

AN ATLAS OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS



LL. GRIFFITHS

IEUAN LL. GRIFFITHS

An Atlas of African Aff



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List of abbreviations

AEF	<i>Afrique Equatoriale Française</i>
AOF	<i>Afrique Occidentale Française</i>
BADEA	Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
CAR	Central African Republic
CEAO	<i>Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest</i>
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
dwt	dead weight tons
EAC	East African Community
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FNLA	<i>Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola</i>
FRELIMO	<i>Frente de Libertacao de Moçambique</i>
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITCZ	inter-tropical convergence zone
LNG	liquefied natural gas
MNR	Mozambique National Resistance
MPLA	<i>Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola</i>
MRU	Mano River Union
NCO	non-commissioned officer
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OCAM	<i>Organization Commune Africaine et Mauricienne</i>
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
POLISARIO	<i>Frente Popular para la Liberacion de Saguia el Hamra y Rio de Oro</i>
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADCC	Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference
SADR	Saharan Arab Democratic Republic
SUMED	Suez-Mediterranean oil pipeline
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TAZARA	Tanzania-Zambia Railway
UAR	United Arab Republic

UDEAC	<i>L'Union Douaniere et Economique de l'Afrique Centrale</i>
UDI	Unilateral declaration of independence
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNITA	<i>Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola</i>
UPC	Uganda Peoples' Congress
US	United States (of America)
WHO	World Health Organization

Notes on maps

The maps of continental Africa are drawn on Lambert's Azimuthal Equal-Area Projection based on the Equator and the 20° East Meridian which are represented as straight lines.

Background information for maps 13 and 15 is from maps in J.S. Keltie (1893) *The Partition of Africa*, London, Stanford, p. 400; hence, for example, the name 'Erythrea'.

Mineral/mining symbols, wherever shown, are according to the key on map 40 (p. 127).

Maps drawn by Susan Rowland.

Preface

This book is very much the product of teaching and researching for many years in the stimulating inter-disciplinary environment of the School of African and Asian Studies at the University of Sussex. Fruitful hours were spent in the libraries of the University and the Institute of Development Studies. Above all the book owes most to warmly remembered years and months spent in Africa from the Cape to Cairo, from Las Palmas to Zanzibar. I am grateful to all who helped along the way.

Specifically I wish to thank Susan Rowland for drawing the maps so superbly and for patiently accommodating inevitable changes. Also Pat Bellamy for typing the manuscript. Don Funnell, Allan Potts and Tony Binns each read parts of the manuscript and offered valued comments. Final responsibility for errors of fact or judgement is mine but it was good to have had generous assistance from so many.

IEUAN LL. GRIFFITHS
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A Environmental

I Africa: barrier peninsula

Africa is completely surrounded by water except where it borders on Asia. The Egyptian king Necho was the first to establish this fact. After he desisted from trying to dig the canal that extends from the Nile to the Arabian Gulf, he sent some Phoenicians in ships with orders to sail back into the Mediterranean Sea by passing through the Pillars of Hercules and so return to Egypt. The Phoenicians left Egypt by way of the Red Sea and sailed into the southern ocean. When autumn came, they went ashore, wherever in Africa they were to sow grain and await the harvest. On reaping the grain they again set sail and thus after two years had passed they rounded the Pillars of Hercules and in the third year reached Egypt. They told a tale that I do not believe, though others may, that in sailing along the African coast they had the sun on their right hand.

