



COUNTRY IN PERSPECTIVE

ETHIOPIA



*Fasil Ghebbi , Gondar
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Abaya, and Chamo. None of these lakes have an outlet, except to another lake, and only Ziway and Awasa are non-alkaline.^{92, 93}

Near the border with Djibouti in the Danakil Desert are several interconnected lakes that are fed by the Awash River. One of these, Lake Abbe, is the terminus for the Awash, which does not have an outlet to the sea.^{94, 95} Another lake, Lake Awash, has expanded 15-fold. This expansion puzzled scientists until they identified recent irrigation run-off and seismic movements as the culprits. If this saline lake grows to contaminate the Awash River, it will have a devastating impact on plans to make Ethiopia a major sugar exporter.⁹⁶

Rivers

All of Ethiopia's rivers originate in the Highlands. Most of the rivers in the Western Highlands flow west toward the Nile River. The most prominent of these are the Tekeze (a portion of which forms the Ethiopian-Eritrean border), Abay (Blue Nile), and Baro Rivers.^{97, 98} These rivers all form deep canyons as they wind through the Highlands.^{99, 100, 101}

Some rivers in the Western Highlands flow eastward into the Great Rift Valley. The most important by far is the Awash River, which originates west of Addis Ababa and enters the Great Rift Valley near the city of Nazret. It then flows toward the northeast to terminate in Lake Abbe on the Djibouti border.^{102, 103} The lower stretch of the Awash River is a world-renowned archaeological site where Lucy, perhaps the most famous hominid fossil (if no longer the most ancient), was found.^{104, 105}



*Dawa River
Flickr / Brendan Ryan*

The Omo River is the primary river of southern Ethiopia and is the main source of water for Lake Turkana, which mostly lies in Kenya. The Omo originates in the southern Western Highlands and flows southward for much of its course.^{106, 107}

In the Eastern Highlands, several rivers emerge from the eastern flanks and flow down to the Eastern Lowlands. Most of these dry up long before they reach the coast in Somalia. Two exceptions are the Shebele River, which passes near Gode on its way to

all international flights to and from Ethiopia go through Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa.¹²⁰

Dire Dawa



Dire Dawa
Flickr / Alan Johnston

Dire Dawa, meaning “empty plain” in Amharic, is an apt description of the dry, mostly flat expanse north, east, and west of the city.¹²¹ The city’s population is composed mainly of ethnic Oromo, Somali, and Amhara.^{122, 123} Dire Dawa was a long-time caravan center. It began its modern development in 1904 when it became the rail terminus for goods from the port of Djibouti. Today, Dire Dawa exists primarily as a trading center for the surrounding region. Major industries include textiles, cement factories, and coffee- and meat-canning plants.¹²⁴ The Dechatu River divides the city and is prone to flooding during the rainy season between June and September. The worst flood in the city’s history occurred in August 2006, leaving 250 dead and 10,000 homeless.^{125, 126, 127}

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Mekele

Mekele, Ethiopia’s third-largest city, is the closest to the Eritrean border.^{128, 129} The city is the capital of Tigray National Regional State. Although it may have originated in the 13th century, its real importance began in the late 19th century when the city served



Mekele
Flickr / Raul Soler

as capital of the Ethiopian kingdom under Emperor Yohannes IV. The Emperor’s castle still stands and is one of the city’s primary tourist attractions.¹³⁰ Today, the city is the commercial capital of Ethiopia’s inland salt trade.¹³¹ Salt mined from the Danakil Depression was the standard currency for the region until late in the 19th century. Camel caravans carrying bars of salt still arrive at local markets.¹³² The city is a main destination for tourists to visit important museums and the rock-hewn churches of

Emperor Haile Selassie maintained a palace in the city and once considered naming Bahir Dar the national capital.^{146, 147, 148} The city is home to Bahir Dar University and its 35,000 to 45,000 students.^{149, 150}

