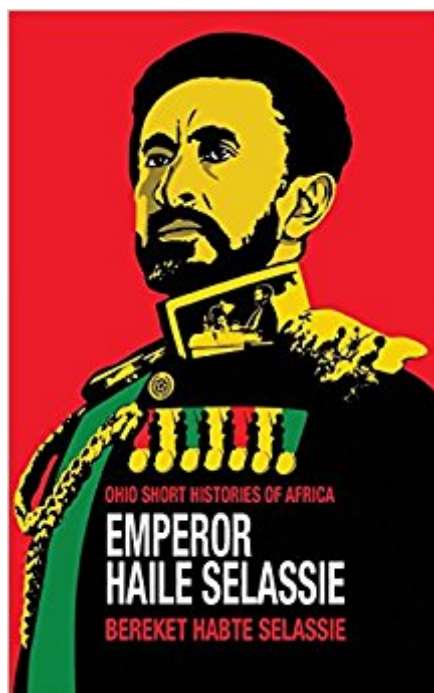


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Emperor Haile Selassie (Ohio Short Histories Of Africa)



Synopsis

“Anyone searching for a quick introduction to Ethiopia’s fascinating history could happily turn to Emperor Haile Selassie as a starting point.”

- Focus on the Horn

Emperor Haile Selassie was an iconic figure of the twentieth century, a progressive monarch who ruled Ethiopia from 1916 to 1974. This book, written by a former state official who served in a number of important positions in Selassie’s government, tells both the story of the emperor’s life and the story of modern Ethiopia. After a struggle for the throne in 1916, the young Selassie emerged first as regent and then as supreme leader of Ethiopia. Over the course of his nearly six-decade rule, the emperor abolished slavery, introduced constitutional reform, and expanded educational opportunity. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s led to a five-year exile in England, from which he returned in time to lead his country through World War II. Selassie was also instrumental in the founding of the Organization of African Unity in 1963, but he fell short of the ultimate goal of a promised democracy in Ethiopia. The corruption that grew under his absolute rule, as well as his seeming indifference to the famine that gripped Ethiopia in the 1970s, led finally to his overthrow by the armed forces that he had created. Haile Selassie was an enlightened monarch in many ways, but also a man with flaws like any other. This short biography is a sensitive portrayal of Selassie as both emperor and man, by one who knew him well.

Book Information

Series: Ohio Short Histories of Africa

Paperback: 156 pages

Publisher: Ohio University Press (October 20, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0821421271

ISBN-13: 978-0821421277

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.4 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,155,935 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #80 in Books > History > Africa > Ethiopia #467 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > Midwest #635 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Africa

Customer Reviews

“Emperor Haile Selassie is a readable, well-organized book that accurately portrays the

life of the Ethiopian King of Kings and, through him, the history of the nation. The author is at his best in relating his personal experience and ties to the Emperor's original material that I found fascinating. — Theodore M. Vestal, author of *The Lion of Judah in the New World: Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and the Shaping of Americans' Attitudes toward Africa* "An informative guide, with an insider's perspective, on a pivotal piece of African history." — Publishers Weekly

Bereket Habte Selassie is William E. Leuchtenburg Professor of African Studies and Law, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and former attorney general of Ethiopia as well as associate justice of the Supreme Court of Ethiopia.

Very riveting story although written by someone who seemed to have bias

Job Well done!!

This slim volume is meant to briefly skim over the life of Emperor Haile Selassie about whom so many books and articles have been written in many languages. The author on the back of the slim volume is actually supposed to have had very close access to the Emperor, having lived in Ethiopia for most of his life and been one of the people who were early collaborators with the military junta, called the Derg, who overthrew the Emperor. With this vintage one expects to get a glimpse of what the author himself witnessed during that tumultuous period to be at least one original contribution to the story of the emperor. But Professor Bereket disappoints miserably and has written a book that a motivated high school student or a college freshman might write as a term paper, perhaps with better clarity. His book adds no more information than many Google articles, and has much less detail than the wikipedia article on Emperor Haile Selassie. It is not clear why Prof. Bereket wrote this book and he does not adequately explain why he wrote this inadequate book, when so many books are available out there. Perhaps he is trying to expel some nagging guilt about his role as the chief prosecutor of the Derg as a member of the kangaroo court euphemistically known then as "The Inquiry Commission" of the emperor's top officials with his grand inquisitors zeal to verbally assault and prepare minimize individuals who in one way or another had contributed to the history of their country and prepare them for execution. Indeed as expected many of them were slaughtered before even the commissions inquiry was completed. One would have also hoped that Bereket would have explained his undercover role for the liberation of Eritrea prior to the breakup of Ethiopia. When

Eritrea became a new country the mercurial Bereket joined forces with it's new president for life of that country and became known as "the father of the Eritrean constitution" One would have hoped he could exorcise his demons from his rather fluent life of movement between loyalties and give us a clue as to his motivation and what makes a man like him tick. But none of this is included in the book. At the end of the day this will be a book for those who are looking for a yellow book version of the life of Emperor Haile Selassie from one who betrayed him and perhaps is feeling a pang of guilt at also being the legitimizer of the dictatorial regime of Isayas' who had since become the pariah of Africa who has turned his country into the South Korea of Africa.

This book is a bit difficult to describe. It is short and personal, because the author knew the emperor and was an actor in some of the events described. There are a number of first-person anecdotes such as the emperor sitting the author down and probing his interests apparently to decide where he would fit in assignment-wise. The author apparently was in government for some years, and must be getting up close to 80. The focus is the emperor and some significant events get small mention. Bits and pieces of the author's opinions portray a competent, somewhat vain, distant emperor. Some comments hint at more important things, such as Selassie adroitly cutting down the power of the Rasas by setting up a paid national army rather than the near feudal private armies that always threatened central government. He has an acid comment about the British not wanting Selassie to go back to Addis Ababa after liberation for fear that something would happen to white people, the thousands of Italians still in the city. He says Selassie had unfortunate trust in treaties and international organizations, betrayed of course. Eritrea became an obsession, one that led to a long gory war. A few comments about Americans are mixed, tending negative. The book has some detail on the attempted 1960 coup. There is more on the 1974 revolution that ended his rule, and the book is a little mixed on it, seemingly something was inevitable after some years of the emperor retreating from his earlier progressive tendencies, with pressure building to the explosive point.

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