

# Ethiopia case essay sample

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## 1. Introduction

The Empire of Ethiopia is an independent monarchy in eastern Africa. It includes the former Italian colony of Eritrea, along the Red Sea Coast, which was federated with Ethiopia in 1952 and became a province in 1962. The country shares frontiers with the Sudan, to the north and west, with Kenya, to the south, and with Somalia, to the south, and to the east. It has 628 miles of coastline on the Red Sea, to the northeast. Its total area is 471, 000 square miles (1, 221, 900 square kilometers). The national capital is Addis Ababa (“ new flower”).

Ethiopia has had a continuous existence as a nation— for no less than 2, 000 years. For most of this period its contacts with the rest of the world were limited and intermittent. At present, Ethiopia is one of the developing nations of the world; its backward economy is based almost exclusively on agriculture, while its political structure has the trappings of a constitutional monarchy superimposed on a traditional autocracy (Blanchard, 2002). Despite this, Ethiopia has taken a leading role in the politics of modern Africa, largely because of its durable emperor.

The emergence of the country from its long isolation has brought into sharp focus the themes of paradox and diversity that are inherent in so many aspects of Ethiopian life. Ethiopia, a country that embraced Christianity as early as the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, was known to Christendom throughout the centuries as a lonely outpost of Christianity in a sea of paganism and Islam (Freeman, 2002).

Yet a large minority of its present population is Muslim. Several types of animistic religions and even an ancient form of Judaism are also to be found. While Ethiopia's existence as a nation-state is one of the longest in the world, its population is linguistically, culturally, and to some extent racially so diverse that it has aptly been described as " a museum of peoples."

This paper intends study the history of Ethiopia for the last 25 years.

1. Background

2. History of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a unique phenomenon in Africa. Ethiopia and Egypt are the only African nations that can trace their history into antiquity; but, while Egypt became more and more alienated from its ancient culture by successive conquests, Ethiopia, except for a few years of Italian occupation in the 1930s and 1940s, retained its original character through the centuries.

Ethiopia's historic community is largely the result of a favorable geographic location; it is high plateaus, which, both fertile and temperate, border on heavily traveled seas on the east and elsewhere, can be defended like fortress from the hostile deserts that surround it (Kaplan, 2001). Thus, Ethiopia has been able to preserve and perfect a unique culture born of the ancient encounter and the slow fusion of two equally skin, who were probably indigenous, and Semitic tribes that may have emigrated from Arabia.

1. Early Ethiopia (to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century)

Remote Antiquity: the land of Punt. The Egypt of the pharaohs believed that it had received certain of its divinity from Ethiopia, which it called Punt, or the divinities from Ethiopia, which is called Punt, or the Land of God. Later, the Greeks thought of it as the original home of wheat and of the olive tree. The legends are partly true (Ottaway, 2000). The most recent discoveries confirm the ancientness of man's presence in Ethiopia; even the remains of an archaic hominid dating back some 1, 500, 000 years have been found in the Omo valley.

According to Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, an authentic civilization began as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. The pharaohs sent fleets there to buy such precious goods as spices, incense, and myrrh. Vas-reliefs sculpted in the Dayr al-Bahri temple in Thebes around 1500 depict certain Ethiopians cultivating myrrh and incense. The text commenting on these drawings calls the Ethiopians Habashat, from which later came the name Abyssinia (Hay, 2001).

The Sabaean period. An Egyptian dynasty—the 25<sup>th</sup>—classified as “Ethiopian,” in the larger sense of the word, by classical Greek authors, has been erroneously included in Ethiopian history itself. Its princes were, in fact, Sudanese or Nubian. Direct illustrations of Ethiopia's past, such as monuments and inscriptions, are found on Abyssinian soil beginning only with the 6<sup>th</sup> century B. C.

These testimonies indicate the growth on the Ethiopian plateau of a civilization closely related to the Minaeans and to the Sabaean from the south of Arabia. This “Sabaean” stage of its past led the Ethiopian nation to

include in its ancient traditions the biblical episode of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, as told in the first Book of the Kings (10: 1-10).