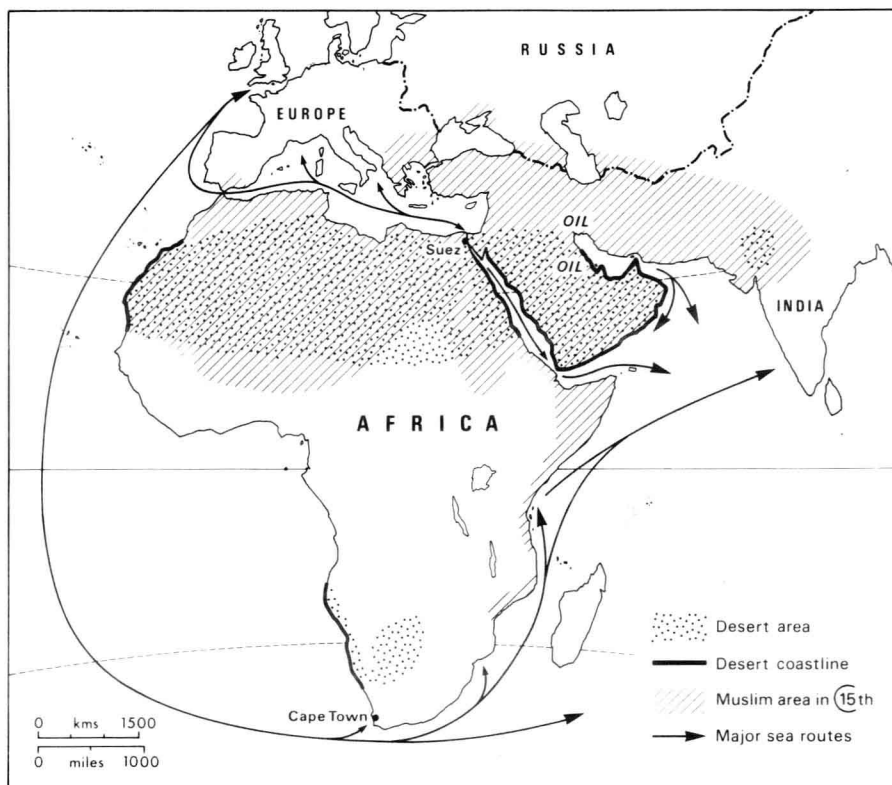
(Herodotus *c.* 440 BC)

Herodotus' throw-away line, of course, is now the very basis for believing the whole story. The canal was duly completed in 521 BC by Darius the Persian. He marked its course with three rose granite *Stelae* which record: 'this canal was dug as I [Darius] commanded, and ships passed from Egypt through this canal to Persia as was my will.'

So the ancient world came to grips with one of the basic geographical problems posed by Africa, a vast barrier peninsula joined to the Eurasian land-mass by the 100 mile (160 km) isthmus of Suez. Modern solutions to the problem are basically the same as the ancient. In AD 1498 Vasco da Gama circumnavigated Africa from west to east, and in AD 1869 a new Suez canal, this time direct to the Mediterranean, was at last completed by Ferdinand de Lesseps.

The African barrier is more formidable than the isthmus of Suez or the 10,000 mile (16,000 km) coastline. The Sahara desert, some 1500 miles (2400 km) across, completely spans the great northern width of Africa, severely limiting overland and even coastal communication. From the seventh century AD Islam spread across northern Africa bringing extensive cultural change and forming another barrier to wider contacts. The 'barrier' role applies to Africa today. Supertankers carrying oil from the Persian Gulf are too big to go through even the enlarged Suez canal and have to take the Cape sea route. During recent (post-1956) enforced closures of the canal *all* east-west maritime trade has had to make that long haul.

For black Africa the barriers have meant isolation that has never been



complete but has been serious enough, for example, to account for the absence of the wheel. In this century of threatened nuclear catastrophe Africa's physical isolation could be its saving grace. A nuclear-free zone south of the Sahara might be a more desirable aim for black Africa than the nuclear stratagems urged on its richer countries by some political scientists. An imported, hideously expensive, high technology means of buying one's right to indulge in nuclear 'deterrence' seems to be an inappropriate way to acquire political influence especially when the freedom from such capability might ensure survival and so a safer path forward.

