**Africa**

 *(Disclaimer: the following section derives from the thought systems of Evolution it does not follow the belief systems of various Religions)*

**The Origin of Human Beings:**

There is no exact moment at which human beings began to appear; the boundary between humans and apes is not a fixed point. Five to 7 million years ago some mutation occurred in an ape ancestor and survived, and from that single mutation other single mutations kept occurring in the branch called hominids, the bipedal apes. The mutations that bestowed advantage were preserved. These changes eventually led to modern Homo sapiens.

These genetic changes took place repeatedly in the same place—eastern Africa. For at least 3 million years human development occurred only in Africa; hominids did not live anywhere else, although apes lived in Europe and Asia as well. Sometime between 1 and 1.8 million years ago, a group of hominids we call Homo erectus left Africa and began to spread out over the rest of the Earth. Later, about 100,000 to 200,000 years ago, another group of people, by then evolved into Homo sapiens, left eastern Africa to inhabit the Earth, while the previous group of Homo erectus, as it had evolved in various places, became extinct. This is the big picture, as best as it can be constructed at the present time, with possibly another migration occurring between them.

**Why did human evolution happen in eastern Africa?**

Eastern Africa is tropical; our lack of hairiness indicates that we evolved from tropical animals. To become humans, tropical apes came down from trees to live on grasslands; we are creatures of grasslands, not forests. The geography that could mold human development is found in the Great Rift Valley of eastern Africa.

 People who visit the Great Rift Valley, the Olduvai Gorge, or the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania are usually deeply moved by the beauty of the place and the recognition of their ancestral homeland. There on the edge of the Serengeti Plain one can still see the abundance of animal and bird life that provided sustenance as humans emerged from apes. The walls of the gorge, the wooded areas, and the open plains provided shelter, enclosure, and food for the hunter-gatherers who crouched beside them.

The Great Rift Valley is formed by a rift in the African continental plate; the eastern piece of Africa will one day split off from the rest of the continent and drift away in the Indian Ocean, eventually to crash into India, China, Japan, or who knows where. The rift begins at the Red Sea in Ethiopia and extends down through Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique, with branches of it extending into Zaire and Zambia. The equator runs right through the middle of the length of the rift, at Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The flat coastal plains rise to an interior plateau between 1,200 and 1,400 feet (365-1,220 meters) above sea level. These highlands maintain the temperature range that is physiologically most natural for humans, on either side of 80 degrees Fahrenheit

The landscape in the Rift Valley was a tropical mixture of woodlands and grasslands, or savannas, with occasional mountain ranges. During the wet months lush grasses, trees, and flowering plants yielded fruit. During the dry months the plateau dried up, lightning ignited fires, and rebirth came again with the rains. The savanna provided a nursery with a comfortable temperature, replete with fruit, nuts, and game.

There were fluctuations, however. Earthquakes and ever-changing rainfall patterns created jigsaws of local environments. When Earth entered a glacial period, the savanna became cooler and drier, with more grassland. During interglacial periods, the savanna was hotter and wetter, with more rain forest.

Climate is currently considered to be a key factor in evolutionary change. Apes changing to humans had to adapt to immense climatic swings. If climate had not changed as it did, if gene pools in particular places had not been exposed to particular pressures, especially coolness and dryness in the tropics, then our species probably would not have appeared as it did.

Earth entered its present condition of alternating glacial and interglacial periods only about 2 million years ago. The first ice sheets arose in Antarctica about 35 million years ago, after Earth took the previous 65 million years to cool off about 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Apparently in the last 2 million years the planet has gotten into a temperature range in which colder and hotter cycles can easily tip back and forth



**Geography**

**North Africa vs. Sub Saharan Africa**

The African continent is so vast that we often limit our thinking in terms of Geography. Most people separate Africa either into 5 regions (discussed later) or into two zones. The Two Zones would be Northern Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Sahara Desert is the largest hot desert in the world and occupies approximately ten percent of the African continent.

Northern Africa has been connected to Europe for millennium and has taken on the appearance and functionality of many European societies while still keeping the rich and distinctive characteristics of its African heritage.

