

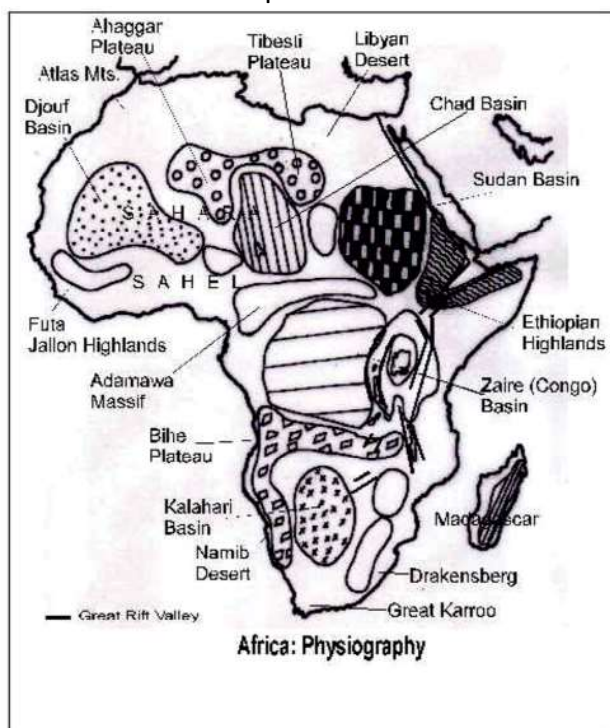
AFRICA

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Once described as the “Dark Continent”, Africa has within it a spectacular diversity and dynamism both in its physical and cultural realms. The physical diversity is reflected in its dripping rain forests, parched deserts and the snow-capped peaks, while the cultural in the great variety of its people, languages and religions. No wonder, the continent always has fascinated one and all.

Introduction

- Africa is the most tropical of all the continents and stands next only to Asia in size, occupying about 20% of the land area.
- It is one of the most generously endowed continents in terms of natural resources but despite its most endowments, it is today the least developed of all continents.
- The backwardness of the continent is attributed largely to following factors:
 - ✓ Colonial part
 - ✓ Continuing civil strife
 - ✓ Ethnic conflicts
 - ✓ Ravaging diseases
 - ✓ Enthronement deterioration
- But it has the potential to transform it into a “Continent of Hope”.



Landscape

- Almost all of Africa appears as one huge plateau with the southern and eastern portions considerably elevated.
- The most striking aspect of African landscape is the absence of elongated parallel ranges of continental dimensions. But the Atlas in the northwest and the Drakensberg in the southeast are notable ranges.
- Special physical features of Africa is its Great Rift Valley which is the long and deep valley formed due to cracks in the land. It runs from the south of lake Malawi to northward till the Red sea and then through Gulf of Suez and Gulf of Aden to the Dead sea.
- The continent boasts of towering mountains like Kilimanjaro which is the highest peak of Africa and is snow capped all year round despite its close proximity to equator.
- Africa is drained by numerous rivers, some of which are of outstanding length and volume. With the exception of river Zaire & Nile, few are navigable because of the presence of cataracts, rapids & waterfalls along their course.

Climate and Vegetation

- Since Africa extends between 37°14'N to 34°50'S so it is most tropical of all continents.
- The annual average temperature remains high throughout the year but is somewhat moderate on higher plateau.
- As far as climatic classification of Africa is concerned, it has following three types of climatic condition with specific vegetation.
- Equatorial type of climate with equatorial rain forest
- Sudan type of climate with Savanna grasslands
- Tropical desert with desert vegetation

Equatorial type of Climate

- This type of climate is mainly found in the belt lying along the equator on both sides especially along the western margin of the continent.
- This belt has only one type of climate throughout the year i.e. hot and humid, with the least diurnal and annual range of temperature.
- The region experiences heavy convectional rainfall mostly in late afternoon daily, therefore these rains have been popularly called 4’O clock rains.
- High temperature and humidity have made this region the most productive natural ecosystem with the greatest biodiversity.
- These forests are described as “gallery forests” due to the peculiar layered arrangements, with trees intensely competing for sunlight.
- Some important species found here are Mahogany, Rosewood and Ebony, which are all hardwood trees.
- This forest is not commercially exploitable due to very high biodiversity and very dense foliage.