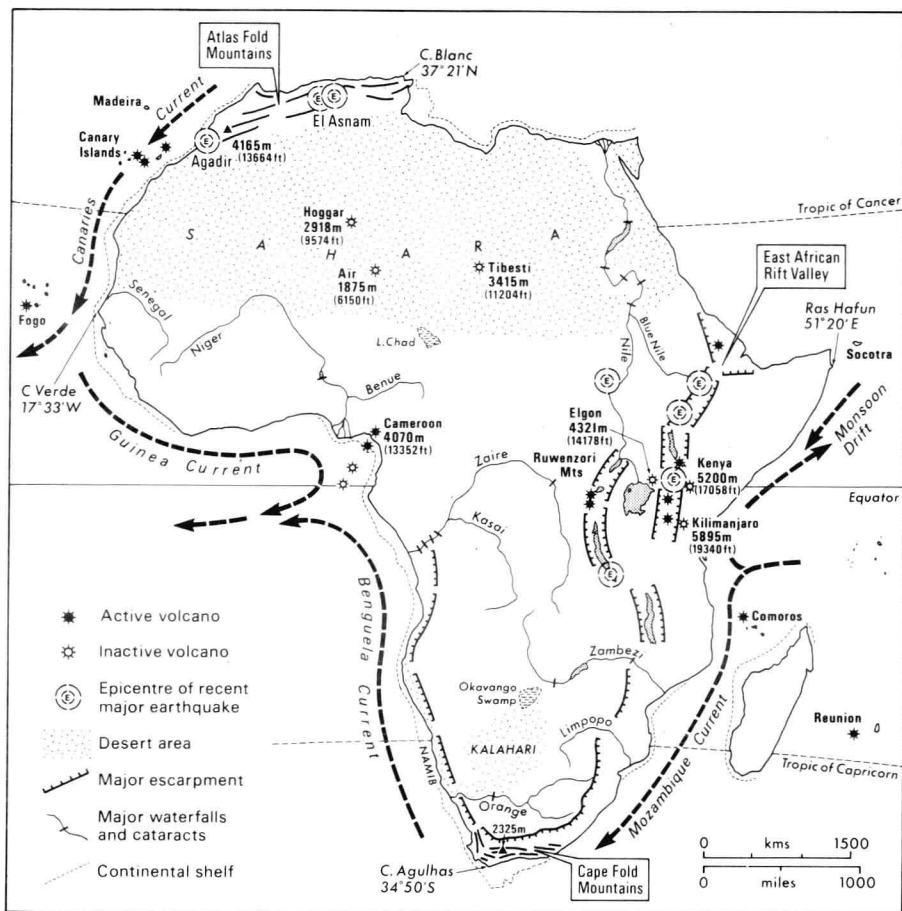
2 The physique of Africa

Africa straddles the equator, extending almost as far south as it does north. This simple geographical fact is of enormous significance as it is the basis for understanding the rather symmetrical distribution of African climates, vegetation and peoples. Notwithstanding their very different shapes and sizes, to a large extent the south is a mirror image of the north, the Kalahari matches the Sahara, the Karroo the Maghreb, and the Cape the Mediterranean littoral. At the centre is the equatorial forest of the Zaire (Congo) basin. To the north and north-east Africa is separated from Eurasia by narrow seas but is also joined to it by the isthmus of Suez. The adjacent location of Arabia, and beyond that Persia, means that north-eastern Africa is arid almost to the equator, an important exception to the symmetry along the line of the equator.

Africa comprises a single tectonic plate; though some would differentiate the area east of the Rift valley system. Almost the entire continent is a geologically stable land-mass of pre-Cambrian basement rocks overlain in part by later sedimentary cover. In the extreme south-west corner the Cape Fold Mountains are of Hercynian age, in the extreme north-west the Atlas Fold Mountains are of the Alpine orogeny. Elsewhere the stability is broken only by the great Rift Valley system.

In contrast to Europe the continent of Africa has a remarkably smooth outline. Its coastline is short relative to its area and there are few major inlets or peninsulas. On a smaller scale there is a marked absence of natural harbours. The continental shelf of Africa, again in contrast with Europe, is almost uniformly narrow. The major exception is in the south where the Agulhas Bank off the southern-most tip of Africa extends some 200 miles (320 km) off shore. The absence of a wide continental shelf limits fishing opportunities and reduces the chances of discovering major oilfields. Africa has relatively few offshore islands and most are small and of volcanic origin. The major exception is Madagascar, which ranks as the world's fourth largest subcontinental island.

