

History through flags: Flag of Ethiopia

Oldest Tri-Colour in Continuous Use



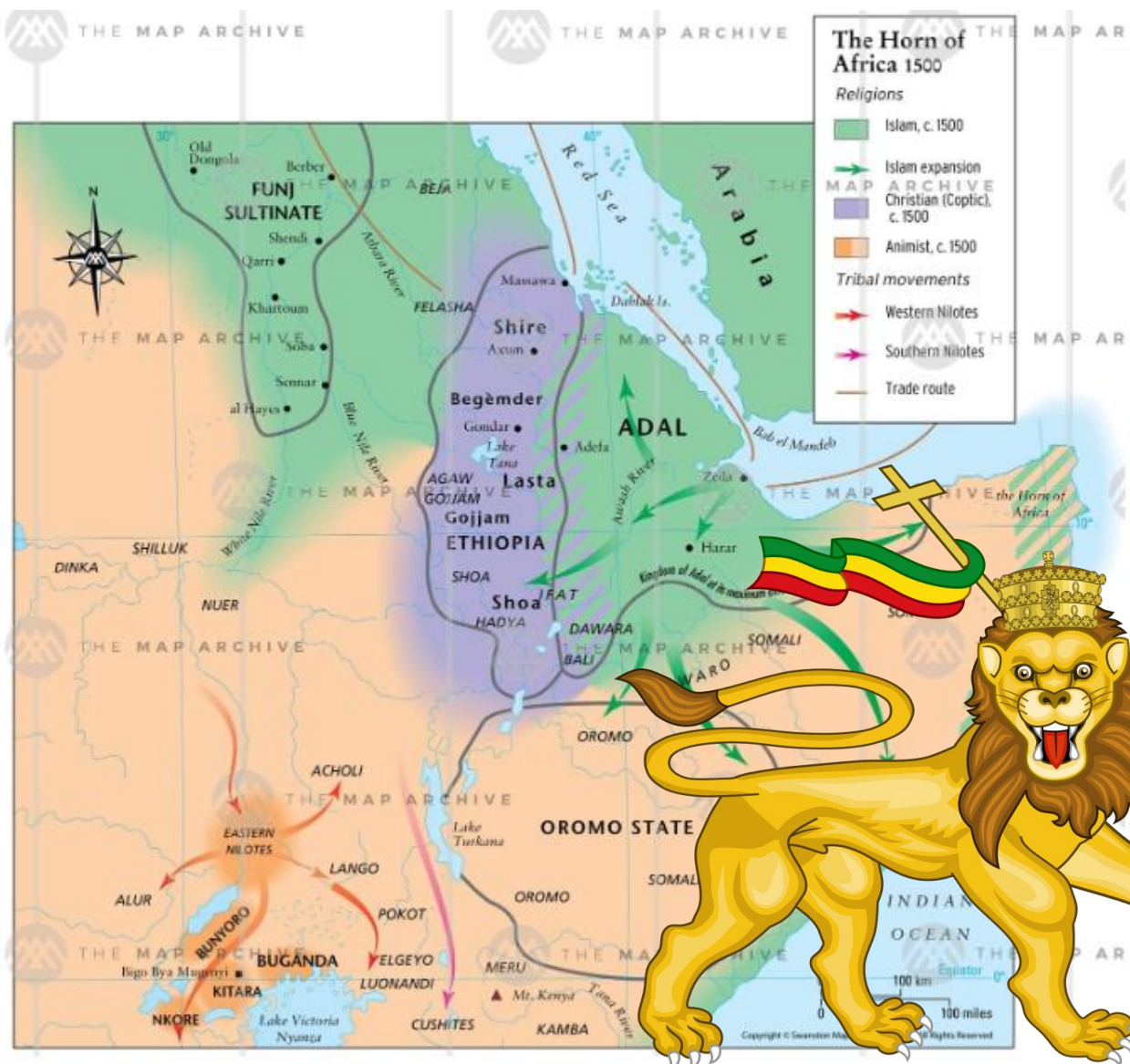
Adopted: 1996 (from an earlier design dating back to 1897)

- Green, Yellow and Red become known as “Pan-African Colours” and are used by other nations in their flag designs:
 - Green: "represents the richness and the fertility of our land as well as hope "
 - Yellow: "represents religious freedom and peace."
 - Red: "represents the sacrifice of our fathers, who spilled their blood in defense of Ethiopia "
- Modified design from the older flag of the Ethiopian Empire (the empire existed from 1270-1974) created in the 19th century:



