

unanticipated readings of the ancient texts, adding further complexity to our image of seventeenth-century Ethiopia. Tribe's translation of the *História da Etiópia* constitutes a wonderful opportunity to explore Páez's output from new perspectives. This elegant and meticulous edition has invigorated the study of Ethiopian history, especially with respect to the land's political, cultural, and religious developments in the 1600s. By dint of the editors' and translator's efforts, future scholars of Ethiopia and of missionary movements the world over will benefit from the richness emanating from Father Pedro Páez's quill.

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ETHIOPIA AFFRONTED

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The Siege of Magdala: The British Empire against the Emperor of Ethiopia. By VOLKER MATTHIES. Translated by STEVEN RENDALL. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2012. Pp xxiv + 209. \$28.95, paperback (ISBN 9781558765528); \$88.95, hardback (ISBN 9781558765515).

KEY WORDS: Ethiopia, diplomatic relations, technology.

In early 1868, Great Britain launched an expedition from India, which consisted of 62,000 men and 36,094 animals including 44 elephants, to rescue some three dozen Europeans held prisoners by the Ethiopian Emperor, Tewodros. The campaign, at a final cost of more than £8 million, had to traverse some four hundred miles of difficult terrain to reach Magdala, where the European prisoners were kept.

The British decision to carry out the expedition and, even more importantly, its success in penetrating Ethiopia and plucking out the prisoners says a lot about how much the world had changed by the nineteenth century. Ethiopian rulers had previously rebuffed Europeans and nothing much was done. The Portuguese envoy, Pedro da Covilha, who arrived in Ethiopia at the end of the fifteenth century, had been prevented from returning to his country. A second mission sent in 1520 was kept cooling its heels for six years. When a religious controversy partly instigated by the Jesuit missionaries threatened the stability of the empire in the seventeenth century, the Emperor Fasiledes (1632–67) issued a proclamation expelling all Europeans from the country and executed a few who refused to leave. Ethiopia remained mostly closed to Europeans for the next two hundred years.

That kind of affront to European honor and image could not, of course, be allowed to stand in the nineteenth century. Tewodros's action was largely an expression of his frustration against European powers. When he ascended the throne in 1855, he had grand plans to modernize the country and restore the centralization of the Ethiopian state that had been shattered by the resurgence of feudal anarchy since the late eighteenth century. He saw Christian European powers as natural allies in the battle against the Ottomans and the Egyptians. Accordingly, he solicited several European governments for alliance and technical support. Tewodros did not at first appreciate the divergence of Ethiopian and European strategic interests. The French, whom he assiduously courted, instead supported rebel chiefs in the north who were sympathetic to Roman Catholic missionaries. England stood to gain more by cooperating with the Ottoman Empire and Egypt than with Ethiopia.

Tewodros was particularly incensed by the failure of the British government to answer a letter that he sent to Queen Victoria in 1862. A very proud man, Tewodros felt slighted. Subsequent overtures from the British government simply complicated the issue. As the emperor's own hold over his empire deteriorated, he grew more intransigent. This 'Abyssinian difficulty', as Disraeli called it, threw the British government into a quandary. The detention of British officials at the hands of an African leader was considered to be a major affront to British prestige and to be detrimental to the image that Britain wished to project globally. Many colonial officials, especially in India, argued that that European prestige would remain under grave threat everywhere as long as the Ethiopian emperor continued to defy Britain. The British cabinet decided on war in August 1867.

Volker Matthies provides a superb description of the organization and deployment of the campaign to Magdala. The task of organizing the force was given to Lieutenant General Robert Napier, a noted engineer and commander-in-chief of the Bombay army. Napier worked out elaborate plans for moving his army across the ocean to the Red Sea coast at Zula and on to the interior of Ethiopia. In the words of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the Magdala Campaign was, 'An early example of the industrialization of war'. Napier made full use of all the fruits of industrialization including rapid firing Snider-Enfield rifles, modern artillery, rockets, telegraphs, photographic equipments, and even a railway line that extended from the harbor at Zula to the foot of the escarpment.

As Matthies argues, while the eventual success of the expedition owed a great deal to Napier's brilliant organizational skills and to British technological superiority, the advance of the British force faced few challenges because the emperor's power had nearly evaporated long before the arrival of the British troops. By the time that the British troops landed on the coast, Tewodros controlled little more than the fortress at Magdala where he kept his European prisoners. Having witnessed the hopelessness of the situation, the emperor released his foreign prisoners and committed suicide minutes before the British forces broke the fortress.

Although the book is largely based on published sources, its exhaustive use of the German materials makes it unique. One would have wished to see fewer and shorter quotations (some as long as four pages), especially when the quoted materials have already appeared in other publications. Overall, it is a well organized work that will be easily accessible to the general reader.

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KINDRED CONCERNS AND AN ABORTIVE ALLIANCE

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Alliance of the Colored Peoples: Ethiopia and Japan before World War II. By J. CALVITT CLARKE III. Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2011. Pp. xvii + 198. \$70, hardback (ISBN 978-1-84701-043-8).

KEY WORDS: Ethiopia, diplomatic relations, race.

J. Calvitt Clarke III, emeritus professor at Jacksonville University, has written an important study of Ethio-Japanese relations in the years leading up to the Second World War. It will be of interest not only to scholars of the history of those two countries, but to many others as well, not least because, as Professor Clarke so carefully shows, the Italo-Ethiopian War was important in helping to create the