

Chanting up Zion: Reggae as Productive Mechanism for Repatriated Rastafari in
Ethiopia

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Abstract

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Ethnomusicology

Since the 1960s, Rastafari from Jamaica and other countries have been “returning” to Ethiopia in the belief that it is their Promised Land, Zion. Based on extensive ethnographic research in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2017, this project examines the ways in which repatriated Rastafari use music to transform their Promised Land into a reality amidst various challenges. Since they are denied legal citizenship, Rastafari deploy reggae in creative and strategic ways to gain cultural citizenship and recognition in Ethiopia. This research examines how reggae music operates as a productive mechanism, that is, how human actors use music to produce social and tangible phenomena in the world. Combining theories on music’s productive capabilities with Rastafari ideologies on word-sound, this research further seeks to provide deeper insight into the ways Rastafari effect change through performative arts.

I examine how Rastafari mobilize particular discourses that both challenge and reproduce hegemonic systems, creating space for themselves in Ethiopia through music. Rastafari use reggae in strategic ways to insert themselves into the contested national narratives of Ethiopia, and participate in the practice of space-making in Addis Ababa and Shashemene through sound projects. I argue that music activities form the basis of social interaction for the repatriated

Rastafari community and in turn produce and reproduce this community. I also discuss the work of Ethiopian reggae musicians who engage in reggae production for different reasons, but whose actions shape the returnees' realities as well. Reggae in Ethiopia therefore serves as a productive mechanism by facilitating the creation of social relationships, spaces that lead to visibility, ideologies that connect Rastafari with Ethiopia, income for returnees, and opportunities for development—important factors that make the Promised Land habitable.

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Introduction

A few months before he passed away, or transitioned to the ancestors, Ras Mweya Masimba enthusiastically showed me his drawings and paintings that he planned to exhibit at his home-turned-museum in Shashemene. Born in the UK, Ras Mweya grew up in Jamaica, lived in Zimbabwe, and “returned” to Ethiopia, Shashemene, to live in 1996. He was a multi-talented artist who used his art to make a living, promote the teachings of Rastafari, strengthen the repatriated Rastafari community in Shashemene, and connect with Ethiopians, and with the world. He painted images of Haile Selassie and published comic books that depicted major aspects of Haile Selassie’s life, which he sold on site to visitors. He also made crafts such as belts, bags, and shoes that he sold in his shop.

Although he worked mainly in visual media, he was also known for the powerful voice with which he led the chanting at the main Nyabinghi tabernacle in Shashemene. Well versed in the Nyabinghi repertoire, he sometimes composed, taught, and led his own songs at these gatherings. He was particularly committed to the Rastafari philosophy that words and sounds have the ability to alter the physical and spiritual environment in which we live. He explained that “every sound resonates. It has a vibration. Every sound is translated into a movement and the movement causes an action” (Personal Interview 2016). It was through reggae, for instance, that he first heard about Haile Selassie, setting in motion his plans to repatriate to Ethiopia.

I spoke with him on numerous occasions in Shashemene where he and other repatriated Rastafari settled, believing Ethiopia to be their Promised Land, Zion. On one occasion, after describing some of the social and economic challenges associated with repatriating to and living in Ethiopia, he said, “You have to come and create your utopia. I’m in my utopia” (Personal

conversation 2016). Through visual art and music, Ras Mweya created an environment for himself and his community in which he felt content and fulfilled to live out the rest of his days. I begin with a eulogy of sorts to Ras Mweya, even though he does not feature prominently throughout this dissertation, because his belief in the power of art and specifically of word-sound to create one's reality—a belief held by many Rastafari—is central to my study.

Based on extensive ethnographic research with repatriated Rastafari in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2017, this project examines the ways in which Rastafari use music to transform their homeland and Promised Land into a reality amidst various challenges. In the introduction to an edited collection on “homecomings”, Anders Stefansson notes that diasporic peoples’ desires to return to their homeland initiates new social projects that “lead them on unsettling, but also potentially relieving paths of return” (Stefansson 2004: 3). This dissertation takes as its point of departure that processes of return are “characterized by considerable complexity and ambivalence that provide rich examples of cultural creativity and inventiveness” (ibid: 4). The field of creativity with which I am particularly concerned is reggae music. Reggae is a major cultural asset of Rastafari, which they deploy in creative and strategic ways to gain “cultural citizenship” (MacLeod 2014) in their Promised Land since they are denied legal citizenship. This research examines how music operates as a productive mechanism, i.e. how human actors, through music, produce social and tangible phenomena in the world. Combining theories on music’s productive capabilities with Rastafari ideologies on word-sound, this research further seeks to provide deeper insight into the ways Rastafari effect change in the world through performative arts.

Rastafari

The Rastafari movement that emerged in Jamaica in the 1930s has gained worldwide attention for its pan-Africanist orientation, commitment to equal rights, and focus on repatriation to Africa. Because its adherents maintain that words and sounds have immense power, I am ever conscious that describing this movement with words requires great thought and care. Nathaniel Murrell states that Rastafari is a “modern Afro-Caribbean cultural phenomenon” that combines “elements of Africanist ideologies and the ‘Caribbean experience’ with Judeo-Christian thought into a new sociopolitical religious worldview” (1998: 4). Most Rastafari who I have spoken to describe Rastafari as a *livity* (way of life) or a movement.

The Rastafari movement is heterogeneous in scope, reflecting different ways of understanding the person of Haile Selassie and the mission and lifestyle of Rastafari. The different groups of Rastafari are sometimes called mansions because in some biblical translations, John 14:2 reads “In my father’s house there are many mansions” and Rastafari have applied this to account for their diversity. The most prominent of these mansions include the Nyabinghi, Twelve Tribes of Israel, and the Bobo Shanti mansions. Lawrence Bamikole notes that because Rastafari do not have identifiable commonalities that define them as a group, identifying a worldview of the Rastafari is particularly difficult. The author uses Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblance” (1988) to address this problem by arguing that the Rastafari is “made up of groups with related and similar beliefs and practices, but none of these beliefs and practices can serve as identifying criteria that characterize a Rastafari, to the extent that if any of the groups does not possess them, then the group will not be regarded as genuine” (Bamikole 2012:130). Each group or mansion is therefore part of the wider Rastafari family even though they each maintain specific identities that distinguish them from each other.

Most Rastafari believe that Haile Selassie is divine (though they do not all agree on the nature of his divinity) and that repatriation to Africa is an important part of one's spiritual journey (Chevannes 2012). Other characterizations of Rastafari include the use of marijuana as a sacrament and the identification with the dispersal of Jews, using similar terms of *Zion* and *Babylon* to describe their own situation (Bonacci 2015: 6). *Zion* represents the homeland and Promised Land that is Africa and more specifically, Ethiopia while *Babylon* refers to the systems and structures of the West that oppress people.

Rastafari drew on ideologies of Ethiopianism to give hope and meaning to their lives, ultimately leading them to imagining a return to Ethiopia (Nelson 1994: 68, Yawny 1978: 87) as opposed to a West African country that may be culturally more similar to Jamaica. Ethiopianism was an “ideological matrix” that centered on the symbolism of Ethiopia as a metonym for all of Africa and represented an ancient, powerful, and deeply spiritual civilization (Bonacci 2015: 82). In Jamaica, Ethiopianism grew with the teachings of Marcus Garvey and the founding of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1916 (Nelson 1994: 69). Based on an understanding of the long history of Christianity in Ethiopia, Garvey drew on images of an Ethiopian God to fuel his teachings, thereby blending social justice with spirituality (Nelson 1994: 70). The Rastafari movement became closely associated with Ethiopianism for a number of reasons, combining ideologies of black empowerment and spiritual fulfillment into one movement. Referencing Gilroy's reading of the Rastafari connection to Ethiopia, Erin Macleod notes that “Ethiopia is important not necessarily because of its direct, legitimate connection to Jamaica, the birthplace of the Rastafari movement, but because of what it represents” (McLeod 2014: 13). For many Rastafari, Ethiopia represents an ancient African kingdom that has resisted European colonization—a narrative mobilized through Ethiopianism.

Although having roots in various back-to-Africa and pan-Africanist philosophies, members of the Rastafari movement trace their beginnings to the day Ras Tafari Mekonnen was crowned the King of Kings on November 2, 1930 in Ethiopia and began using his baptismal name Haile Selassie. By taking on the name of Ras Tafari and becoming Rastafari, the Jamaicans in this new movement directly aligned themselves to the teachings and mission of Haile Selassie and solidified a commitment to Ethiopia. Some Jamaicans saw Haile Selassie's coronation as a fulfilment of a prophecy attributed to Marcus Garvey that a black king would be crowned in Africa. Haile Selassie also claimed to be a descendant of King David and King Solomon and therefore part of the messianic line. This, in conjunction with Ethiopia's history of resisting colonialism, and the mentions of Ethiopia in the bible, placed Haile Selassie and Ethiopia at the center of Rastafari thought.

Although some scholars have claimed that Rastafari see Haile Selassie as God, there are actually divergent views amongst Rastafari on the nature of Haile Selassie's divinity. The Twelve Tribes of Israel organization holds that Haile Selassie is a manifestation of Jesus' second coming while members of the Nyabinghi order believe that Haile Selassie is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Barnett 2005). The differences in beliefs and practices therefore makes it difficult to generalize about the Rastafari movement. Although Rastafari hold different views on the nature of Haile Selassie's divinity however, they all believe that he is an important figure and they desire to live in his country, Ethiopia.

Return to Ethiopia

Central to understanding peoples' motivations to "return" is the level of importance they give to the concept of the homeland—a "place of origin to which one feels emotionally attached" (Tsuda 2004: 125). Although homelands are often imagined (Holsey 2004, Butler 2001), the

concept of the homeland “remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 39). William Safran asserts that there is a triangular relationship between the diaspora, the homeland, and the hostland that constitutes the myth of the homeland—a myth that is often exploited for social and political purposes (Safran 1991: 91-92). Embedded in the myth of the homeland is the myth of return, which is important because it serves to solidify ethnic consciousness (Ibid). The Promised Land is a concept most tied to Judaism and functions in a similar way to the concept of the homeland. As a “mythical elsewhere” a Promised Land is often presented as a “lost paradise, land of abundance and a better world” (Anteby-Yemini 2004: 147). Because Rastafari view Ethiopia as both homeland and Promised Land, I use these terms interchangeable throughout this dissertation.

The phenomenon of Rastafari returning to Ethiopia can be situated within a larger framework of ideologies and social movements centered on returns to Africa (Bonacci 2015, Holsey 2004, Lake 1995, Safran 1991). The process of imagined return to Africa was initiated by and through pan-African movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. “Imagined return” involves the process of imagining, anticipating, fearing, and planning a future return (Long and Oxfield 2004: 7). This is often an emotionally-charged experience that frames how people relate to their countries of origin and settlement (ibid). According to Sidney and Kelly, the “main characteristic of early Black nationalism was a concern with intellectually establishing the existence of a racial-cultural bond between continental Africans and diasporan Africans, and demonstrating the importance of pan-African unity in building an emancipatory movement” (Sidney and Kelly 1994: 3). Two proponents of this movement, Marcus Garvey and Kwame Toure, held strongly to the notion of repatriation to Africa (Nelson 1994: 73; Lake 1995: 24). Lake clarifies their stance on repatriation, stating that Garvey and Toure did not necessarily

advocate for a mass repatriation movement to Africa but contended that descendants of enslaved Africans in the West will continue to be at a disadvantage while living outside of a land they can call their own (Lake 1995: 24). Many persons of African descent were inspired by their teachings and began imagining possible physical returns to Africa. This imagining was crucial to the development of a people's identities in terms of how they related to their home of residence and home of origin. Among the groups of people who heavily relied on teachings of pan-African thinkers were members of the Rastafari movement, birthed in Kingston Jamaica.

Although repatriation to Africa has always been a cornerstone of Rastafari beliefs, Chevannes shows that Rastafari imagined repatriation in different ways. Rastafari either saw it as a divine act, which included a miraculous transformation or a human act, which involved physically moving to Africa (2012). Bamikole describes repatriation as being either physical, psychological, or spiritual. He further explains that “The notion of Zion was derived from the Bible, which is connected to the Promised Land. The idea of the Promised Land is a situation where oppression, exploitation, deprivation, and discrimination will cease and where happiness (in Aristotelian terms) will be achieved” (Bamikole 2012: 135). He further suggests that because conditions in Ethiopia are perhaps as bad or worse than in the Caribbean, Rastafari should embrace African norms in their own lifestyles instead of physically repatriating (Bamikole 2012: 135). Although Bamikole and other scholars view the future of repatriation more in spiritual and psychological terms, the reality is that Rastafari have been physically returning to Africa for years and the movement continues to this day.

“Repatriated return” includes “resettlement in the home country with a long-term commitment usually with the resumption of citizen status” (Long and Oxfeld 2004: 11). Long and Oxfeld emphasize that repatriated returns can be either voluntary or forced and therefore not

always seen as homecomings. They distinguish between repatriated returns and repatriation by acknowledging that repatriation often refers only to organized and assisted returns (Ibid). In this project, I use the terms *repatriation* and *return* (along with *repatriates* and *returnees*) interchangeably with the understanding that people have carried out their physical acts of return under different circumstances and conditions.¹ In the act of physically returning to Ethiopia, Rastafari are faced with the task of reconciling their imagined expectations with the reality of their new home.

Giulia Bonacci provides the most detailed history of the physical movements of the Rastafari who returned to Ethiopia, highlighting the significance of Rastafari action. She states, “By going to Ethiopia, these migrants (African Americans and West Indians) not only sealed the convergence of two major pan-African ideologies – Ethiopianism and back-to-Africa – but they linked symbolic discourse to social practice” (Bonacci 2012: 355). In her book, *Exodus! Heirs and Pioneers, Rastafari Return to Ethiopia*, she examines the reasons for return to Ethiopia, the processes by which people returned, and the social history of the land on which returnees settled (2015). She notes that the “study of the return to Ethiopia, to Shashemene, provides an approach to the entanglement of racial, political and religious ideologies at the core of the black experience and offers the analysis of an unfamiliar mobility, one which remains nonetheless, in the words of William Shack, a ‘historical reality’ (1974, 143)” (Bonacci 2015: 2). She provides detailed accounts not only of the realities of returning to Ethiopia but of settling and negotiating the political and cultural terrain of the land.

What is also important about Bonacci’s work is that she shows that the history of return to Ethiopia began long before the emergence of the Rastafari movement. Ethiopia’s victory over

¹ Although some returnees identify as Ethiopian, for the sake of clarity I have chosen to keep the categories of repatriates/returnees and Ethiopians distinct from each other.

the Italians in the famous battle at Adwa in 1896 further fueled African Americans' fascination with Ethiopia. Since then, a few descendants of enslaved Africans were inspired to move to Ethiopia for economic and spiritual reasons (Bonacci 2012: 357). The development of the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) in 1937 in New York also significantly played a role in promoting Ethiopia as an African powerhouse. The main objective of the EWF was to gather support for the Ethiopian war against the Italian invasion between 1936 and 1941 by publishing a newspaper, *Voice of Ethiopia*, in which they informed the public about the war. The EWF also organized public events and hosted celebrations on Haile Selassie's Birthday (Bonacci 2012, 363-4). The Jamaican branch of the EWF was founded in 1939, however, members of the Rastafari community were not allowed to be members of the EWF because of their "unkempt" appearance (Bonacci 2013: 89). When Haile Selassie was restored to power in 1941, a number of African Americans migrated to Ethiopia and contributed to the restoration and development of the country (Bonacci 2013: 361).

Perhaps the most significant factor that stimulated a return movement to Ethiopia was Haile Selassie's announcement in the 1940s of a land grant in Shashemene to members of the EWF as a token of appreciation for their help in the war against Mussolini (Bonacci 2012: 364). Shashemene is a town located 250 kilometers south of Addis Ababa in the region of Oromia (Figure 0.1).



Figure 0.1 Map of Ethiopia showing Addis Ababa and Shashamane (Google Maps 2017).

While a few people took up the offer from various countries in the Americas, it was not until Haile Selassie’s state visit to Jamaica in 1966 that Rastafari began to organize repatriation efforts to Ethiopia (Bonacci 2012: 365). Rastafari saw the offer as the fulfilment of prophecy and therefore an invitation to repatriate (Bonacci 2013: 89). The repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia comprises less than 1000 members from all over the Caribbean, the USA, and Europe.²

Erin MacLeod’s work on Ethiopians’ perceptions of the repatriated Rastafari (2014) is important to scholarship that deals with return to Africa and has provided useful frameworks for my present study. MacLeod notes the conflicting ways in which Rastafari and Ethiopians understand what it means to be Ethiopian as a major source of misunderstanding between the two groups. She argues that “this disjuncture is based on different narratives of the postcolonial Rastafari and the noncolonial Ethiopian and how they come to communicate and dialogue with each other” (2014: 23). She also argues that ideologies related to Christianity, marijuana, and

² This estimation is based on what I was told by returnees in Ethiopia and is also supported by Bonacci (2015) and MacLeod (2014).

Haile Selassie are topics of contestation that are constantly negotiated between Ethiopians and repatriated Rastafari. She does the necessary work of highlighting the multiple narratives that Ethiopians reproduce about the repatriates, emphasizing how challenging it is for the repatriates to feel senses of belonging in Ethiopia.

The actual return to Ethiopia has been somewhat challenging for Rastafari, reflecting Casey's assertion that return movements often contain "elements of rupture, surprise, and perhaps, disillusionment (Casey 1993:294). The biggest challenges for repatriated Rastafari occurred during the *Derg* regime when the entire political structure in Ethiopia changed. In 1975, the *Derg* nationalized all land in Ethiopia (Marcus 1994: 192). This major change in land policy since the reign of Haile Selassie altered the original land grant offered by Haile Selassie and therefore significantly affected the experiences of Rastafari who returned in that they could neither own nor officially claim land. Another major challenge for repatriated Rastafari is that they are not acknowledged as citizens in the land they call Zion. No repatriated Rastafari is an Ethiopian citizen according to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MacLeod, 2014: 4).