Sub-Saharan Africa has been isolated and exploited in many ways throughout its history. As a result, the present situation is generally dire and can be illustrated by the high illiteracy rate, high poverty numbers and low life expectancy statistics.

**Regions of Africa**



Northern Africa lies between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara desert. It includes the large countries of Egypt and Algeria. Since ancient times, this area has been influenced by European and Asian cultures. The peoples of this region include Berbers and Arabs.



Western Africa is part of the Low Africa land region. It primarily consists of forest and grasslands. The annual rainfall averages in parts of western Africa are as much as 100 inches (250 cm). Land in western Africa is primarily used for subsistence farming with coastal patches of forest land production.



As part of the Low Africa land region, central Africa is covered with dense tropical rain forests. The average rainfall in this region ranges from 10–80 inches (25–203 cm), and the regional climate various from semi-arid to tropical wet. Land in central Africa is primarily used for subsistence farming, grazing, and some forest land production. Some of chief agricultural products of this region are millet, cotton, coffee, cacao, and cassava.



Mount Kilmanjaro and Mount Kenya, volcanic mountains, rise above the grasslands of eastern Africa. The Great Rift Valley is located in this region. Lake Victoria, one of several large, deep, beautiful lakes of the Great Rift Valley, is the source of the great Nile River. Grasslands stretch down the eastern coast to southern Africa.



Mountains, plateaus, and rolling hills are characteristic of southern Africa. The Kalahari Desert lies in southern Africa. Much of the land is used for subsistence farming and grazing. Part of the High Africa land region, southern Africa also has deserts, swamps, and forests. The average rainfall in this region ranges 2–60 inches (5–152 cm). The climate varies from tropical wet and dry in the upper part of the region to desert conditions in the lower coastal areas.

**Egyptians**

**Hieroglyphics**

Much more is known about Egyptian society, because Egyptian hieroglyphics have been deciphered. Unlike the writing of the Sumerians, which shows a gradual development, Egyptian hieroglyphics appeared as a full-blown system, in about 3300 to 3200 BCE, suggesting a possible imitation of the Sumerian system. Egyptian hieroglyphics were decoded in 1824 by Jean-François Champollion, who used the Rosetta Stone found in Egypt by Napoleon’s troops. The inscription on the stone, from the second century BCE, featured the same text written in three scripts: hieroglyphics, demotic (a simplified hieroglyphics), and Greek. Most Egyptian texts are found on papyrus, which preserves well under dry conditions. Papyrus roll books in Egypt date from about 2500 BCE. Papyrus documents reveal that urban settlements along the Nile were united in about 3100 BCE as a single complex society governed from Memphis on the delta. Rulers, called pharaohs, declared themselves divine from an early time, another idea that may have come from Sumer.

**The Nile River**

The Nile River—the longest river in the world at 4,160 miles, with floods more reliable than any other river—presented advantages available nowhere else in the world. It provided reliable transportation by boat in both directions (the current flows north, the wind blows south), making it possible for the pharaoh to control shipping and distribution in his kingdom. The river provided annual flooding, which people trapped behind dikes for its deposit of soil, then released to water plants, avoiding the evaporation that caused salinization in Sumer. Thus the Nile provided the basis for an unusual stability, while the surrounding deserts provided a natural defense.

The basic food crops in the Nile Valley were wheat, barley, dates, figs, olives, and grapes. Egyptians domesticated small fowl—ducks, geese, quail, pigeons, and pelicans—and caught many fish. They learned to make olives edible by soaking them in salt and water. They made bread and beer and used salt to preserve fish, which by 2800 BCE they were trading to the Phoenicians in exchange for cedar, glass, and purple dye made from the murex shellfish. Egyptians also learned to preserve human bodies by covering them in salt for seventy days.