The ocean currents off the African coast are influenced by the continental straddling of the equator. On the east coast the westward flowing North-Equatorial Current of the Indian Ocean divides to flow northwards as the Monsoon Drift and southwards as the Mozambique Current. The Monsoon Drift flows northwards in the northern summer but is reversed in the northern winter, historically a major factor in trading links between east Africa and Arabia, the Gulf and India. The Mozambique Current sweeps down the coast of south-eastern Africa as a swift warm current. On the west coast the currents flow



towards the equator as the Canaries Current and Guinea Current from the north and the Benguela Current from the south. They are cold currents, especially the fast-flowing Benguela. The Canaries Current and the Benguela Current flow for hundreds of miles along hot desert coasts well known for hazardous fogs caused by this juxtaposition.

Africa is a continent of wide horizons on broad, flat plateau surfaces. Plains cover thousands of square miles, stretching away, seemingly endless, in a featureless landscape. The plateau consists of a number of vast, shallow basins separated often by barely discernible watersheds, occasionally by mountainous tracts of considerable height as in the Tibesti, Air and Hoggar mountains of the Sahara. In southern Africa the Kalahari basin presents an outward-facing

scarped rim, the Great Escarpment, which in places rises to 10,000 feet (3000 m) proving a formidable obstacle to transport development.

The Cape Fold Mountains are wrapped, in a series of parallel ranges, around the south-west corner of the continent. They are aligned north-south along the west coast for about 150 miles (240 km) then swing through 90 degrees to run west-east along the south coast for over 600 miles (900 km). The ranges are steep and high, reaching 7632 feet (2325 m), with literally dozens of peaks of over 5000 feet (1500 m). The Cape Mountains make for spectacular scenery especially near the coast, as in the Cape Peninsula, but also in the narrow gorges (*poorts*) cut through the ranges. Being near to the coast and roughly parallel with it throughout their length the Cape Fold Mountains were a most effective barrier to penetration of the continental interior by man and by rain-bearing winds.

The Atlas Mountains occupy the north-western corner of Africa and are an extension of the Alpine system of Europe. Consisting of a number of roughly parallel ranges with intermontane plateaux and valleys they extend in a belt up to 200 miles (320 km) wide from Tunisia to southern Morocco, a distance of 1400 miles (2250 km). Seldom above 5000 feet (1500 m) in Tunisia, there are two main ranges in Algeria divided by a plateau. In Morocco there are four main ranges, the Rif, Middle, High and Anti Atlas and it is in the High Atlas that the greatest elevation of 13,664 feet (4165 m) is attained, far higher than the older Cape Mountains. The Atlas Mountains are parallel with the northern coastline of the Maghreb and so cut off the north-western Sahara from maritime influence.

The ancient surfaces of Africa are disrupted on the eastern side of the continent by the great Rift Valley system which extends roughly north-south from the Red Sea to the Zambezi (and northwards along the Red Sea to the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley). From the Red Sea the Rift Valley cuts through the Ethiopian highlands; in east Africa there are two Rift Valleys, eastern and western, which unite in the southern or Malawi section. The rifts are prominent features in the landscape, great trenches 20-50 miles (30-80 km) wide, with inward-facing walls, sometimes very steep, sometimes stepped, themselves up to 3000 feet (1000 m) high, an unmistakable and unforgettable sight.

The east African rifts have closely associated volcanic and seismic activity and many of the active volcanoes of Africa are to be found here, some towering on the valley sides, some actually on the rift floor. Near the eastern edge of the eastern rift are the two highest mountains in Africa, Kilimanjaro (19,340 ft, 5895 m) and Kenya (17,058 ft, 5200 m), both inactive volcanoes. The Rift Valley areas experience frequent earth tremors and occasional large earthquakes including the largest in Africa this century, near the southern end of Lake Tanganyika in the western rift. Other earthquake-prone areas in Africa include the Atlas Mountains where recently there has been considerable loss of life at Agadir and twice at El Asnam. Africa's largest active volcano is Mount Cameroon (13,352 ft,

4070 m) which is part of a chain of volcanoes which stretches far out to sea. It is recorded that when the Portuguese first sailed into these waters in the fifteenth century and saw on either side towering volcanoes belching smoke and fire they turned and fled convinced they had found the very Gates of Hell. Africa's other active volcanoes are on the offshore islands, notably the Canaries, where, in a less religious age, they are now a major tourist attraction well worth a visit.

