

Past of Africa: A Legacy to Present and Future

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Abstract: Human being is curious and rationale being interested in finding and deciphering dynamics of himself and his surroundings. The questions man had been asking since the dawn of civilizations were always natural, social, economic or fictitious. His natural questions gave him good understanding and exploitation of nature, social questions supplied him potency to better coexistence in societies, economic questions facilitated his mercenary improvement till he owned almost all what he wanted and manage it well, fictitious questions elevated man to purifying his set of believe and organizing the right way of translating the forces of nature. It may be trite but really right, that man at first ask about what he sees in space nearby him before what is far away, and this is the beginning of the discipline of geography. Geography grew with natural, social, economic and fictitious questions of man and finding their answers in spatial context. It is not uncommon to appreciate why somewhere is different from somewhere else economically, socially, technologically etc. In antiquity social, economic and fictitious disparity displayed less variability over the globe, as man then was at the level of testing different hypothesis that came to his mind regarding his questions. Fortunately or unfortunately variable responses to the challenges of environment over the surface of the earth created much disparity in social, economic and cultural context as well as set of believe and adherence to new changes as time goes on. In present time, world is polarized economically, socially and technologically with some areas advanced far up leaving behind others far behind as if they were not started dealing with the aforementioned questions together in the ancient period. One can appreciate the said point when observe that economically small island nation of Japan has a per capita GDP of \$30,660 while a giant continental Nigeria has \$2,221 only (WDR 2013). In socio-cultural arena, we can see a disparity also where 72% of Estonians claim no religious faith with them at the time significant percentage of Bhutanese devoted themselves as monks working in the temples. Notwithstanding, the political scene also show inconsistency in the sense that all west European countries have right to vote for their heads of states while in some Asian and African countries people only see sons inheriting their fathers over their national affairs. These disparities are not only restricted to international correlations, rather found even within the national boundaries. Africa in the recent times has become the pivot of debate by regional analysts, definitely due to the disseminations of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, civil war, disease and the measures taken by African countries to rescue themselves. Many observers especially outside Africa consider it as the continent of “ds” i.e.: destitute, doomed, dark, disaster prone, drought-stricken, disjointed, disconnected, and debt-ridden (Johnson et al 2012). However, one who move closer to Africa will appreciate a lot of its diversity of culture, history, huge resource deposit, many developmental efforts and a lot of potentialities. Past of Africa supplied us with the fact that the continent is a hub of development, civilization and development in recent and far times. Whether Africa will overcome its challenges and turn potentialities to reality in the near future, this remain a subject of discussion and this review will try to give some insights into the past lessons for the current and future Africa.

Keywords: African physiography, Ancient Africa, African civilizations, languages and religions of Africa

1. Term Africa

The word Africa is ancient and longtime use of it by different civilizations to refer to some people somewhere varied from one civilization to another. Judaic statements relate the word Africa to ‘Epher’ one of the grandsons of Abraham, whom they claim his descendants invaded Libya. Leo Africanus gave the word Africa Greek origin ‘aphrike’ which means land without cold or phrike meaning cold and horror. In all the cases word Africa is used by the ancient mostly to refer to Carthagians, a kingdom in the present Tunisia, Tripolitarians in the present Libya, Numidians in the present Algeria and Tunisia or any indigene of the western present day Egypt. Modern concept of Africa is used to describe the whole of the continent that stretches between latitude 37°21'15" N in Tunisia to 34°51'15" S in South Africa and longitude 17°33'22" W in Cape Verde to 51°27'52" E in Somalia. In rear cases word Africa is used to refer to only blacks’ portion of Africa which means the whole continent except the Arab dominated northern countries. Below is the world map showing African continent among other continents (Map 1).

Map 1: Continent of Africa



Source: Google images

2. Landform

Continental drift movement shifted continental landmasses from their positions in last millions of years, the shift reach thousands of kilometers somewhere like Indian subcontinent from Africa and Arabia to its present position, north and south America from Europe and Africa to their present position. African continent shifted less relative to other continents in last 250 million years.