Savanna regions with Sudan type of Climate

- To the north and south of equatorial rainforest is the Savanna regions with most area and Sudan type of climate.
- These are the regions of warm summer and mild winters. Most of the rain occurs in summer. There is a distinct dry period. Total rainfall is much less than tropical forest.
- This region is called “Park landscape” because vegetation of these regions consists primarily of coarse and very tall “elephant grasses” interspersed with few trees.
- The region is also known as “Big game country” as it has some of the largest and fastest wild animals.
- The region is one of the most fragile ecosystems and is severely threatened by fires, floods, droughts and desertification.

Tropical desert

- Beyond the Savanna, both in the northern and southern parts of Africa are the trade wind tropical deserts.
- The climate here is hot and extremely dry. There is almost no rainfall.
- Vegetation is either wholly absent or includes only desert vegetation i.e. scrub and bushes.
- Entire North-West of Africa is the desert known as the Sahara desert which is the largest desert of the world.
- In the south is the famous Kalahari Desert which is in Botswana, South Africa and Namibia.
- Kalahari is actually not a desert. It’s rather a bushy scrubland situated between the Orange and the Zambezi rivers. The area is an inland basin with annual rainfall averaging less than 50 cm.
- Ostrich is a large and flightless bird of the Kalahari Desert.
- In addition to these two important deserts, three other deserts of Africa are:
- Namib Desert – On Western Coast of Namibia and South Africa
- Nubian Desert – In the North East of Sudan.
- Arabian Desert – In Egypt in the coastal area along Red Sea.

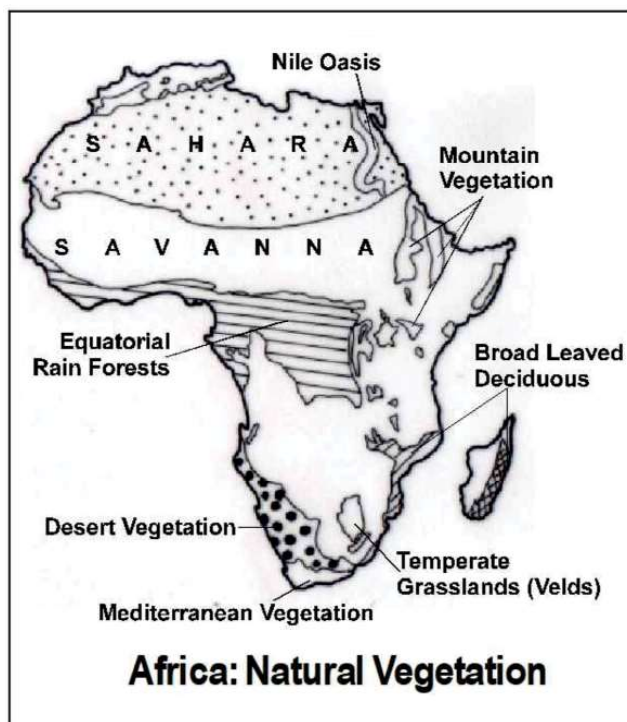
Besides these three important types of climatic regions, in some parts of Africa following types of climate are also experienced-

- Mediterranean climate
- Temperate Grassland
- China type

Mediterranean Climate

- Found in the southwestern part of South Africa and the areas bordering Mediterranean Sea in the North West Africa.
- The region experiences warm dry summer and mild but wet winters. It is because of-
 - ✓ Offshore trade winds
 - ✓ Onshore westerlies
- Vegetation in the region is marked by the

stunted trees with xerophytic adaptations. Important trees are cork, oak, figs and olives.



- The Mediterranean regions of the world are important for the cultivation of citrus fruits and therefore are called the “Orchards of the world”.
- A prominent feature of this region is the prevalence of local winds such as Sirocco and Khamsin.

Temperate Grassland

- The region of temperate grassland is somewhat restricted in Africa due to narrowness of continent in its southern part.
- But is found between the Drakensberg and the Kalahari especially in south Africa where it is known as Veld which is further subdivided into more tropical Bush –Veld and the temperate High-Veld.