**Egyptian Religious Ideas**

The religious ideas of the Egyptians cannot be systematized for lack of sufficient evidence. But a few basic assertions are clear. Egyptians were proud and judged themselves superior to others, a common human trait. Their population was mixed, composed of many different groups from Semitic peoples to dark black Nubians, and their gods were a blend of many local ones. Their creator god, Atum, was bisexual (the he-she god) and came to be associated with Ra, the sun god. Egyptians considered the heart to be the seat of intelligent thought and formulated a belief in an afterlife that one earned by thoughtful and moral behavior in this world. Osiris, the god of the dead who himself had risen from the dead, presided over the judgment, at which the newly dead person’s heart was placed on a scale to measure whether the person would be snatched by the demons of death or proceed to an afterlife better than this one. Osiris’s wife, Isis, was widely worshipped even outside of Egypt, especially in the early years of the Roman Empire.

**Egyptian Political Development**

The Egyptians managed to sustain their irrigation system for 5,000 years, longer than either the Sumerians or the Harappan society in the Indus Valley. Today, however, Egypt is beset with soil and water problems, since the technology of the twentieth century, applied to fix the problems, has worsened them. (For example, the Aswan Dam does not permit the annual flooding that deposited fertile silt; the dammed water is leaking underground into ancient tombs.)

The Egyptians, who did not feature much warfare among themselves, eventually suffered an invasion from people known as the Hyksos, thought to be the Canaanites from Palestine. In 1678 BCE the Hyksos used horse-drawn chariots, newly perfected, to cross the Sinai Desert and drag the Egyptians into the maelstrom of warfare that occurred between 2350 and 331 BCE among the rulers of the Middle East. Rulers everywhere had become skilled at building empires and maintaining them with a bureaucracy; by about 1550 BCE Egyptians ruled the Nile as far south as upper Nubia and the coast of Palestine and Syria north to the Euphrates River. Eight hundred years later Assyrians ruled Mesopotamia, and 200 years later the Persian Empire included lower Egypt, all of Turkey, and Mesopotamia to the Black and Caspian seas, stretching east to the Indus Valley. These military triumphs were supported by improvements in fighting, specifically horse-drawn chariots and iron metallurgy for cheap armor, starting in Cyrus or eastern Turkey about 1200 BCE.

Egyptian culture strongly influenced a “country cousin” culture, the Minoan, on the island of Crete, located off the coast of Greece. Minoan culture was the first complex society of Europe, developing from 3000 to 1450 BCE. It used an early form of writing and deployed ships to found colonies and create a trading empire. Since Crete lies in the Mediterranean between Greece and the coast of Africa, Egyptian influences on Minoan frescoes, and presumably on the rest of its culture, were strong. Through Minoans, Egyptians influenced the Greeks, perhaps even providing analogs to its gods and goddesses. Minoan culture came to an abrupt end for unknown reasons, probably including the horrendous volcanic eruption on the nearby island of Thera, now Santorini, in 1645 BCE, which cast sun-reducing ashes into the atmosphere for years to come

**Trade after the fall of Rome**

While western Europe experienced its dark age of migrations and warfare, Africa was coming more into the network of trade and stability emanating from the Muslim world. North Africa converted to Islam, as described earlier, while sub-Saharan Africa continued to be something of a special case, isolated from the main currents of world trade far longer than most of the Eurasian landmass.

**Camels**

The use of camels as pack animals came to Africa from Arabia sometime before the start of the Common Era, reaching Lake Chad at around 300, when caravan traffic across the Sahara began. Since camels are superior to other pack animals, carrying more for less food and water, the Sahara became a favored region of cheap transportation. Egypt and northern Africa came under Muslim control between 636 and 711, after which African contacts with the rest of the world were chiefly through Muslims. During the early centuries of trade with Muslims, West African rulers resisted accepting the Muslim faith, with its literacy and world participation, because it required repudiation of local religious traditions that gave kings their claim to sacred powers. The first known African king to convert did so in 985.

Along the eastern coast, sailors from what is now Indonesia reached Madagascar in about 500, bringing bananas, yams, and taro root, which the native Bantus cultivated, allowing settlement of more forest zones. Islam spread along the coast, where a common culture and language developed, based on African grammar and vocabulary but enriched with many Arabic and Persians terms and written in Arabic script. In time, the people and the language became known as Swahili, from the Arabic name sawahil al sudan, meaning “shores of blacks.” The Islamic traders did not go inland, where Bantu-speaking Africans remained content with their own religions for centuries to come.