Other challenges that returnees faced had to do with cultural differences and disappointments based on their expectations of the Promised Land. Offering insight into some of these early challenges, Bonacci presents the views of one returnee in "An Interview in Zion: The Life-History of a Jamaican Rastafarian in Shashemene, Ethiopia". In her own words, this perspective offered by Junior Dan "unveils the social experience of repatriation to Shashemene and life in Ethiopia in the past thirty years" (2011: 744). In the transcribed interview, Junior Dan describes his dreams of moving to Ethiopia as well as the challenges and disappointments he experienced when he arrived. Junior Dan, who moved in Shashemene from Jamaica in 1972, recounts his first impressions:

. . . because I was coming from a modern world I was actually expecting Ethiopia to have proper toilets and proper sanitary convenience and people being hygienic and all of that. The place not being so bushy. My expectation was a bigger one, like maybe it should be more developed then and people would be more clean in their appearance but it weren't so. However, all the people we had stayed with we start being so disgusted about them daily and one of the things that start confuse me is we can't talk even if I want to get sweet I haffi ask someone to buy it for me. I didn't know how to say nothing! Just like a dumb man. That's how they got to exploit my money, tell me prices which thing never cost (2011: 750)

Here we are. I can say I had good times and bad. But even the bad times I had I consider them not bad at all. In all pioneer work, people have to build spearhead for the rest of the spear that has to come through. Because that is our pioneers works. I can truly say that we were pioneers for everyone that come here now. I have no regrets being here (2011: 752-753).

In addition to these cultural differences, Rastafari are perceived by many Ethiopians with ambivalence (MacLeod 2014) and treated as minorities. One Ethiopian told me that he does not trust Rastafari in the country because they “use drugs”—a reflection of some assumptions that Ethiopians make and their misunderstandings of what marijuana is and what it means to Rastafari. Even Ethiopians with dreadlocks have told me that they face discrimination because of their hair. Some of these negative perceptions that Ethiopians hold are based on stereotypes and not necessarily through personal interaction with Rastafari.

Bonacci (2015), MacLeod (2014), and Niaah (2012) point out that despite the challenges faced by Rastafari in Ethiopia, Rastafari have made efforts to contribute to Ethiopian society and many are happy with their decision to repatriate. For example, MacLeod discusses how Rastafari participate in a water-harvesting project and other such ventures in Ethiopia as a means of contributing to society. She states that through these efforts, Rastafari are able to gain “cultural citizenship” even though legal citizenship is unattainable (2014). Jahlani Niaah maintains that the Rastafari in Ethiopia have played a significant role in spreading pan-African and liberation ideologies through reggae music in Ethiopia and Africa in general (Niaah 2012: 66-67).

Reggae music has indeed played a significant role in helping Ethiopians connect with regional and global cultures and markets because reggae has been a loud and consistent champion of Ethiopian culture and reggae commands a strong presence around the world. Rastafari music in general, therefore, deserves its own study in the process of repatriation—the task this project sets out to accomplish. Bonacci, who mentions the role of reggae in parts of her book, notes that “as Rastafarians embody a black international cultural identity, they appeal to many a young Ethiopian in search of meaning, culture and international connections. (Bonacci 2012: 371). Erin MacLeod devotes a section of a chapter in her book to discuss Ethiopian reggae artists who mobilize Rastafari tropes through their music to evoke style and, in some cases, align with Rastafari ideologies (2014). Mariette Bonnabesse’s unpublished master’s thesis examines “reggae repatriated” to Ethiopia (2010). She provides an account of the reggae scene in Addis Ababa in 2009 and shows how the practice of reggae in Ethiopia transforms the identities of Ethiopians and returnees.

A few days before I submitted this dissertation to my reading committee, one of my advisers found and forwarded to me an unpublished master’s thesis by Enrica Mattavelli that also examines the role of reggae music in Rastafari repatriation to Ethiopia (2014).³ Her research was based in Shashemene and, due to the brevity of her timeframe, she was unable to investigate music in Addis Ababa or Ethiopian reggae singers. My dissertation provides an in-depth investigation into the ways reggae music functions in the process of repatriation and resettlement. By investigating both returnee and Ethiopian reggae in Shashemene and Addis Ababa, I am able to discuss the broader contexts in which reggae operates in Ethiopia. As a musician, I present much of my findings through the lens of music because it was through

³ The author had uploaded the thesis to her academia.edu profile.

rehearsals and performances that I was able to understand the dynamics of reggae's productive nature in Ethiopia.

The Power and Practice of Rastafari Word-Sound: Framing the Study

As expressed in their philosophy of word, sound, and power, Rastafari believe that words and sounds (and therefore music) affect the physical and social world around them (Chude-Sokei 1997: 187). Related to this philosophy is the notion that humans live in and in relation to a “shitstem” (system, often referred to as Babylon) that must be exposed and opposed. Word-sound is often the Rastafari weapon of choice used to dismantle or “chant down” the Babylon system. Throughout this dissertation, I examine different ways that word-sound, as mobilized through human action, affect the systems that govern the processes of Rastafari repatriation. Anthropologist Sherry Ortner in her article “Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties” offers useful frameworks of “practice” for thinking about and analyzing how people enact, produce, reproduce, and challenge the system in which they are governed (Ortner 1984: 127). She describes the study of practice as the “study of all forms of human action, but from a particular—political—angle” (1984: 149). Music, as a form of human action is a “practice in which meanings are generated, manipulated, even ironised within certain limitations” (Stokes 1994: 4). I situate Rastafari conceptions of the efficacy of word-sound alongside theoretical frameworks of practice to analyze the processes involved in the transformation of Ethiopia into the Rastafari Promised Land.

The title of this dissertation, “Chanting up Zion” is directly related to the productive qualities and potential of sound and music. Ras Mweya Masimba explained to me that before a sound is uttered there must be a thought and “the thought is made manifest through the sound and therein lies its power” (Personal Interview 2016). John Homiak states, “in Rasta ontology, 'word-sound'

is power. Word-sounds, moreover, are conceptualized in a fundamentally African way as 'vibrations' which have the power to impact directly upon the material world” (Homiak 1995: 175). Rastafari, therefore, believe that through words, sounds, and music they are able to create their realities.

Through the social practice of music making, Rastafari are also actively involved in dismantling the “Babylon” systems of oppression that seek to prevent them from creating and living their ideal realities. The Rastafarian usage of the term Babylon describes

any system of ideas and institutions that constitutes a culture in which people are oppressed and alienated from “Jah” and the life-giving, self-affirming reality of Rastafari. In the Rasta’s conception of Babylon, the experience of forced captivity of Africans in the West parallels the Babylonian experience of the ancient Hebrews, and their own subjugation and downpression recall the Roman iron rule over its empire. Therefore, Rastas find the spirit of Babylon surviving as an oppressive force in twentieth-century political and economic systems and institutions in the West generally and in Jamaica specifically (Edmonds 1998: 25).

Along with viewing their history of “downpression”⁴ as connected to the plight of the ancient Hebrews, Rastafari also believe in the liberating power of God to punish the “downpressors” and restore Rastafari to their Promised Land.

The Rastafarian understandings of Babylon as an oppressive force that operates through ideologies and institutions is similar to Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony.” Raymond Williams views hegemony as the lived domination and subordination of particular classes as part of and relation to a whole social process (Williams 1977). There is a mutually constitutive element at work here in that the system is constantly directing the lives of individuals even as these individuals are constantly reproducing or challenging the system. Because a system should be “analyzed with the aim of revealing the sorts of binds it creates for actors [and] the sorts of

⁴ Rasta talk for oppression.

burdens it places upon them” (Ortner 1984: 152), it is important to examine the impact of the system on practice and the impact of practice on the system (ibid: 148). In this project, I therefore pay attention to the ways hegemonic systems are maintained, reproduced, and subverted through practices related to music and sound.

When Rastafari “chant down Babylon” they believe that elements of injustice and oppression are defeated by and through their music. The phrase “chant down Babylon”, although becoming well known through Bob Marley’s song “Chant Down Babylon”, is an old Rastafari phrase used long before reggae came into existence and biblically resonates with the fall of Jericho. (Cooper 1995: 121, Murrell 1998: 10). Murrell explains that Rastafari chant or beat down Babylon by

showing political dissonance and cultural resistance; developing a psychology of Blackness and somebodiness; exorcising demons of racism; rejecting bigotry, classism, and stereotypical ways of being and knowing that are partially encoded in Jamaican folklore; attacking social problems with the creation of a ‘big, big music,’ an art that is irresistible and coded with situation-changing messages (Murrell 1998, 10).

Reggae music and Rastafarian chants, as forms of direct action, become tools for Rastafari to engage counter hegemonic projects that ultimately lead to the downfall of Babylon (Partridge 2014: 226).

In addition to bringing about destruction, word-sound also has the power to build up or create. When the Jamaican reggae group the Abyssinians sang “There is a land far, far away, where there’s no night there’s only day” (1976), they were, through imagination and imagery, creating an alternative reality to Babylon in the form of an African place. Christopher Partridge, in discussing the symbolism of repatriation as manifest through reggae, argues that just as reggae is “able to chant down Babylon, so it is able to ‘chant up Zion,’ to raise African consciousness” (Partridge 2014: 226). Raising African consciousness through music is certainly an important means by which Rastafari have initiated and mobilized repatriation projects. In this dissertation, I

show how chanting up Zion involves not only raising and promoting African consciousness, but also involves the labor of reggae musicians who use music in strategic ways to produce or build their utopia.

The productive capacity of reggae music is an important theme that I explore throughout this project. Literary critic Louis Chude-Sokei has analyzed reggae's productive capacity—specifically the construction of the African diaspora—through the metaphor of an echo chamber (1999, 2008). Chude-Sokei attempts to account for the ways in which the echoes of Africa (that are “new world black cultures”) have now “bounced back” to Africa creating a complex scenario in terms of the ongoing production of the African diaspora (2008: 17). The echo chamber, he says, is the best way to grasp the concept of how the diaspora is produced and reproduced through time and space (ibid). For him, the echo chamber is “not just the machine-world of global capitalism, but also the metaphor of the diaspora as a process, as a technology of change in which reggae is not only a product but a productive mechanism” (2008: 39). I use his idea of reggae as a productive mechanism to discuss the ways in which various actors use reggae as a tool for different purposes that ultimately leads to the social construction of the Promised Land.⁵

One way that the Promised Land is constantly being constructed is through discourse. Critical discourse analysis “perceives discourse as a form of social practice or action, something people do to, or for, each other” (van Leeuwen 1993, McKerrell and Way 2017: 6). Like other forms of social practice, discourse is productive, though not always in ways intended by the actors. Central to critical discourse analysis is investigating the ways in which discourse interrogates, fuels, or subverts the distribution of power in a society. Linguist Norman Fairclough

⁵ I also would like to acknowledge that ethnomusicologist Morgan Luker, whose 2017 guest lecture on “Music as a Productive Force” at the University of Washington and our subsequent conversations, contributed significantly to my framework development.

has written extensively about the ways in which language contributes to the domination of some people by others largely through the mobilization of ideologies (2001: 2-3). Fairclough argues that humans are able to resist dominant ideologies by mobilizing counter discourses, but the “effectiveness of resistance and the realization of change depend on people developing a critical consciousness of domination and its modalities, rather than just experiencing them” (2001: 3). The Rastafari concept of word, sound, power is an acknowledgement that language is implicated in the distribution of power and is therefore a means of resistance. Because the Babylon system is “bolstered by the authority of the written word, articulate in English”, Rastafari have developed a language that reflects their ideologies and opposes the ways English enforces certain “downpressive” ideologies (Cooper 1995: 121). I am therefore looking at how Rastafari, who actively seek to gain consciousness of domination and its modalities, use word-sound to challenge these structures that seek to define for them personal concepts such as worth, home, and belonging.

Because all homelands and Promised Lands are imagined (Butler 2001: 205), Rastafari who have sought to return to Ethiopia find creative ways to imagine and create a place that befits the concept of Zion. Music—and the arts in general—are important to these efforts for a number of reasons. Firstly, music has played a major role in popularizing the Rastafari movement globally and is therefore tightly linked to the practices of Rastafari. Additionally, through music and the arts, Rastafari are able to not only conceptualize a reality, but bring it into being. Thomas Turino, who discusses music’s significance to social life, states that “musical experiences foreground the crucial interplay between the Possible and the Actual” (2008: 16). He goes on to state that the “arts are a realm where the impossible or nonexistent or the ideal is imagined and made possible, and new possibilities leading to new lived realities are brought into existence in perceivable

forms (ibid: 18). For Turino, musical experiences shared between people facilitate the creation of intimate relationships, helping people identify with each other. Repatriated Rastafari and Ethiopians experience these bonds during music making, which are the foundation for wider forms of interaction, identification, and understanding.

In Anthony Seeger's seminal work *Why Suyá Sing*, he notes that for the Suyá people in Brazil, singing was an integral part of social reproduction (Seeger 2004: 130). He further states that "ceremonies ordered production and through their performative nature were a way Suyá created and re-created their village and themselves" (Seeger 2004: 130). For Rastafari in Ethiopia, music activities and ceremonies are crucial to the creation and maintenance of their community.

Throughout this dissertation I show how different actors use music in ways that construct and challenge realities. Here, the question of what motivates human action is important. Sherry Ortner discusses motivation through the lenses of interest theory and strain theory. Interest theory assumes a certain amount of intentionality behind actions and is a limited framework because it assumes actors are always making intentional decisions and it does not account for ways humans react to stimuli (Ortner 1984: 151). Actors in strain theory, however, are "seen as experiencing the complexities of their situations and attempting to solve problems posed by those situations" (ibid). Because actors in strain theory are responding to issues that they face, strain theory places greater emphasis on the analysis of the system and how the system acts upon human lives (ibid). By acknowledging that human action is at times intentional and at other times a result of habits or in reaction to phenomena, I am able to analyze how various actors associated with the reggae scene in Ethiopia contribute to the production of the Rastafari Promised Land.

I therefore examine how Rastafari mobilize particular discourses through music that challenge and, in some cases, reproduce hegemonic systems in ways that create space for themselves in Ethiopia. I discuss how repatriated Rastafari use “song style as strategy” (Webster-Kogen 2014) to inscribe their community into the contested national narratives of Ethiopia. Additionally, I show how returnees, through sound projects, participate in the practice of space-making in Addis Ababa and Shashemene. I also examine the work of Ethiopian reggae musicians who engage in reggae production for different reasons and under different circumstances but whose actions shape the returnees’ realities as well. By combining Rastafari ideologies of Babylon and the power of word-sound with theories of practice, I am able to interrogate “actors’ motives and the kinds of projects they construct for dealing with their situations” (Ortner 1984: 152).

Rastafari Music

The Rastafari movement developed and grew in Kingston in the 1930s in an environment in which other spiritual movements with music traditions existed such as Revival and Kumina (Bilby 1999, Chevannes 2012: 17). Many Rastafari chants came from Revival songs whose lyrics were changed to reflect Rastafari ideology. Early Rastafari ceremonies were not accompanied by drums but by “hymns and choral chants, sometimes accompanied by a shaka, rhumba box, and scraper” (Bilby and Leib 2012: 258). With the forming of the Nyabinghi mansion in the 1940s, a drumming tradition emerged from the Buru and Kumina traditions that were practiced in West Kingston. Nyabinghi drumming involves a similar instrumentation to Burru, comprising a bass drum, a funde drum, and a high-pitched repeater drum (Bilby and Leib 2012). The bass and funde keep a steady rhythm while the repeater player improvises. The

transcription in Figure 0.2 shows the basic ways the three Nyabinghi drum patterns together form the Nyabinghi rhythm.

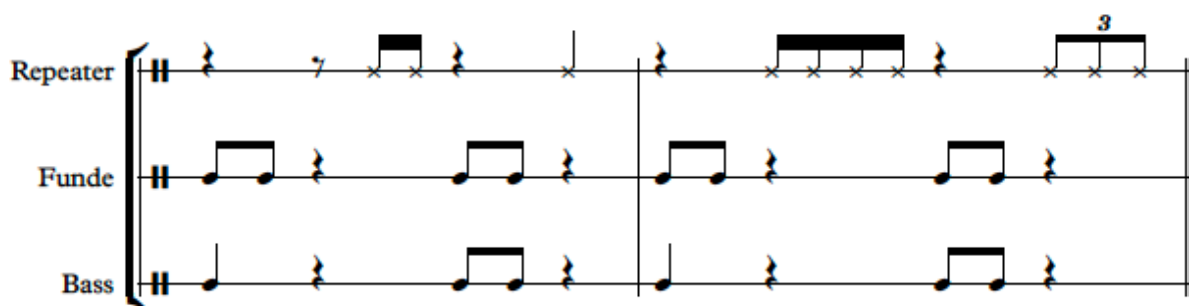


Figure 0.2: Author's transcription of basic Nyabinghi drum rhythms.

Drumming and chanting were the main music forms associated with Rastafari until in 1968 Vernon Carrington (Prophet Gad) founded the Twelve Tribes of Israel organization and initiated a lasting bond between Rastafari and reggae music. Rastafari were always involved in Jamaican popular music to certain degrees but the connection became stronger when Prophet Gad, a singer himself, encouraged Rastafari to use popular music to spread their message.

Michael Barnett writes:

The Twelve Tribes of Israel Mansion embraced reggae music wholeheartedly as an intrinsic part of the Rastafari life and committed themselves to a once-monthly ritualistic reggae dance. Rastafari players, singers, musicians, and artists were attracted to this mansion, which nurtured and actively encouraged budding musicians and singers in their artistry. In contrast to other mansions, this mansion became a virtual reggae factory, shaping and molding new reggae artists for the reggae industry. Notable Twelve Tribe Rastafari artists were Bob Marley, Dennis Brown, Freddie McGregor, Rita Marley, Judy Mowatt, Fred Locks, and the band Israel Vibration. (2012: 276-277).

Because so many prominent reggae artists in the 1970s belonged to the Twelve Tribes of Israel mansion and publically performed their faith, reggae music became the main vehicle for popularizing the Rastafari movement (Barnett 2010, Rommen 2006, Savishinsky 1994).

Reggae music's genesis is rooted in the sound system phenomenon of the 1950s in Kingston, Jamaica. In the late 1950s, Jamaicans began recording cover versions of American R&B songs to be played on large sound system speakers at dance halls (Manuel and Bilby 2006). By the early 1960s, the off-beat piano rhythms became more emphasized by horn sections and the swing feel was replaced by more straight attacks. Ray Hitchins also notes that "emphasized low frequency is a sonic characteristic that became synonymous with the production of Jamaican popular music during the 1960s" (2013: 30), what others call "bass culture" (Bradley 2000). The Kingston recording studios brought together musicians experienced in different music forms from mento to jazz. Many of these musicians were also exposed to Nyabingi drumming traditions, gospel music, Revival music and other traditions. Out of stiff competition to create new and fresh sounds, and from a desire to create local-sounding musics that could appeal to the masses, the 1960s saw a surge in creativity. Musicians, arrangers, and engineers experimented with different instruments, sounds, and production techniques. By the late 1960s ska and rocksteady music settled into the form now known as reggae.

