

Document A: American Textbook

Ethiopia: A Successful Resistance

Ethiopia was the only African nation that successfully resisted the Europeans. Its victory was due to one man – Menelik II. He became emperor of Ethiopia in 1889. He successfully played Italians, French, and British against each other, all of whom were striving to bring Ethiopia into their spheres of influence. In the meantime, he built up a large arsenal of modern weapons purchased from France and Russia. In 1889, shortly after Menelik had signed a treaty with Italy, he discovered differences between the wording of the treaty in the Ethiopian language and in Italian. Menelik believed he was giving up only a tiny portion of Ethiopia. However, the Italians claimed all of Ethiopia as a protectorate. Meanwhile, the Italian forces were advancing into northern Ethiopia. Menelik declared war. In 1896, in one of the greatest battles in the history of Africa – the Battle of Adowa – Ethiopian forces successfully defeated the Italians and kept their nation independent. After the battle, Menelik continued to stockpile rifles and other modern weapons in case another foreign power challenged Ethiopia's liberty.

Source: Beck, R. B., Black, L., Krieger, L.S., Naylor, P.C., Shabaka, D.I. (2006) *Modern world history: Patterns of interaction*. McDougal Littell. p. 349.

Document B: Ethiopian Textbook

Foreign Relations with Italy

Menelik had very close relations with foreign nations, especially with Italy. The relationship between Italy and Ethiopia began as a friendly one, but it deteriorated after the Treaty of Wuchale was signed between them in 1889. The cause of the conflict was Article XVII of the Wuchale Treaty, which was written differently in Amharic and Italian. The Amharic version says that Ethiopia could use the services of Italy in her foreign relations with Europe. The Italian version bound Menelik to make all his foreign decisions through Italy. Menelik asked Italy to change the Italian version of Article XVII. Italy refused. As a result, Menelik rejected the entire treaty. Thus, when peaceful methods of trying to occupy Ethiopia failed, the Italian government began preparation to occupy Ethiopia by force. In 1895, the Italians invaded Ethiopia in the north. In the same year, 1895, Menelik declared war on Italy and marched northwards to fight the Italians.

The Battle of Adwa (1896)

The Battle of Adwa was fought in March 1896 between the Ethiopian army commanded by Menelik and the Italian army commanded by General Baratieri. The battle was started by the Italian commander Baratieri because he was given orders by the Italian prime Minister Crispi to start the war quickly.

The battle began at dawn on March 1, 1896. The battle lasted for one full day. The result of the battle was unexpected and surprising to the world. The well-trained and well-armed Italian force was defeated by the ill-trained and not well-armed Ethiopian force. Ethiopia was victorious because of her people's high degree of courage and the full support of the people. Moreover, Ethiopian women supplied water and arms to the fighters. They carried the wounded to camps and encouraged the fighters to fight with great courage.

Source: Mehari, Getachew, Mamo, A., Alemu, T., T'Giorgis, S., & Dissassa, M. (2006). *Social studies student textbook: Grade 8*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Educational Materials Production and Distribution Enterprise. p. 86-88.

Guiding Questions

American Textbook
1. Who, according to this textbook, was most responsible for the Ethiopian victory?
2. What event led to the battle?
3. Who, according to this account, started the war?
4. Why, according to this account, did Ethiopia win the battle?
5. How is this account similar to and different from the first textbook account?

Guiding Questions

Ethiopian Textbook

1. According to this account, what events led to war between Ethiopia and Italy? How is this version similar to and different from textbook A?

2. Who, according to this account, started the battle? Why did they start the battle?

3. Why, according to this account, did Ethiopia win the battle? How does this compare to the other accounts?

Making a Claim:

How did Ethiopia defeat Italy at the Battle of Adwa?

Write a paragraph in the space below, using evidence from the documents to support your claim.