

An African people's quest for freedom and justice

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Résumé ou extrait : Like its African neighbours, Eritrea attained colonial statehood under a European power, in this case Italy. Yet, during decolonisation, its people were singularly excluded from the right to self-determination, for external reasons: superpower rivalry over the country's strategic position on the Red Sea; a mistaken notion of irreconcilable sectarian differences within Eritrea's population, invoked in order to brand it a society unfit for statehood; and Ethiopia's imperial claim, based on mythical historical connections. The Ethiopian call for Eritrea's return, supported by the UK and the US, sealed its fate at the international level. First, in the early 1950s, the UN General Assembly federated Eritrea as an autonomous unit under Ethiopian sovereignty; a decade later, Addis Ababa annexed it as a province—in neither case was the population consulted, sparking a liberation war. This vital book traces the genesis of the Eritrean independence struggle through hitherto unexplored local sources, both written and oral, analysed against the rather scanty existing literature on this period. Alemseged Tesfai refocuses the narrative on the actions, reactions and expectations of a relatively small nation, in both size and population, as it set out to right an international wrong, imposed by the Great Powers of the day.

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