

## **Short Historical & Natural Profile of Ethiopia**

1. Ethiopia is located in East Africa.
2. Ethiopia is one of the oldest country in the world.
3. Ethiopia as a country is more than 3,000 years old.
4. Ethiopia has never been colonised and is the oldest independent country in Africa and in the world.
5. Ethiopia is one of the founder members of the United Nations (League of Nations).
6. Ethiopia was the only independent country that played a greater role in the struggle of African countries for independence from colonialism.
7. Ethiopia is the **capital city** of the African Union.
8. Ethiopia is the second most populated country in Africa (around 110 million people in 2020)
9. The national language of Ethiopia is Amharic. (There are also more than 75 nationalities (ethnic groups) who speak different languages.)

### **Ethiopian Ancient Civilisation:**

Some of the basic foundations of the Ethiopian ancient civilisation are:

1. **Calendars:** Ethiopia has its own calendar consisting of 13 months. The 12 months have 30 days each and the 13<sup>th</sup> month has 5 days and 6 days every 4 or leap year. The Ethiopian calendar year is behind the Gregorian (GC) by 7 years (from Jan to Aug) and 8 years (from Sept to Dec). For example, this year is 2013 in Ethiopian calendar (EC), while it is 2020 in the Gregorian calendar (GC).
2. **Alphabets and Numbers:** Ethiopia is the only country in Africa that has its own alphabet, numbers & written language. The Ethiopian alphabet consists of 231 letters (33 letters representing only consonants, which may be transformed into syllabic symbols by the attachment of the appropriate vocalic markers to the letters and 198 letters representing only vowels).

The current Ethiopian Amharic alphabets & numbers developed gradually from the Ethiopian ancient Ge'ez & Sabeian alphabets since the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, although most vowel indication and some additional alphabets started to appear mainly in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD during the reign of **King Ezana**.

3. **Alphabet & literature:** as Biblical evidence indicates, the Ethiopic alphabet and written scripts/books started before the **Flood of Noah** took place (in around 2500 BC). For example, the most complete **Book of Enoch** that was supposed to be written **on rocks** before the Flood was discovered in Ethiopia from Ethiopic manuscripts, written in Geez, which was brought to Europe by

James Bruce in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and was translated into English in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From this historical evidence, some Ethiopian scholars agreed that the **Book of Enoch** was written in the Geez alphabet and they also concluded that the Geez was the first language of Adam and Eve who used to live in Ethiopia (Gen Cha: 2: 7-13).

### **Unique Profile of Ethiopia**

Based on the Biblical and scientific evidence:

1. Ethiopia is the origin of human kind (i.e. the birth place of Adam & Eve is in Ethiopia) (Evidence in the Bible, (Genesis Ch: 2: 7- 13) Adam & Eve were created in the Eden Garden that was watered by the Giyon River or the Blue Nile River in Amharic Abbay Wonz/River. Evidence in scientific discoveries (e.g. 3.5 million years old human fossil named Lucy or in Amharic 'Denkenesh' was discovered in Ethiopia, 1974 and 4.5 million years old human fossil was also discovered in Ethiopia, 1993). Based on such evidences, all modern humans originated from Ethiopia and later on migrated to the rest of the world.
2. Ethiopia is the origin of the Blue Nile River (Giyon in the Bible) or Abbay in Amharic. The Blue Nile originates in Lake Tana in Ethiopia – Bahrdar City of the current Amhara region.
3. Ethiopia is the origin of Coffee (South of Ethiopia, Keffa region).

### **Historical Places of Ethiopian Civilisation**

There are many historical places in Ethiopia. Some of them are as follows.

