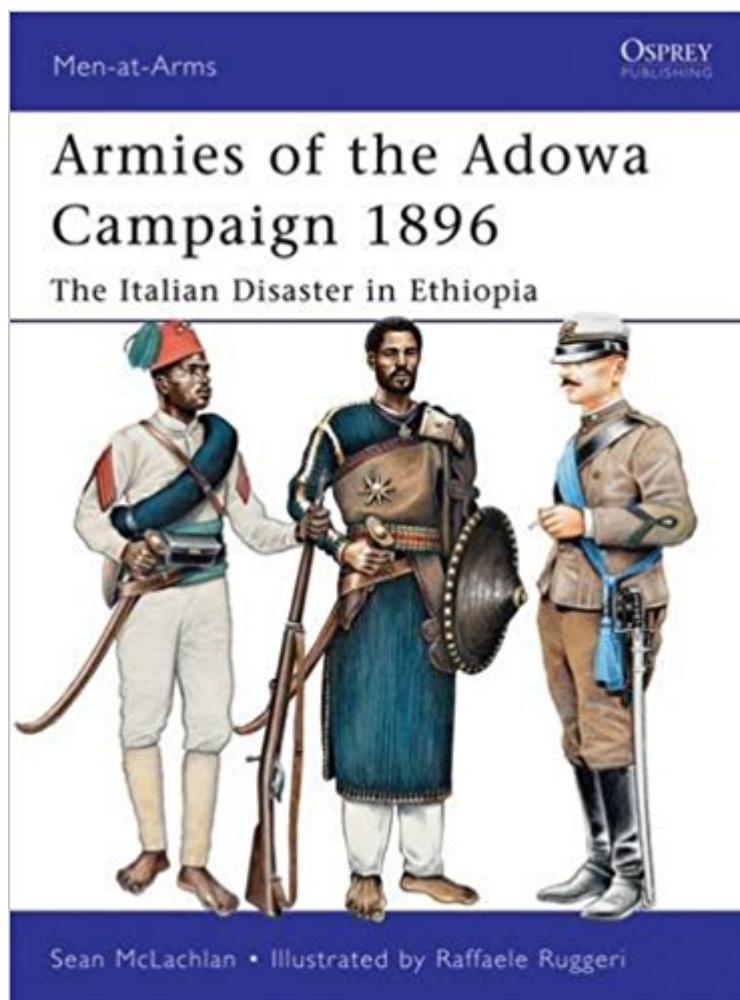


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# Armies Of The Adowa Campaign 1896: The Italian Disaster In Ethiopia (Men-at-Arms)



## Synopsis

In the late 19th century, the new nation-state of Italy was eager to join her European neighbors in creating an international empire. Italy's eyes turned towards Africa as a source of potential colonies. Most of the continent had already been carved up between the Great Powers but Italy succeeded in securing a foothold in Eritrea on the Red Sea coast, a vassal of the Emperor of Ethiopia. Trade and other links were established with the Ethiopian empire but quarrels regarding the interpretation of a particular clause led to Ethiopian support for uprisings in Eritrea. Italian troops entered northern Ethiopia and captured Adowa, the capital of the Tigray province. Full-scale war broke out and this new Osprey title tracks every development in the battle and the men who fought in it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Sean McLachlan worked for ten years as an archaeologist before becoming a full-time writer. He has published several books on history and travel and divides his time between Missouri, England and Spain. He has conducted several research trips to Ethiopia in the course of researching this title. His website is [www.seanmclachlan.com](http://www.seanmclachlan.com)

Armies of the Adowa Campaign 1896, Osprey Men at Arms 471. Written by Sean McLachlan, and Illustrated by Raffaele Ruggeri, Copyright 2011, 48 pages. Scope - bigCompleteness - fairAppeal - highAccuracy --not able to judgeThe late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the age of imperialism. It was during this period that many of the more developed, more powerful, primarily