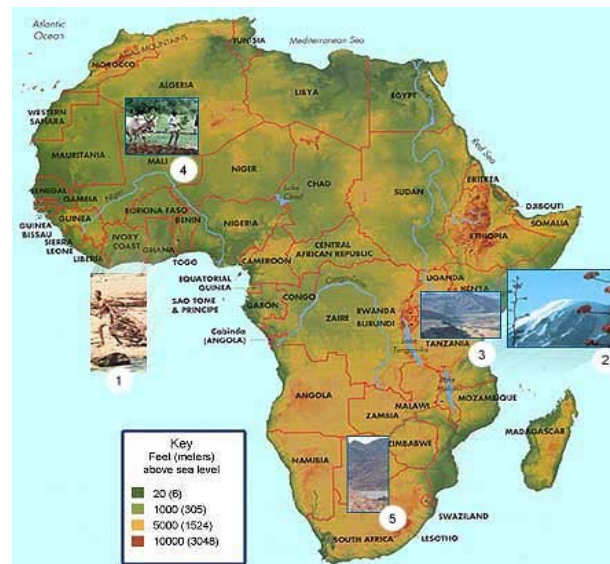
Mountain ranges and massifs surrounded basins and valleys throughout the continent. Ahaggar mountain from eastern Mali through Algeria joined with the mountains of Tibesti in northern Chad and southern Libya to create north-west orientation of the ranges, having 2000m high mountains of Libyan desert to the east and Massif des Bongo in central Africa and Adamawa highland and Jos plateau to the south wide Chad basin was formed. Taoudenni basin formed west of Ahaggar Mountain and north of Futa Djallon highland.

Western slope of East African rift valley in Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda, Bie plateau in Angola, western slope of Adamawa Highlands and Ubangi hills to the north surrounded Congo basin, the second largest drainage basin in the world. Qattara Depression in Libya and Egypt are coastal fertile lowlands. Sudd wetland in south Sudan, Okavango inland Delta and Niger and Nile valleys are essential African basins.

Eastern Africa is a craggy one marked with the longest rift valley on earth that stretches from Dead Sea in Jordan to Zimbabwe in southern Africa. Eastern and Nubian Deserts in Egypt rose to the south expanded in Ethiopia forming Ethiopian Highland, the rift valley divided into east and west rifts around Lake Turkana surrounding Lake Victoria that make Kenya, Uganda and Tanzanian border. Western rift was gorged by Lake Albert and Lake Tanganyika. Both east and west rifts joined near Lake Nyasa. Great East African rift and its resultant highland designed the highest point in Africa within Tanzania, the Kilimanjaro, 5895 masl.

Zambezi, Limpopo, Orange and Okavango are important rivers draining the plateau dominated southern Africa. It is interesting that Okavango River terminates in the Kalahari Desert, forming a vast swampy inland Delta. Drakensberg in South Africa and associated western mountains in Namibia-east to Huila Plateau created a cliff that faces Oceans. This western mountains marked the border between Namib and Kalahari Deserts. Nile, Niger and Congo are the three longest rivers in the continent, with Nile supporting the most populous city, Cairo, in the continent, Niger supporting the most populous country, Nigeria, in the continent and Congo supporting equatorial rain forests in the continent. Map 2 below shows some of these landforms.

Map 2: Landforms of Africa



Source: <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/teachers/curriculum/m3/activity1.php>

3. Climate, Vegetation and Soil

Africa is characterized as the hottest continent via that around three-quarter of the continent lies between Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn. There is fact that for a century the hottest temperature ever recorded in any human habitat is in Al'aziziyah, Libya, where the temperature of 58°C is frequent. To a greater simplicity African climate can be classified into four types:

(i) Tropical rain forest climate:

This is found in eastern Madagascar, eastern Tanzania and Mozambique, coast of West Africa and densest part of it in central Africa covering Congo DR, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and most of Cameroun. Rainfall is throughout the year, moist airs from the ocean is absorbed into continent and condense aloft to release plenty of precipitation. Average rainfall ranges between 1500-2000mm annually. Cape Debundsha in Cameroun is the wettest place in Africa with a record of 10290mm rain once upon a time. Temperature is uniform also throughout the year with negligible monthly or even daily variation. Average temperature is 18°C. Vegetation of the rainforest are dense and thick with green leaves throughout the year. Specie multitudes are apparent to the region, with more than 300 specie per square kilometer. Primate animals including monkeys, gorillas, chimpanzee etc. are more here than anywhere in the continent. Passerine birds and water animals like Hippopotamuses are common also in the region. Madagascar and east Africa has less density of the forest but Madagascar has endemic species of plants and animals like Lemur. A soil of the forest is ferrallitic and oxisol soil that is characterized with deep weathering profile, poor organic humus on the surface due to leaching, high water absorption capacity and high iron and aluminum sesquioxides. The soil is relatively less mature than may be expected, but its capability can be improved by the use of chemical fertilizer.

(ii) Tropical grassland or savannah climate:

Between deserts and rainforest of Africa lies grass dominated vast plain patches with inselberges called

savannah. Savannah has more forested characteristics to its southern boundary and more desert like to its northern fringe. Rainfall decreases from south to north and vulnerability of the environment to drought and other forms of degradation is higher in the north also.