Gonder

Few cities in Ethiopia have as much history as Gonder. The northern city lies at an elevation of 2,300 m (7,500 ft) in the Amhara region of northwestern Ethiopia. It served as the national capital from 1632 to 1855. Sometimes referred to as the Camelot of Africa, the city is home to walled castles and palaces built by the nation's early rulers.^{151, 152} These well-preserved ruins can be found today within a walled enclosure, which is a major tourist attraction and a UNESCO World Heritage site.^{153, 154, 155}



Gonder
Flickr / Wojtek Ogradowczyk

Gonder declined during the Era of the Princes (1706-1853) as local warlords battled the emperors. Emperor Tewodros II sacked the city twice in the 1860s, and fighters from neighboring Sudan burned the city in the 1880s.¹⁵⁶ Today, the city of roughly 154,000 is the capital of Gonder province and an important regional and cultural center. It is home to one of the nation's most modern hospitals and a medical university. The city remains an important center for the Ethiopian

Orthodox Church.^{157, 158} Besides tourism, the local economy is based on trade of locally produced grains, oilseeds, and cattle. Artisan products, such as textiles, jewelry, copperware, and leatherworks are also important.¹⁵⁹

Environmental Concerns / Issues

Perhaps the major environmental problem facing Ethiopia is its rapid population growth. The population has nearly quintupled since 1935, greatly straining the country's resources. The high population density in the highlands has led to overgrazing, soil erosion, and reduced fertility of the land.^{160, 161, 162}

Deforestation is a major concern in Ethiopia, where more than 90% of the original forest cover has been harvested to make room for agriculture and other human needs.¹⁶³ Most of the nation's remaining forests are in the southern sections of

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*The Castles of Gondor
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Chapter 2 | Ethiopia in Perspective

History

Introduction

The geographical core of Ethiopia has remained intact, more or less, for several millennia. This is in contrast to many African nations, which developed out of colonial convenience rather than from local indigenous histories. Along with Liberia, Ethiopia is the only present-day African nation never colonized by Europeans.¹ However, the European “scramble for Africa” did enable successive Ethiopian emperors to acquire territories through conquest and negotiation; these set the geographical boundaries that endure to the present, with the exception of Eritrea.²

many years, it was the oldest hominid ever found. After its discovery, the small 1.1 m (3 ft 7 in) tall, fossilized skeleton became known as Lucy—after the Beatles song “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” which was playing on tape when the discovery was made.¹⁸ Researchers examined and analyzed Lucy’s knee, thigh, ankle, spine, and pelvic joints and bones, which offered evidence that the skeleton belonged to a female and that she walked upright, one of the defining characteristics of hominids.¹⁹ Further archaeological evidence shows that near the end of the Stone Age (5000 B.C.E.), both pastoralists groups and settlements co-existed in the highlands region.^{20, 21}

Early Kingdoms

Sometime around the seventh century B.C.E., people speaking the Semitic language Ge’ez established a community in the Northern Highlands, in the region now known as Tigray.^{22, 23} Several hundred years later, an important kingdom emerged around the modern city of Aksum.²⁴ The Aksumite kingdom, which developed between the second century B.C.E and the second century C.E., was a trading center, facilitated by its ties to the Red Sea port of Adulis.^{25, 26, 27, 28} Around the beginning of



An Ethiopian Chief
Flickr / George Lane

the fourth century C.E., Christianity became the state religion of Aksum.^{29, 30} The city is a holy site for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and according to church teachings, the Emperor Menelik I, son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, brought the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem and rests today in St. Mary of Zion Church in Aksum.^{31, 32, 33}

Persian and Arab control of Red Sea trade routes, in the sixth and seventh centuries, cut off Aksum’s access to international trade and the kingdom quickly declined.^{34, 35} By the seventh or eighth century, the remainder of Aksum’s political, cultural, and economic influence shifted southward where the Agaw, who were subjects of the Aksumites, assimilated their former oppressors.^{36, 37} The Zaqwe dynasty, which was centered in the Agaw district of Lasta, rose to power in 1137. Their capital was near the small town of Lalibela. Subterranean churches cut out of rock remain one of the remarkable artifacts of this period.^{38, 39, 40}