European nations engaged in campaigns of conquest and control throughout the less developed, primarily African and Asian portions of the world. Few really understand that in Asia, for instance, every nation except Japan (which modernized quickly and became a colonial power itself) and Thailand (which managed to maintain independence by playing the French against the British) were colonized in whole or in part. In Africa, the exceptions were Liberia (which had a strange history as it became dominated by returning African-Americans) and Ethiopia which maintained its independence until the Italian conquest shortly before world war two. Which begs the question, how did Ethiopia maintain its independence? The answer lies in this book. In the late nineteenth century, Italy was a recently united nation, not terribly respected by many of its neighbors and considered to be behind its peers in terms of gaining colonies. The Italians sought to gain colonies in the region of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia as well as portions of north Africa. In Ethiopia, the Italians began a large campaign of conquest and colonization. Although it was common for African and Asian people to resist such colonization efforts, the Ethiopians not only fought back, but they fought back successfully, defeating and humiliating a large Italian army (composed largely of African Askaris recruited on the continent) and keeping their nation independent from Italian control. Many claim that of all the colonial battles this is the only incident where a European nation was defeated and never returned to avenge that defeat. (Which, incidentally, is one reason why the Italians came back and conquered Ethiopia in the 1930s, partially to reverse the humiliation they'd experienced at the hands of the Ethiopians. But that's another story told in a different Osprey book.) Like most of the Osprey books on obscure conflicts, this one begins with a 24 page overview of the conflict. In this brief space it gives a fairly good description of what happened and why the two nations involved were fighting.) The Ethiopian army is covered in 13 pages. Logistics, weapons, and composition of the army is covered fairly well. The Italian army is covered in 6 pages. Again, logistics, weapons, and composition of the army is covered fairly well.

A very good introduction to this forgotten battle. This is the only English language book that I know of devoted to the battle of Adowa. Twenty years after Little Bighorn which ended in the massacre of nearly 300, the Italians suffered nearly 6,000 killed in a huge catastrophe that resulted in the collapse of an Italian government. The two battles had many similarities--mis-judged indigenous enemy's strength; allowing an already outnumbered force to be split in the face of the enemy; over-estimated ability of a modern European/American army to overcome indigenous numbers; indigenous forces armed with modern weapons (in some cases more modern than that of the European/Americans). However, the scale of the battle, and the Italian disaster was exponentially

greater with concomitant strategic effects. Despite this, Adowa gets hardly a notice in English language military histories where the writing and study of Little Big Horn is prolific. This Osprey volume is a good start to remedy this knowledge gap of a very dramatic and horrific battle.

Whenever you order a new book from Osprey, you never know what you are going to get. At worst, the author is an enthusiastic amateur who knows everything about the subject but writes terribly. Other times, the book is from one Osprey's "period experts" and the books reads like someone's masters thesis. Sometimes, the books turn out great and are models of how to cover a complex subject in an easy to read format. Fortunately, "Armies of the Adowa Campaign" is an example of Osprey Publishing at its very best. The author Sean McLachlan, is a good writer and it is easy to follow the intricacies of this complex military campaign. As in the best Osprey titles, McLachlan did his research and he obviously loves the subject. In addition, the maps are clear, the photographs are interesting and the illustrations by Raffaele Ruggeri are absolutely first rate. A better introduction to the Italian disaster in Ethiopia cannot be imagined. As a final note, for those really interested in this campaign be sure to check out "La Guerre Coloniali Italiane 1885/1900" by Raffaele Ruggeri, the illustrator of the book reviewed. It is a bilingual English/Italian work that follows a format very similar to the one popularized by Osprey Publishing. It is 88 pages long and is filled with great photos and illustrations. It will take a little leg work to find it but it is a great supplement to the "Armies of Adowa".

Good book on a battle that is not discussed often in America. Nice descriptions of the Italians and Ethiopian forces, including uniforms, tactics, and weaponry. Not to mention the color plates, always an Osprey win. This will fit nicely on my shelf along with other Italian military studies.

Covers the history sufficiently to stimulate the reader and coverage is quite good. Unlike most Osprey, not heavy on illustrations, but instead heavy on good text.

Informative story of attempted but failed colonization of Ethiopia. The Italians underestimated the Ethiopians in 1896 and they did again in 1936. The Ethiopians state "your religion is your own, but Ethiopia is first." They were NEVER colonized.

Informative/

Overpriced for its 48-page size, but the most comprehensive and valuable all-in-one-place account I have yet seen of the battle (I have read many, and have been in Adwa several times). The day of the battle is still observed as an Ethiopian national holiday.

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