From South to north savannah of Africa is classified into three on the basis of rainfall amount:

- a) Guinea savannah: - Here rainfall is averaged to 1000-1500mm per annum, average temperature is 20-25°C, it is the largest vegetation belts in many West African countries. Tall grasses, few scattered deciduous thick barks with long tap roots trees. Some trees have umbrella shaped canopy, grasses are green during rainy season and turn brown in the dry season. Examples of vegetation are oil palm, Dum palm, Shea butter, Isoberlina, etc.
- b) Sudan savannah: - This region has the average temperature of around 30-35°C and rainfall of 500-1000mm per annum. Grasses in this vegetation zone are more prevalent than in the guinea savannah. Trees scattered with huge trunk and strong leaves for water conservation. Soil here is ferruginous, an Alfisols type characterized with high iron and aluminum content. The soil is more fertile than the rest of African grassland, it support crops like sorghum, millet, rice, groundnut etc. Most of Africa's wild life and World Heritage Sites are found in this zone.
- c) Sahel savannah: - Here rainfall is reduced to 250-500mm per annum. Temperature is high with greater variability even between day and night. The average maximum temperature is between 31 and 42°C. Sahel is an Arabic word meaning lower beach, and the region was given this name for its akin to the beach, as beach protect sea water from land also Sahel protected main Savannah from sea of sand. Trees are scattered with thorny leaves and fleshy stem for water storage. Grasses reduces to the ground being short in length. Soil is entisols characterized with weak horizon and poor organic matter content.

(iii) Tropical desert climate

There are three major deserts in Africa; Sahara in the north, Kalahari in the South and Namib in the coast of Angola and Namibia. Sahara alone covers around 25% of African land area. Other deserts include Ogaden in eastern Ethiopia and Somalia, Nubian Desert in Sudan, Libyan Desert in Chad and Libya and minute portion of southwestern Madagascar. Sahara desert is where the highest and lowest temperature is recorded in Africa; in Ifrane of Morocco -25°C is recorded which is the lowest temperature in the continent, 58°C temperature record of Al'aziziyah in Libya is the highest also in the continent. Range of temperature is high in desert also, in Mali the daily range rose to about 16°C.

Rainfall in Sahara is extremely low especially in the east. Driest African area is Wadi Halfa of Sudan where less than 2.5 mm of rain is recorded as annual mean rainfall. Scientists believed the tilt of the earth axis cycled in every 41,000 years from 22° to 24.5°, and this will turn Sahara green again in the next 15,000 (17,000) years. Kalahari is not as dry or as hot as Sahara by the fact that the average mean temperature is never exceeding 29°C though daily may rise to about 45°C. Rainfall ranges between 110-500mm per

annum, but dry season may linger to about eight months. Frost is recorded in the southern winter of southern Africa. Swamp of the Okavango River at the heart of Kalahari create vast inland delta that host significant number of wildlife in Botswana.

Namib is a coastal desert ignited by Benguela cold current in western cost of Angola, Namibia and South Africa. Temperature in this desert is generally between 9-20°C by annual average, but daily may rise to about 45°C. Convergence of Benguela and Hadley cell in the coast of this desert create thick fog that frequently causes ship hazards and consequently called *Skeleton coast*. Rainfall is normally less than 10mm annually, but frequent fog remains the major source of moisture. Aridisol type of soil, few vegetation and thorny scrub lush the desert.

(iv) Highland climate

Altitude is proved to be a factor influencing climate globally, by the fact that temperature normally decrease with altitude, and this causes cold climate of Arctic type to occur in the low latitude. In the highlands of eastern Africa especially Kilimanjaro (5,898 MAMSL) in Tanzania and Mount Kenya (5,200 MAMSL) in Kenya permafrost capped the mountains, though Kilimanjaro is just 3° south of the equator. Atlas in the extreme northwest is also cold and the coldest temperature inhabited by Africans is found there at Ifrane.

Plateaux of southern Africa also experience temperate type of climate with near 10°C temperature average in some localities. Mediterranean type of climate is also found in the extreme southwestern coast of South Africa at Great Karoo of western Drakensberg.

Montane vegetation is prevalent in African highlands like Jos plateau in central Nigeria, Tibesti in Chad, Ahaggar in Algeria, Massif del Air in Niger, Ethiopian plateau, Kenyan highlands, Bie plateau in Angola and Congo, Drakensberg in South Africa and great East African rift valley. Colluvial soils and river's alluvial deposit coupled with adequate moisture provide a vast fertile soil that support both temperate and tropical crops on and around these mountains.

