade routes of North Africa, Indian Ocean and Middle East are restricted by Arab. India produce huge amount of spices, Europeans brought these spices from India through the spice routes of the Africa. That's way Africa plays a major role in trading of spices[8]. Venice, the chief commercial center of Italy, alters the conditions in the world spice trade. The Portuguese brought the Indian spices to Europe over the direct sea route from Africa.[9]

Colonialism impact on spice trade:

Colonialism is unfamiliar or overseas political rule or manage imposed on a community. It is in many forms: economic, cultural, political, social and legal. The colonialism age begin on 1500, subsequent the European discoveries of a marine rout in the region of Africa's coast. On June 7, 1494, the Portuguese and the Spanish signed the agreement of Tordesillas that separated the world in two spheres. The eastern half with India and Africa was specified to Portugal. Colonialism affected the religions of the country, Agriculture, social structure and cookery. The different movements of colonialism had a regular

and varied impact on the Muslim world. While colonial rule became powerful some reflective changes occurred in the entire province and the inland waterways access was restricted. These moves disengaged the great union of the Indian Ocean trading scheme, when the worldwide trade was broken down Europe was ready for war. Some merchants made profits in spice trade up to 300%, but it was not sustaining that the Portuguese effort to manage the spice trade[10].

Legacy of Colonialism: The most important European colonizers in SEA include Portugal, Britain, Spain, France and the Netherlands. Colonialism has three motives: Economic, political and Cultural. Economic profits are profit-making Enterprise and global Trade, rising wealth to support the economy, Sea Route to the East. The rulers of Portugal hunted special routes to the Indies. Colonialism which influenced the world in all fronts was in turn influenced by Spice trade. It dominated colonies with favorable conditions to produce spices well and traded them all over the world apart from their self usage.

How spice trade impact economies of trading countries:

The Islamic heartland has trade between the three continents of Africa, Asia and Europe and was middle to all trade routes. Routes from and towards Europe and southern Africa passed through African Islamic lands, Southeast Asia/china to Europe through key Islamic territory, as same routes important in India. In the trade business has an advantage since many of the roots navigate these lands either overland or by sea[11].

The East India Company was also known as East India trading Company. It was established to make trade with the Southeast Asian countries although it ended trading with China and India. It is earliest and wealthy and most dominant trading company ever. To break the domination of Dutch in spice trade the company was formed.

Spice trade lead to wars:

The Portugal financial prospects diverting spice around the Cape were clearly apparent to the royal committee; after that they saw plans for sending out huge fleets to the Indies. There was an instant urgency in Mediterranean spice trade brought by universal crisis.

The political problems in Egypt lead to radical decrease the deliver of available spices for sale. In the period of 1499 to 1502 Venetian trade was disrupted by state war which resulting the scarcities of spice supply. In 1504 Francesco Teldi invites sultan to Lisbon to buy spices but Signoria not prefer its ancient allies. An appropriate action was taken by sultan against Portuguese spice trade, at this time the Indian Ocean had slipped out of the control of Egypt regulations[12].

Research findings:

Africa plays a major role in spice trade business. Europeans brought spices from India through the routes of the Africa, this African region become a significant part of the spice route. The discovery of a new route through Africa on Indian Ocean reduces the journey by one year between Europe and Asia. Africa acts as a middle man for spice business between Arab countries and Asian countries. The colonial rules obstructed the spice trade and where

lots of wars were held for domination. Even though the production and trade was not more in Africa, but being in the centre between Europe and South East Asia, it has improved itself in economic perspective. For spice trade, Africa without the centre is out of reach for any ones' thought.

Conclusion:

There are several evidences that suggest the importance of Africa as a center and its role in improving the spice trade. The routes of spice trade, Africa as center, colonial impact, wars for spice trade domination and its impact on the trading countries and Africa, shows how the spice trade revolved around Africa in Indian Ocean. All the aspects of Spice trade in the South Eastern nations, directly or indirectly linked to the Africa as a center point in the Indian Ocean. The analysis concludes that the research on spice trade with out Africa has no value and cannot be concluded.