Camels that could cross the Sahara were useless in the sub-Saharan humid climate because of the tsetse fly and the trypanosomes it carried, which caused sleeping sickness. Other diseases in sub-Saharan Africa—malaria and yellow fever—proved fatal to people not used to that disease environment. Geography also kept people out of sub-Saharan Africa; the largest rivers, the Niger and the Congo, were cut off from the sea by rapids or waterfalls near their mouths. A complex array of parasites kept the local population in check. The interior of Africa remained isolated from the rest of the world until the nineteenth century, without the density to develop urban societies; local traditions, using about 2,000 languages, remained characteristic of sub-Saharan Africa.

**African Metals (Gold!)**

Africans developed iron smelting, beginning sometime early in the first millennium CE, possibly by themselves or by importing the idea and/or technique. The Bantus, who lived on the edge of the rain forest near known sites of early iron smelting, close to the modern boundary of Nigeria and Cameroon, moved south and took iron smelting with them into southern Africa by 800.

In the hot, wet tropical forests and humid savannas of sub-Saharan Africa, all goods that were traded had to be carried on the heads of people. No other pack animals could survive. This fact favored the lightest, most valuable commodities, particularly gold. Two kingdoms based on trading gold emerged before 1000—Ghana in West Africa and Zimbabwe in the east.

Ghana appears in an Arabic text of the late eighth century as a “land of gold.” Covering parts of Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania, the kingdom of Ghana was developed by the Soninke people, who traded gold dust to the Berbers along the northern coast in exchange for copper and manufactured goods. The ancient capital of Ghana was a double town before 1000, with one area for merchants of all origins and another area for military and political leaders and their followers.

On a plateau south of the Zambezi River, another powerful state emerged, based on gold mined locally and carried to the coast. The capital of this state, now known as the Great Zimbabwe, had about 18,000 inhabitants at its height in about 1400. Historians suspect that people in the capital used up nearby forests for firewood, while their cattle overgrazed nearby pastures, hastening the state’s decline in the fifteenth century. On the whole, however, the shorelines of Africa remained a frontier to the Afro-Eurasian network before 1000, and the interior remained a frontier long after that.

**Slavery**

**The First Slave traded on the Atlantic**

Portuguese sailors had first bought West Africans in 1441, taking them to Portugal and to the Madeira and the Canary Islands, where they used them to raise sugarcane. Sub-Saharan Africans had been exported as slaves to the Middle East and China for over 1,000 years, but the slave trade increased in size and significance after the Atlantic Europeans connected the Atlantic coasts.

**The Problem with Gold**

 After the Spanish found a mountain of silver in the Andes, silver came to replace Gold as the popular way of paying for daily transactions. Gold was now losing demand and with cheaper sources overseas, Africa had a real problem on their hands. Then, with no market for its gold, African princes and chiefs sold other Africans in order to buy cloth, iron, copper, tobacco, alcohol, guns, and cowrie shells from the Indian Ocean, which were used in West Africa as the main currency.

With more wealth, chiefs could acquire additional wives, who brought them more children—their chief treasure. Europeans needed slaves in tropical America in order to raise sugar and tobacco profitably. Columbus and his men took sugarcane, originally from India, to the Caribbean, and by 1520 there were sixty sugar mills on St. Thomas island alone. But the Tainos and Caribs were dying; Africans were cheaper than Europeans, and they were resistant to malaria, which they brought with them (along with hookworm and yellow fever).

Europeans usually did not have to capture their own African slaves; African rulers and slave merchants were willing to do it. During the 350 years of the Atlantic slave trade, an estimated 12 to 25 million enslaved people were shipped from Africa for the Americas, of whom some 85 percent survived the terrible six-to-ten-week voyage. About 40 percent went to Brazil, 40 percent to the Caribbean, 5 percent to what would become the United States, and the balance to the rest of Spanish America.

 By the 1820s five times more Africans than Europeans had come to the Americas. During the 350 years of the Atlantic slave trade, Muslim slave traders took an estimated 2.1 million enslaved Africans from the east coast to Arabian and Indian ports. Overall, the Muslim slave trade lasted twelve centuries and shipped approximately 14 to 15 million people. Possibly as many people were enslaved within Africa as were shipped west and east.