4. African History Through Time

Researchers believed the human ancestors, the family of Hominids split from African Apes probably 5-10 million years ago and developed to upright motion creature known as Australopithecines 'Ape-man'. The first example of Australopithecus was found in 1925 in a limestone cave near Taung, in South Africa, by the anthropologist Raymond Dart. Another famous found in Africa was in Ethiopia's Omo Valley in 1974. It was the skeleton; about 40% complete, of a young girl known to the outside world as 'Lucy' and to Ethiopians as 'Dinqnish' - the wonderful or precious one.

So also the oldest relic of modern and intelligent man (*homo sapien sapien*) called Homo Habilis 'Hand man' was found in the extraordinary geological site of Olduvai gorge of

Tanzania in the east African rift valley, the skeleton is believed to be reserved for 2.5 million years.

Hence, "So far the evidence that we have in the world points to Africa as the cradle of humankind. There is no question that Africans contributed towards the development of human beings as we know them today. They were the first to use their physical capabilities to enlarge their brains. They were able to develop the technology of stone tools...they were the first ones to move out of trees and walk upright...and they were the first ones to explore....crossing the seas and going out to Asia and Europe...and to me this is the greatest achievement that humanity has ever done." George Abungu, *Director-General of the National Museums of Kenya*.

Therefore, entirety of human race today is a bud of African men, as P. Hunziker et.al says "some geneticists have even argued that every woman alive today carries the mtDNA of just one African woman who lived 10,000 generations ago".

5. Inventions

Around 40,000-10,000 BCE i.e. the later Stone Age, development of bow and arrow, evidence of rock paintings and hunter gathering lifestyle embedded Africa. Evidences of rock paintings with dancing and socializing also confirm the rich culture of ancient Africa. Hence, Burkinabe historian Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo, was quoted in UNESCO General History of Africa saying "The various scenes depicted in African rock art can be said to be a sort of documentary film of everyday life in prehistoric times."

Also P. Hunziker et.al commented on Ethiopian paintings "Art reflects but also stimulates action and these prehistoric carvings and paintings proclaim the relentless struggle of African man to dominate nature but also to add to his own nature through the divine joy of creation."

Around 9,000-3,000 BC, last major wet period in Africa, the Sahara was habitable with savannah grassland and rivers. "Baked clay pottery were found in African stone age communities and it was at this time we found the beginnings of agriculture and domestication of animals in Africa" (Hunziker et.al, 2005). So if as hinted by Castleden (2011) Agriculture was invented by Near Easterners around 8,000 BC we can say African agriculture is the oldest, though more research is needed.

Around 500 BC there were iron smelting in Nigeria and central Niger which spreads to rest of West Africa by 1000 AD. Three evidences were given regarding the emergence of iron working in Africa.

The first relate it to the Kingdom of Meroe around 500BC in northeastern Africa, which gave the skill to Bantu people and Bantu in their migration spread it to central and southern Africa. Hunziker et.al (2011) confirm that no evidence that iron-use skill of Kush Kingdom has ever spread either further west or towards the south, although we do not know this for sure.

The second source relate the arrival of iron smelting skill to Phoenicians whom found the Kingdom of Carthage around

800BC in North Africa and from them the skill crosses the Sahara to west Africa. But, there was evidence of iron smelting in Jos plateau of central Nigeria 200 century earlier.

The third and probably most powerful is that the iron-use skills originate in Africa without copy of the skill from anywhere, even though iron use was said had begun in Iran since 5500BC.

Eras of 200-500 AD is regarded as the age of movement of Bantu people to east and southern Africa, "The Bantu Migrations." These Bantus were pointed as the originators of many African languages and civilizations. Their movement makes three major areas of research as pointed by many researchers. Viz.

- Linguistic: a comparative study of languages spoken in some parts of eastern, central and southern Africa show similarities with the mother tongues originally spoken in West Africa. There are some 450 known languages in the Bantu family from Gikuyu in the north to Setswana in the south.
- Pottery: there is evidence of similar pottery technology in eastern, southern and western Africa. Iron Age farmers were skilled pot makers and decorated their pots with grooves and patterns. Related groups of people used similar styles of decoration.
- Iron: there is little or no evidence of iron working in east and southern Africa before the arrival of the Bantu suggesting that new technology was spread by the migrants. These migrants might probably be Bantu who migrated from western and central Africa. It is also known that Bantu were in Jos plateau and worked iron prior to their famous migration.

The Bantu proved enormously successful at adapting to their new environments and it has been argued by some historians that they brought not only new methods of survival but the development of the system of statehood that we still find today.