Pinning down essences of reggae music can sometimes be difficult because of the different styles of reggae. Most scholars and musicians agree that the one drop feel is one of the main elements that characterizes reggae. The one drop is so called because the "bass drum drops the downbeats, sounding only on beat three" (Manuel and Bilby 2016: 192). In other words, beat one of each measure is dropped. I have also heard musicians say that it is called one drop because the bass drum only drops once in each bar. Not all reggae songs, however, feature articulation of the one drop in the bass drum. In some reggae songs, the one drop feel is articulated in the snare or other instruments. Musicians with whom I worked, for instance, distinguished between the one drop rhythm (as heard in Bob Marley's "One Drop"), the steppers

rhythm (as heard in Bob Marley's "Iron Lion Zion"), and the "poof paf" (as heard in Chronixx's "Here Comes Trouble"). In each of these styles the accent on beat three is still articulated but not always by the bass drum.

The offbeat patterns in the guitar and keyboards that began in ska carried over into reggae and are sometimes doubled. Musicians have a variety of terms for these patterns such as skank, chop, or bang. Ray Hitchens discusses how the term "sticky" was used to indicate how to play these off-beat patterns. "The execution of the stroke is slightly delayed, as if stuck to the backbeat of the measure and the process of pulling the stroke away from the beat creates a delay in the timing. However, the term also implies a particular attitude in the performance, which I interpret as being different to merely playing 'late' or 'behind the beat'" (Hitchens 2013: 35). The organ bubble is also considered by many as a central component of reggae music (ibid: 32). The "bubble" refers to a rhythmic pattern that involves alternating between the right and left hand on the keyboard and helps to thicken the texture.

The transcription in Figure 0.3 shows the composite of rhythms that together constitute a basic reggae groove. It should be noted that this transcription does not attempt to depict the exact way in which the music would be played. The rhythms are sometimes executed in a laid-back or almost-swung manner and each musician improvises rhythms throughout a given song.



Figure 0.3: Author’s transcription of basic reggae groove heard in Bob Marley’s “One Drop”.

Ray Hitchins asserts that “the spontaneous nature of Jamaican popular music influences, its interpretation, as well as its creation, ultimately require an understanding of core local values and is generally described in terms of ‘feel’, ‘groove’ or ‘vibe’” (2013: 36). The feel is such an important element in reggae music and yet describing exactly what it is or how to achieve it can be quite difficult. “Feel” can encompass “what notes are chosen, how they are played, and where they are placed by a musician” (Washbourne 1998: 161). Feel can also refer to the essences of larger scale structures and how parts interact with each other throughout a song, what Shannon Dudley refers to as “interactive rhythmic feel” (1996). In reggae, feel can also take on a mystical quality whereby musical expression emerges from an attitude or mindset (Hitchins 2013). Many Rastafarians liken the reggae feel to the heartbeat for instance (Bilby 2010).

In reggae music, different rhythmic patterns and accents come together in ways that do not always line up with each other to form a groove. Olly Wilson notes that this type of rhythmic

contrast is a strong feature of West African and African American music (1999). The slight out-of-syncness that occurs, what Charles Keil calls “participatory discrepancies” (1987), is what pushes the music to groove. For reggae to “feel right”, rhythms must be executed in a delayed manner with a certain laid-back attitude (Hitchins 2013: 35). Other terms used by Jamaicans to describe how reggae should be played include “lock in” and “siddung”. Hitchins explains that “locking in” is a process in which musicians of the rhythm section adjust their respective playing attitude to establish the desired rhythmic groove with each other. The term “sidung” (sit down) describes how the “rhythm section solidifies the rhythmic interpretation” (2013: 36).

Within the reggae genre is a sub-genre known as roots reggae that developed in the 1970s (Manuel and Bilby 2006: 191). The term “roots” came to refer to the “downtown ghetto experience of suffering and struggle” as well as the “African sources of Jamaican culture” (ibid 2006: 192). Roots reggae, considered by many Rastafari to be the most authentic style of reggae, is mainly categorized by conscious themes in the lyrics—messages related to Rastafari ideology, social justice, and pan-Africanist views. Most songs labelled as roots reggae sound quite similar to other reggae songs that evoke themes of love, partying, or the everyday but sometimes the inclusion of Nyabinghi drumming in roots reggae gives the song a more “rootsy” feel and sound. Rastafari believe that the combination of “rootsy” sounds with conscious lyrics contributes to the potency of their word-sound. Partridge further explains that the “understanding of roots reggae as sacred energy is rooted in the Rastafarian understanding of the supernatural efficacy of the spoken word and sound—understood to be a manifestation of divine presence with the power to create and destroy” (Partridge 2014: 226). Roots reggae is therefore at the heart of the discussions offered throughout this dissertation.

Although not all reggae artists were Rastafari and not all Rastafari participated in reggae, the 1970s solidified a certain connection between reggae and Rastafari that cannot be denied. Sarah Daynes notes that reggae and Rastafari can (and should) be studied together and independently (2010: 21). She argues that the relationship between Rastafari and reggae can be thought of as an “elective affinity” (ibid: 22). The meeting point between reggae and Rastafari, she argues, has come from a “special attraction” and “has produced such a complex relationship that it has become difficult to say which cultural form has influenced the other first, or most” (ibid: 23-24). Indeed, reggae music has brought Rastafari to the world even as the Rastafari image associated with reggae has contributed to reggae’s global popularity.

Timothy Rommen notes, however, that with the globalization of reggae music, its associations with Rastafari spiritual practices become less salient in different contexts (2006: 240). Thinking of the relationship between Rastafari and reggae as an elective affinity is a useful way for understanding how reggae signifies Rastafari but also how non-Rastafari reggae singers can use reggae to mobilize meanings that are distant from Rastafari. Rommen discusses this ability to distance oneself from unwanted meanings in music as a “negotiation of proximity” (2006). Throughout the dissertation I highlight the ways in which repatriated Rastafari and Ethiopians negotiate their proximity to each other to demonstrate how music is used as a marker of identity and is therefore always already political. Repatriated Rastafari in Ethiopia work to establish and maintain a strong connection between reggae and the Rastafari movement to draw attention to themselves and their mission. As a result, Ethiopians who embrace or perform reggae need to also negotiate a cultural and ideological proximity to the Rastafari community in Ethiopia.

Methods

My research methods largely comprise participation and observation, interviews and “reasonings”,⁶ and semiotics-based music analysis. Ethnomusicologists have maintained that focusing on performative aspects of culture and engaging music and individuals through substantive participation and observation increases the value of fieldwork for cultural understanding (Cooley and Barz 2008: 5). Following Jeff Todd Titon, I approach ethnomusicological fieldwork as a process of "knowing people making music" (Titon 2008). This framework has allowed me to analyze musical ways of being that reveal aspects of human interaction, thought, and resistance that are not always expressed through everyday speech and behavior while experiencing the productive nature of music first hand.

I stayed in Ethiopia for ten months between October 2015 and August 2016 and then I visited for one month in July 2017. The majority of time was spent in Addis Ababa with numerous visits to Shashemene. I carried my steelpan to Ethiopia so that I could perform with different bands. the steelpan, an instrument from Trinidad and Tobago, is not necessarily a typical instrument used in reggae but it is recognized as a Caribbean instrument and was welcomed by the bands in which I played. Because there is only one other steelpan player in Ethiopia (he lives in Shashemene), I was invited to perform in different bands because they wanted to have this unique sound as part of their performances. This not only allowed me to help bring attention to their band but it also served as a good research tool to get behind the scenes in rehearsals and backstage at concerts. Although I mainly performed with two repatriate-led bands, I also was able to spend time in rehearsals and performances with Ethiopian bands and musicians. By participating in these different environments, I was able to undertake an ethnography of

⁶ Rastafari mode of discussion in which each participant offers a word-sound or opinion about the subject being discussed.

micropractices—a “study of musicians as individual actors operating within existing cultural configurations and building new bridges between these configurations” (Brinner 2009: 12). I paid keen attention to the micropractices of musicians in rehearsals as they composed, learned, and taught songs. I also noted the ways musicians in these spaces interacted socially with each other. This ethnography of micropractices helped me to analyze the ways musicians in Ethiopia impact their surroundings from the small to large scales.

Interpreting Data

In my search for meaning in the interviews, ceremonies, concerts, informal gatherings, and other data I collected, I employ Geertz’s use of the “thick description” which he considers the “object of ethnography” (1973: 7). This method involves seeking out meanings behind actions, words, modes of dress, and other phenomena, as opposed to merely describing the phenomena. Geertz argues that this method is largely interpretive and also microscopic. Cultural analysis, he posits, is “guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses” (1973: 20). I took detailed field notes based on my observations and have used these in addition to interviews and personal experiences to inform my guesses.

A tool that I have found helpful in assessing meanings in music is Turino’s use of Peircean semiotics (Turino 1999, 2008, 2014). Turino notes that “every musical sound, performance or dance movement, and contextual feature that affects an actual perceiver is a sign, and every perceiver is affected by signs in relation to his or her own personal history of experience, which is at once a partially unique but largely shared social experience” (2014: 188). These signs are linked to “objects” through iconic, indexical, and symbolic relationships. An example of a musical icon might be the sound of a Nyabinghi bass drum that sounds like

thunder. The sign is the sound produced by the drum and the object is thunder. An indexical interpretation could involve a Rastafari associating the sound of the bass drum with “judgement” from heaven because of biblical associations, or someone who hears drums and imagines Africa because of the many drumming traditions on the continent. A symbol might be the words “everfirsting fya bun down Babylon”⁷ written on the side of the drum that shows that the drum symbolizes judgement on Babylon. Turino notes that the “affective potential of signs is highly dependent on the manner in which the sign and object are linked” (Turino 1999: 228). As a researcher, I use this semiotic approach to understand how humans in different scenarios interpret signs in relation to particular objects and also how humans use signs intentionally to signify particular objects for particular reasons.

Returnee Bands with whom I performed

During my ethnographic research period I rehearsed and performed with Ethiopian and Rastafari reggae musicians and observed how and why they create music. Within rehearsal spaces, backstage and on stage I observed how Ethiopians and Rastafarians interacted and negotiated conflicting ideologies and cultures. By participating in performance with Ethiopians and Rastafarians I was able to (as a Jamaican) experience the challenges faced by Rastafarians in adapting to Ethiopian musical elements. Through this process of participation, I gained insight into strategies that repatriated Rastafarians use to engage their Ethiopian audiences and assert their presence.

I mainly performed with two bands during my fieldwork in Ethiopia. Both were led by repatriates but included Ethiopian musicians. As a result, much of my observations are linked to the rehearsals and performances I participated in with these bands. By examining the choices

⁷ “Everlasting fire, burn down Babylon”. Strikingly, this was written on a Nyabinghi bass drum in Shashemene.

individual performers make in “moving about the spaces between the system and its multiple environments” (Erlmann 1996: 474), I am able to better understand the performers’ “actions and the formation of their individual capabilities and proclivities as musicians against the various group affiliations and identities with which they grapple” (Brinner 2009: 33).

Ras Kawintseb Kidane Mihert and the Aeitofrika Band was the first band I performed with in Addis Ababa. The leader, Ras Kawintseb, is originally from Trinidad and Tobago and moved to Ethiopia in 1997. He is a guitarist and singer and follows the Nyabinghi lifestyle. He mandates that band members do not drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes at rehearsals and performances and tries to ensure that meat is not consumed when the band shares meals. His devotion to the works and teachings of Haile Selassie is evident in all aspects of his life. He speaks of Haile Selassie both on and off the stage and is often quite willing to engage Ethiopians in discussions (in English or Amharic) on the divinity of their emperor. Although viewed as an elder Rastafari (his grey locks reveal his many years) his highly energetic performance skills show that he is full of vitality. During my time with this band his keyboardist, rhythm guitarist, and bassist were Ethiopians, while his drummer, Jahnoch was a repatriated Rastafari from the Caribbean island of Bonaire.

Sydney Salmon and the Imperial Majestic Band is the other band with which I performed. Sydney formed this band soon after arriving in Ethiopia in 2001 from core members of the Twelve Tribes of Israel Shashemene house. Ma’an Judah from the Phillipines and the USA and Alton Ricketts from Jamaica and the UK, who play keyboard and drums respectively, have been a part of this band since its founding. Other main members include Nicola Masalini from Italy and Helen Legasse from Ethiopia. Over the years the band has had rotating Ethiopian musicians performing with them. The band’s press kit describes the band as becoming “home to

many musicians and artists who were seeking to ‘Live the Life and Meet the people’ as a musician in the motherland.” Among other notable performances, the band is the “first and only band to perform at the Jubilee Palace of H.I.M Emperor Haile Selassie the Ist, backing reggae celebrities such as Rita Marley, Bob Andy together with Sydney Salmon during the Bob Marley-Africa Unite Celebrations in 2005.” This band has, indeed, gained wide popularity in Addis Ababa and continues to appear in major events in the capital city.

Positionality

While this research is based on interviews and observations, it is important to note that my identity as researcher and participant impacted the kinds of spaces to which I was able to gain access, the types of interviews I could do, and the ways I interpret data. I am a Jamaican of mixed ancestry with light skin—what many Jamaicans call brown—and I am not a Rastafari. It was somewhat difficult for some Ethiopians to accept that I was from Jamaica, their first question being “where is your hair?” For Ethiopians, I was not the same kind of Jamaican to which they were accustomed. In cases where Ethiopians had questions or comments about Rastafari that they were hesitant to ask or say to members of the repatriated community, they felt somewhat comfortable directing those questions and comments to me knowing that I would not be offended. Although I was able to negotiate taxi prices and shop at local markets using Amharic, my knowledge of the language is limited so all of my interviews were conducted in English. Ethiopian musicians and singers in Addis Ababa were also comfortable communicating with me in English. The focus of this research is on the repatriated community and most, if not all, of them speak English.

I made it clear to Rastafari with whom I worked that I did not identify as Rastafari but was interested in understanding the role of music in the process of repatriation. I was welcomed

by the repatriated community especially because I represented a middle class (uptown), brown sector of Jamaica who showed enough interest to make it all the way to Ethiopia to meet with those who had made the choice to settle there. This interest on my part caused a few Rastafari to challenge my assertion that I am not Rastafari believing that something mystical brought me to the country. While I did not argue with that, the fact is that I do not belong to any Rastafari mansion/organization, nor do I intentionally live a lifestyle associated with Rastafari. This detachment from the movement allowed me some distance from the research that gave me a certain degree of objectivity. My Jamaican identity helped me to gain access to social groups and individuals. In some cases, people were interested in talking to me since I had come to Ethiopia fresh from Jamaica and could provide news and information about the state of affairs in Jamaica. Being a performing musician also helped me to meet people, gave me access to backstage areas, and rehearsal spaces in which I was able to observe behind-the-scenes activities. The content of this dissertation, therefore, is largely shaped by and through my interactions with people in Ethiopia and the ways I perceived situations.

Chapter Outline

In chapters one through three, I focus on Rastafari who use music strategically to imagine and create the Promised Land in different ways. In chapter one, I employ a multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the ways that Rastafari have used music to mobilize Afrocentric discourses in response to dominant Eurocentric ideologies while constructing utopian versions of Africa. This chapter sets the tone for understanding how music operates as a productive mechanism by highlighting what is being produced through music, who are the agents, and how what is produced acts on returnees in Ethiopia. In chapter two, I show how returnees' in Ethiopia make musical decisions that are shaped by their experiences in Ethiopia as well as strategic

decisions aimed at shaping their experience in Ethiopia. In chapter three I continue to look at musical strategies that returnees implement but with a focus on how space factors into the equation. I show that returnees combine music with spatial practices to inscribe their presence into the land and soundscapes but also to provide venues where they can interact with Ethiopians.

In Chapters four and five, I highlight the extent to which Ethiopians participate in the construction of the Rastafari Promised Land. Chapter four examines Ethiopians who create reggae music noting that they, too, are contributing to the creation of the Rastafari Promised Land even as they generate their own meanings and associations with reggae music through their negotiation of proximity to Rastafari. In chapter five I detail how returnees use reggae music to collaborate with Ethiopians and to be seen and heard collaborating with Ethiopians. This is part of a larger strategy that returnees implement to get Ethiopians to work with them in bigger developmental projects that will benefit Ethiopia and Africa on a whole. I conclude by offering thoughts on the future for the repatriated community in Ethiopia and the ways music can continue to help them in their mission.

Chapter 1

Songs about Zion: Reggae as Discourse and Discourses on Reggae

As a child growing up in Jamaica, I heard the Abyssinian's' song "Satta Massagana" from time to time. It was an unusual song for reggae in that it made use of the minor mode and had rich vocal harmonies that stood out sharply in the song's texture. The lyrics described a land that was far away, a mythical land in which peace and justice reigned. The language sounded exotic. Was it even a real language? And if so, how did Rastas know it? I thought Satta Massagana was the name of the place to which they were referring. It did not occur to me at the time that the singers were referencing Ethiopia, the land of Haile Selassie, "land of origins," "birthplace of civilization." As far as I knew, Ethiopia was the desolate land that we were always praying for in the Roman Catholic school I attended in Kingston. It never occurred to me that the singers were referring to a real country that one could visit. I recall these thoughts here as a way to introduce a discussion of the ways in which Rastafari, through reggae music, have mobilized particular discourses on Africa that counter the Eurocentric ideologies that dominated Jamaica. In this chapter I discuss reggae and Rastafari songs that center on or, are related to, Africa/Ethiopia⁸ and repatriation to this place.

Following van Leeuwen's assertion that music can and should be analyzed as discourse (2012), I examine a particular body of Jamaican popular songs about repatriation to Africa-Ethiopia in order to demonstrate how reggae musicians and singers (re)produce certain discourses that impact the processes of repatriation while challenging hegemonic ideologies mobilized through slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. McKerrell and Way argue that

⁸ I use the term "Africa/Ethiopia" to account for the ways Rastafari conflate Africa with Ethiopia.

multimodal discourse analysis is a useful method for revealing how “various semiotic resources, or modes, play a role in articulating ideological discourse” in which a mode is defined as a “socially agreed channel of communication” (2017:7). Building on the notion that “much of music’s power lies in its use as multimodal communication” (McKerrell and Way 2017: 8), I use multimodal discourse analysis to interrogate meanings generated by and through a body of repertoire that deals with Africa/Ethiopia and return. I examine song lyrics, rhythms, melodies, as well as visual performance cues and album covers. These communicative modes are important discursive elements that connect reggae with Ethiopia. Christopher Small’s concept of “musicking” (1998) is a useful way to understand that these are not “extra musical” activities but are intimately part of, and central to how music is produced and experienced. By engaging in this type of analysis, I show that the Rastafari word-sound concept has far reaching potential and that its power lies not only in the words that are uttered but also in the types of sounds that are produced.

