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HANNA RUBINKOWSKA, Uniwersytet Warszawski

Review

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Reviews

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Verena Böll, Universität Hamburg

ANTHONY MOCKLER, *Haile Selassie's War*. Oxford: Signal Books, 2003, xxxiii, 454 pp. Price: £ 35,-. ISBN: 1-566564-73-5.¹

Anthony Mockler recites the Italian invasion on Ethiopia along with the British campaign that resulted in the freedom of the country. On several occasions the author underlines his admiration for the Ethiopian Emperor: Ḥaylä Šəllase I, which may be an explanation for the title of the book.

¹ Signal Books has issued the second edition of Anthony Mockler's *Haile Selassie's War*. Oxford University Press published the first edition in 1984.

Mockler introduces the story with the battle of ʿAdwa in 1896 where Ethiopians won their victory against the Italians. The events influenced the European perception of the African country and its Emperor, Mənilək II, as well as the Italians' attitude towards Ethiopians to such an extent that it appears sensible to commence the story at this point. Mockler dedicates much less consideration to the five years of the Italian occupation of the country. Instead, he tries to present the events of the Italian war and occupation within the framework of Ethiopian history. The attempt sometimes fails because the author provides some mistaken information. The most striking of them is suggesting *ras* Kaša the victorious leader of Šäwan troops in the battle of Sägäle in 1916. In fact, the role was taken by *fitawrari* Habtä Giyorgis. The latter is not mentioned in the description of the battle at all (p. 5).

In the main text, minimal alteration of the first edition is noted, although there is a preface added for the second edition. It is unfortunate that the mistakes of the first edition were not corrected. Ethiopianists and students of Ethiopian history can find the transcription rather misleading. Furthermore, some titles and Ethiopian terms are mentioned in their incorrect forms (for example: *näggadras* as “Nagradas” or *bahər nägäs* as “Bahr Ghazal”, p. xxiv).

I find it hard to agree with the view regarding the future of Ethiopia mentioned in the preface. It suggests that the restoration of the Ethiopian Empire would be possible one day. Moreover the discussion regarding the terms “Ethiopia” and “Abisynia” used to nominate the country is clearly now both superfluous and outdated.

The book contains ten maps, which allow the reader to monitor the movements of the armies. In order to clarify the story, the author provided a brief “Note on the geography, provinces, and history of Ethiopia” followed by a “Note on Ethiopian spelling, pronunciation and names” and a glossary of Ethiopian terms. There is also some basic information on the five main Ethiopian historical districts and a list of five major Ethiopian figures mentioned in the historical section. To prevent the reader from becoming confused with the heroes of the story, the genealogical trees of what the author called “the ruling house of Tigre”, “the ruling house of Gojjam” and “the ruling house of Shoa” are also included. In relating Ethiopian events within the context of European history, there is also a “Note on chronology” which is a list of major events from Ethiopian, British and Italian history of the period.

Although it has been twenty years now since the first edition of the book, the description of the British campaign in Ethiopia in which the author took part himself, remains unique, and provides the main essence of the publication and a sound basis for the second edition.

Hanna Rubinkowska, Uniwersytet Warszawski