Also associated with the Rift Valley system are the great lakes of east Africa. In the Rift Valley floors they are characteristically long, narrow and sometimes of great depth; on the plateau between the rifts lies the relatively broad and shallow Lake Victoria, the third largest lake in the world. In the Lake Victoria basin is the long-sought-after source of the Nile, reputedly the longest river in the world (4150 miles, 6640 km). While almost one-third of Africa is desert, another third is drained by five great rivers, the Nile, Zaire (Congo), Niger, Zambezi and Orange. Because of the plateau basin structure of the African interior none of the major rivers is navigable inland from the sea for any great distance, in contrast to the great rivers of the Americas and Europe. The Nile is navigable 960 miles (1500 km) to Aswan, the Zaire 150 miles (240 km) to Matadi, the Niger 120 miles (200 km) to Onitsha all the year round, the Zambezi is open only to shallow-draught boats to Tete 300 miles (500 km) from the mouth, while the Orange is simply not navigable. The Nile, Zaire and Niger do have long navigable interior stretches but they are also broken by further falls and cataracts. The Zaire has the most extensive inland waterway system with the greatest single stretch from Kinshasa to Kisangani, about 1090 miles (1740 km) in Conrad's 'heart of darkness'. The absence of navigable waterways from the sea kept explorers, traders and colonizers at bay and it is an impediment to economic development except that such disadvantage is considerably outweighed by the enormous hydroelectricity potential being realized on all the major rivers at points where they plunge over the basin rims and escarpments.

The physique of Africa is very different from that of any other continent. Its unique characteristics have done much to shape the lives of its peoples and provide it with enormous potential for future development.

3 Sunshine and storm

Rainfall is the climatic factor of greatest significance in Africa. Most of the continent has a small annual range of temperature, and wind is also much less of a feature than in temperate latitudes. Africa extends little beyond 35 degrees of latitude from the equator. This limits the range of African climates and also means that the basic movement of air over most of the continent is towards the equator, or more accurately, towards the inter-tropical convergence zone (ITCZ). The actual position of the ITCZ shifts with the seasonal movement of the sun across the tropics. In July the ITCZ lies across north Africa along the southern edge of the Sahara; in January it skirts the west African coast, snakes along the northern and eastern margins of the Zaire (Congo) basin and thence over Madagascar. The ITCZ influences the distribution of climatic zones which assume some symmetry about the equator as Africa extends almost as far south as it does north of the line. That symmetry is distorted by the effect of the adjacent Eurasian land-mass and by highland areas within Africa.

The climatic zones of Africa are shown according to Thornthwaite's classification. Largely because only the two warmest of the six temperature efficiency classes are present, Africa has only nineteen different climatic zones, most of which are found in more than one part of the continent.

Thornthwaite's classification

1	<i>Precipitation effectiveness</i>	2	<i>Temperature efficiency</i>	3	<i>Seasonal rainfall</i>
A	Wet	A'	Tropical	v	adequate all seasons
B	Humid	B'	Mesothermal	s	deficient in summer
C	Sub-humid	*C'	Microthermal	w	deficient in winter
D	Semi-arid	*D'	Taiga	d	deficient all seasons
E	Arid	*E'	Tundra		
		*F'	Frost		

* Not represented in Africa

The wet tropical climates (AA'v) in Africa are limited to the coastal strips of Sierra Leone/Liberia, the Nigeria/Cameroon border, and eastern Madagascar. These areas experience rain at all seasons with an annual average of up to 200 inches (5000 mm), and mean annual temperatures of about 79°F (26°C) with an annual range of only 4°F (2°C).