

Emperor Theodoros II



The husband of Abyssinia, the betrothed of Jerusalem!

It is 145 years (14th April 1868) since Emperor Theodoros committed suicide in the fortress of Meqedella. This amazing Emperor ruled Ethiopia for 13 years. He is known for taking the initiative to end the Era of Princess or *Zemene mesafent* and sacrifice his precious life for the pride of his country. Numerous books have been written on his life and work but in foreign languages and very few books in Amahric. Most Ethiopians mainly adore Theodoros for his role in ending the decentralized government and also for his pride without actually knowing the full extent of his great work, kindness and intellect. I am planning to write a good summary of his life and work and in the mean time would like to share some of Theodoros's comments from "The survival of Ethiopian Independence" book which was written by Sven Robenson. This is the best book ever written on Emperor Theodoros and every Ethiopian should read to know more about this splendid Emperor.

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Theodoros expressed to the Europeans "do not believe I am an Abyssinian at heart; no, I am one of you." No doubt you have heard of our, the Ethiopian people's, ignorance & blindness. ... I don't want silver or gold, I want people who will open my eyes, because I am blind.

Theodoros said that my countrymen have turned their backs on me and have hated me because I imposed tribute on them and sought to bring them under military discipline. ... "The people of my country ... had provoked me to anger against them. Out of what I have done of evil towards them, may God bring good".

Although Emperor Theodoros had a great desire for modernization of his country and wanted the Europeans to assist him, he was aware of their colonial intentions. In one occasion Theodoros said to the Europeans “I know the tactics of the European governments when they want to seize a country in the orient. First they send missionaries, the counsels to support the missionaries, the battalion to sustain the counsels. I am not a rajah from Hindustan to be made a fool of like that: I prefer to engaged the battalions at once”.

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I asked from them a sign of friendship, which was refused to me. If they wish to come and fight let them come ... I don't fear. I don't trust in power; I trust in God, who says, if you have faith as a mustard grain, you can remove mountains ... Not only at the time of Captain Cameron, when they gave me no answer to my letter ... I found out they were not my sincere friends; but I saw it even at the time of Plowden and Bell ... I leave it to the Lord and He shall decide between us when we are fighting in the battle field.

Once things were not going his way in terms of the relationship with the English, Emperor Theodoros imprisoned the missionaries. Having made his position clear, Theodoros began to use his considerable charm and persuasive mixture of rewards and threats, to get the missionary artisans to concentrate their effort on important matters like mending muskets, making roads, blasting rocks, and constructing a machine for manufacturing of gun powder. The threats have made were disturbing enough in themselves to get results, but compliance and success were rewarded with dazzling amiability, and with kindness and acts of generosity which took a variety of forms from encouraging invitations to partake of the Lord's supper together ...

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Emperor Theodoros told the European prisoners when the British expeditionary force arrived in Ethiopia, “the reason I have ill-treated you was because I wanted the people of your country to come to me. I am glad they are coming. Whether they beat me or I beat them, I shall always be your friend”.



Emperor Theodoros said “I long for the day on which I shall have the pleasure to see a disciplined European army. I am like Simeon who would rejoice, having the Saviour in his arms; but he was old and died, and I am old too, but I hope God will spare me to see them. I am no proud of my soldiers. We are nothing in comparison to a disciplined army, where thousands of men act on the command of one man.”

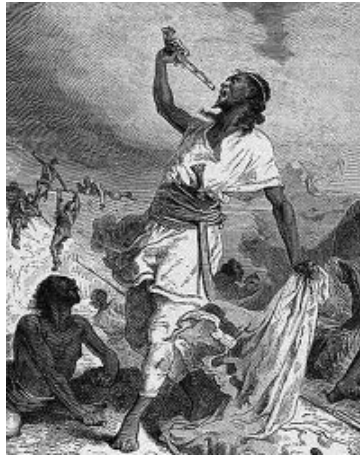


In the last few letter Theodoros wrote that since now we are friends, you must not leave me without artisans, as I am a lover of the mechanical arts! A last appeal from the defeated for a share in the technological know-how of the Europeans!

Theodoros was a last chance for Ethiopia ... if he does not succeed in effecting an improvement, no native of the country ever will. ... He was the first and only patriot Abyssinia ever saw, and assuredly, will be the last!

Theodoros said that “if He who is above does not kill me, none will kill me, and if He says, you must die, no one can save me”.

In the last days of his reign, Theodoros wrote a letter “... I reached the end of my dream, my struggle and my endurance... Kassa whose trust is in Christ”.



The ruler who for reasons that had nothing to do with the campaign was already a king without a land and almost without people ended his life by committing suicide.

The British succeeded to release their citizens with their ability to divided the Ethiopians. The English expedition to Abyssinia has returned home, and the country has resumed its old appearance except that there is **one great man** less and many rebels more ...

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Theodoros was the only representative and defender of a unique and Christian Abyssinia, the only person in Abyssinia who acted to put ideas into practice ...

One of the prisoner Kienzlen said that “Theodoros was the only man in Abyssinia who possesses the fear of God”.

Beide-Mariam Ejigu Retta