I engage in multimodal discourse analysis with the broader aim of understanding the role these songs play in encouraging repatriation and how they affect repatriated Rastafari experiences in Ethiopia. Central to a multimodal discourse analysis, like critical discourse analysis, are the ways in which human actors negotiate power differentials through discourse. I argue that the discourse that reggae musicians and singers produce through these songs challenges dominant Eurocentric ideologies by promoting positive images of Africa. The ways singers and musicians represent Africa, however, are usually based on their imaginations and although challenging some problematic ideologies, also participate in exoticizing the continent. I conclude by suggesting that although songs about repatriation have not been dominant factors that influenced people to physically repatriate, the meanings generated by and through these

songs (and the actors who contribute to these meanings) produce narratives of “love for Ethiopia and Africa” that in the long run make Ethiopians more accepting of the Rastafari presence in Ethiopia.

Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and Music

In order to contextualize reggae songs about repatriation to Africa, it is first important to understand how descendants of enslaved Africans in the West have used music to respond to the trauma of the transatlantic slave trade and carve out new identities that reflect and speak to the rupture they endured. Various music forms that were developed in the West but traceable to Africa have played a significant role in the creation of black and pan-Africanist movements and senses of community over hundreds of years. The corpus of black musics that engage black and African identity politics is diverse even as there are commonalities between genres. Paul Gilroy tries to make sense of black cultural expressive forms that, although perhaps traceable to a distant physical location in Africa, have been changed through time and displacement and take on new meanings and aesthetics (1991: 111). Observing differences in black culture and music and following Leroi Jones’s ideas, Gilroy uses the term “changing same” to account for this phenomenon in the music of black expressive cultures (1991: 126). Gilroy points out that there is no fixed essence of African music and culture, yet there are unifying elements among dispersed Africans that can be identified in the “breaks and interruptions” experienced by Africans through the slave trade (Ibid). Reggae music therefore belongs to a body of African-influenced musics in the West that speaks to and from Gilroy’s concept of the black Atlantic.

Louis Chude-Sokei, who is influenced by Gilroy, suggests that the black diaspora and modern black nationalisms are constructed primarily through sound (Chude-Sokei 1997:187). He goes on to assert that because sound cannot be contained in one nation, area, or ideology of

liberation, the very mechanisms of sound are necessarily diasporan (Ibid). Following Gilroy, he engages with and provides an alternative framework to the work of Benedict Anderson who theorizes the concept of the nation as an “imagined community” constructed out of the rise of literacy and print media among other phenomena. Chude-Sokei asserts that within populations of the black diaspora, national and cultural belonging is articulated in and disseminated by the “sound/culture nexus: that discursive space where Africa ceaselessly extends and invents itself in an epistemological matrix coded not in words but in sound” (1994: 80). In other words, senses of belonging to an African diaspora or black nation are engendered, mobilized, and experienced not through literary media but through sound. These ideas of community/nation building through sound are useful for thinking about how reggae participates in the construction of a certain kind of African diaspora community, especially through the Rastafari word-sound philosophy.

Shana Redmond shows how songs that are connected to senses of black nationalism—what she calls “Black anthems”—construct a “sound franchise” that mobilizes black identities in diaspora and that the analysis of these anthems “expands our understanding of how and why diaspora was a formative conceptual and political framework of modern Black identity” (2014: 5). Giulia Bonacci, who has shown the extent to which Ethiopianism has mobilized African communities in the Americas (2012), also examines the role of anthems (2014). She focuses on the multiple versions of the Universal Ethiopian Anthem and the social roles of the people who produced these versions and the various meanings associated with them. These versions were produced and performed by the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF), and the Rastafari communities in Jamaica. She suggests that music is an important element of Ethiopianism and music played a significant role in uniting persons in an Ethiopian/Black/African national identity (2014: 1057). Bonacci also relies on Gilroy’s

concept of the changing same to show that although the anthem was meant to be universal (representing all blacks), the different versions point to differences in ideologies, experiences, and musical aesthetics (2014: 1078). These authors all show that music plays a role in shaping and facilitating multiple versions of African diaspora consciousness and pan-African identity. The images of Africa imagined and created in and through musics such as reggae are, therefore, also based on these differences in ideologies, experiences, and musical aesthetics.

US jazz musicians have also sought to mobilize connections to Africa through sound. Norman Weinstein's work, *A Night in Tunisia: Imaginings of Africa in Jazz*, is an in-depth foray into the ways in which jazz artists have created and imagined themes of Africa in their music (1992). He specifically analyzes how "jazz musicians who recognize their African connection create music to acknowledge their profound artistic debt to Africa, how they celebrate one of their chief wellsprings of musical inspiration" (1992: 3). The African origins of jazz melodies, harmonies, and rhythmic structures, he writes, is of less consequence to him than what a "jazz musician does who assumes the authenticity of his or her African connection" (ibid). He notes that "whatever the source of African inspiration, musicians involved with Africa have had to develop imaginative visions of Africa in contradistinction to the African visions sustained by colonizers, businessmen, evangelicals, and others who brought to their actual or imagined African encounters various racist stereotypes" (1992: 9). He identifies these projects as part of an "Afrocentric imagination" that operates as a "counter-racist imagination." This imagination, he argues, has been informed by the ideas and writings of intellectuals such as W.E.B DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Sterling Brown, Amiri Baraka, and others (1992: 11). These figures have significantly influenced musicians all over the black Atlantic and inspired these projects of "Afrocentric imaginations" through sound—projects

that actively seek to change and challenge discourses that focus on Europe as the center of the world.

As I will demonstrate further, there are similarities between the thought processes of jazz musicians in the US and Jamaican popular musicians even though their ideas were manifested in different ways. The similarities and differences in thought and approach represent the changing-same of African diasporic music traditions but also point to the ways in which these music traditions influence each other. The Afrocentric ideologies mobilized through jazz and other forms of North American musics reached the ears of Jamaican musicians and further inspired Rastafari to sing about Africa and return.

Reggae Music as Discourse on Africa/Ethiopia, and Repatriation

Jamaican popular music has a rich history of reflecting and shaping local sociopolitical trajectories as well as connecting with wider discourses on the black Atlantic (Stolzf 2000, Niaah 2010, Daynes 2004, Bilby, Chude-Sokei 2011). I am most concerned with the ways reggae participates in discourses on Africa/Ethiopia, repatriation, desires for elsewhere, and the harsh socioeconomic realities of Jamaica. Evoked in these discourses are images of Africa that have impacted global perceptions of the continent, and, more specific to my project, processes of physical repatriation to Ethiopia. Because I am examining the ways in which people imagine, articulate, and construct an idealized place, I have found it useful to frame this discussion in terms of constructing “senses of”. Ethnomusicologist Christina Sunardi states that the usefulness of the phrase “senses of” lies in that it indicates multiple ways that individuals produce and perceive constructs such as history, place, and identity (2010). Although place is a mappable phenomenon, humans tend to insert their own ideas of how a place can or does function that aligns with their own worldviews—and music is often used as a tool. Sara Cohen asserts, for

instance, that “Zionism and other political movements have used music to reify particular places in the pursuit of common goals so that those places come to embody the future and alternative ways of living” (1998: 277) . Sheila Whiteley states that part of music’s role in facilitating collective senses of identity and community is “achieved by spiritually transporting them to a common place—an imagined ‘spiritual’ homeland” (2004: 4). Rastafari have long used music to imagine and evoke senses of Africa/Ethiopia and reify this place as a homeland.

The construction of diaspora identities is linked to the construction of the homeland and reggae and Rastafari music in particular command a prominent place in the global sound projects that produce and reproduce diaspora identities that connect to blackness and Africanness (Chude-Sokei 1999, Gilroy 1992, Johnson 2015, Veal 2010, Daynes 2004, 2010). Sociologist Sarah Daynes focuses on the construction of the African diaspora as a multidimensional space of memory and observes the role played by reggae music in this construction (Daynes 2004: 25). Her analyses is based on a corpus of reggae songs from the 1970s to the 1990s as well as field work in the “British West Indies” and Great Britain in the late 1990s (2004: 26). She suggests that there are three core aspects to reggae’s construction of the African diaspora: Reggae transmits a collective memory considered essential to the very survival of the group, it voices a discourse of and on the diaspora, and it traces the space and movements of the diaspora (2004: 37). Her work highlights the ways in which reggae music constructs a diaspora that is both linked to Africa and to the experiences of being marginalized as black people. This is evident in a song such as Bob Marley’s “Buffalo Soldier” in which he sings “Stolen from Africa, brought to America, fighting on arrival, fighting for survival.” Another example is of Peter Tosh’s 1977 “African” in which he sings “don’t care where you come from, as long as you’re a black man you’re an African.” Tosh lists some countries in the Caribbean and links nationalities

with Africanness even though these Caribbean nations comprise people from different continental backgrounds. In this song, he challenges such concepts as creolization and multiculturalism by reifying the significant African-derived cultures of the Caribbean. Together these two songs link black bodies with Africa through descent (blackness), through shared experiences (the transatlantic slave trade), and through the dominant African ways of being in the Caribbean. By reproducing discourses on embodied Africanness, reggae singers emphasized connections to Africa that justify a certain degree of belonging to the continent and unbelonging to Jamaica, the West, Babylon.

Desires for Elsewhere

Having gained consciousness of being in exile from an African home, Rastafari began to see Jamaica as Babylon—not just as a place of exile but as place in which systems of oppression thrived. Jamaica’s independence from Great Britain in 1962 did little to reassure Rastafari in Jamaica that justice would prevail for all people in the country. Nettleford states that the “coming of independence in 1962 only served to intensify the activist Rastafarian belief that Jamaican nationalism had no relevance to their existence” (Nettleford 1970: 60). It is interesting that after 1962, a repertoire of nationalist songs emerged in Jamaica along with a body of songs that expressed a desire for elsewhere. Michael Veal states:

It was during Michael Manley’s attempt at democratic socialism in Jamaica of the 1970s, that a mood of cultural nationalism was energized by Castro’s Cuba, the African American civil rights struggle, African nationalism, and the religious vision of Rastafari. All of these stimulated, in varying ways, a reevaluation of African cultural roots. Most literally, Africa was deemed by Rastas to be the site of inevitable repatriation for a people in exile—and considering the economic hardship, strife, and violence that accompanied Jamaica’s attempts at social change, it was not surprising that even at the height of cultural pride, many still wished for another place to call home (Veal 2007: 211).

While this “other place” has been represented as Africa in many reggae songs, scholars have also interpreted this place as an “elsewhere” (Daynes 2004, Chude-Sockei 1997).

Sarah Daynes notes that the “elsewhere” described in reggae comprises “various levels of identification which continuously mix and overlay each other; it is idealized, imagined, fantasized, conceptualized, and intimately experienced; it is a reinvented Africa.” (2004: 27). Although in many cases this “elsewhere” is portrayed as an “African” place, it is important to note other ways that “elsewhere” can be conceived within the Jamaican context. Rex Nettleford notes that Jamaicans had been migrating to various countries for decades before the Rastafari movement started in the 1930s and what the Rastafari did was to “substitute Ethiopia for the United Kingdom, the United States and all those other places to which Jamaicans have migrated since the late 19th century” (Nettleford 1970: 44). Chude-Sokei builds on Nettleford’s assertions stating that “Rastafari simply changed the pole of authenticity in a colonized psyche... they reversed the paradigm established by the colonialism in which Anglo-American culture was the pinnacle and replaced it with an explicitly romantic construction [of Africa] (Chude-Sokei 1997: 197). Reversing this colonial paradigm is a major aspect of Rastafari objectives and is not a small task due to the centuries of oppression meted out by the European colonizers in Jamaica.

Reggae music, as a groovy and appealing genre, is a means by and through which Rastafari package and mobilize this counter discourse. Although scholars have shown that reggae music itself comprises African music elements (Bilby 2006, Witmer 1984), reggae is also strongly “Western”. The use of tonal harmonies, phrases grouped in fours and twos, and structural forms similar to American popular music are examples of some of the ways reggae is part of a Western tradition (Witmer 1984). Reggae musicians and singers therefore are operating within a Western music system in order to challenge this system. Western elements appeal to

wide audiences, which helps their music to spread far and wide, while the more African-derived elements and themes force listeners to engage with Africa in digestible, bite-sized pieces. It is also important to note that Rastafari reggae musicians, in order to challenge the Babylon system, operate within the structures of global capitalism—and all the trappings of inequality that come with it—in order to sell their products. In these ways, reggae musicians both challenge and reproduce the structures that govern their realities. However, it must be noted that the fact that Rastafari, through reggae, have been able to produce sounds that the world cannot ignore is in itself a significant challenge to the structures that long sought to silence black and African voices. These sounds have reached the ears of Ethiopians and other Africans who are appreciative of the work that reggae musicians and Rastafari have done to promote Africa in a positive light. Rastafari who return to Ethiopia are therefore able to appeal to Ethiopians through these senses of solidarity.

Repertoire Analysis

Reggae musicians who align themselves with the Rastafari movement have long approached the composition and performance of reggae in such a way that reggae's connection to Rastafari is hard to miss. The songs themselves, though not conjuring up specific images of what Ethiopia the Promised Land looks like, include various signs that signify Ethiopia as the ideal place to live. Album art, stage performances, and musician interviews also include references to Ethiopia and are part of a larger project in which reggae is imbued with meaning from different angles.

Daynes highlights four meanings that Africa/Ethiopia holds for Rastafari that are generated through reggae music. First, Africa is a “spatial elsewhere”, a lost paradise, the land of origin and the land of God. Secondly, Africa is the original center from which the diaspora

scattered and is therefore considered home. Thirdly, Africa is “an alternative to the Western world, almost its antithesis. And fourthly, Africa represents the Promised Land, a temporal ‘elsewhere’ that holds the promise of the end of oppression” (2004: 28). Because Africa is both a spatial and temporal elsewhere she posits that, for Rastafari, Africa represents the place of utopia but “not exactly a ‘no place’ or a ‘no time,’ but a place and a time that cannot be reached in the present” (Daynes 2004: 29). Throughout my multimodal discourse analysis I show how songs reflect or reproduce these concepts articulated by Daynes .

Reggae music specialist Bruno Blum has created a discography of 125 Jamaican songs that reference repatriation to Africa between the years 1958 and 1983. Some of these songs refer to Africa, the Promised Land, Zion, or explicitly to Ethiopia. Bonacci has noted that there are certain years in which “back to Africa reggae” peaked in terms of number of songs released. These years include 1970, 1976, 1977, and 1978—close to the time of the Ethiopian revolution and the rise in popularity of Bob Marley and the Rastafari movement (Bonacci 2015: 228). The 1970s were also turbulent years in Jamaica politically, marked by increased violence and an economic downturn. Bonacci notes some important themes in the songs’ lyrics and titles that are related to the evocation of slavery contrasted with the “liberating representation of Africa and Ethiopia” (2015: 228). Bonacci shows that many songs that express a desire for repatriation include the themes of a departure by train and by boat. There are also numerous songs with strong biblical themes with references to Jerusalem, Zion, and the Promised Land that show the spiritual significance of return (or an anticipation of the afterlife). The theme of land, she describes, is evoked in terms of “a land of joy, a promised land, the Holy Land, the land of the judgement, the land of Ethiopia or the land of dream” (2015: 229)—similar to the categories of meaning put forth by Daynes (Africa as home, Promised Land, land of origin, the antithesis to

the West). The songs in this corpus as well as other more recent songs that I have encountered can be used as a starting point for understanding how Africa/Ethiopia has been imagined and constructed in the popular consciousness of Jamaicans and reggae fans throughout the globe.

I begin my discussion of these songs about Africa with an early calypso from Trinidad and Tobago to highlight that artists within the Caribbean have been engaging in discourses on Africa for many years before reggae was developed. Trinidadian calypso also heavily influenced Jamaican mento and Jamaican Calypso, and therefore Jamaican popular musicians. Trinidadian Calypsonian The Tiger released his song “Gold in Africa” in 1937. The song is a commentary on the Italian invasion into Ethiopia. The singer gives details of the story, showing Mussolini to be the villain coming into Ethiopia to steal the country’s wealth and destroy their infrastructure. This song does not encourage repatriation but it helped to place Ethiopia in the minds of Caribbean people in the 1930s through music. Tiger sings about Mussolini:

The man want to kill King Haile Selassie
To enslave his territory
They began to cry for food and water
In that burning desert of Africa.

We have diamond, ruby, and pearl
Platinum, silver, and even gold
I don’t know why the man making so much strife
I now believe he want Haile Selassie[‘s] wife.

The song is about a serious subject but Tiger slips humor in at the end, suggesting that Mussolini invaded Ethiopia just because he wanted Haile Selassie’s wife. Also describing Ethiopia as a burning dessert in Africa contributes to ideas about Africa as desolate, even as he describes Ethiopia as being rich with precious stones.

In 1958, Lord Lebby and the Jamaican Calypsonians released “Etheopia”, a song in which the singers express a longing for Ethiopia.

Come along everybody, come and hear what I have to say
'just listen and I will tell you what is the talk of the town today
In every corner you may walk you will see a group of people talk
They are not skylarking they are only talking about Ethiopia

Some say they want to leave Jamaica and go back to Africa
Some talk about Ethiopia and others Liberia
But no matter where I do not care for I know I must be there to get my share
Of all the riches and delicious dishes of Ethiopia

So you can tell me about Ethiopia, 'cause that's the place where I want to go
I keep dreaming of Ethiopia where the milk and honey flow
It is the land of liberty with crown and wine awaiting me
It is a wonder my heart keeps pander for Ethiopia

The song was composed by Everald Williams, who composed numerous Jamaican mento and calypso songs that reflected social issues in Jamaica (Daniel Neely, email correspondence). The lyrics explicitly state that there is a discourse in Jamaica surrounding going to Ethiopia or Liberia. His song therefore amplifies this discourse through its recording and distribution. Ethiopia is described as a land of milk and honey—analogous to the land that God promised the Israelites and their leader Moses in the Bible. The lyrics describe an idealized version of Ethiopia that is more aligned with the biblical writings on the Promised Land than with any mention of the reality of Ethiopia. This likely reflects the vagueness of the discourse in Jamaica at the time. For instance, the singer desires the delicious dishes of Ethiopia but does not name any. Although the instrumentation in the recording is more akin to mento music (banjo, hand drums, maracas), the song is labelled as “calypso” on the disc.

In 1959, Count Ossie and the Wareikas sang “Going Home to Zion Land”. The song has mainly one line of lyrics that are repeated over and over: “I’m going home, going home to Zion Land.” Oswald “Count Ossie” Williams was a Rastafari who is highly revered for his influence

on Jamaican musicians and Jamaican popular music by incorporating Nyabingi drumming styles into Jamaican popular music (Bilby 2010). He also invited musicians to his camp in East Kingston where Jamaica's top musicians learned about Rastafari beliefs and drumming traditions. Count Ossie's recorded songs contain strong themes related to Africa and repatriation. This song and later cover versions of it are included in Bruno Blum's discography on "back to Africa" music even though its lyrics do not mention Africa at all. Count Ossie's affiliation to Rastafari and pan-Africanist ideologies, I argue, imbues the song with meaning that allows audiences to perceive it as a desire to go to Africa—or at least a heavenly place that resembles Africa.

