Africa Essay, Research Paper

Africa in General

And Madagascar

Africa, until the middle to late nineteenth century was known as The Dark Continent. The reason for this reputation was that at the time no outsider was able to go in land of the big continent and see the diversity and the complexity of it. . The first impression the European got was what they saw that the coastal areas of Africa and took this impression back to their countries and labeled the continent as being dark, not only because the encounter they had with dark skinned people also because of their ignorance. Africa can be looked at in several different ways, such as climate, ethnicity, history, languages, vegetation, natural resources, physical feature, and religions.

First, Africa has five main climate regions: tropical rain forests, mediterranean, savanna, steppe, and desert. It also has small regions of highland, marine, and subtropical. Second, the vegetation varies depending on the climate area. In desert regions it is mostly barren but does have small amount of vegetation, which has adapted to a limited supply of water. Tropical rain forest usually has three layers of trees; all of which are broadleaf evergreens. They also have a variety of small ferns, vines, and shrubs. In the mediterranean environment there are evergreen trees mixed with coniferous and broadleaf trees. Oaks, pines, and small shrubs also are common. There are two types of savanna, woodland that has tall tress and perennial grasses and grassland, which consists of low growing deciduous, evergreen, and shrubbery. Grassland savanna also have many species of bear thorn shrubbery and the grasses are almost barren. Depending on the area, Africa’s cash crop consists of coffee, gum, rubber, tobacco, cocoa, grapes, ground nuts, sugar, citrus, cotton, oil palm, and tea. Then we can say that the climatic region determines what vegetation, cash crop or natural can survive where. Generally speaking however Africa’s natural resources are consistent through out the continent. They range from coal, natural gas, petroleum, diamonds, and iron ore, to salt. There are also many other resources but they are not as common through out Africa. Fourth, Africa has changing physical features but it is mostly dominated by lowland. It also has many scattered basins, plateaus and some mountains. Unfortunately, over fifty percent of Africa has inadequate rain fall. On the other hand about ninety percent of Africa has severe climate contrasts, either too much or too little rain (AFIM).

Africa’s ethnic groups and its languages fall hand to hand. In northern Africa there are only five ethnic groups such as Arab, Nubian, and Berber. Similarly, two of the three languages spoken are Arabic and Berber. Western Africa has more than 30 ethnic groups and at leas as many languages. Easter Africa has over twenty-five ethnic groups as such as Arab and Kikuyu and languages such as Somali and Cewa. Central Africa has over twenty ethnic groups, like Kuyu and Teke and languages such as Luba and Sango. Southern Africa has over 25 ethnic groups as Zulu and Shona and languages as Shono, Zulu and Lozi. Although Africa is full of all of these indigenous languages it was colonized by Europeans and the official languages such as Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Religiously speaking, Africa has three main religions, those being Christianity, Islam and indigenous religions (AFIM).

Africa has three main historical periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and period of African Independence. Pre-colonial Africa was from 2900bc to 1885, which was most of Africa’s history. 1885 was the year that European nations start to colonize Africa and claim it as their own. The colonial period lasted from 1885 to 1960. It was in this period in which European nations had control over all of Africa except Ethiopia and Liberia. It was starting from 1960, many African nations start to get their independence and this period is know as the period of African independence (Almanac786).

It is not easy to describe all of Africa as a whole and get deep understanding of the continent. In order to look Africa closer it is better to look at a single country, in this case Madagascar. Its official name is Republic of Madagascar. It is the forth-largest Island in the world, situated in the Indian Ocean and separated from the main land Africa by the Mozambique Channel. It has an area of 226,658 square miles with a maximum length of 994 miles and a maximum width of 360 miles. The country population was about 9,490,000 in 1985. Madagascar has two main climate: hot, rainy from November to April; cooler, dry season from May to October; southeastern trade winds dominate; with occasional cyclones. Its capital is now Antananarivo and it gained its independence on June 26, 1960. A mixture of African, Arabic and Malayo-Polynesian people populates Madagascar. All of the Malagasy share a common language of Indonesian origin. Malagasy, which, with French, is one of the two official languages. Religiously, Madagascar has its own traditional religion based on recognizing an omnipotent deity and also secondary divinities. We also can find have of the population being Christian and a small amount of Muslims. There are about for main ethnic groups: Merina, betsimisaraka, Betsileo and Tsimihety. Primary and secondary education is sanctioned by the state and local government however there are 1.1 million primary school students. 133,500 secondary students and 7000 students in technical schools. There are about 30,000 students attending institution of higher education. The University of Madagascar has six regional centers, one in each province. All students are thought in French but usually speak their indigenous languages (Heseltine107-120).

Africa is a very diverse and complex continent. Even when we are looking at a single country as Madagascar, which has its own diversity and complicity. However, we could also find similarity with in Africa, such as climate, humanities, as well as in resources.

Work Cited

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