**Colonization**

**Racism**

By 1870 Europe had about 70 percent of all world trade. By 1914 it occupied or controlled 80 percent of the world’s area. In 1900 China had only 6 percent of the world’s output, falling from 33 percent in 1800, and India had only 2 percent, falling from 25 percent in 1800. Africa had been parceled out to the European powers.

In Europe and the United States the peak of racist thinking and policies based on racism marked this period. Racism exists “. . . when one ethnic or historical collectivity dominates, excludes or seeks to eliminate another on the basis of differences it believes are hereditary and unalterable,” while at the same time professing to believe in human equality.

Racism seems to be mainly, if not exclusively, a product of Europe and the United States; its logic was fully worked out and implemented in three societies in the twentieth century: in the South of the United States against African Americans (1890s-1950s), by European colonists in South Africa against Africans (1910s-1980s), and in Hitler’s Germany against Jews (1933-1945).

**Imperialism**

By the mid-nineteenth century many people of Europe and the United States regarded their dominance in the world as evidence of their innate biological superiority, rather than as indication of cultural, technological, or geographical advantage. France, Britain, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, and the United States used this racial ideology to justify acquiring new colonial territory. The fact of their military power enabled the industrial powers to carve up much of the rest of the world among them in the decades before 1914.

After the 1840s a significant imbalance existed in weaponry and communication systems; by the end of the 1800s the imbalance became even greater with the development of repeating rifles and machine guns and the medical ability to check diseases. The industrialized countries could take colonies with quick, cheap military action, and they chose to do so.

Britain took the lion’s share of colonies; its empire spanned the globe by 1914, becoming the largest ever in the history of the world. (The Mongol empire was the largest continuous land empire.) India, its richest and most important colony, became Britain’s gradually between 1750 and 1860, after the Moghul empire had lost vitality by 1710. Britain also took control of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Egypt, and enough else in Africa to control about 60 percent of its people by the end of the nineteenth century.

The African social order in the last decades of the nineteenth century was more firmly rooted in slavery than ever, which helped open the way to industrial powers, which took all parts of Africa except Liberia and Ethiopia. The population of central Africa, which had had little prior contact with the outside world, fell perhaps a quarter between 1880 and 1920. Later in the century, with access to medical advances, Africa experienced the most rapid population growth the world has ever seen.

**The Creation of the Wealth Gap**

**Energy Use**

The last half of the twentieth century witnessed a spectacular sixfold growth of the world’s economy. This seems normal to those who have lived through it, but such economic growth is historically unprecedented on a global scale and depended on science and technology as noted above, population growth, and increased energy use. The world population grew from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.1 billion in 2000. Oil production soared six times from 1950 to 1973.

 In the 1990s the average world citizen used energy equal to the power of twenty slaves, but that figure obscures the inequality in distribution of energy. The average U.S. citizen directed more than seventy-five “energy slaves,” while a citizen of Sudan directed less than one. Nevertheless, between 1950 and 1975 inequality between the richest and the poorest regions narrowed, as well as inequality within industrial societies. The ancient gulf separating the rich and the poor in all previous urban societies actually decreased during this twenty-five year period.

Since the 1970s, however, the inequality between the richest and poor-est areas, and between the richest and poorest people, has started to widen. After the 1980s the richest one tenth of people grew much richer, while the lowest one-tenth grew slightly poorer. By 2000 the income per capita of six nations containing almost half the world’s population could hardly be plotted on a graph with that of the wealthiest nations. In 1985 the independent democracies, with a sixth the world’s population, enjoyed five-sixths the world’s wealth. In 2000 the richest 20 percent of the world’s population controlled more than 80 percent of the world’s gross product.

**The Gap Today**

By the end of the twentieth century much of the world’s wealth was no longer organized or regulated by national governments; it belonged to multinational corporations in some ways beyond the control of nations and wealthier than many nations of the world. No one knows what this development will mean for the future.

