

## Italian Colonization

Written by Winta Weldeyesus

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### The coming of Italians to Eritrea

In 1869 Italy bought land in Asseb under the pretext of land needed for a trading company from the governors of the region, Sultan Ibrahim and Sultan Hassen, and after 13 years Italy declared Asseb as its official colony.

Starting from the early settlement of Italians in Asseb, the people of Denkalia knew that Italy had the ulterior motive to colonize the whole country and were opposing the presence of Italians in the region as a result of which many Italian explorers were killed. In the period between 1881 and 1885, two groups of Italian explorers were killed in Southern Denkalia.

Despite the opposition from the inhabitants, Italy continued to expand its hold and occupied Beilul in January 1885. All the territories occupied by Italians used to be under Egyptian rule but there was not much opposition from the Egyptian side. As a result, Italy continued occupying many territories and by February 1885, they had occupied Massawa. By the end of the same year the Italians declared all the territories under their rule as their official colonies.

While Italians were expanding their colony in the Eastern lowlands of the country, Raas Alula was looting the highlands and thus many Eritrean traditional rulers began cooperating with the Italians. Some of the early leaders that accepted the Italians were Baranbaras Kafil of Denbelas and Kentibai Hamed of Rora Habab. Exasperated with continuous invasions and lootings from Raasi Alula these leaders took side with the Italians in a bid to receive arms and other kinds of assistance.



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