China type

- This is also called the Natal type of climate is found in the southeastern part of South Africa.
- In this climate there is uniform distribution of rains and small annual range of temperature due to following reasons:
 - ✓ Narrowness of continent
 - ✓ Maritime influence
 - ✓ Onshore trade winds

- Natural vegetation include, both the broad leaved deciduous forests on the low lands and conifers on the highlands.
- Apart from these major vegetation types, two minor type of vegetation is also found-
 - ✓ Mangroves along the Gulf of Guinea
 - ✓ Montana vegetation on the highlands of Ethiopia western Tanzania and Kenya.

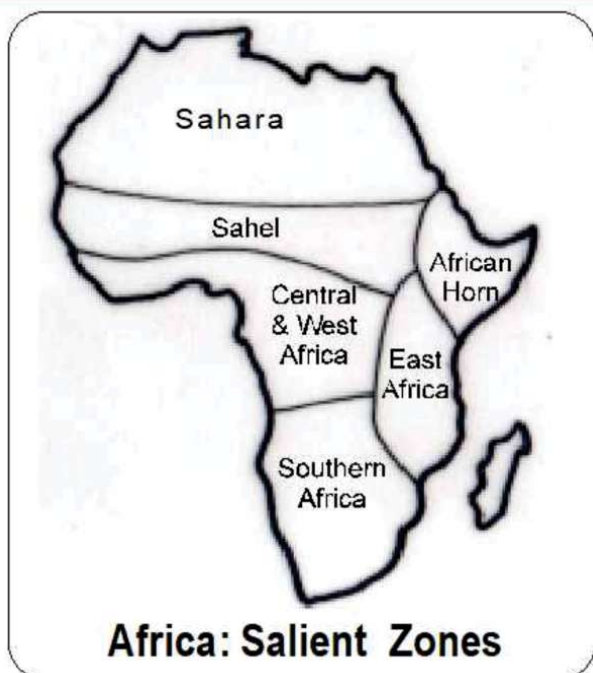
Soil and Agriculture

- In Africa, only 10% of the soil is suitable for crops. It includes-
 - i) the volcanic soils of east Africa
 - ii) the alluvial soils of the Nile valley
 - iii) certain soils of Savanna land
- Different kinds of crops are grown here, but most of the food crops of Africa are root crops such as Yam and Cassava.
- Cereals are not very important except maize.
- Amongst the cash crops, palm oil groundnut, cocoa, coffee, cotton, sisal and cloves are important.
- The contribution of some of the cash crop in the world trade is as follows-
 - i) Cocoa from Africa constitute 60% of world trade
 - ii) Cotton from Africa constitute 9% of world trade
 - iii) Cloure from Africa constitute 90% of the world trade
- It has large variety of fruit trees.
- In tropical region, banana, pineapple, papaya, jackfruit and mango are common. Citrus fruit such as lemon, orange and lime are also grown here.
- The Mediterranean regions grow olives, apples peaches and grapes.
- Zanzibar and Pemba islands are biggest producers and exporters of clones in the world.
- Cocoa and Kola are two important trees of Africa which provides beverages. Cocoa is a popular drink like coffee and is used for making chocolate whereas Kola trees yields which are used in preparing cola drinks and chewing gum.

Agricultural Produce	Leading Producers
Coffee.....	Liberia
Rubber.....	Liberia
Tea.....	Kenya
Oil Palm.....	Nigeria
Cocoa.....	Ghana
Coconuts.....	Tanzania
Date Palm.....	Egypt
Cotton.....	Egypt
Wheat.....	S Africa
Maize.....	S Africa
Fruits & Vegetables.....	S Africa
Wool.....	S Africa
Sisal.....	Tanzania
Cloves.....	Zanzibar

Human Aspects

- Africa is a land of diverse races and tribes. About 70% are Negroes, while the rest can trace their ancestry to Europeans and Asians.
- It has a total population of 750 million with the average density of about 26 person per sq. km.
- It has a low average population density, but there are some pockets of high density. High density areas include Nile delta, Mediterranean regions in North and the big towns in Sub-Saharan Africa.