Into this situation came the networked personal computer, possibly as significant an invention as the printing press. The electronic computer was first used in World War II to break codes; by the 1990s the networked personal computer emerged to widespread use. By 2000 there were several hundred million personal computers in the world, with 1.6 billion web pages to choose from, 78 percent of them in English. Computers put a premium on education; weakened the power of the state, at least temporarily; and increased communication among multinational corporations, academics, pressure groups, and terrorists, while increasing the possibilities for hackers to wreak havoc on the system.

Many Africans live without electricity, yet they are aware, from television in cafés or from radio, of what others have that they do not. The range of inequality in a world where rapid communication makes people familiar with their disadvantages creates an explosive situation whose unfolding cannot be foretold. The fundamental facts, reduced to their simplest, are that during the twentieth century the human population grew almost fourfold, the world’s economy grew fourteenfold, per capita income grew almost fourfold, while energy use expanded sixteenfold. This scale of expansion is something new under the sun, completely unprecedented in Earth’s history and a lot has been at the expense of Africa**.**

**Land Issues for Africa**

**Food**

Food prices declined notably in the last half of the twentieth century; in 2000 food in general cost to consumers less than a third of its price in 1957. This happened primarily because of high-yield crops, irrigation and dams, fertilizers and pesticides, and the management skills of farmers, not counting the cost in environmental damage. The increase in cheap calories was not shared by sub-Saharan Africa, which increased its calories per day by only about 150 from 1960 to 1997, compared to Asia’s increase of 800 calories per capita per day. Sub-Saharan Africa used much less fertilizer per hectare than Asia and irrigated only 5 percent of its cultivated area, compared to 37 percent in Asia, with more soil erosion. Sub-Saharan farmers have potential for producing more food, but have been hampered by severe ethnic conflicts, droughts, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, poor education, and fixed farm prices.

**Soil Erosion**

Earth’s crust is covered by a thin layer of topsoil, up to hip deep, that takes centuries or millennia to build up. This top layer easily erodes after deforestation, which occurred rapidly in the twentieth century as the world’s area under cultivation roughly doubled, much of it in the rainforest regions. Soil erosion in Africa averaged eight to nine times greater than in Europe; only in Africa did food production decline after the 1960s. Elsewhere erosion and loss of soil was masked by higher food production, forced through the use of chemical fertilizers to replace the depletion of nitrogen and phosphorus from the soil that limits crop production.

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| Concepts | Details, Descriptions and Definitions |
| The Origin of Human Beings | What are the Facts about how Human Beings originated? |
| Why did Human Evolution happen in Eastern Africa | How would you describe the Great Rift ValleyWhat Fluctuations occurred in the Rift Valley?Why was Climate a key factor in human development? |
| Geography  | How are North Africa and Sub-Sahara Africa Different?What is unique about each of the five regions of Africa?North - West - Central –East – South –   |
| Egyptians | What are the key Facts that are known on the development of Hieroglyphics? |
| Egyptians | What advantages does the Nile River provide Africans? |
| Egyptians | What Basic assumptions can be made about Egyptian Religious ideas? |
| Egyptians | What happened when Egyptians experienced War from invading armies?What happened to the Minoan culture? |
| Trade after the fall of Rome | What parts of Africa came under control of Muslims during this time period?How did the east coast of Africa develop during this time?Why was sub-Sahara Africa isolated for much of its history? |
| Trade after the fall of Rome | Describe the development of two Kingdoms based on trading gold.Ghana - Zimbabwe- |
| Slavery | Why did Slavery flourish after the collapse of the global gold market? |
| Colonization | Where did Racism develop?How did Racism play into the colonizing of Africa? |
| Colonization | What is imperialism?Why were France, Britain, Germany, etc successful in conquering Africa?  |
| The Wealth Gap | What happened to the World economy in the last half of the twentieth century? Please Explain. What happened to the inequality between the richest and poorest countries? Please Explain. |
| The Wealth Gap | How did technology widen the gap?This section uses the words “explosive situation”… what is that situation? |
| Land Issues | Why is Africa starving? |
| Land Issues | Why is Africa’s rich soil deteriorating? |