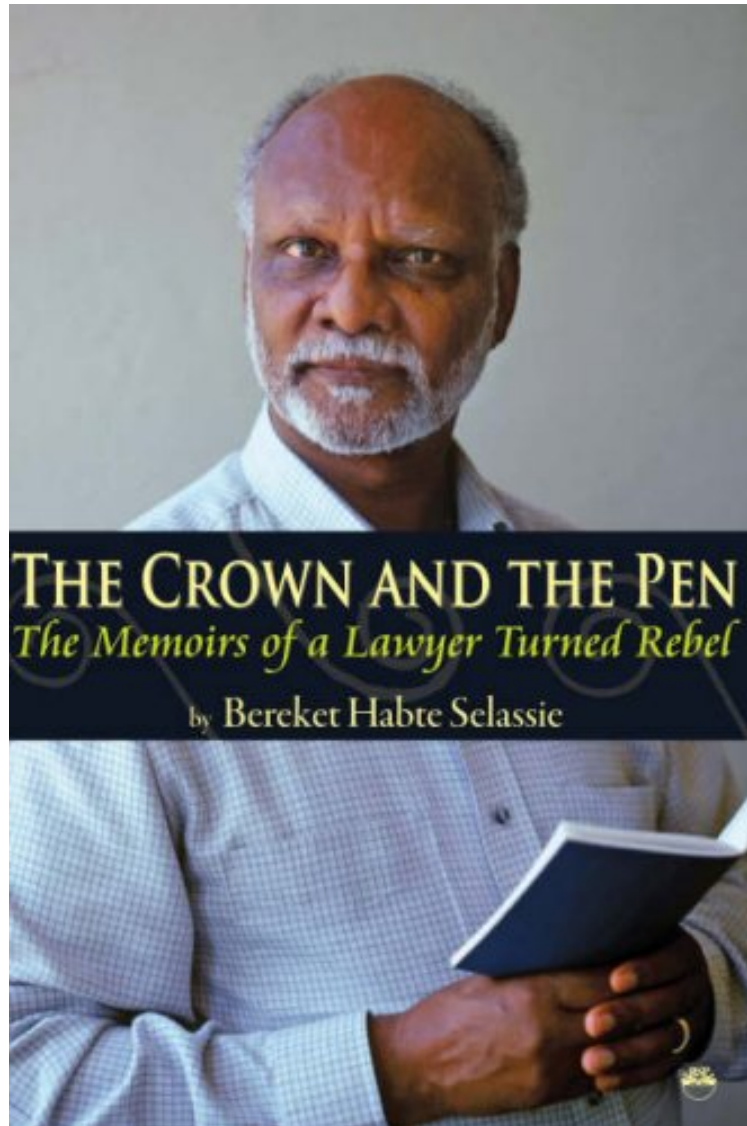


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The Crown and The Pen: The Memoirs of a Lawyer Turned Rebel

Bereket Habte Selassie

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This memoir recounts the extraordinary story of man straddling two worlds a progressive lawyer and high-ranking official of the government of Emperor Haile Selassie who struggled for justice within an archaic system. Briefly stated, as Attorney General acting to advance progressive ideas in the context of an unreconstructed feudal society, the author was often involved in clashes. In the end the tension proved unbearable. The fact that he is Eritrean further complicates his position and eventually leads to his resignation and, after the overthrow of the Emperor in 1974, to joining the Eritrean freedom fighters. The story begins in the author's village of origin outside Asmara, the Eritrean capital. After a few years of elementary education, he begins his lifetime journey of adventure by traveling to Ethiopia, as a thirteen year old. Then he is off to England on a scholarship for university education, just about the time when the sun was setting on the British Empire, and African agitation for independence was beginning. While in law school the author is involved in anti-colonial student politics and, after graduation with a law degree, he finds himself in the thick of pan-African politics and, at the same time, in clandestine politics within Ethiopia. In December 1958, the author attended the All African Peoples Conference convened by President Nkrumah of Ghana, where leaders of political parties, liberation movements, labor unions and student and women's organizations participated. This was a defining moment for many young Africans orienting them towards the idea of African liberation and unity. It brought pressure to bear on African leaders, including Emperor Haile Selassie, to be on the side of unity and liberation; at least they paid lip service to it. It provided young Africans, like our author, with the moral and intellectual framework to work towards those goals. It also contributed to the author's decision to be involved in clandestine politics inside Eth

About the Author
Bereket Habte Selassie is the William E. Leuchtenburg Distinguished Professor of African Studies and Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He was Chairman of the Constitutional Commission of Eritrea (1994-1997).