Numerous reggae songs that make up the canon of "repatriation reggae" mention a return to Zion, and not Africa specifically even though Zion is understood to have African qualities. Rex Nettleford notes that because there are overlaps between Rastafari and Revival practices in Jamaica, "Rastafarian withdrawal by Repatriation may be seen as a parallel to the revivalist's hope for life in the next world" (1970: 78). Bob Marley and the Wailers' 1973 song "Rastaman Chant" is perhaps a more explicit example of this. They sing "Fly away home to Zion, fly away home. One bright morning when my work is over I will fly away home." This melody and some of the words come from the hymn "I'll Fly Away" written by Albert E. Brumley in 1929 and later adapted by Revival groups in Jamaica.⁹ "I'll Fly Away" became a popular hymn in Southern Baptist churches in the United States and describes the journey to heaven after death. In Bob Marley and the Wailers' version, Zion is therefore somewhere (or sometime) between Africa and the heavenly afterlife.

⁹ I thank Kenneth Bilby for directing my attention to this hymn and its relationship to Revival music in Jamaica and Bob Marley and the Wailers' "Rastaman Chant."

In “Going Home to Zion Land,” the heavy use of African American and Afro Jamaican music elements also points to a focus on Africa, albeit an Africa or Africas constructed in exile. The Nyabinghi groove that drives the music forward is placed on beats two and four instead of one and three thereby emphasizing the backbeat in each measure. The sound of drums such as the Nyabinghi drums used here have become indexical signifiers of Africa through their historical connections to the continent and through centuries of associations between Africa, drumming, and rhythm (Agawu 2003, Chude-Sokei 2008). Each verse is structured on the 12 bar blues form with brass lines providing melodic interjections in empty spaces. The swinging brass lines are evidence of the influences of jazz on Jamaican musicians in the 1950s and 1960s. The call and response between leader and chorus is reminiscent of African American and Jamaican spirituals. This song therefore brings together lyrics of going to Zion with Jamaican and African American musical forms. The jazz and blues elements in the song highlight the extent to which Jamaican Rastafari musicians engaged elements of African American traditions.

In both “Going Home to Zion Land” and “Rastaman Chant”, the lyrics emphasize the agency of the singers: “I’m going home”, “I will fly away home.” They can be compared with the lyrics of the spiritual “swing low, sweet chariot. Coming for to carry me home” in which the singer must wait for another actor to carry out the action. In the two Rastafari songs about going home to Zion is the idea that black people are in control of their bodies and destinies.

The 1965 instrumental hit “Addis Ababa” composed by Don Drummond and performed by the Skatalites represents a homage to Ethiopia’s capital. The iconic ska sound is heard in the accented off beats in the brass and keyboard as well as in the walking bassline. What is different in this particular song is that the typical one drop rhythm played by the drummer in ska music is absent. In this song, the drummer, Lloyd Knibb, plays a syncopated rhythm that departs from the

typical ska drumming style. In numerous interviews, Knibb admitted that he learned the traditional burru drum patterns from Count Ossie and incorporated these rhythms into ska music (Kenneth Bilby, Personal Conversation 2016). Walker argues that “Addis Ababa” is one such song in which Knibb plays these burru rhythms (Walker 2005: 120). The incorporation of burru drum rhythms also highlights the ways in which Jamaican recording musicians were influenced by Rastafari ideology and musical practices. By bringing together drumming traditions that originate in west and central Africa with a song about Ethiopia, the group demonstrates that the desire for Ethiopia is inseparable from the desire for Africa in general. Again, there is little evidence that the musicians were concerned with representing Ethiopia accurately, they instead presented an idea of Ethiopia that really represented Africa on the whole.

In a presentation at the 2017 Global Reggae Conference in Kingston, musicologist Samuel Flynn argued that Drummond’s “Addis Ababa” evokes orientalist tropes through its “far East sound.” He showed that the composition “Addis Ababa,” like Drummond’s earlier composition “Confucius” is built on a minor chord (on the tonic) for the entire piece, which indexes senses of the Orient for Jamaican audiences. Michael Veal notes that the “Far Eastern” sound comprised “African and Asian-themed instrumentals” recorded by Don Drummond, Dizzy Moore, Jackie Mittoo, and Tommy McCook for Studio One and Treasure Isle in the 1960s (Veal 176). The interpretation of orientalist tropes in “Addis Ababa” further solidifies Daynes’ ideas that an African elsewhere is imagined through reggae.

In addition to painting pictures of Ethiopia as the Promised Land in their music, singers mobilize this narrative in other ways related to Rastafari ideology. Because Haile Selassie is such a central figure in Rastafari, songs about the emperor tend to be more in abundance than songs about Ethiopia. I would argue that Ethiopia as a Promised Land is always subtly reinforced in

songs about Haile Selassie because of how important Ethiopia is to who Haile Selassie is. Laurel Aitken's 1969 "Haile Selassie" is an example of an early reggae recording that thematically brings together reggae with Haile Selassie. Aitken does not sing on this track but instead speaks short phrases every now and then. The entire composition is built on a groove of two alternating chords. The one drop in the drums, the guitar skank, and the keyboard bubble are strong indications of the reggae feel. Improvised trumpet lines permeate the composition. In between each line of text is at least two cycles of the chord progression. The effect is similar to the dub music that came later in Jamaica. He repeats the following lines throughout the composition:

Emperor Haile Selassie, the conquering lion of Judah
Kings of Kings and Lords of Lords
Reggae Nyah man. Reggae
The conquering lion of Judah...

Aitken is not saying much about Haile Selassie such as where he is from or what he has done but simply says the emperor's name, title, and then he mentions reggae. In this example he specifically links the figure of Haile Selassie with the reggae genre not only by using reggae music as the track's foundation but also saying the word reggae. The phrase "Nyah man" is a related to the Nyabinghi Rastafari order. This composition therefore links reggae, Rastafari, and Ethiopia (through the figure of Haile Selassie) without actually mentioning anything about Ethiopia.

Bob Andy's 1970 song "I've got to go back Home" is a groovy lament that speaks to feelings of not belonging in Jamaica. In a particularly dark verse he sings:

There is no gladness
Nothing but sadness
Nothing like a future here
I've got to, got to leave this land
I've got to find myself on some other side
I just can't stand this lie for living, Lord.

In an interview with Mel Coke for the Jamaica Gleaner, Andy said that in the song, “home” meant Africa. He, however, continued saying that “though Rastafari spoke of repatriation, I did not see the physical reality. This did not negate the fascination. The dream was wrapped up in the process”¹⁰. This is an important revelation because it shows that although Africa is imagined as home, the singer does not necessarily consider repatriation to be a feasible option. The song, however, does participate in the discourse on repatriation even though repatriation is not the singer’s intent.

In 1973 Count Ossie and the Mystic Revelation of Rastafari released the album *Grounation* described by Weinstein as a “three-record set of drumming, blowing and chanting that represents a broad swatch of Rastafarian history, moving from the transatlantic slave trade days through the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1937 to postcolonial Jamaica” (Weinstein 1992: 99). The song “Ethiopian Serenade” on that album consists of Nyabinghi drumming and a melody played on a recorder and clarinet. The drumming and chanting of Count Ossie, though lifting up Africa from racist imaginations in global discourse, is an example of Chude-Sokei’s argument that Rastafari have used drumming and chanting to construct pre-colonial, pre-industrial Africas (1997: 195).

Count Ossie’s next album, *Tales of Mozambique*, was thematically centered on Mozambique and included a short “Re-visioned history” of Mozambique in the liner notes. Weinstein posits that Count Ossie centered his album on Mozambique because Rastafari were captivated by the “heroic attempt there [in Mozambique] to counter European colonialism through cultural resistance, often musical resistance” (103). The album cover (figure 1.1) shows

¹⁰ Mel Coke. “Bob Andy Shed Tears for ‘I’ve Got to go Back Home’”. Jamaica Gleaner. June 20, 2010. <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20100620/ent/ent4.html>. Accessed October 26, 2017.

naked dark-skinned bodies with arms raised in celebration or praise. Like Chude-Sokei's commentary about drums and chants conjuring images of pre-industrial Africas (1997), this image may also be interpreted through the lens of primitivism.



Figure 1.1: Album Cover for Count Ossie and the Mystic Revelation of Rastafari's *Tales of Mozambique*.

The album features a song, “Selam Nna Wadada” which means “peace and love” in Amharic but the lyrics have nothing to do with this title, Ethiopia, or with Mozambique. “Selam Nna Wadada” is a cover of Nigerian singer Babatunde Olatunji's “Kiyakika” and set to the Nyabingi drumming for which Count Ossie is known. This song therefore includes references to Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Jamaica, making it difficult to discern exactly what the song is communicating.

In 1977 the roots reggae group, Abyssinians, released their album *Forward on to Zion*. This album is a good example of a scenario in which the album cover contributes to the meanings of the songs. The image appears to depict the Israelites wondering through the desert in search of their Promised Land. The clothing and dark skin tone of the figures reveal that these people depicted are part of an African tribe and that their Zion is therefore in Africa (figure 1.2).

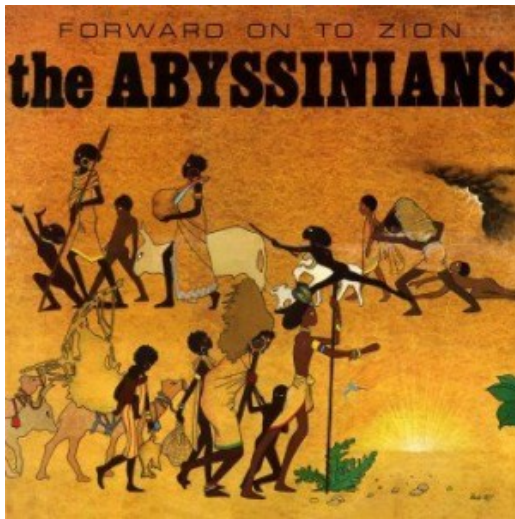


Figure 1.2: Album Cover for the Abyssinians’ *Forward On To Zion*.

The Abyssinian’s’ hit song on this album, “Satta Massagana” is an important one for understanding how Ethiopia has been chanted up through roots reggae mainly because the Jamaican singers are singing in Amharic. The lyrics “satta massagana le amlak hula giz” loosely translates to “give thanks to God all the time”. The use of Amharic in this song, though not expressed in the grammatical way Ethiopians would, is a manifestation of Rastafari language ideologies (Hollington 2016). Language ideologies refer to the cultural conceptions of language and linguistic practices that reflect and shape social life (ibid).

Andrea Hollington notes that for Rastafari, the use of African languages is a means for them to reconnect with Africa and that “Amharic, in particular, the *lingua franca* of Ethiopia and the language of His Majesty Haile Selassie, has a special prestige among many Rastafari” (Hollington 2016: 140). Some Rastafari were able to learn basic Amharic in formal and informal settings in Kingston (Yawny 1994). Hollington states that these practices “illustrate the value of Amharic for Rastafari and reflect an Afrocentric ideology which also seeks to overcome Eurocentric hegemony, presenting an alternative to mainstream language attitudes in Jamaica, which award high prestige to English” (Hollington 2016: 140). Some of their other songs that

feature Ethiopian languages such as Amharic and Ge'ez¹¹ include “Tenayistilin” (1975) and “Y Mas Gan”. By including Amharic and Ge'ez in their music, this group displayed an effort to learn about Ethiopia and perform a version of Ethiopianness. The group’s name is also a key factor in their performance of Ethiopianness as it refers to the ancient Kingdom of Abyssinia that expanded to become what is modern day Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The song begins in English with the lyrics, “There is a land, far far away, where there’s no night, there’s only day, look into the book of life and you will see, that there’s a land, far far away.” Although they do not mention Ethiopia by name, it is clear they are talking about Ethiopia because of the Amharic language in the bridge. The lyrics evoke Ethiopia as a mystical place, far away and yet attainable. They sing, “The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, sit upon his throne and he rules us all, look into the book of life and you will see that he rules us all”. Although part of Haile Selassie’s official title was King of Kings (Negusa Negast), Clinton Chisholm notes that the phrase “Lord of Lords” was not part of the Emperor’s official title but its use by Rastafari was probably influenced by a reading of Revelation 19:16 (1998: 171) that refers to Jesus as the ruler and judge of the world.¹²

Musically, “Satta Massagana” is somewhat similar to the group’s 1968 “Happy Land” that was released under the name Carlton and the Shoes. “Happy Land” is composed in a major mode and makes no reference to Ethiopia, Africa, or Haile Selassie. When the Abyssinians recorded “Satta Massagana” they changed the lyrics and included Amharic to index Ethiopia and changed the mode from major to minor. The use of the minor mode in reggae music is unusual

¹¹ Ge'ez is the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but is no longer a spoken language.

¹² “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords”, King James Translation.

and could therefore be considered an orientalist trope in this regard. Carlton Manning, in an interview with Carter Van Pelt, spoke about the intentional use of the minor mode in this song to create the far east sound. He said:

[My] harmonies are mainly minor chords on a 7th, 9th, 13th [tertian (thirds)] harmony. If you know the [guitar], you deal with the chords and formulate the harmonies from there if the artists can take it. Minor chords are intricate. The scales are not the regular scales. You have to know what you're doing musically. [That's how] you get the Far East sound (quoted in Van Pelt 2002: 30).

“Satta Massagana” therefore sonically departs from the norm in reggae music. With the inclusion of Amharic and the minor mode, this song evokes a mystical quality that paints Ethiopia as a place that is far, far away and exotic. The distance from Ethiopia created by and through this song suggests a homeland that is beyond physical reach and seems to evoke an imagined, rather than physical, return.

Bob Marley is often acclaimed as one of the main reggae singers who championed Ethiopia as the Promised Land. In many interviews he spoke about Ethiopia in these terms. However, there are not many songs in which Bob Marley explicitly connects Ethiopia with the Promised Land. His 1977 album *Exodus*, however reveals his intentions in different ways. The album cover (figure 1.3) for the album has the word *Exodus* written in red against a gold background, with the letters taken from the Ethiopian syllabary (Fidel).



Figure 1.3: Album Cover for Bob Marley and the Wailers' *Exodus*.

The song “Exodus” on this album is about the “movement of Jah people” who are stepping out of Babylon and going to the Promised Land. He does not specifically state where this Promised Land is in the song but the use of the Ethiopian syllabary on the album cover shows that Ethiopia is indeed on his mind.

Other than reggae songs themselves, singers connect reggae to Rastafari and Ethiopia in their live concerts as well. Famous reggae artists such as Bob Marley and Dennis Brown always said the name of Haile Selassie in concerts. Even if these words did not make it into every song of theirs, an audience member at their concerts would surely have heard them. The use of the Lion of Judah flag and clothing with the shape of Ethiopia depicted also emphasize connections between reggae and Ethiopia.

As indicated above, Bob Marley’s influence came not only from his songs and performances but his interviews, which were aired all over the world. In discussing Ethiopia and Haile Selassie in detail, Marley became a significant figure in the spread of Rastafari ideology and the importance of Ethiopia to Rastafari. In Bob Marley’s famous 1980 interview with Gil Noble on the show “Like it is” he said:

Christ promised that him will return within 2000 years. And when him seh him come he will be the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, conquering Lion of Judah... through the lineage of King Solomon and King David. Now my life have great meaning to me so I search to find out if God is really there. I search, I look inna Ethiopia, I look all 'bout. I look inna Germany because, mi nuh prejudice. Mi look fi God. Mi look inna Ethiopia and mi see one man stand up with these names... Emperor Haile Selassie, King of Kings Lord of Lords, conquering lion of Judah through the lineage of King Solomon and King David.¹³

People all over the world have seen interviews in which Bob Marley spoke about Haile Selassie and Ethiopia in this manner. Marley's lifestyle has therefore been highly significant to the ways that his music is interpreted. The lyrics to Marley's famous song "War" is a direct translation from Haile Selassie's speech to the League of Nations. Although this song does not mention Ethiopia or repatriation, it contributes to the Promised Land narratives by linking reggae and Rastafari to Ethiopia through the figure of Haile Selassie.

Anthropologist Kofi Ababio, in a discussion with me on the relationship between Haile Selassie, Bob Marley, and repatriation said:

Isn't it interesting that a lot of reggae, including Bob Marley himself, sampled his [Haile Selassie's] particular speech. That's the foundation of it. Obviously Haile Selassie, when he was doing that wasn't thinking that future reggae musicians were gonna... He was just doing what he did. But they've [Rastafari] come and built on that because they have seen that it's a way of getting the Promised Land into prominence, the back to Africa thing, the 'repatriation is a must.' That's what it is (Personal Interview 2017).

Ababio noted that the reggae songs about Haile Selassie are part of the discourse on the Promised Land and that Rastafari who have returned to Ethiopia absolutely continue this type of musical discourse in order to further its construction.

Dennis Brown's song "Promised Land" (1977-1979) has particular significance for many Rastafari who have repatriated to Ethiopia because the song's lyrics are believed to be based on

¹³ Bob Marley "Like it is" Bob Marley Interview. 1980
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl0JpC7XO74>. Accessed September 4, 2017.

Brown's experience in Ethiopia.¹⁴ He is particular to mention place names in Ethiopia, including Shashemene—the Rastafari settlement.

Make a step down to Asmara,
Then we stopped in Addis Ababa.
Made our way to Shashemene land,
Riding on the King's highway.

His line “there's plenty of land for you and I” later in the song is perhaps coming from his observation of the vast landscape of Ethiopia but does not take into account the strict land laws in Ethiopia whereby the government has control of all land. His line “plenty of work to be done in the Promised Land” is one that resonates with repatriates in particular because it reflects a truth about repatriation that many do not realize until they arrive in Ethiopia. His song “Country (Shashamane) Living” expresses a desire to live in the country, in Shashemene land, because city life is not for him. By city life, the song lyrics could be referring to the type of city life in Babylon specifically in which Western values are promoted. This is an example of Ethiopia as antithetical to Western living. Again, this is a nostalgic longing for simple life that Ethiopia provides. While Shashemene in the 1980s definitely was a rural town, the longing for simple living in Africa is part of what Chude-Sokei argues when he writes that Rastafari construct primitive versions of Africa, ignoring Africa's efforts of modernization.

Augustus Pablo's 1976 reggae composition “Ethiopia” begins with an explicit melodic quote from the Algerian folk melody “Kradjouta” (Figure 1.4) before launching into the Java *riddim*.¹⁵ The “Kradjouta” melody has been used in numerous compositions around the world to signify the Orient. The clear use of this Algerian melody coupled with the song title “Ethiopia” can be heard as part of the orientaling of Ethiopia i.e. imagining Ethiopia as far away and

¹⁴ I have not been yet able to find out the year Dennis Brown visited Ethiopia.