- It is inhabited by several tribes having distinct life-styles and customs.
- Some of the important tribes of Africa are:
 - i) The “Marais” of Kenya and Tanzania are pastoralists
 - ii) The “Hausas” of Nigeria are agriculturists
 - iii) The “Pygmies” of Congo basin are hunters and food gatherers.
 - iv) The “Bushman” of Kalahari Desert is nomadic hunters and food gatherers.

Religious Composition

- As far as religious composition, Saharan Africa is predominantly Islamic while sub-Saharan Africa is Christian and animistic.
- The African Transition Zone which marks a zone of conflict between the followers of Islam and Christianity, provides a key to understanding the civil war that plague this region.

Minerals

- Africa is very rich in several valuable minerals.
- It leads the country of the world in the production of diamond, gold and platinum.
- More than 95% of world's diamond production and 50% of world's gold production comes from Africa.
- But there is not much coal and Iron ore in this continent which has hampered the production of steel.
- Some of the famous mines of Africa along with the mineral which is extracted from there are:

Mines	Country	Minerals
1. Kimberley	South Africa	Diamonds
2. Lumbabashi	Zaire	Copper
3. Wankee	Zimbabwe	Coal
4. Witwatersrand	South Africa	Gold
5. Katanga	Zaire-Zambia	Copper & Cobalt
6. Kasai Province	Zaire	Bort Diamond

- Some of the minerals along with leading producers of Africa are:

Minerals	Leading producer
1. Gold.....	South Africa
2. Bauxite.....	Guinea
3. Copper.....	Zaire
4. Platinum.....	South Africa
5. Chromium.....	South Africa
6. Vanadium.....	South Africa
7. Antimony.....	South Africa
8. Tungustun.....	Zaire
9. Phosphate.....	Morocco
10. Manganes.....	Zaire
11. Diamond.....	South Africa
12. Iron ore.....	South Africa
13. Petroleum.....	Nigeria

Important local winds of Africa

Sirocco

- It is a warm, dry and dusty local wind which blows in northerly direction from Shara desert towards Mediterranean sea.
- It becomes very strong and active at the time of the origin of cyclonic storms over the Mediterranean sea.
- It becomes extremely warm and dry while descending through the northern slopes of the Atlas mountain.
- There are different local names for Sirocco in Africa. For example:
 - i) Khamsin in Egypt
 - ii) Gibli in Lybia
 - iii) Chili in Tunisia
 - iv) Simoom in Arabian desert

Harmattan

- It is a hot, dry, dust laden wind blowing from the Sahara to the Guinea coast.
- It provides a welcome relief from the damp air of the Guinea land by increasing the rate of evaporation with resultant cooling effect.
- It is also called the 'doctor'.

Berg

- It is a hot dry wind blowing from the interior plateau in the Natal type of climate found in southeastern part of South Africa.

Rivers

1. The longest river in the world.....Nile
2. Most voluminous river of Africa.....Zaire
3. Most important river of western Africa.....
.....Niger
4. The only river to cross the equator twice
.....Zaire
5. The only river to cross the
Tropic of Capricorn twice.....Limpopo
6. The source of Blue Nile.....Lake Tana
7. The source of White Nile.....Lake Victoria
8. The confluence city of the Blue Nile and
the White Nile.....Khartoum (The
capital of Sudan)
9. The region of inland drainage Lake Chad
- 10.....The river forming the boundary
between.....South Africa and
Botswana.....Limpopo
- 11.....The river forming the boundary between
South Africa and Namibia.....Orange
- 12.....The river forming the boundary between
Zambia and Zimbabwe.....Zambezi

S.N. Rivers

Mouth (i.e. Falls into)

1. Nile.....Mediterranean Sea
2. Niger.....Atlantic Ocean
3. Zaire.....Atlantic Ocean
4. Zambezi.....Indian Ocean
5. Limpopo.....Indian Ocean
6. Orange.....Atlantic Ocean

Important Dams and Waterfalls on different Rivers in different countries:

1. Aswan Dam → Nile → Egypt
 2. Kariba Dam → Zambezi → Zimbabwe
and Zambia
 3. Kainji Dam → Niger → Nigeria
 4. Cobora Bassa Dam → Zambezi →
Mozambique
 5. Victoria Fall → Zambezi → Zambia-
Zimbabwe
 6. Boyoma Fall → Zaire → Democratic
Republic of Congo
- David Livingston: A missionary, who is credited with the discovery of famous Victoria Falls. Original name of the falls in

the local language meant “the smoke that thunder”. While traveling through Africa Livingston sighted it for the first time in 1855 and named it after Queen Victoria.