6. Some Ancient African Civilizations Egypt and Nubia

Nile River with the length of 6695 Km, is the longest river in the world. It has two major sources; the White Nile (originated from Highland of Uganda and passes through Sudan) where it jointed with Blue Nile (originated from Ras Dashen glacier in Ethiopian highland,) in Omdurman, a town near Khartoum. The White Nile brings a steady flow of water and cause floods in what we now call the Nile Valley mostly in Sudan and Egypt. Each year Nile flood its banks and settling abundant fertile alluvial soil which support around 1.5 million populated ancient city. The main flood is around Aswan where the present Aswan high dam is located.

Egyptians and Nubians are famous for their ability to control the flooding of the river Nile, use variety of techniques to trap the water inside canals, basins, dams and dykes. They are also able to develop techniques of irrigation in their fertile environment, which could provide the foundation for

the great civilizations that followed and prominently invention of the famous hieroglyphs writing system and Papyrus paper.

There are/were dichotomies of whom were the early settlers of Egypt between Negroes as hinted *Cheikh Anta Diop* (2011), Hamites argued by *Charles Seligman* (1873-1940) and Mediterranean's as pointed out by *Basil Davidson*. Archeological evidences and climate change history proved that Sahara desert was fertile grassland until the end of the last Ice age (8000BC), people of African race inhabited the area then. And at all it turned to dry desert around the last 2000 years. This causes the movement of people to the wetter savannah and forest in the south and Nile Valley in the east.

Hunziker et.al (2005) commented on the blacks Kingdom of Kerma (Kush) in Northern Sudan as "an advanced society and archaeological evidence shows that ceramics were being produced by 8,000 BC - earlier than in Egypt. By about 1700 BC, the town had grown into a town of 10,000 people with a complex hierarchical society". If this is correct then Kushites are older than Egyptians around Nile.

It is a fact of history that Nubia and Egypt compete one another in ruling Nile civilizations. "Nubia was the meeting place of the Mediterranean and African civilization. The relationship between Egypt and upper Nubia was completely different from time to time and period to period. If the Egyptian king's power is widespread it catches everything under its control and Nubia comes under Egyptian authority, but if it is weak, then upper Nubia is ruled by itself." Osama Abdel Meguid also narrated that "around 713 BC black King Shabaka came to power in Kush and brought the Nile Valley as far as the Delta under his control. The name of one of his successors King Taharqa is found on inscriptions throughout the Valley" (Osama Abdel Meguid, *Director of the Nubian Museum in Aswan*). While commenting on twenty fifth Egyptian dynasty in Nubia he added that "They dealt like Egyptians, they dressed like Egyptians, but they were still proud of their black faces."

Also, to confirm the formation of black kingdom of the Nile episode, Dr. Salah el-Din Muhammed Ahmed, *Director of Fieldwork at the National Museum in Khartoum*, opined that "From the graves and from the images painted on tombs we can see that people looked much more African than Mediterranean. The jewelry is really of an African nature-like anklets, bracelets, ear studs and earrings - and you can still find the style of the jewelry used by the Meroites on tribes of the savannah belt south of Khartoum."

Cheikh Anta Diop in his BBC program in 2005 commented "taken from The African Origin of Civilization", ancient Egypt was a Negro civilization. The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in the air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt. The African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor objective nor unruffled. He is ignorant, cowardly and neurotic. The ancient Egyptians were Negroes. The moral fruit of their civilization is to be counted among the assets of the Black world." Diop also in his research quoted some prominent

ancient Greek historians describing Egyptians as follows: The Greek historian Herodotus, for example, described the Colchians of the Black Sea shores as "Egyptians by race" and pointed out they had "black skins and kinky hair." Apollodorus, the Greek philosopher, described Egypt as "the country of the black-footed ones" and the Latin historian Ammianus Marcellinus said "the men of Egypt are mostly brown or black with a skinny desiccated look."

In the year 1974 UNESCO organized a conference in Cairo to discuss the recent research on race of the ancient Egyptians and the symposium was closed with the following words "It is more than probable that the African strain, black or light, is preponderant in the Ancient Egyptian, but in the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to say more."

By the way, in 1987 Martin Bernal's published his work 'Black Athena' in which he argued that Classical civilization had its roots deep in Afro-asiatic cultures which had been systematically suppressed for mainly racist reasons. Professor Simiyu Wandibba of University of Nairobi also hinted that Europeans deny black Africans their credit of creating Great Egyptian Kingdom just to pave themselves way to colonizing Africa. He was saying "In the nineteenth and early twentieth century's there were theories that Africa was inhabited much later than Asia and that the people occupying Africa today were the result of waves of migration from western Asia, the Middle East and the Far East. I want to say that this is not true. But if you want to rule a people, you don't want to give them credit."