The Ethiopian Empire during the 16th century (Quoted from *Encyclopedia Britannica*):

- Christianity was declared a state religion in 330 AD
- About 1520 the leadership of Adal was assumed by Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ghāzī, a Muslim reformer who became known as Sahib al-Fath (“the Conqueror”) to the Muslims and Aḥmad Grāñ (“Ahmad the Left-Handed”) to the Christians. Aḥmad drilled his men in modern Ottoman tactics and led them on a holy war against Ethiopia, quickly taking areas on the periphery of Solomonic rule. In 1528 Emperor Lebna Denegel was defeated at the battle of Shimbra Kure, and the Muslims pushed northward into the central highlands, destroying settlements, churches, and monasteries.
- In 1541 the Portuguese, whose interests in the Red Sea were imperiled by Muslim power, sent 400 musketeers to train the Ethiopian army in European tactics. Emperor Galawdewos (reigned 1540–59) opted for a hit-and-run strategy and on February 21, 1543, caught Aḥmad in the open near Lake Tana and killed him in action. The Muslim army broke, leaving the field and north-central Ethiopia to the Christians.



- Following close upon the Portuguese musketeers were missionaries who, sent by the Jesuit founder St. Ignatius of Loyola, sought to convert Ethiopia to the Western church. The most successful of these was the Jesuit Pedro Páez; his personal authority and eminent qualities were such that Emperor Susenyos (reigned 1607–32) notified the pope of his submission. This apostasy (the abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief) was joined by many in the royal court but met with violent resistance from the provincial nobles, the church, and the people at large. Susenyos was forced to abdicate in favour of his son Fasilides (reigned 1632–67).
- Fasilides established a new capital at Gonder, a trading centre north of Lake Tana that connected the interior to the coast. At its height about 1700, the city supported the arts and educational, religious, and social institutions as well as Beta Israel craftspeople, Muslim traders, and a large population of farmers, day labourers, students, and soldiers. Fasilides was succeeded by his son, Yohannes, and then by a grandson, Iyasu the Great. The court sponsored secular and religious construction, manuscript writing and copying, the verbal arts, and painting. A second wave of cultural productivity followed, in the middle decades of the 18th century under the sponsorship of Empress Mentewwab (reigned 1730–69), a remarkable woman who ruled jointly with her son and grandson. However, ethnic, regional, and religious factionalism undermined the kingdom and led in 1769 to its collapse. The Zamana Masafent (“Age of the Princes”; 1769–1855), an era of feudal anarchy, had commenced.



Empress Mentewwab

- For most Ethiopians, life during the Age of the Princes was difficult. Power had shifted from the central court to the courts of regional princes, and they vied with one another in battle. There were no significant changes in the social order, but the oppression of the farming population increased as armies traversed the highlands, ruining the countryside and plundering the harvests of farmers. Nevertheless, significant developments were taking place in the south.
- Agricultural development in the Gībē River basin led to the formation of Oromo states to the southwest of Shewa; the Gonga people developed their own states in the Kefa highlands on the west bank of the Omo River; and a line that claimed Solomonic descent established a formidable regional kingdom in northern Shewa. Shewa prospered in the growing trade of the Gībē states, and Shewa's self-proclaimed king, Sahle Selassie (reigned 1813–47), and his successors expanded southward; by 1840 they controlled most of Shewa to the Awash River and enjoyed suzerainty as far south as Guragē.
- To the north, Kassa Hailu was in the process of ending the Age of the Princes. After serving as a mercenary in Gojam, Kassa returned to his native Qwara on the extreme edge of the western highlands, where he prospered as a highwayman and built a good small army. By 1847 he had monopolized the lowlands' revenues from trade and smuggling, forcing Gonder's leading magnates to integrate him into the establishment. Finally, in April 1853 at Takusa, Kassa defeated Ras (Prince) Ali, the last of a succession of the Oromo lords who had played a central role in the Age of the Princes. After defeating the ruler of northern Ethiopia, Kassa was crowned Emperor Tewodros II on February 11, 1855. Later that year he marched south and forced the submission of Shewa. His consolidation of power over the formerly separate states established the modern Ethiopian country.