Elections in 2008 and 2010 returned the EPRDF to power in noncompetitive elections that cemented the party's virtual monopoly on power and control of 99.6% of all seats in the National Assembly.¹⁷¹ In August 2012, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi died. Although he ran an autocratic and repressive government, his death created the prospect of instability within the nation and across the region.¹⁷² Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, the first non-Tigray or non-Amhara leader in two centuries, succeeded him as prime minister in September. On 24 May 2015, the country's ruling party, the EPRDF, won all parliamentary seats in national elections that were described by African Union observers as "calm, peaceful, and credible."^{173, 174}

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*Jinka Market
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Chapter 3 | Ethiopia in Perspective

Economy

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, the Ethiopian government has endeavored to transform its socialist economy. The government eliminated price controls as part of a structural adjustment program in an effort to create an economy in which markets play a role and exports receive official promotion.¹ Major reforms have also focused on efforts to reduce poverty and increase productivity in agriculture.² Yet, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest nations in the world with a per capita GDP of only USD 1,500.³ The country also scores low in economic freedom, ranking 149 out of 165 nations in the 2016 index and now is officially classified as “economically repressed.”⁴ Although the

to African markets, with 83% bound for Somalia, Djibouti, and Sudan. Only 5% went to North American markets, with 97% destined for the United States and Canada.⁸⁰ Ethiopia's largest individual export partners include China (13%), Saudi Arabia (8%), Germany (8%), the United States (8%) and Belgium (7%). Its largest import partners in 2013 were China (15%), Saudi Arabia (8%), India (7%) and the United States (6%).⁸¹

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

The climate for doing business in the country remains poor.^{82, 83} The World Bank, citing problems with credit, power supplies, and regulations for starting businesses, ranked Ethiopia 172 out of 183 countries.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Ethiopia is attracting considerable attention from foreign investors.⁸⁵ Growing international interest in Ethiopia made it the third-largest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa in 2013.⁸⁶ In 2013-2014, foreign direct investment totaled approximately USD 2.8 billion. The most popular sectors are construction, manufacturing, real estate, and agriculture.^{87, 88} The energy sector, spurred by recent discoveries of oil attracts investment.⁸⁹ Mining is drawing increased foreign interest as well.^{90, 91} China is the largest contributor of FDI to the nation followed by Sudan.^{92, 93} Large amounts of FDI coming to Ethiopia is from other developing countries, including India and Saudi Arabia. However, significant inflows also emanate from the United States, Britain, Italy, Germany, and Turkey.⁹⁴

Tourism

Although Ethiopia has natural and cultural attractions that could form the basis of a strong tourism industry, the country's civil wars, droughts, famines, and conflicts with its neighbors have made it difficult for extensive tourism development to take hold. In 2011, only 523,000 travelers visited the country, placing it 17th in international visitors among African nations.⁹⁵ The primary cultural attractions are in the northern part of the Western Highlands in the ancient imperial capitals of Aksum, Gonder, and Lalibela. Lake Tana and its island monasteries are another attraction, as are the wildlife parks of the Great Rift Valley and the ancient walled city of Harer in the Eastern Highlands.^{96, 97}



*Church of St. George
Flickr / USAID*

According to the World Economic Forum, Ethiopia ranks 118 out of 144 countries in tourism competitiveness.⁹⁸ The nation has great tourism potential but lacks infrastructure and a macroeconomic environment, and it suffers from a poor international image.^{99, 100, 101, 102} In 2013, tourism's direct contribution to GDP was only 4.2% but total contribution to GDP was 10.3%. That number is expected to rise by nearly 5% by 2024.¹⁰³ The sector directly employed nearly 4% of the workforce in 2014 but is expected to drop to 3% by 2024.¹⁰⁴ Most tourism dollars come from international travelers (69%). Domestic tourism continues to be a small part of the sector, accounting for only 31% of tourism dollars.¹⁰⁵