6.1 North African Civilizations

North Africa here refers to what is now Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya since we gave some detail about Egypt and Sudan above. In Roman times Mauretania (the land of the Mauri - or Moors) coincided roughly with modern Morocco. It is not to be confused with present day Mauritania; which is further south. And the Roman name for part of what is now Tunisia and Algeria was Numidia. Western Libya was and may still be called Tripolitania, and eastern Libya Cyrenaica.

Nomadic Berber were the original inhabitants of Northern Africa, their occupation is nomadism with few practicing trans-Saharan trade with West Africa. Berber originally does not organize into unified states. Collapse of the Pharo power in the eleventh century BC gave Libyans army opportunity to conquer Egypt and established the Libyan Dynasty in Egypt around 1950s BC.

Another important civilization in the ancient North Africa is Greek city of Cyrene which Davidson described as "famous for its intellectual life, notably its schools of philosophy and medicine." 813 BC Phoenicians in Mediterranean coast of Africa and third century Carthagians in Tunis were equally important in the history of development and intellectuality of North Africa. In the seventh century AD, Islam invaded North Africa after Arabs conquest of Egypt in 642 AD and moved as far west as Spain in 670 AD. Berber accepted Islam at their wish and made them lax to Arabs by marriage and slavery the result of which made them less like Africans and more like Arabs till date.

6.2 West African Civilizations

West Africa is considered oldest civilization after Egypt and Berber of North Africa. Trans-Saharan trade and agriculture along Niger River were the most important activity that facilitated the growth of more than twenty Empires and hundreds of kingdoms and chiefdoms in the vicinity of West Africa.

Ife and Benin sculpture in Nok around 500 BC, in the present southern Nigeria worth consideration here, these kingdoms are the source of the big Yoruba Empire.

Ghana (Founded around 300 AD) grown in the present day position of Mauritania, Sene-Gambia and Mali. The Present day Ghana inherits the name of that empire though away from the actual mound of the ancient Ghana. Mali Empire (founded around 1300 AD) followed Ghana with Headquarter at Djenne and extended to the present day Mali which inherited the name.

Songhay Empire (1500 AD) consumes most of Niger River courses locating its Headquarter at Goa. Till the eve of naming Nigeria in 1914 people expected the name of the country will be Songhay. Other major empires of West Africa include Kanem of Borno (1700 AD) around Lake Chad, Asante In the position of modern Ghana (around 1600 AD), Oyo kingdom which cease the prominence of Ife around 17th century, and Sokoto Empire that founded the Islamic Empire of faith in the Hausa land of Northern Nigeria and Southwestern Niger etc.

6.3 Central African Civilizations

In the central African region a small Iron Age communities developed a society in the mouth of Zaire (Congo) river which developed into empire led by Manikongo around 15th century AD. The position of this kingdom is in the present day Congo.

In Angola large kingdoms had been formed by about 1400 AD called Ndongo. The Kingdoms of Luba and Lunda in the grasslands of the upper Congo between present day Congo DR and Angola participated in trade with the west coast as well as with the east around that time also. Others are: as praised by Davidson "The farming people of the Kingdom of Kazembe, in Katanga in southern Zaire, appear to have led an untroubled existence until the middle of the 19th century - and contributed much to African culture in art, music and dancing."

6.4 East African Civilizations

Nubian and Kush kingdoms discussed with Egypt above, are part of great African empires in east Africa. They dwell as changing with time, positions of the present day Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. Others in the region include: Swahili; name given to the people living between Mogadishu in present day Somalia to Rovuma River in the present day Mozambique. Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, in 100 AD describe them as "Men of greatest stature, who are pirates, inhabit the whole coast and at each place have set up chiefs."

These people especially the dwellers of Tanzanian coast were known by Arabs as Zanj, and longtime contact with Arab give clue to African envies to snatch most of their credits and awarded it to Arabs. For that I quote From Compendium of Knowledge by the Chinese scholar, Tuan Ch'eng-shih, 8th century: "This country has not been subject to any foreign power. In fighting they use elephant's tusks, ribs and wild cattle's horns as spears, and they have corselets and bows and arrows. They have twenty myriads of foot-soldiers. The Arabs are continually making raids on them."

Hunziker et.al also put it this way "But oral and archaeological evidence suggests that Swahili society was both dynamic and coherent. The relationship between people on the African main land on the one hand, and those from Arabia and Persia on the other was in fact, one of mutual dependence and benefit. Therefore it does not make sense to talk of the Arabs 'appearing' on the East African coast and 'taking over' African societies".

Buganda in the present day Uganda, Lunda in southern Congo DR and Kitara Empires were prominent around 16th century in the area of Great Lakes of Africa, in the present day Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Congo DR.

