History Revealed, 2016.

Timeline: The life of Haile Selassie

Born to rule, 1892

Born Tafari Makonnen Woldemikael in Harer, Ethiopia, in 1892, the future monarch is part of the Solomonic dynasty that has ruled the country for several millennia. However, it is when he marries the niece to the heir to the throne in 1911 that his march to power truly begins and, five years later, he becomes Crown Prince to the throne. He proves to be a progressive regent, signing up Ethiopia to membership of the League Of Nations in 1923.

Crowned emperor, 1930

When Empress Zewditu succumbs to diabetes in 1930, Tafari Makonnen – crowned King two years before – becomes Haile Selassie I, the 225th Emperor of Ethiopia. His coronation is a lavish affair, rumoured to have cost more than $3 million. Dignitaries from many nations are in attendance, as is the British novelist Evelyn Waugh, covering the coronation as The Times’ special correspondent.

Italian Invasion, 1935

On 3 October 1935, Italian forces cross the border into Ethiopia (from Eritrea). Using aerial warfare and poison gas, Mussolini’s troops reach the capital Addis Ababa in May 1936, three days after Haile Selassie has left the country on the Imperial Railway. Mussolini refused to allow his commanders to bomb the Emperor’s train.

Plea for aid, 1936

In June 1936, Haile Selassie arrives in Geneva where he addresses the League Of Nations, calling on the organisation’s principles of collective responsibility to defeat Mussolini’s fascism. “It is us today,” he pointedly tells the General Assembly. “It will be you tomorrow.”

Return of the king, 1941

Having spent four years in exile in Britain, Haile Selassie returns to Ethiopia in 1941, following the Italian withdrawal from Africa after heavy losses against British forces. PM Winston Churchill sends a cable to Selassie expressing his “deep pleasure” at the Emperor’s return to power. In January 1942, Britain hands back full sovereignty to Ethiopia.

Africa United, 1963

In 1963, Selassie’s deeply held principles of international cooperation and collective responsibility underline his founding of the Organisation of African Unity, a conglomeration of 32 African states, most of whom had just announced their independence from colonial rule.

A Rasta welcome, 1966

Haile Selassie’s plane is swamped by an enthusiastic crowd as it lands in Jamaica on 21 April 1966. The well-wishers – those of the Rastafarian religion that bears the Emperor’s birth name – believe his visit to be the coming of the black messiah. Annually, 21 April is still celebrated by Rastafarians as Grounation Day.

Death of a dynasty, 1974

After growing domestic discontent, Selassie is deposed in September 1974, bringing the long-reigning Solomonic dynasty to an end. He is dead within a year. The cause of death is officially given as respiratory failure, but many believe he was killed by members of the new military government.