Banking and Currency

Ethiopia's unit of currency is the birr (ETB). In May 2015, USD 1 was equal to 20.5 birr.¹⁰⁶ The birr is divided into 100 cents, with Ethiopian coinage based on units of 1, 5, 10, 25, and 50 cents.¹⁰⁷ The birr is one of Africa's most stable currencies, although it remains vulnerable to fluctuations against hard currencies such as the euro and the U.S. dollar.^{108, 109}



*Ethiopian Bank Notes
Wikimedia / Marc Baronnet*

The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE), headquartered in Addis Ababa, is Ethiopia's central bank. Founded in 1906, as the Bank of Abyssinia under the control of the British-owned National Bank of Egypt, it became the fully government-owned Bank of Ethiopia in 1931 during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie. The current name came into effect in 1964.¹¹⁰ Today, the NBE serves as Ethiopia's banking regulatory agency, oversees the country's monetary supply, regulates interest rates, and fixes and controls foreign exchange rates.¹¹¹

Ethiopia's banking sector is a hybrid of state-owned and private banks. The sector remains largely closed.¹¹² There is one state-owned development bank and 18 commercial banks.¹¹³ Two of these are state-owned. The largest, Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, controls about 70% of the sector's total assets. The other two state-owned institutions account for an additional 16%.¹¹⁴ Foreign banks are not allowed to operate in Ethiopia.^{115, 116, 117}

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The Oromo

The Oromo, a Cushitic group, are the nation's largest ethnic group and are located predominantly in southeastern Ethiopia. They were originally nomadic cattle-herders, although in the highlands region they are now largely sedentary farmers.^{19, 20, 21} Among the Oromo, both Christianity and Islam are practiced. The traditional Oromo social system, known as *Gada*, was egalitarian and based on democratic principles. No political leader could stay in power for more than 8 years, thereby restraining the effects of wealth and power accumulation within the society.^{22, 23} This system enabled the Oromo to flourish until the 1890s when they were colonized by the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) empire.^{24, 25}

The Oromo were brutally suppressed under the Ethiopians, who attempted to destroy Oromo cultural identity and language.²⁶ The Oromo remain politically marginalized, subject to extrajudicial disappearances, segregation, and victimized by discrimination.^{27, 28, 29, 30} Many Oromo chose to struggle for liberation against the government.³¹ The Oromo Liberation Front, Ethiopia's oldest armed rebel group, continues to wage an armed insurgency against the Ethiopian government.^{32, 33}

The Amhara (Amara)

The Amhara, members of the Cushitic people, are the second-largest ethnic group in Ethiopia.^{34, 35} They trace their origins to Menelik I, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, although many regard this as more legend than fact.³⁶ Their traditional homeland is Ethiopia's central highlands plateau, and they are the dominant group in the Amhara National Regional State.^{37, 38} The Amhara and the Tigray have dominated Ethiopia's political and military elite, except during the Italian occupation. Although their political power has waned since 1974, the Amhara remain a dominant force in the nation.³⁹ The Amhara are mostly Coptic Christians and have been since Christianity came to Ethiopia in about the fourth century. Their lifestyle has changed little in several thousand years. They are primarily farmers using oxen to plow their fields and relying on rain for water.^{40, 41}



Amhara Man
Flickr / Richard Mortely

important rituals, including fasting and regular prayer, are more typical in urban than rural settings.^{73, 74}

Christianity

Ethiopia may be the world's oldest Christian nation.⁷⁵ Some historians point to Biblical references that the apostle Matthew brought Christianity to the region.⁷⁶ According to established accounts, two brothers brought Christianity to the region early in the 4th century C.E. Shortly thereafter it became the official state religion.^{77, 78, 79}



Three-piece Christian panel
Flickr / ellenm1

The Ethiopian Church developed its own particular brand of indigenous orthodoxy.⁸⁰