6.5 Southern African Civilizations

In the mineral rich southern Africa empires grow in the veld grasslands. One of the most important was the kingdom of Great Zimbabwe around 1000 AD that used stone to construct spectacular fortified palaces like Stonehenge in Britain and Machu Picchu of Peru called Dzimba Dza Mabwe. Zimbabwe of today inherits the name and took the position of that empire. This empire was overtook by Mutapa in the 15th century from nearby Mozambique. I found it meaningful here to quote the comment of Dr. Innocent Pikarayi, lecturer at University of Zimbabwe about Mutapa and surrounding kingdoms: "The Mutapa rulers continued the tradition of building structures in stone, similar to Great Zimbabwe, although considerably smaller in size.

The Torwa state was established in south west Zimbabwe around the same time as Mutapa. The capital of the Torwa state was Khami. The Torwa were defeated during the 1640's in a civil war. From this period on wards we begin to hear about the Changamire Rozvi. They built their elaborate capital at Danangombe, in the middle part of Zimbabwe. This state was brought to an end by the Nguni during the 1830's, but before that the Rozvi had already broken up into several smaller groups. The Nambya established themselves near Victoria Falls, and their capital was probably Bumbuzi. The other Rozvi groups dispersed over most of the Zimbabwe Plateau. The most notable group of them all established its authority on the Venda people in the Zoutpansberg Mountains in South Africa. Their capital was at Dzata."

Map (3) below show some of these civilizations, kingdoms and empires.

Map 3: Africa's Kingdoms and Empires



Source:

<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m7a/activity3.php>

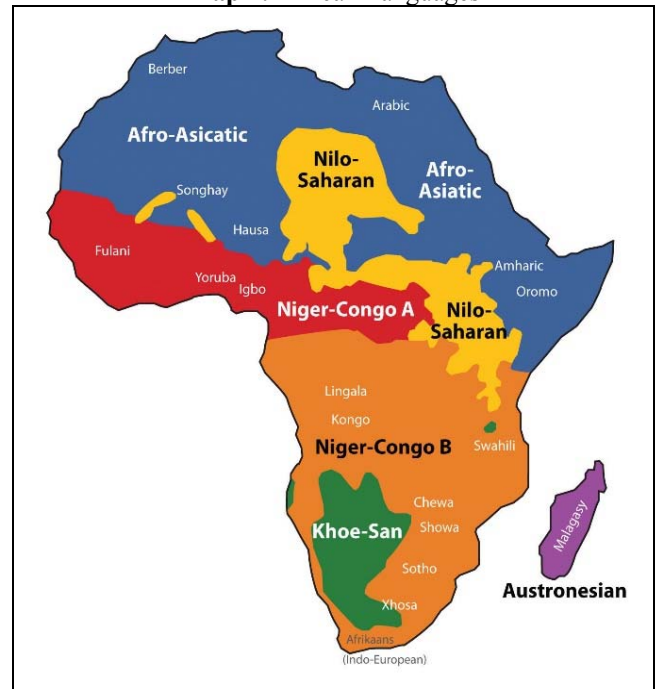
6.6 Languages

Among the interesting events of Africa are the multitudes of languages, out of the 6912 languages believed to be alive in the world more than 1,000 are spoken in Africa. Most intriguing is the fact that only around 25% of the languages has more than five million native speakers. These multiple African languages were classified into 6 major families, viz.

- (1) Afro-Asiatic: cover most of North Africa down to the southern fringe of Sahara and southern Ethiopia and Somalia e.g. Tamazight, Hausa, Oromo, Amharic, Arabic, Somali, and Tigrinya etc.
- (2) Niger-Congo: cover the coastal belt of West Africa, most of Central and Eastern Africa and Eastern Southern Africa. Most of smaller African languages are in this family e.g. Mande, Swahili, Sesotho, Yoruba, Igbo, Kongo, Zulu, Shona, Sukuma, Gikuyu, and Kirundi etc.
- (3) Khoisan: cover northwestern South Africa, Southern Namibia and western Botswana, the language is associated with Nama, Hottentots and Bushmen.
- (4) Nilo-Saharan: cover areas around Lake Chad and extend north to southern Libya. Another pocket is around Lake Victoria e.g. Kanuri, Nuer, Dinka, Teda, Luo and Masai etc.
- (5) Austronesian: found only in the Island of Madagascar e.g. Salakava, antaisaka Betsileo and Merina etc.
- (6) Indo-European: arrival of Boers to southern Africa brought indigenization of Dutch derivative language in Southern Africa called Afrikaans.