Between the 6<sup>th</sup> century B. C. and the 1<sup>st</sup> century A. D., approximately, Sabaeen influences reached the Ethiopian sacred royalty and social institutions, intensive agriculture, architecture, and art. Sabaeen writing was adopted in Ethiopia in order to transcribe a language almost identical to that of the Arabian Sabaeans; that Ethiopian church in the form of Ge'ez (Ottaway, 1999).

During the last centuries B. C. Ethiopia also felt the influence of Hellenistic Egypt. The Ptolemies' fleets founded trading posts on the Ethiopian coasts, through which entered "modern" merchandise, the beginnings of commerce, and a few traces of Hellenistic art and the great ancient port of Adulis, the modern hamlet of Zula.

The Aksumite Empire. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A. D the fusion of new immigrants (primarily the Aguezat, who felt their name to the Ge'ez language) with people who had been on African soil for some time created an independent nation centered at Aksum on the plateaus of Tigre, which still remains Ethiopia's religious center. Its busy ports helped the nation develop its military and maritime power and thus to dominate the neighboring regions in the 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> centuries; even the south Arabian kingdom of the Himyarites, a fusion of the Sabaeen and Minaean kingdoms, came under its suzerainty.

This expansion of the Abyssinian peoples, all of whom were related, along the Gulf of Aden, and even toward the coasts of Benadir (then known as Azania) brought economic and financial prosperity and a religious, artistic, and social thriving to that part of the ancient world (Hay, 2001). This was facilitated by intense maritime traffic in the southern Red Sea, through which the fleets had to cross in order to pass from the east to the west and which brought ships of all origins to Ethiopian ports, Adulis principally.

Thus, Ethiopians imported commodities from everywhere in exchange for African products, particularly costly gums (incense, myrrh, etc.), which other peoples were then buying in considerable quantities for the needs of their pagan cults and funeral embalmings. Commerce rested on sound financial methods, attested to by the minting of splendid coins bearing the effigies of Ethiopian emperors and by the fact that the Christian Himyarite city of Najran, a vassal of Aksum in the Yemen plateaus, was an early center of authentic banking activity (Pausewang, 2002).

### III. Discussion

#### 1. People and Population

- Ethnic origins.

As there has been so much racial inter-mixing, racial identifications are of limited use in Ethiopia. Periodic migrations of Caucasoid peoples from across the Red Sea and of Negroid peoples from the West have produced a population that preponderantly manifests a blend of the two physical types.

The primary sources of identification for the peoples of Ethiopia are language, religion, and other aspects of culture. The terms Amhara, Galla, <https://assignbuster.com/ethiopia-case-essay-sample/>

and Tigre refer to linguistic and to some extent cultural groups, rather than to races or tribes (Prouty & Rosefeld, 2001).

- Languages

There are nearly 100 distinct languages, some of which have several dialects or less well-defined regional variations. The languages fall into the Semitic, Cushitic, and Nilotic language groups: a language group usually classified as Cushitic may be distinct enough to form an independent and coordinate family called Omotic.

In terms of the historical, political, and cultural role of its speakers, the most important of language groups is the Semetic. Semetic languages in Ethiopia fall into a northern group—Ge'ez, Tigre, Tigrinya—and a southern group—Amharic (Amarinya), Gurage, Harari, Gafat, and Argobba. Ge'ez, the language of the ancient Aksumite Empire, survives as a liturgical and literary language. Tigre is spoken by about 310, 000 people in the western and northern lowlands of Eritrea. Tigrinya, with about 4, 000, 000 speakers, is the language of Tigre Province and the highlands of Eritrea (Sauldie, 2003).

Amharic, the national language, first emerged into recorded history as the court language in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and has been the language of the center of political power ever since.

- Religions

Christians are generally believed to constitute about half the population. An estimated 35 percent are Muslims, and the remainder 35 percent are mostly animists; there is also small number of Jews. The stronghold of Christianity is

the northwestern highland region from central Eritrea to Shewa, while that of Islam is the lowland area and much of Kefa Province. Animism prevails in the far south and in the southwestern foothills but is losing ground to both Christianity and Islam. The Falasha, pre-Talmudic Jews who were probably converted by Yemenite Jews, are found in small groups in the province of Begemdir and Simen (Pausewang, 2002).

Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, while Islam was introduced in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Historically and culturally, Christianity has been and still is the dominant religion. Ethiopian Christianity had strong formal ties with the Coptic Church of Alexandria, which until 1959 provided the archbishop, or abuna, for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

- Demography

Demographic data on Ethiopia are limited and unreliable. The average population density is 52 persons per square mile. Densities are about twice the average in the populous provinces of Arusi, Shewa, and Welo. The lowest density, of five persons per square mile, occurs in Bale.

The lowland areas are generally more sparsely populated than the highlands. Almost 91 percent of the populations are rural, the most urbanized provinces being Shewa and Eritrea, which have urban populations of 21 percent and 17 percent, respectively. Birth and mortality figures are highly unreliable, and immigration and emigration are insignificant. The best estimate for the annual rate of population growth is slightly more than 2 percent (Zartman, 2003).

## 1. The National Economy

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Ethiopia is among the less developed countries of the world. Many of the characteristics of underdevelopment, such as the predominance of the subsistence sector, the limited role of industry, the underdeveloped economic infrastructure (roads, water supplies, schools, and other facilities), the shortage of domestic capital and the undiversified export structure, while shared with much of the rest of Africa, are nevertheless more pronounced in Ethiopia. The growth rate of the economy has remained well below the average annual increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) for Africa in general (Freeman, 2002).

- Natural resources

Mineral resources had been accurately surveyed by the early 1990s. Preliminary information, however, indicated that mineral deposits were probably considerable. The basement rocks contain valuable metals, the more important of which are gold, platinum, lead, tungsten, and copper. The sedimentary rocks may contain petroleum, but none has yet been discovered in quantities sufficient to make exploitation worthwhile. Limestone deposits are important, and the volcanic deposits of the Danakil Depression contain sulfur, sodium and potassium salts, gypsum rock salt, and potash (Freeman, 2002).

- Sources of national income

Agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Ethiopian economy. It provides a livelihood for 95 percent of the population, constitutes more than half of the CDP, and accounts for nearly all of the country's exports. Except on the few large-scale commercial farms, land is

tilled by the ox-drawn plough or the hoe, and seed is sown by mostly used as fuel or as an ingredient in building material, rather than as fertilizer. The small yield obtained is primarily used by the farmer himself, and only a small proportion of the produce reaches the markets (Prouty & Rosefeld, 2001).

Coffee is the most important agricultural export. The coffee plant is native to Ethiopia and grows wild in the provinces of kefa, Welega, Ilubabor, and Gemu Gofa. There is increasing, cultivation of coffee in these provinces and in similar highland areas of Sidamo and Harer. Other important agricultural products are sugarcane, various oil seeds, vegetables, and fruits. There are possibilities of large-scale production of cotton in the lowlands, as exemplified by the plantation at Tendaho.

- Mining and Quarrying.

The contribution of mining and quarrying to the economy is also small. Mining activity includes the exploitation of the alluvial gold deposits at Adola and the mining of manganese ore near Mitsiwa, salt in the Danakil region and southern Borana, and platinum in Welga.

- Manufacturing

Manufacturing is little developed. It employs less than 1 percent of the population and contributes about 10 percent of the GDP. It is based almost entirely on the processing of agricultural raw materials and the production of light consumer goods (Prouty & Rosefeld, 2001). Most industry is located in the few major urban centers; about half is in Addis Ababa and most of the rest in and around Asmera, Nazaret, and Dire Dawa.

## 1. Conclusion

About half of the Ethiopians are Christian; the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is of early Coptic origins. Moslems form the second largest religious group. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was no public education in Ethiopia. A modern school system was begun before the World War II. Many parts of the county still lack schools, however, and there is widespread illiteracy. Universities are at Addis Ababa and Asmara. The government also operates schools for teacher training and for vocational and technical training.

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