⁸¹ From the beginnings of Christianity in the region, the Church has been more than a religious institution. It is the central institution in society, playing a central role in all aspects of national life. It has been a repository of cultural, political, and social life for Ethiopian Christians.^{82, 83, 84}

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians do not believe that the Pope is infallible.⁸⁵ Nor do they believe in Immaculate Conception.⁸⁶ Orthodox Christians believe that Christ was a man who voluntarily gave his life. Once Christ had ransomed himself on the cross, he rose to heaven.^{87, 88, 89} The name of the Ethiopian church, from the Ge'ez word *Tewahedo*, refers to the "one nature" of Jesus.⁹⁰ Basic Church doctrine closely follows the Old Testament and requires its males to be circumcised and to observe Saturday as the Sabbath.⁹¹

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are required to pray seven times a day, beginning when they awaken and ending at midnight. Prayers are highly ritualized. Christians should stand when praying, turn toward the east and make the sign of the cross from left to right, and finally kneel down and lie prostrate.⁹² In addition, there are several important holy days that require the faithful to attend longer services and engage in rituals of singing, dancing, and feasting. Devout Christians should fast approximately 165-180 days a year.⁹³ For the clergy, the number of fasting days is 265. Fasting days include each Wednesday and Friday, as well as the two months of the Lent and Easter.

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Ethiopia in Perspective

Chapter 5 | Security

Assessment

1. The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) is one of the largest military forces in Africa.
2. Historically, relations between the United States and Ethiopia have been poor.
3. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is considered a terrorist group by the Ethiopian government.
4. Political instability and uncertainty has compelled the Ethiopian military to support the Somalian Transitional Federal Government (TFG).
5. The situation along Ethiopia's border with Eritrea has calmed considerably and is no longer a hot spot.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False

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Ethiopia in Perspective

Final Assessment

1. Ethiopia is landlocked and depends on Eritrea for access to Red Sea ports.
2. Ethiopia's climate has significant variations.
3. Ethiopia's terrain consists of continuous deserts that transition into plains.
4. The capital, Addis Ababa, is the only city with a population over 1 million.
5. Rapid population growth is the major environmental problem facing Ethiopia.
6. Ethiopia was annexed by Italy in the 20th century.
7. Due to the introduction of improved farming techniques, famine is a thing of the past in Ethiopia.
8. The Derg leadership imposed a socialist-style government on Ethiopia.
9. Ethnic tensions throughout the nation have generally been lower since the new constitution was adopted in 1994.

10. Eritrea's independence eased the nation's political problems with Ethiopia.
11. In 2013-2014, Europe was Ethiopia's largest export market.
12. Because of its poor business climate, Ethiopia receives the lowest amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) dollars in Africa.
13. As part of its market economy reforms, Ethiopia has encouraged foreign banks to invest in the Ethiopian financial sector.
14. Mining plays a major role in Ethiopia's economy.
15. Roughly one in three Ethiopians survives on less than USD 1 per day.
16. Nearly one-third of all Ethiopians identify themselves as Oromo.
17. Vegetarian dishes make up a significant portion of the Ethiopian diet.
18. Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic federation with each state populated primarily by one ethnic group.
19. Approximately one-third of the Ethiopian population follows Shi'a Islam.
20. Child marriage, once a common feature of Ethiopian life, is relatively rare now.

21. Ethiopia's special police and paramilitary forces have been accused of serious human rights abuses.
22. The United States considers Ethiopia of only marginal strategic importance.
23. The Ethiopian Army maintains a poor state of readiness.
24. The inability to agree on a border continues to cause significant tension between Ethiopia and Sudan.
25. In spite of being at high risk for political violence, Ethiopia's government is likely to remain stable in the near-term.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True; 6. True; 7. False; 8. True; 9. False; 10. False; 11. True; 12. False; 13. False; 14. False; 15. True; 16. True; 17. True; 18. True; 19. False; 20. False; 21. True; 22. False; 23. False; 24. False; 25. True;