Apart from those indigenous languages every African country has influence of foreign language from either colonial language of Europe or religious language of Arabs or any other immigrant language. Issue of lingua franca is also significant where one powerful language tend to dominate others in a region; like Swahili in East Africa, Hausa in West Africa, Tswana-Sotho in southern Africa and Amhara in the African horn. Map (4) below show the distribution of Africa's major language families.

Map 4: African Languages



Source: <http://www.african-tribe.com/map-of-africa.html>

6.7 Religions

African people have strong adherent to religion since antiquity, they also organize a set of believe and deities before contact with foreign religions.

See how prominent Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe described Amalinze The cat's father as chastised by a priestess in *Things fall apart* for not working hard to find what god predestined for him, according to Igbo traditional believe: "Hold your peace, screamed the priestess, her voice terrible as it echoed through the dark void. You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with his gods and ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm. You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machet and your hoe. When your neighbors go out with their axe to cut down virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farms that take no labour to clear. They cross seven rivers to make their farms; you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man."

Africans believe share some common features: a belief in one God above a host of lesser gods or semi-divine figures; a belief in ancestral spirits; the idea of sacrifice often involving the death of a living thing to ensure divine protection and generosity; the need to undergo rites of

passage to move from childhood to adulthood, from life to death etc.

Ancient African religions varied in man-god relationship; some facilitate direct man-god relationship without the need for intermediaries, while others deny possibility of direct man-god consult and enforce intermediaries. Read how Huzinker et.al (2005) exemplified some: “Abaluiyia of Kenya, the Bambuti of the Congo area, and the Galla of Ethiopia are among those who pray directly to the supreme deity on a regular basis”

Here is the example of a common prayer of the Nandi, in Kenya, which reflects the importance of cattle in their community: God guard me, the children and the cattle, God guard for us the cattle, God give us good health! Igbo in southern Nigeria relate god with a rich man that you need to approach through intermediaries. Huzinker et.al (2005) and Johnson et.al (2012) give example of deities in traditional Africa:

Table 1: Africa's People and their Deities

| People | Supreme Deity | Location |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Akan speakers | Nyama | Ghana |
| Luba | Kalumba | Congo |
| Baganda | Katonda | Uganda |
| Yoruba | Oludmare(Oloru) | Nigeria |
| Zulu | Nkulunkulu | South Africa |
| Fulani | Dondari | West Africa |
| Igbo | Chuioku or Chukwu | Nigeria |
| Bashongo | Bumba | Zambia |
| Mande | Saketa | Sierra Leone |

Source:<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index.html>

Judaism might be the first foreign religion though its first figure i.e. Moses started his preaching of prophet hood and independence of Israel in Egypt at the time of Ramses II. Nevertheless, exodus of Jew took place from Africa to Palestine. Falashas or black Jews are found in Ethiopia, pockets of Jews communities like Djerba in Tunisia are there in North Africa also.

Christianity is the first among foreign religions that got stand in Africa around first or second century AD, came to Egypt then diffused to Ethiopia and stay there for several centuries before European missionaries spread it along the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts. Still Coptic Orthodoxy is the major Christian sect in Ethiopia. 17th and 18th centuries were the growing time of African Christianity when missionaries delved inland converting areas less consumed by Islam into Christianity. Roman Catholicism sect tend to be more prevalent in German and Belgian colonies while Protestantism is more to others colonies.

Islam was in Africa since its dawn when Prophet Muhammad sent a clique of his companions (around 616 AD) to Ethiopian king that was a Christian to safeguard them for him from tribulation of elites in his hometown (Makka). Muslims believed that king *Najjashi* embraced Islam in the hand of those companions.

Conquest of Egypt in 642 AD by Muslims under the second successor of Prophet Muhammad is the first declaration of Islam in Africa. Islam diffuse west to Morocco, south to Sahel and along the eastern coast of Africa. There is least of sectarian diversity in African Islam as Sunni Islam predominate. Some population of Hindus and Buddhist are found in eastern South Africa. There are thousands of Baha'is in Congo and other Central African states, also some exist in Northern and Southern Africa.

7. Conclusion

Discussions above gave insight into the physical and social diversity of Africa as well as its great achievements in ancient and later periods. Undoubtedly Africa is lagging behind in the present context, but looking at its potentialities and incandescent past one can have a good hope for the betterment of the continent. What happen in the past have every tendency to repeat itself, in the sense that whoever can investigate and identify the glory of his ancestors and emulate example the uplift of his status guaranteed.

8. Future Scope

This review explored the past of Africa and its achievements in search of clue about possibility of Africa to prosper in the near future. Many facts of this article are subject to further study, so that more scientific evidences and empirical reasons would be employed to support them.

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