



The New Inland Maritime Trade Route in Sub-Sahara Africa – “Ecmmtp”?

Tanko Yakubu*

Department of Maritime Insurance, Marine Logician and Commission Sales Associate at Planet boat Turkey, Ghana, Africa

Introduction

The ancient Trans-Sahara Trade route was established between the 11th and the 12th centuries mainly for trade between the North African countries and the West, East and South African countries. This route was very important and therefore was used for the transportation of goods and services in Africa through the 17th to 18th centuries. The trade was mainly Gold from the forests of the Gold Coast and tributaries of Faleme in the upper Senegal River and also included salt and other commodities from the desert coastal parts of North Africa [1].

These trades have empowered and enriched both the Arabs in the North of Africa and the rest of West African empires but failed to transcend to modern day Africa. While the North African traders were using the proceeds of the trades in Africa to establish industries and developing well-structured and permanent trade routes and alliances between them and the European states, west African Trades to the large extent only benefitted their chiefs and powerful individuals and empires who focused less on the trade routes' improvement and creating trade alliances. Out of the eight (8) trade routes in the world that changed the worlds historical trades, the sub-Saharan Africa trade route was the most important in our history and probably could even be more important today than it was in ancient times, if it was still in existence and playing the same role in trade, but unfortunately, it died with the collapse of the empires in Africa.

Probably the only benefit the ancient sub-Sahara African trade route impacted on us today apart from the vast desertification it left in its wake was the creation of socioeconomic framework that became influential in the shaping of the early Trans-Atlantic trade between Africa and European countries [2].

Discussion

Just as European power was beginning to expand along the west African coast in the 15th century, therefore, the impact of the Trans-Sahara trade reached its Zenith. The 15th century was not just the time of European expansion but of global expansion of networks, trade, production, and the manifestation of this powers today, in more complex states in west Africa and beyond, but Africa did not pay much attention to the gradual paradigm shift culminating in the delay in development and loss of opportunities that came along with the global trade [3].

However, Africa had not taken the prevailing opportunities that the ancient Trans-Sahara trade and today's Trans-Atlantic trade presented her over 1000 years ago. Africa is failing to establish a robust and sustainable trade route that will endear itself to the major trading continents in the world, and therefore, Africa is not categorized in the following shipping routes: Asia – America Trade Route, Asia - Europe Trade Route and Asia – Middle East Trade Route

It has rather been categorized as a minor trade route or trade partners with the other major trading partners. This is because of its low trade volumes and trade barriers that exist in the infra trade opportunities within Africa. Also, and probably the most important reason is the lack of Africa Trade routes and connectivity that can create the platform for Africa Trade opportunities in the global space [4].

The contributions of infra-trade routes in Europe, Americas,

Asia and Middle East today, must be a guiding principle for Africa to emulate in order to grow and develop rapidly. The engine for growth and expansion that will bring economic development can only take place with industrialization, and this requires that there must be a vehicle to serve as a medium of transport for the industrialization [5]. In order to replicate that level of industrialization across Africa rapidly, there must be a robust and sustainable multi-model transport facet connecting the sea ports to rail lines and Inland water ways and roads to neighboring and landlocked countries to provide the infra African trade and movement of international cargo, transit goods and regional trade effectively across the continent.

Conclusion

Like the Trans-Siberian railway (TSR) network with connecting rails going into the Far East, Asia such as China, Mongolia and North Korea, Africa can equally be connected together seamlessly to improve trade volumes and orchestrate the desire trade volumes for a rapid economic development and industrialization in the continent supported by a robust multi-model transport infrastructure. This can be akin to the ECOMMTP project in Ghana, connecting its neighbors and landlocked countries in the transportation of goods to support the Just – In – Time (JIT) concept in Africa. Another intervention is unfolding in the West Africa state of Ghana, following the original railway development plan conceptualized by the First President of the republic, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, to develop a rail line connecting the sea port to the Inland Waterway and to the Northern parts of Ghana and onwards to the Neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

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*Corresponding author: Tanko Yakubu, Department of Maritime Insurance, Marine Logician and Commission Sales Associate at Planet boat Turkey, Ghana, Africa, Tel: +233243116462, E-mail: y2tanko@gmail.com

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