¹⁵ A *riddim* in Jamaica is an instrumental accompaniment that often gets recycled through its use in different songs. Riddims have different names such as Java, Punnany, Playground, etc.

exotic. Michael Veal notes that Pablo’s music is characterized by the use of the “Far East” sound. Describing Pablo’s compositions, Veal states: “Composed to evoke the locales of the Old Testament as well as the cultures stretching eastward from West Africa through East Africa and on to islands of the Indonesian archipelago, Pablo essentially created a devotional genre of reggae exotica that reflected the political and spiritual dimensions of his Rastafarian faith” (Veal 2007: 176). Veal further notes that “Pablo’s use of unusual chord progressions such as moving between a I minor chord and a \flat VII minor provided a suitably mysterious harmonic setting for his Afro-orientalist sound paintings” (Veal 2007: 177).



Figure 1.4: “Kradjouta” melody used as the introduction to Augustus Pablo’s “Ethiopia.”

In addition to individual songs operating as discourse, the method of music production operates as discourse. Dub music emerged in Jamaica in the 1970s and is characterized by the technological manipulation of sounds to create various effects. Michael Veal, in his seminal work on dub, analyzes the musical elements and link them to exile and diaspora. Throughout his book Veal argues that the musical elements of dub symbolize aspects of the forced migration experience of enslaved Africans. He states that the reverberation in dub “provided the cohering agent for dub’s interplay of presence/absence and of completeness/incompleteness, evoking the intertwined experiences of exile and nostalgia, and reflecting Said’s characterization of exile as ‘fundamentally a discontinuous state of being’” (Veal 2007: 199). He further states that the echoes symbolize distant memories and the ruptures in sound symbolize the ruptures of forced

migration (206). Dub is therefore an example of the ways Jamaican music producers manipulated sounds to imagine other worlds and states of being.

Buju Banton's 1995 song "Till I'm Laid to Rest" is another interesting song for its representations of an African spatial elsewhere. Banton chants his frustration with "Babylon system" and love for Africa over Nyabingi drumming. A choir in the background adds another musical layer that is reminiscent of South African a cappella traditions. The low, bass "hmms" in these background voices are part of what Julia Day refers to as the "mbube topic"¹⁶ (2017) that is commonly used to signify Africa. This musical gesture, she argues, has been popularized and used repeatedly through songs such as "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" and Paul Simon's "You can Call me Al" in such a way that it is now widely heard and used as a marker for Africa.

The mbube topic can be heard throughout Buju Banton's song as demonstrated in figure 1.5. The male chorus sings short melodic lines in a low register to "hmms" index this trope that has been used to evoke Africa. Although Banton uses this "African" trope in his music and he sings about going to Africa, his lyrics also offer a critique of Western life with Africa being positioned as an alternative:

Oh I'm in bondage, living is a mess
An I've got to rise up, alleviate the stress
No longer will I expose my weakness
He who seeks knowledge begins with humbleness
Work 7 to 7 yet me still penniless
For di food pon me table Massa God bless
Holler fi di needy an' shelter less
Ethiopia awaits all prince and princess

¹⁶ "Mbube" is the name of a song recorded by Solomon Lindo and the Evening Birds in South Africa in 1939 that became "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" in various versions in the US.

The image shows a musical score for an excerpt of Banton's song "Till I'm Laid to Rest". It consists of three staves. The top staff is for Buju Banton, the middle for Male Chorus, and the bottom for Nyabinghi Drums. The music is in 2/2 time and B-flat major. The lyrics for Banton are "'Till I'm laid to rest". The Male Chorus has vocalizations "mm hmm mbe". The drums play a steady eighth-note pattern.

Figure 1.5: Author’s transcription of an excerpt of Banton’s “Till I’m Laid to Rest”.

In this song, therefore, Banton imagines an alternate reality to that of Jamaica but clearly paints this reality as African. His lyrics describe Babylon (“I’m in bondage, living is a mess”) but also looks to Africa (“Ethiopia awaits all prince and princess”). This is an example of Daynes’ assertion that Africa is portrayed as the antithesis to the West in reggae. The musical elements also point to a version of Africa through the drumming and the mbube topic, though not to one, specific Africa. Louis Chude-Sokei argues that reggae musicians never made any attempts to reproduce musical sounds associated with contemporary African popular music (1997: 195). By looking to a pre-modern Africa, Rastafari potentially contribute to primitive and exotic representations of the continent, thereby creating versions of Africa that have little base in contemporary reality.

Taurus Riley and Kabaka Pyramid’s 2013 reggae song “Fly di Gate” is about encouraging youths to go to Ethiopia to live but also about reaffirming a bond with the motherland. The lyrics begin with a conversation as if with an old friend. This song is as much about reinforcing the diaspora condition as it is about an actual return to Ethiopia. Riley sings:

Hey Ethiopia a long time no see
Yeah how yuh doing? How's my family?
Here in di west still I am mindfull of thee
A coming home one day you'll see

Later in the song Kabaka Pyramid sings:

Jamaica weh mi born but mama Africa is my own
It's in my DNA down to my very chromosome
Di blood inna mi vein, di same blood that was slain
In di fields dem of the cane
When di ships dem come around
But Africa that's where I get my strength from
Di river Nile civilization I was sent from
Fi some a di youths dem from Kingston to St. Ann
Tell dem seh repatriation is a retention

Riley and Kabaka Pyramid refer to Ethiopia more in terms of a homeland, drawing on histories of Africa and the trans-Atlantic slave trade and less in terms of biblical prophecy. They also link themselves to African ancestry by discussing blood connections to Africa. During the chorus that Riley sings, Kabaka Pyramid is heard in the background mentioning names of places in Ethiopia such as Lalibela and Shashemene further emphasizing Ethiopia as the ideal destination.

In a 2016 song, “Red, Green, and Gold” by Koro Fya and Kabaka Pyramid, the singers chant their desires for Africa. In the opening lines, Kabaka Pyramid says “I-thiopia that’s where we want to be yeah...repatriation is a must.” The chorus goes:

Red, Green, and Gold
The only banner whe mi rise, real I-thiopian
Red, Green and Gold
The whole of Africa unite, People stand up fi yuh rights

The lyrics throughout the song reference Rastafari ideology surrounding repatriation and draws on the teachings of Marcus Garvey. “Repatriation is a must” is a phrase used by the Twelve

Tribes of Israel organization. Being released in 2016, this song clearly shows that a longing for Africa has not completely died among the newer generation of reggae singers.

Discourse on the Songs

This multimodal discourse analysis of reggae music presented here has shown the many ways by and through which musicians have produced and mobilized discourses on Africa and repatriation. I now turn to a brief analysis of some of the verbal discourse surrounding the musical discourse on Africa and repatriation as expressed by people in Ethiopia. I asked returnees to what extent these songs encouraged them to repatriate and what do these songs mean to them now as they listen from within Ethiopia. Most returnees in Ethiopia told me that reggae music had a large role to play in exposing them to the Rastafari movement but not necessarily to repatriate. Once they became interested in the Rastafari movement through reggae, they then learned that repatriation was a central component, mainly from the ideologies expressed within their reasoning sessions.¹⁷ The major role that these repatriation songs had for most returnees was strengthening their desire to make the move.

Mark Joseph, a returnee from Barbados told me that he did not even start to notice messages of repatriation in reggae music until after he joined the Twelve Tribes of Israel organization in Barbados:

MJ: We grew up with Bob Marley. But now that I started learning ‘bout His Majesty, I was actually hearing what Bob Marley was saying. It’s like your ears open up, your third eye open up. I was walking and seeing paintings of His Majesty I passed every day that I never noticed. It was something hidden from me. I was blind to this, and deaf to these things. It’s when you get into the Rasta ting that you start to hear [these messages] in the music. Even in the ragga I was into... there would be people singing about Africa, singing about Jah that you wasn’t noticing before.

Me: So it was really the Organization’s motto that encouraged you to repatriate?

¹⁷ “Reasoning” is a term Rastafari use to describe a process of discussing ideas or experiences.

MJ: Yeah the motto. The music was just there to inspire you more. But that motto 'repatriation is a must', the West is going to perish, Ethiopia is a better place, I'll never give up a continent for an island (Mark Joseph, Personal Interview 2015).

Christine Smith-Stone was born in Jamaica and grew up in Canada but became exposed to Rastafari when she went to Jamaica as an adult. It was through reasonings and discussions that she learned about the Rastafari lifestyle and about Ethiopia. "When I went to Jamaica, after I graduated, reggae became more to me. I started to understand. You have to really listen to reggae to really understand it. It's the message within the music of reggae that is the center to why everyone listens to reggae because there is a message." She, however, did not remember hearing songs about repatriation at that time, "and even if I did, they didn't have an impact on me" she said (Personal interview 2015). The music helped her to understand more about the Rastafari ways of life, which eventually led to her decision to return to Ethiopia. Songs about returning to Ethiopia, however, were not as important.

I asked Paul the Dragon Slayer if music played a role in his decision to repatriate and he replied that "it definitely did". He recalled Barry White's song "The Wicked Shall not Enter" and the Heptones' "Holy Mount Zion" as two main songs that had an impact on him. About the significance of these types of songs, though, he explained that Rastafari can be "encouraged by the music in one way but your faith has to be more" (Personal interview 2016). For him, researching history, learning Biblical prophecy, and understanding yourself are key steps to take in order to repatriate. The music can only help to encourage the step.

Ras Kawintseb grew up hearing about Ethiopia, thinking it was a mystical place. It was not until he heard Bob Marley talking about Haile Selassie as king of kings, however, that he realized Ethiopia was a real place. Ras Kawintseb referenced Bob Marley's interviews as well as

the subjects Marley spoke about in live performances as the means by which he understood more about Ethiopia (Personal Conversation). This suggests that the music's effect on its listeners evoked mysticism and fantasy while the spoken word has more weight. Images of Ethiopia might have been portrayed as utopian through reggae songs, but for Ras Kawintseb it became more real when he heard someone speak about it, pointing to the importance of considering not only what takes place in the music but also the other phenomena around the music that give music meaning.

Whenever I asked returnees about the role of these repatriation songs almost all of them had strong words to say about artists who sing about repatriation but who never even visit Ethiopia. Alton Ricketts said, "Dem a sing bout Ethiopia but me nuh see dem" (Personal Interview 2016). For returnees such as Ricketts, who have to face the daily realities of living in Ethiopia, many of these songs fall short of their potency and meaning because the singers, themselves do not practice what they preach. Christine went on to explain possible reasons for the lack of reggae singers coming to Africa:

They sing about Africa, and repatriation and Africa is the home and Ethiopia is the bomb. But none of them is coming...because they feel that Africa has nothing to offer them and they are distracted. You can sing about it and make money but yet you're not doing anything to help people over here, you're not even coming yourself? What's a song if it ain't gonna serve its purpose? Yuh see weh mi a seh? You can sing all you want and be a player of instruments but you're not making any difference if you're not showing your own words into actions. It's irritating to me because I know It's only about making a profit.

Christine, like many other returnees, felt that artists who sing about Ethiopia should either be going to Ethiopia or doing something for Ethiopia. When the singers do not put action to their words, returnees view them as appropriating the ideologies of the Rastafari movement and Ethiopian culture for personal gain.

Mark Joseph said, “They sing about here and they don't know what it's like. It's in their imagination. A lot of things they don't get right. Some songs get us upset. Or it's just funny.” He joked with me about Buju Banton’s famous song “Till I’m laid to Rest” in which there is one line that Banton sings “Only Ethiopia protect me from the cold.” Mark, laughing, said, “but how you could say that? Addis Ababa is freezing” (Personal Interview 2015). I also laughed, having experienced the cold of Addis Ababa and the absurdity that Ethiopia would keep me warm. These songs about Ethiopia and return perhaps reflect Kim Butler’s assertion that it is the “existence of the issue of return, and the related sense of connection to the homeland, that is intrinsic to the diasporan experience, rather than a specific orientation toward physical return” (2001: 205). The idea of Ethiopia, therefore, is what protects Buju Banton from the cold and harsh realities of Babylon.

Similar to Butler, Desta Meghoo, a returnee from Jamaica, viewed these songs as ways that Jamaicans try to make sense of their histories and identities.

We have reclaimed our identity. We’ve come home. Bringing all of this with us... Because the only attribute that you can take out of that whole slave experience is that we now came into pan African consciousness in the absence of our own tongue, in the absence of our culture, in the absence of of an identity. We recreated.. We patch it together. Likkle piece of this likke piece of that. Likkle woluf here, likkle bantu there. Wha di song name? The Abyssinians’ song... “there is a land”? ‘Satta massagana!’ It's [supposed to be] amesegonalehu. We're trying to pull it together (Personal Interview 2016).

She specifically referred to the Abyssinians’ song as an example of Jamaicans’ attempts to reconnect with Africa even if they fall short in some ways because they cannot access the languages and cultures.

Although there are many ways to interpret these songs, it is also clear that they have conjured up images of Africa that are both positive and problematic. Chude-Sokei argues that although reggae has been a powerful musical advocate for Africa, it has also participated in

replacing the “Africas of colonialism and independence with a panopoly of possible Africas drawn from quite diverse black radical traditions” (Chude-Sokei 2011: 78). Many of the reggae songs about Africa also served as sociopolitical critiques of Jamaican society. The songs must be understood as a reflection of the local realities even as the songs participate in constructing an elsewhere. Chude-Sokei eloquently explains the connections between the discourses on exile, diaspora, local sociopolitical realities, and Africa:

These alternate Africas produced in Black Diasporic sound may have been shaped by desire, nostalgia, and trauma, but they were primarily produced and configured by the local politics of America and the Caribbean. And so they have been fraught with ambivalence and fear and have been riven with class and sexual tensions. These darker motivations are as much a part of pan-Africanism, the Black Atlantic, and the Black Diaspora as the celebrated and often exaggerated notions of resistance, subversion, and revolution. (2011: 78).

These “darker motivations” are part of the realities that individuals living in Jamaica face on a daily basis. These are the motivations that inspired Bob Andy to sing in his song “I’ve got to go back Home”, out of desperation, “this couldn’t be my home. It must be somewhere else, or I would kill myself.” Living in harsh conditions with limited economic opportunities has indeed motivated reggae singers to look elsewhere for relief. If their songs do not reflect a version of Africa that is based on modern realities, it is because this was not their aim.

The mystical qualities of Africa evoked through these songs have made it challenging for returnees upon arriving in Ethiopia who have to deal with some of the harsh realities in that country. However, because of these songs, reggae is world renown for being a genre that promotes Africa in a positive light and this has made people all over Africa receptive to reggae music. In Ethiopia, too, people often told me that they love reggae because Jamaicans sing about Africa and Ethiopia. This, I believe, is the strongest way that these songs about repatriation and

Africa have impacted the process of repatriation and will be explored further throughout the dissertation. The songs, and the other forms of discourse they mobilize, have helped to make Ethiopians more receptive to reggae and therefore to the Rastafari presence in their country.

Conclusion

Based on my ethnographic data, it is clear that although songs about repatriation to Africa were inspirational to returnees, these songs were not a significant motivational factor in their decision to return to Ethiopia. As Christine asks, “What’s the point of a song if it ain’t gonna serve its purpose”, we may need to see these songs as serving multiple purposes and resulting from multiple factors. As I have demonstrated, reggae songs are rich sites for multimodal discourse analysis on the ways Rastafari imagine and conceive Africa and repatriation. I have shown the different ways that Rastafari, through music, have used Ethiopia and Africa as a basis for imagining a utopian elsewhere, Zion. Ethiopia, while used as a metonym for all of Africa, has been and continues to be thought of as a special place, that is both homeland and Promised Land.

The construction of Ethiopia as homeland and Promised Land is inextricably linked to feelings of exile, displacement, and a growing awareness of being part of the African diaspora. It also points to the social and political environment in which song writers find themselves in Babylon. The songs referenced in this chapter are powerful examples of the ways in which Rastafari have mobilized a narrative of Ethiopia as a strong, beautiful, and desirable country, thereby showcasing a positive image of Africa to Western audiences. At the same time, some of the images that lyricists and musicians have conjured up in these songs present essentialized versions of Ethiopia that are not always rooted in the reality of the place and these songs impact returnees in different ways.

Most importantly, perhaps, is that reggae has helped to promote and maintain an African consciousness both within the black Atlantic and within Africa (Johnson 2015). Reggae, like jazz music, has helped to produce an “Afrocentric imagination” (Weinstein 1992) that counters racist imaginings of Africa that were produced through centuries of colonialism. These songs have also helped to further link reggae with Rastafari ideology in the minds of listeners all over the world. This Afrocentric discourse mobilized through reggae has made Africans receptive to Rastafari and has helped returnees in Ethiopia to navigate Ethiopia’s landscapes and ethnoscapas that are suspicious of foreigners.

The rest of this dissertation examines the effects of this discourse on the experience of returnees in Ethiopia including how returnees participate in, and continue this discourse to assert senses of belonging in Ethiopia. In the following chapter I show how repatriated Rastafari, who are immersed in the daily realities of living in Ethiopia, approach reggae music performance strategically and continue to create their Promised Land through song, as they articulate and construct senses of place.

Chapter 2

Adapting to and Shaping New Realities: Repatriated Musicians and Sonic Strategies of Belonging

We need to interject our message into the music. We only replay Bob Marley and other... we need to get the real story on this side of the fence. We all came to Ethiopia for difference reasons but searching for the true identity of the self. We all want acceptance. Maybe it's a reflection of what we've heard in music. Our stories are all different.

-Christine Smith-Stone

“This is where we want to come and so what happens to the music when it comes here?”

-Alton Ricketts

“When I was in the West I focused my poetry on Rasta themes... wrote more African American point of view poems...But when I came here I made the decision that I'm free and I'm gonna write whatever the hell I want. I never used profanity in the West but since I've come to Africa I allow myself to drop a cuss word or two if it fits the poem...I write love poems now. Now that I've repatriated I don't need to limit myself...I'm here living in Africa so I write about living in Africa.”

-I Timothy

During my first month of extended fieldwork in Ethiopia and in my first rehearsal with the Imperial Majestic Band in Addis Ababa, a phone call relating the news of a repatriated Rastafari's murder in Shashemene interrupted our music and our spirits. Simeon, as he was known, was killed under circumstances related to property ownership by Ethiopians in his community. This news reinforced what most returnees already knew, that life in the Promised Land is not always easy, safe, or peaceful. After observing a moment of silence and praying together, the band members spoke about the challenges of living in Shashemene and the importance of living a godly life. The band leader, Sydney, lamented that they (the returnees) have so many plans to develop Shashemene but it seems like the devil keeps getting in the way. Finally, he got up and said, “we have work to do so mek we go back and keep up with the work, the mission. We can't stop to mourn right now.” The following night at the club, Sister Pat took

the stage to sing a song but was visibly shaken. She stopped singing and said “I’m sorry I can’t sing this song for you tonight because one of our brethren was killed in Shashemene and I just can’t sing right now.” This scenario reveals that, on the one hand, music making in the Promised Land for returnees is significantly affected by the realities of living there. In this case, Sister Pat was not able to sing at all. On the other hand, returnees are also keen to persevere in the midst of these challenges to make music that will fulfil their mission and ultimately change their environment and circumstances as Sydney demonstrated in his drive to continue the rehearsal.