1. **Aksumite Civilisation:** the ancient city of Ethiopia was Axum. The Aksumite civilisation took place from 980 BC to 940 AD. From 100 BC to 940 AD the Ethiopian Aksumite Empire was one of the 4 great powers of the world, (e.g. Persia, Rome and China)
2. **Lasta Lalibela:** the town of Lalibela was originally known as Roha. It was renamed during the reign of King Lalibela in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. King Lalibela was a member of the **Zagwe Dynasty**, which took over the power of the Aksumite Empire in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (1000 AD). King Lalibela built extraordinary churches (11 Rock Hewn Churches) that can be another witness for the Ethiopian ancient civilisation.
3. **Gondar Castles and Churches:** historically the city of Gondar was the residence of the Emperors of Ethiopia from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ethiopia had no capital city, as the empire's rules moved about their territory living in tents, in mobile royal camps while foods being supplied by farmers around the camp, (it was known as Zemene Mesafent).

The history of Gondar city begins in 1636, after Emperor Fasilides ended the tradition (Zemene Mesafent) by decreeing Gondar to be the Ethiopia's capital. Emperor Fasil started building a walled enclosure around his castle became

the palace compound for half a dozen of different palaces, 3 churches and support buildings built of two centuries by his successors.

Most famous Gondar Castles of Ethiopia that are located in this walled compound, have become part of the Gondar UNESCO World Heritage Site

4. **Harar city:** Harar is located in the eastern part of the country and known as the capital of Harari kingdom. The Harar Wall was built between 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century as a Muslim sacred city. According to UNESCO, Harar has 82 mosques, three of which date from the 10<sup>th</sup> century as well as 102 shrines.

### **Religious history in Ethiopia**

The current main religions in Ethiopia are **Christians** and **Muslims**

#### **1. Pre-Christianity**

- Before 980 BC Ethiopians used to worship God without written religious rules and orders, (Hege-Libuna or Rule of Mind).
- **Judaism** - King Menelik-I (980 BC) introduced the Old Testament religion (Judaism) as a state religion in Ethiopia.
- As the Book of the Kings mentioned, King Menelik I, the son of the Queen Sheba (965 – 931 BC) that mentioned in the Bible, brought the Ark of the Covenant (Tsilate-Musie) to Ethiopia. This historical religious Heritage of the world is believed to be in the city of Axum, Ethiopia.

#### **2. Christianity:**

Ethiopia accepted Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century (33 AD) through the Ethiopian Official who was in charge of all the treasury of the Queen Hendakie of Ethiopia, who went to Jerusalem to worship (Act of the Apostles 8:27–39).

However, Christianity became the state religion in Ethiopia during the reign of King Ezana in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (341 AD).

#### **3. Islam:**

Ethiopia is the first country in the world to accept Islamic religion by receiving Muslim believers (the Families of Prophet Mohamed) who fled from Mecca to Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century (615 AD).

The Quran mentioned that Ethiopia was a land where its King, Negus or Al-Negashi who protected the first Muslim believers came to Ethiopia by saying ----- and your God is one; and it is to Him we worship/bow in Islam: (Quran 29:46)

The Ethiopian king who received the Muslim believers and protected them from persecution is known as King Armah or in Arabic Al-Negashi.

In conclusion, we have to be proud of that Ethiopia has been a **safe home** for all great religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) without fear of persecution.

### **Unique and Endemic Species in Ethiopia:**

Ethiopia is the home of unique animals, which are found only in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is therefore the origin of the following unique & endemic animals that are not found in the rest of the world.

1. Red Fox
2. Walia Ibex
3. The Mountain Nyala
4. The Yellow Fronted Parrot
5. The Bale Mountain Vervet monkey
6. Gelada Monkey (Baboons)
7. Cape Bushbuck
8. Menelik Bushbucks
9. Swanyne's Hartebeaste and
10. Other animals and birds have not been listed here.

This short historical profile of Ethiopia is extracted from different Ethiopian histories to be used as a resource for Amharic School students. As a result of such great Ethiopian historical & natural profile, if we, Ethiopians are able to utilise our spiritual & social capital and to modernise our historical civilisation & natural resources, Ethiopia will definitely be one of the top economic powers and tourism destinations in the world in the near future.

Good luck with your reading of such great historical & natural profile of Ethiopia

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