- **Suez Canal:** It is 16 km long man made canal which cuts through the isthmus between Egypt and Sinai Peninsula. At the north end is Port Said, on the Mediterranean; and on the Southern is Suez on the Gulf of Suez. The canal was built by French engineer Ferdinand De Lesseps. It was completed in 1869. IT has significantly reduced the distance between Europe and Asia. It is one of the busiest sea routes in the world.
- **Madagascar:** It is world's 4th largest island and is actually a huge block of Africa that separated from the mainland about 80 million years ago. The first settlers on this island were not from Africa but S.E. Asia. They are mostly Malayas for which culture of Madagascar has a perceptible oriental tinge. The former name Malagasy is attributable to Malayas.
- **Superimposed Boundaries:** Ever wondered why many African countries have straight boundaries? In 1884 representatives of different colonial powers-Germany Britain, France, Portugal and Belgium met to divide the African territory under their control, like a group of people dividing cake between themselves. Even after independence these superimposed boundaries still exist on the face of Africa as a scars of colonial past.
- **The Maghreb:** The northwest African countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are together called the “Maghreb” which in Arabic means ‘West’. The regions Djezira-el-Magrib or ‘Isle of west’ is in recognition of the Atlas mountains, rising like most “islands” on the west coast of Mediterranean Sea. These states are also called the Barbary States because of the region's oldest inhabitants, the Berbers.
- **Harmattan** It is a hot, dry, dust laden wind blowing from the Sahara to the Guinea coast. Also called the doctor, it provides a welcome relief from the damp air of the Guinea lands by increasing the rate of evaporation with resultant cooling effects. But it is such a dry dusty wind that, besides ruining the crops, it also stirs up a thick dusty haze and impedes inland river navigation.
- **Great Rift Valley** One of the striking physical features of Africa is its Great Rift Valley running from the south of lake Malawi, northward to the Red Sea and then through the Gulf of Aquaba to the Dead Sea. The East African rift valley represents the initial stage in the breakup of a continent. Extensive volcanic activity believed to accompany continental rifting is exemplified by the large volcanic mountains such as Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya. If the rift valley in Africa remains active, East Africa will eventually split from the mainland in much the same way the Arabian Peninsula did just a few million years ago!
- **Kalahari 'Desert'** It is not actually a desert. It's rather a bushy scrubland situated between the Orange and the Zambezi rivers. The area is an inland basin with annual rainfall averaging less than 50cm. Aborigines, called Bushmen, living in the region have perfected unique methods to survive in desert like conditions. They collect water in ostrich eggshells and in dried bucks' stomachs. In drier years, they are known to even suck dew drops which collect on leaves and scanty grass, using straw.
- **Gibraltar :** It is the gateway between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and forms an important strategic point of control for the west Mediterranean, especially with the extension of British interests in the east and the opening of the Suez Canal. The stretch between the steep Rock of Gibraltar and Cape Ceuta is called the Pillars of Hercules. So towering is the landscape on either side that it was once regarded with awe, as the pillars on which the proverbial Hercules supported the sky. The Rock of Gibraltar is the only place in Europe where monkeys (Barbary apes) run wild. It's rather unusual because monkeys are primarily arboreal creatures of the tropical forests.
- **Lake Victoria,** the largest lake in Africa, is the source of White Nile, while Lake Tana in Ethiopia is the source of Blue Nile. Both White and Blue Nile meet at Khartoum, the capital of Sudan from where the combined stream is called river Nile.
- **Lake Chad** is a region of inland drainage. The area is actually a deflation hollow formed due to wind erosion.