The realities of the Promised Land are vastly different from the ones imagined and constructed through reggae songs, as discussed in the previous chapter. Although Rastafari have, through reggae, constructed versions of the Promised Land for decades without physically repatriating, those who have put their lyrics into action and moved to Ethiopia must reconcile the imagined Promised Land with the real Ethiopia. This chapter investigates the ways in which repatriated Rastafari musicians respond to the realities of being in Ethiopia and the strategies they implement to respond to and transform their new reality and make it habitable. Although homecomings for diasporic peoples are often filled with ambivalence because their feelings of nostalgia are challenged by the realities of the place, they are still able to create a home for themselves through various strategies (Tsuda 2004: 126). I show that the decisions that repatriated musicians make regarding song choice, lyrical themes, and musical elements are significantly shaped by their circumstances, and subjectivities, and that these decisions become strategies that are geared towards shaping their environment to align with their visions. In thinking about song style as strategy (Webster-Kogen 2014), I examine how Rastafari negotiate authenticity and innovation in their musical choices as well as how they adapt themes and narratives to suit their current realities.

There are different components of the mission for repatriated musicians. There is the spiritual aspect (that deals with the fulfilment of prophecy and purpose) and there is survival (earning a living). Sydney Salmon explained to me what he sees as the spiritual mission of musical returnees:

The music follows the mission not the mission follows the music. Where we are now is repatriation. We give thanks for the brethren in Jamaica, through music pushing the message of repatriation. But the message has been preached for forty-odd years. And the people who are getting the message are saying ‘okay, let’s see who is going to lead the way.’

But the Bible says the singers went first. And the players of instruments followed after with the damsels and their timbrels. So we now coming here as artists and musicians is really fulfilling that part of the bible, of the repatriation motion. That’s one part of the mission. To fulfil the repatriation and encourage others and also to open up the minds of the people to prepare for those who are coming. That’s the mission.

Now there is also Africa on a whole. Where there is an urgent need for Africans to come together and unite. For the better for the continent. So we are networking with African artists. To bridge that gap.

It’s a twofold mission. Repatriation and unification and of course we know reggae music will teach them a lesson, reggae music will lead the way. For sure we have to take the other African music with us, the rhythms, scales, so that in itself is another work (Personal Interview 2017).

Using the Bible to justify their mission shows the conviction of Sydney and the Imperial Majestic Band that they are doing important work. The work they do is in both the physical and spiritual dimensions and takes a lot of time, sacrifice, and money. Throughout this chapter I show how a number of returnees view their mission and how they use music to carry it out.

Repatriation involves a mission of spreading a Rastafari message through reggae music, but the music also has to be marketable so that the musicians can earn a living. While quite a number of returnees participate in song composition and performance, less than ten returnees

depend on music as a main source of income. It is difficult for returnees to make a living solely from reggae performance partially because it is unlikely that they are able to perform more than twice per week, which is sometimes only enough to make ends meet. One returnee musician told me “boy mi woulda love fi find enough spots to perform on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays in Addis.” I responded that he must really want to take over Addis with his message. “A nuh really dat” he replied. “Mi just have nuff bills fi pay” (Personal Communication). Finding and staying with reggae clubs is challenging for reasons explored in chapter three but creating music that appeals to local audiences is also part of a strategy returnees use to gain more visibility and wider audiences. The strategies and decisions returnees make regarding genre, lyrics, musical elements, and stage presence have potential economic benefits to them in addition to the spiritual fulfilment of performing in the Promised Land.

Returnee musicians implement a variety of strategies to appeal to audiences that reflect their ideologies on music and spiritual beliefs. The ways in which these strategies are implemented also reveal how returnees view their relationship to Ethiopia and the, sometimes conflicting, ways in which they believe repatriation should be accomplished. On the one hand, returnees choose to maintain senses of authentic Rastafari musical practices because they feel that the authenticity is tied to the roots of the movement. On the other hand, there is a feeling amongst returnees that innovation in the ways they create and spread music is vital to communicating to new audiences. I view the decisions to remain authentic or to be innovative as strategic decisions that shape and are shaped by the returnees’ experiences. These decisions represent a tension that returnees have to negotiate in Ethiopia in that Rastafari want to be viewed as Rastafari and hold onto their identities but they also need to be seen integrating into

Ethiopia. This negotiation of proximity to Ethiopianness plays out in and informs their musical strategies.

Strictly Roots! Whose Roots?

One decision that returnee musicians make in response to their new lives as repatriates involves not compromising their beliefs and identities as Rastafari. For musicians, being true to themselves involves a continued commitment to authentic performances of musical forms associated with the Rastafari movement, which for most is roots reggae. Although concepts such as “authenticity” and “tradition” are vague at best and problematic at worst, I examine returnees’ expressions of these concerns to show the range of musical responses to repatriation.

While most people automatically link Rastafari with roots reggae, returnee Desta Meghoo shared views on the importance of Nyabinghi music to Rastafari and repatriation. She believes that this drumming and chanting have the ability to connect with Ethiopians in a deeper way than reggae music:

Rasta music is the Nyabinghi harps¹⁸ and the voice...Our music and our chanting can bring us so close to the people...We have not realized the power of the Nyabinghi to speak and communicate with our beloved... How do we come here and not use these drums, harps? They are powerful...This can show us in a spiritual light (Personal Interview 2016).

She further pointed out that Nyabinghi drums and chants are used in Twelve Tribes of Israel and Bobo Shanti devotions so “it’s the one thing that brings us together, the one thing that we have in common” (Personal interview 2016). The drumming and chanting is indeed similar to the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in that both Nyabinghi ceremonies and the Orthodox Mass use only acoustic percussion instruments and the voice. Ras Mweya also stated that the Nyabinghi drumming and chanting should be used more in Ethiopia to spread the

¹⁸ Rastafari sometimes refer to their drums as harps.

Rastafari message because “Binghi shows the real livity and meaning of Rasta” (Personal Interview 2016).

As a global music genre, reggae reaches the ears of Ethiopians through different media. Today, international reggae songs from popular artists such as Chronixx, Protoje, and Jah9 are played on a few radio stations in Ethiopia such as Afro FM. Additionally, with growing internet access throughout Ethiopia, people are able to access songs on YouTube and other online sites. There remains a strong market for live music in Ethiopia, however, and it is here that repatriated musicians try to make their mark with reggae music. The work of repatriated musicians is particularly important to the live music scene in Addis Ababa because reggae music is taking on a life of its own in Ethiopia especially among Ethiopian youths. By keeping a strong presence on major stages, repatriated Rastafari continue to reinforce that they have a special claim to the music as returnees and they gain significant visibility for the repatriated community.

The term “roots reggae” signifies a degree of authenticity because it is rooted in Rastafari consciousness. The Imperial Majestic Band uses this term in flyers to appeal to audiences who desire authentic reggae. In Figure 2.1 the words “Reggae Roots & Culture” are at the top of the flyer indicating that this band provides not only authentic reggae music but also the culture that is part of reggae. This authenticity is what makes returnee reggae bands stand out against Ethiopian reggae bands and attracts the attention of Ethiopian youth.



Figure 2.1: Promotional Flyer for Sydney Salmon and the Imperial Majestic Band.

On many occasions I heard Sydney Salmon and other returnee reggae singers say that reggae music is about “the message.” As discussed in the introduction, roots reggae in Jamaica was associated strongly with Rastafari themes of African unity, Haile Selassie, and black liberation. By maintaining this tradition in Ethiopia, returnee reggae singers reinforce the connection between reggae music and Rastafari ideologies. This association mobilizes the indexical relationship in Ethiopia between reggae and Rastafari—and specifically the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia. This is important for the repatriated community who find themselves marginalized in certain ways and desire recognition from Ethiopian governmental officials. This also forces aspiring Ethiopian reggae musicians to connect with repatriated Rastafari musicians in order to acquire senses of authenticity.

One particular repatriate who focused exclusively on authentic roots reggae was the Jamaican reggae musician known as Uncle Issachar or “Glasses” who passed away in 2017. He led The Black Lion reggae band which comprised mostly Ethiopian musicians. He maintained that an original roots reggae sound was important to the integrity of the music and ensured that all the details of a reggae groove were executed. When I was rehearsing and performing with the Ge’ez Roots Band for a show celebrating Bob Marley’s birth, Uncle Issachar was asked to lead some of the rehearsals. Every now and then he would stop the band and chastise someone for playing a rhythm that was “not like reggae”. He would demonstrate with his voice and bodily gestures what he expected to hear. While some Ethiopian musicians questioned his methods of instruction (he was somewhat aggressive), he was respected as a tradition bearer and his mentoring helped in the development of Ethiopians’ abilities to groove. Repatriates see their ability to pass on their knowledge and expertise of reggae as a form of professional development because they are giving Ethiopians skills in the arts that will allow Ethiopians to further enhance their careers as musicians (further explored in chapter 5).

The use and spread of sound systems in Ethiopia by returnees perhaps represents their most unique musical addition and contribution. The sound system developed in Jamaica in the early to middle part of the twentieth century and was central to the dissemination of new popular music in Kingston’s inner-city neighborhoods (Stolzoff 2000). Some repatriated Rastafari sound system operators told me that the sound system is the most authentic way to consume reggae because that is how it was originally meant to be consumed in Jamaica. However, the sound system is a foreign concept to most Ethiopians, which presents a challenge to returnees: Do they expose Ethiopians to this phenomenon and risk being shunned or do they adapt to the Ethiopian cultural landscape? Some returnees want to teach Ethiopians how to consume the music and

culture of Jamaica through the sound system. There are, however, conflicting ideas amongst returnees on how best to do this.

A small group of repatriates were able to bring sound systems into Ethiopia amidst the financial challenges of doing so. Paul the Dragon Slayer was one of the first repatriated Rastafari to introduce sound systems into Ethiopia. Paul is a returnee from the UK with Jamaican parents. Coming from a UK tradition of sound system culture, Paul mainly plays dub and steppers in Ethiopia. He is the only sound system operator who focuses on these styles of reggae and is often criticized by other returnees because these styles are specific to scenes in parts of the UK and not easily consumable by most audiences—including non-UK Rastafari. Paul's challenges reflect the fact that sound system cultures can be quite different from each other, further highlighting the diverse ways authenticity in reggae and Rastafari music can be understood. Although the sound system developed in Jamaica, it took on a life of its own in the UK and Europe that is almost incomprehensible to many Jamaicans. Paul explains:

I have been ridiculed by Rastas here... especially Twelve Tribe. Rastas from the Caribbean have little knowledge of the music...Most of their knowledge is coming from Jamaica. Only the ones who passed through the UK could understand...and those who could remember the 70s and Tubby's sound system...What Rastas thought was that you needed to play more contemporary music. What the people know. But the tables are turning. Ethiopians are becoming more conscious (Personal Interview 2016).

He believes that despite what other Rastafari say, he can make an impact in Ethiopia with his preferred style of conscious dub by exposing Ethiopian audiences to the music.

In addition to positioning themselves as authentic tradition bearers, maintaining senses of authenticity helps returnees cope with the experience of being in a foreign land whose citizens display ambivalent attitudes towards them (Macleod 2014). In Takeyuki Tsuda's work on Japanese Brazilian returnees to Japan she discusses the ways in which the Brazilian Japanese

returnees maintain aspects of Brazilian culture as a means of maintaining senses of the familiar in order to cope with the challenges of Japanese culture which is foreign to them even though they are originally Japanese. She asserts that by keeping their traditions, returnees suffer fewer mental issues and they adjust better to life in Japan as opposed to assimilating immediately into Japanese culture (Tsuda 2003, 270). In a similar manner to the Japanese returnees in Tsuda's work, Rastafari who maintain reggae and other aspects of their culture aids in their adjustment to life in the Promised Land even though they want to integrate somewhat.

When the King Shiloh Sound System visited Ethiopia from Europe they held sessions in Addis Ababa and Shashemene. One Rastafari told me that she went to the dance in Addis, then a few days later went all the way to Shashemene after work just for the dance, returned to Addis after the dance, and went back to work the next day. For her, this was therapeutic. Returnees maintain traditional and authentic music in Ethiopia, I argue, as a strategy for demonstrating and using their social capital, but also for maintaining their identities and coping with the change in environment.

New Songs in Zion and Sonic Essences of Ethiopianness

While in some instances returnees believe that a commitment to authentic or traditional Rastafari music will help them to further their mission in Ethiopia, other instances call for new strategies and measures. For example, new song lyrics reflect the new experience of living in Ethiopia vs. living in the West. Musical elements that can further emphasize their repatriation status and appeal to Ethiopian audiences is also important. Repatriated musicians implement various Ethiopian musical elements into their performances and compositions to add an Ethiopian flavor to their songs. These strategies are used to reach local audiences, capture international audiences with a new "repatriated" sound, and to perform new identities as

repatriates. The returnees' adoption of Ethiopianisms in their music is not only strategic in terms of making a living but also strategic in terms of gaining cultural/social belonging, what MacLeod refers to as the quest for "cultural citizenship" (2014). For this discussion, I identify sonic essences of Ethiopianness, or the musical signs that are perceived as being distinctly Ethiopian in relation to foreign musical elements.

Ethiopianness

Although Ethiopia, like many states, has always comprised a heterogenous population, there have been many attempts—both internally and externally—to present Ethiopia as a homogenous nation. Erin Macleod discusses Ethiopianness as a "variable concept, constituted both from within as well as from without" (2014: 36) and as constantly being contested and recreated" (2014: 40). Due to the rich diversity in languages, ethnicities, religions, and geographic terrains, a unifying sense of Ethiopianness is quite impossible to pin down even though this concept has meaning for many people. Ethiopia comprises over eighty ethnic groups with their own languages and dialects and in 1994 the government declared Ethiopia a state consisting of Peoples, Nations and Nationalities (Clapham 2002, 27). Non-Ethiopians have formed ideas of Ethiopia ranging from the land of famine to the mysterious, ancient Holy Land, the Kingdom of Abyssinia. Falceto writes, "[S]ince the beginning of time, perched between legend and mystery, Ethiopia has always carried a whiff of 'King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba', 'The Kingdom of Prester John', 'Empire of the Negus', the 'King of Kings'—today become 'Jah Rastafari' (Falceto 2011: 9). MacLeod notes that Rastafari have constructed a narrative of Ethiopia as a unified nation under imperial rule that is home to all black peoples. In a more problematic way, Rastafari identify with the Amharization of Ethiopia that, while allowing them access to mainstream audiences, puts them in contestation with Ethiopians who oppose

Amharization such as the Oromo people. MacLeod further argues that while the Rastafari imagining of Ethiopia is in conflict with the socio historical reality of Ethiopia, the Rastafari's emphasis on the uniqueness and importance of Ethiopia reinforces Ethiopians' "deeply held belief in the exceptional nature of the country" (MacLeod 2014: 36) albeit in different ways.

Teshale Tibebu suggests terms for understanding modern Ethiopia. The "Ge'ez civilization" is the "larger envelop that defines the overall Ethiopian 'civilizational project'" (Teshale 1995: 3) and operates as the overarching hegemonic structure in Ethiopia. It is sustained socioeconomically through the "gerber system", culturally through "Tabot Christianity", and ideologically through the "Aksumite Paradigm" (ibid). The version of Ethiopianness to which Rastafari align themselves is based largely on these dominant systems in Ethiopia.

The ideologies of the "Aksumite paradigm" that Teshale presents are some to which Rastafari subscribe. The first involves the story of Ethiopia's origins as told in the epic *Kebrä Negast* (Glory of the Kings) that includes the installment of the Ark of the Covenant in Ethiopia (Teshale 1995). The second is "historical essentialism" in which Ethiopia's history is presented as grand and exceptional. The third involves a superiority complex held by people within the Ge'ez civilization over anyone outside its reach, including anyone who is not Orthodox Christian or from the "Amhara, Tigray, or Agaw" ethnic groups. Interestingly, it is in this last ideology that Rastafari find themselves on the peripheries in Ethiopia. They therefore have to show that they subscribe to Orthodox Christianity and that they are competent in Amharic. By demonstrating their abilities to identify with the Aksumite paradigm, repatriated Rastafari mobilize narratives that they belong in Ethiopia. At the same time, by doing this they are reproducing and giving more weight to this hegemonic system that oppresses other groups in Ethiopia. The counter hegemonic discourse mobilized by Rastafari musicians in Jamaica

discussed in the previous chapter that draws on images of Ethiopia now comes to stand as the hegemonic discourse within Ethiopia.

These essences of Ethiopianness are based on the ideologies of Teshale's Aksumite paradigm (1995) and MacLeod's description of how Rastafari view Ethiopianness (2014). In order to examine the musical meanings and levels of Ethiopianness generated from reggae performances, following Turino's use of Peircian semiotics, I discuss these musical elements as signs. In this scenario, the use of language, scales/modes, rhythms, dance gestures, and vocal techniques are deployed as signs that index Ethiopianness.

Amharic

The main sign that is used to signify Ethiopianness is language. Amharic is the national language of Ethiopia and is therefore the strongest way to identify a song as Ethiopian even though this association between Amharic and Ethiopianness is a political construct. Returnees' skills in Amharic range from nonexistent to fluency. For repatriated Rastafari who want to communicate to and reach Ethiopian audiences, however, Amharic is an important tool because many Ethiopians do not understand English and certainly not Jamaican creole. In addition to being ideologically motivated, the returnees' use of Amharic helps them navigate daily communicative situations and "may constitute part of their efforts to integrate into Ethiopian society" (Hollington 2016: 140- 141). Some main examples of returnees' use of Amharic in their songs are Sydney Salmon's "Never Colonized" and Ras Kawintseb's "Bado Egur", which will be discussed below. Andrea Hollington notes that for Rastafari, the use of Amharic represents an "ideologically-grounded linguistic overcoming of colonialism and (linguistic) oppression and symbolizes reunification with Africa, lived through repatriation" and serves as a "strong emblematic marker indexing Ethiopian identity" (Hollington 2016: 150).

Because power is implicated in language ideologies, the strategic use of language is tied to distributions of power within a society (Fairclough 2013). While Rastafari's use of Amharic in Jamaica can be seen as part of an act of resistance to European language ideologies, the use of Amharic in Ethiopia operates differently because Amharic is the dominant language and represents hegemonic structures—part of Teshale's "Ge'ez civilization" (1995). By using Amharic to gain cultural citizenship and visibility in Ethiopia, returnees on the one hand challenge the system to accept outsiders while on the other hand reproduce the ideologies of the Ge'ez civilization.

Scales

Another sign that is intentionally used by returnees involves the Ethiopian scales. Ethiopians and foreigners alike consider the Ethiopian *qeñet* (often translated as scales or modes) to be ancient and rooted in essences of Ethiopianness even though the codification and labeling of the scales is most probably a more recent development (Weiser and Falceto 2013). While various scholars have discussed the use of *qeñet* (Ezra 2007, Kimberlin 1967, Ashenafi 1971, Powne 1968) in Ethiopian music, Weisser and Falceto offer the most in-depth analysis of their development and standardization, noting that the "Amhara secular scales" were standardized and made to fit Western instruments sometime in the mid-twentieth century even though their non-tempered roots indeed have a longer history (Weisser and Falceto: 314).

Kimberlin (1976) and Ashenafi (1971) show that the word *qeñet* is related to terminology for tuning a musical instrument. Weiser and Falceto explain that the *qeñet* indicates the first notes of a melody and the scale of particular songs (2013: 299). Since the 1960s, a doxa of four distinct modes emerged in scholarship and music curricula entitled *ambasel*, *anchi hoye*, *tizita*, and *bati* (ibid). These terms were originally names of songs that required particular tunings

related to specific songs and then came to denote actual scales (Wesier and Falceto 2013).

Although this is not a system that is recognized throughout Ethiopia, or even the Amhara region (Morand 2012), nor has it been in existence in this codified manner for a long time, the system of modes has come to define Ethiopian music in relation to non-Ethiopian music, especially in Addis Ababa. The scales presented in Figure 2.2 are taken from Ezra Abate's transcriptions (2007) but also represent the scales I learned in Ethiopia from musicians.

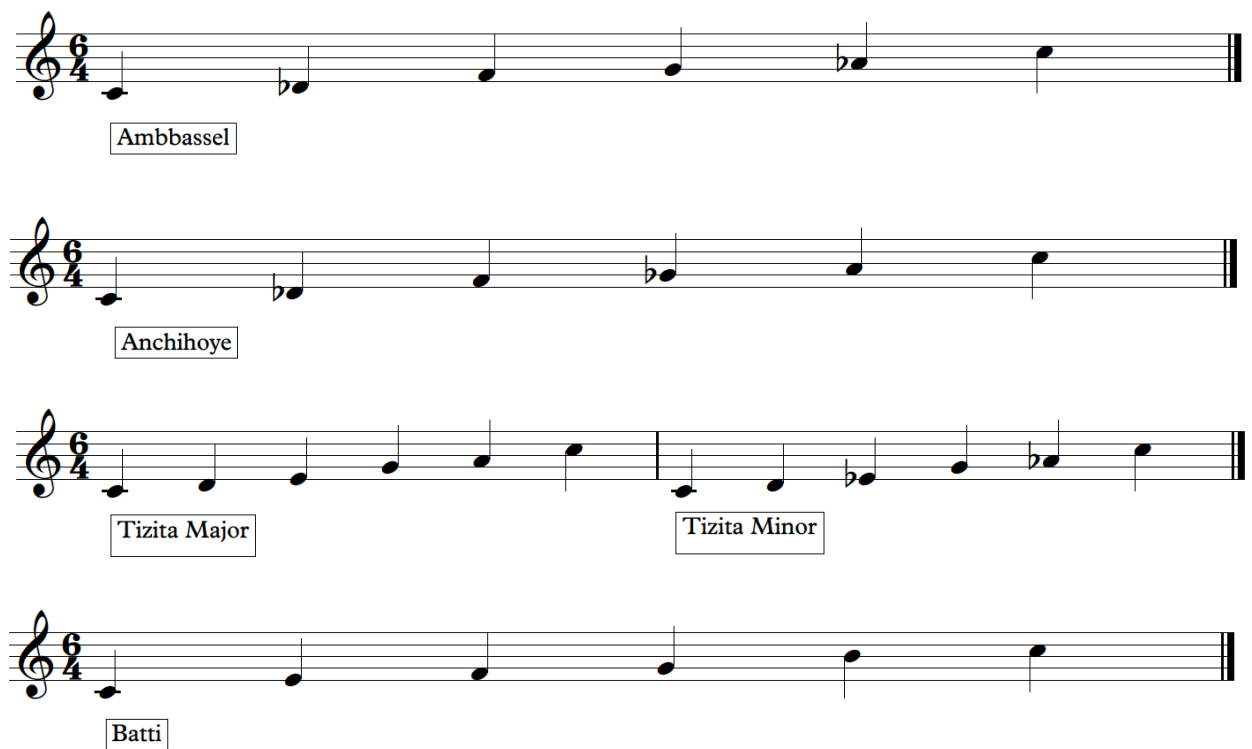


Figure 2.2: Author's transcription of main Ethiopian scales used in Ethiopian popular music.

For purposes of this project, I am most concerned with how people—musicians in particular—make associations between the scales and the antiquity and exceptionalism of Ethiopia. It is, however, difficult to know exactly what the scales mean to different people throughout Ethiopia. Scholars have described the link between the scales and azmari traditions (Ezra 2007) and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Kimberlin 1976) but do not give precise details

about how they arrive at these conclusions. On the Anchihoeye scale for example, Ethnomusicologist Cynthia Tse Kimberlin states that “Anchihoeye is said to have been ascribed to David’s harp by Yared (496-571 A. D.)” (1976: 75). She shows that her informants believe that this particular scale is as old as King David of the Bible. Kimberlin goes on to assert that the *tizita qeñet* is thought to have come about with the arrival of Christianity into Ethiopia and is therefore connected to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but again does not say who or how many people believe this to be true (Kimberlin 1976: 78). The standardized *qeñet* system, having been constructed from older traditions, and more importantly linked to myth histories, signifies central aspects of Ethiopianness for people with whom I spoke in Ethiopia.

Additionally, because these scales have been popularized by famous singers in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, foreigners who are familiar with the *Ethiopiquest* series in particular associate the scales with this period, a time when Ethiopian music was believed to be at its peak.¹⁹ Indeed, Francis Falceto, who wrote about and exposed these songs to international audiences, has termed this period the “Golden Age of Ethiopian Music”. The association of these scales with the 1950s and 1960s, also aligns with the reign of Haile Selassie and so for Rastafari, these scales signify his reign and further cement their gloriousness.

For Sydney Salmon, the use of Ethiopian scales is an important strategy for reaching wider audiences. At a rehearsal with the band one day, in reference to the scales, Salmon said that the “people want to see how Ethiopic we are”. He further stated that “[W]e have to give them reggae with Ethiopian trimmings like the white Habesha shirts with the designs on the collar and sleeves” (Personal Conversation 2016). He often said that he believed that the use of Ethiopian scales in the music is the direction Bob Marley wanted take his music had he lived

¹⁹ *Ethiopiquest* is a series of albums of Ethiopian popular music released in the 1960s and 1970s that became popular with non-Ethiopian audiences all over the world.

longer. When I performed with his band, he asked me to learn all the Ethiopian scales and include them in performances. I was also told by other returnee musicians that if I were to learn the Ethiopian scales on the pan, Ethiopians would enjoy my performances more. This shows an understanding on the part of returnees that the scales were an important marker of Ethiopianness that could be accessed and manipulated by outsiders. On some occasions, during sound check I tested this theory. I started out by playing diatonic scales and then switched to playing a recognizable Ethiopian scale such as *tizita* minor and watched for responses. Most times, Ethiopian musicians immediately noticed what I was doing and they often commented on how nice it was to hear their scales played on a foreign instrument.

Incorporating Ethiopian scales with a reggae feeling certainly produces a different type of sound than Ethiopian music that is set to a reggae groove. For returnees, the reggae is the foundation and the Ethiopian scales are additions. Ma'an Judah explained to me that the Imperial Majestic Band want to keep the integrity of reggae music and so their approach to the use of scales will be different to that of Ethiopians:

When you tell Ethiopians to play the scale, they have trouble with making it fit. But because we feel reggae...reggae is a feeling. There's something about the scales. When you mix the two it works. The way we do it is with more feeling. If you tell an Ethiopian to do it they will put more technicality into it. To make it theoretically right. We just do it with feeling (Personal Interview 2016).

These additions can be implemented in ways that do not compromise the integrity of the reggae feel, however. This is similar to the approach to repatriation in that Rastafari ideology (and to an extent, Jamaican language and culture) is the foundation for the repatriation experience even as individuals are transformed (perhaps slightly) by Ethiopianisms.

Fusing Ethiopian elements with reggae is a major part of the process of performing repatriation. There is a sense amongst many returnees with whom I worked that their lives should

be somewhat new in Ethiopia and that this newness should be reflected in their everyday lives. The new ways of performing reggae is one prominent and marketable means by which returnees can show their repatriated status especially because it allows them to demonstrate competency in the language, music, and dance of Ethiopia.

Singing New Songs

I was always asking the question. Out there we grow up in the situation that the message in the music is like this... "far over there, there is a land for I"... So when we come here, we still gonna sing the same message? For many years I ask this one question...Are we gonna sing that same song?...Or do we have a new message for this and the next coming generation here inna Africa, Ethiopia. And from here that is the heartland, the mama land...Spreading over creation like water covering the earth.

-Ras Ibi (Personal Interview 2016).

The question of what to sing about now that they are repatriated is an important one for returnees, and one that they approach in different ways. In some ways, they write new songs that reflect a change in their environment while some songs are geared towards encouraging the environment to change to suit their visions. In some cases, they write similar songs but make slight adjustments to how they express certain topics.

A notable change in how returnees formulate lyrics about the Promised Land is in how they sing about repatriation. Instead of singing about going to Ethiopia, they want to encourage potential returnees to come home. At a reggae show one night, Buzayo (an Ethiopian Rastafari returnee)²⁰ sang Chronixx's song "Capture Land." In the original song, Chronixx sings "Carry we go home, bring us round a East, cus man a Rasta man, and Rasta nuh live pon nuh capture land." When Buzayo performed it however, he changed the words to "Carry dem come home, bring dem round a East..." This change from us to them is part of the new message that repatriates have for the rest of the world. As a number of Rastafari told me, the songs before used

²⁰ Buzayo is an adopted Ethiopian in France-turned-returnee.

to say “go to Ethiopia” but now we are here, so we say “come”. Contrasting the repatriated musician experience with that of artistes still singing in exile, Ma’an states, “They’re out there singing about here but we’re here now. We’re singing about coming here. Telling them to come.” Often repatriated musicians lamented that there are not enough reggae musicians returning to Ethiopia. In general, the repatriated community desires more “strengthening” in the form of more returnees. Encouraging people to come, even if these words do not reach beyond Ethiopia’s borders often, is a way for returnees to express their desire for others to share in the fulfilment of their destiny.

Sydney Salmon’s biggest hit in Ethiopia, “Babylon is Falling” is an urgent call for people to leave the West and settle in Ethiopia. The lyrics that form the song’s hook is “Babylon is Falling, Ethiopia she is calling”. This song was particularly popular with Ethiopian audiences. On the one hand it encourages repatriation, but it also speaks to Ethiopia as the ideal place to live. In the song he says “inna Shashemene everyone shoulda live” expressing the exceptional nature of this place. This song also is also loved by repatriates because it reinforces that they made the right decision to return and settle in Ethiopia.

Ebony J, one of the most popular female repatriated singers reflected on her approach to music in Ethiopia. She spoke about Jamaican artistes who sing about coming to Ethiopia but do not ever come. She believes that even if they do not come, they might inspire others to come and that is also important. Her song, “Sun on Me” is about her experience being in Ethiopia and it encourages others to come. Singing about coming to Ethiopia reinforces that the Promised Land is indeed a reality for those outside Ethiopia thinking about repatriation. Because these songs explicitly refer to repatriation from the perspective of one who has made that step, the songs make the Promised Land appear more real and something to aspire to.

Promoting the Teachings of Haile Selassie

Ras Kawintseb told me that one of the most important aspects of his mission as a repatriate is to educate Ethiopians about their history and culture, and particularly about Haile Selassie. He and other returnees feel that because Ethiopians are not taught enough about Haile Selassie in schools and so reggae becomes the appropriate medium through which to promote the works and teachings of Ethiopia's last emperor (Personal Conversation 2016).

Many Rastafari referred to reggae as the "king's music", meaning that it is the only popular music genre that was created to praise the King of Kings, Haile Selassie. While Rastafari all over the world freely sing about Haile Selassie as a way to give glory to his works and promote his role as an African leader, this becomes more complicated in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia returnees have to consider how to sing about Haile Selassie to Ethiopian audiences who may not know much about him and certainly do not fully comprehend his significance to the descendants of enslaved Africans in the West. Additionally, many Ethiopians have strong views on Haile Selassie, seeing him as a great leader or a ruthless, heartless dictator. The major issue is that although Ethiopians might believe that Haile Selassie was divinely chosen to be the King of Kings, many Rastafari believe that Haile Selassie is divine. Ethiopians who were alive during Haile Selassie's reign or who heard stories from their parents cannot follow Rastafari logic about his divinity. Not all Rastafari believe that Haile Selassie is God necessarily but that Jesus is revealed in his personality. Rastafari, many of whom have experienced arguments with Ethiopians about the nature of Haile Selassie, have to negotiate these images that Ethiopians have of their last monarch. Although the decision to keep singing about Haile Selassie in Ethiopia is an example of Rastafari staying true to their roots, it is also an example of ways that returnees adapt to their environment because they often find ways to appeal to Ethiopian audiences.

Ras Kawintseb asserted that while in Ethiopia he will continue to “chant the name of Haile Selassie without apology” (Personal Conversation 2016). He was sometimes discouraged from singing about Haile Selassie by Ethiopians who liked his music but were suspicious of his message. He remembers shortly after coming to Ethiopia being labelled by some as being part of the *Moha Anbessa* Political Party—a group that was trying to restore the monarchy. He had no idea that such a party existed and yet he was tied to its politics. Some of his early band members were sometimes afraid to perform with him because of his insistence on singing about Haile Selassie. He finds it interesting that for Rastafari in Jamaica in the early days, it was “considered blasphemous to chant His Majesty as their king while under the rule of King George. It's almost worse here” (Personal Interview 2016). He, however, has never been punished for glorifying Haile Selassie. In fact, he recalls that he was greeted with a thunderous applause the first time he sang about Haile Selassie on stage in Ethiopia. One of his main songs about Haile Selassie, “Lions on Entoto” is based on a story he heard people tell him that Haile Selassie was once spotted riding on a lion in a fire on the Entoto mountain. Since the story originated in Ethiopia he sees this song as a way to connect with Ethiopians. Another song, “Ejarsa Goro”, details the birth of Haile Selassie in the town Ejarsa Goro and is sung in a mix of Amharic and English.²¹ This song is a telling of history and is therefore not seen as a threat or a political statement.

Responding to ideas that Rastafari advance a political agenda to Ethiopia, Ma'an Judah stated that “some people might say reggae is political. It's not political it's history...we come to do what His Majesty left off. These are the teachings we have. We spread it through the music. It's not political” (Personal Interview 2016). For Rastafari, the message of Haile Selassie is central to their mission because of how powerful his words are. Jamaican born Ras Seyoume stated clearly that every song on his album has to do with giving glory to Haile Selassie. Like

²¹ Both songs are on his 2017 *Touch of TSION* Album.

many Rastafari, Ras Seyoume knows about the life and speeches of Haile Selassie and believes strongly that Haile Selassie's teachings are important for the advancement of the human race. Ras Seyoume explained "My word, sound, and power is from the knowledge of His Majesty. My reality of this whole perspective on music and Rasta is His Majesty" (Personal Interview 2016). Ras Mweya, emphasizing the power of Haile Selassie's words said "World War Two was a consequence of the world not listening to His Majesty's word sound because of his truth" (Personal Interview 2016).

Because Rastafari believe in the power of Haile Selassie's speech they compose songs that are direct translations of his speeches just as Bob Marley did with "War". Sydney Salmon and the Imperial Majestic Band's title single on their latest album, "The Ultimate Challenge" (2016) is an example of this. The lyrics to this song is a translation of Haile Selassie's 1963 speech to the United Nations in which he argues that we must put away divisions such as race and nationality and focus on the needs of all, the human race. This is a speech that although originally delivered in Amharic, many Rastafari have memorized in English and is therefore immediately recognized by them. What is interesting is that Salmon released this song in Ethiopia, singing the speech in English. This shows that he intends for this message to be spread globally and not just be limited to Ethiopians. In order to engage Ethiopian audiences however, the track begins with a clip of Haile Selassie delivering the speech in Amharic. This clip is also included in some of Salmon's live performances and shows. In this way, he tries to spread the message of the speech to Ethiopians and non-Ethiopians through music, making explicit the link between his mission as an artist and the objectives of Haile Selassie.

The musical elements in the song reference the *tizita* minor scale. In the transcription shown below in Figure 2.3, the guitar line is played at various points in the song and is a strong

indicator of the *tizita* scale, especially when articulated by Ethiopian guitarists of the band Dereje or Andi. Of importance, too, is that the melodic line begins on the third beat of the bar each time—that is, the beat emphasized by the one drop feel. The guitar line thus signifies Ethiopianness through the use of the scale but also reinforces authentic reggae practices by emphasizing the one drop feel.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Electric Guitar, Keyboard, Electric Bass, and Drum Set. The music is in 4/4 time. The Electric Guitar part starts on the third beat of the first bar with a melodic line. The Keyboard part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The Electric Bass part plays a steady bass line. The Drum Set part features a one-drop reggae rhythm with a prominent kick drum on the third beat of each bar.

Figure 2.3: Author’s transcription of an excerpt from Sydney Salmon’s “The Ultimate Challenge”.

Finding ways to engage Ethiopians on the subject of Haile Selassie is crucial to the process of making the Promised Land habitable for returnees. Not only are Rastafari objectives and spirituality based on their understandings of Haile Selassie, but the Shashemene land grant was awarded by Haile Selassie. The returnees’ claim to the land is thus strongly tied to him. For repatriated Rastafari, Haile Selassie must be at the center of discussions in order to effectively explain their love for Ethiopia and their reason for moving and living there.

The Everyday: Living in the Promised Land, Life in the Promised Land

One of the most important elements of repatriation is experiencing and sharing the joys of living in Zion—and sharing these experiences with others as evidence of successful repatriation. These joys are sometimes expressed in humorous songs that describe everyday life in Ethiopia. These songs can be appreciated by Ethiopians who enjoy hearing how “foreigners” relate to the country. According to Stephen Johnstone the rise of “the everyday” in contemporary art is usually understood in terms of a “desire to bring these uneventful and overlooked aspects of lived experience into visibility” (2008: 12). Johnstone goes on to show, however, that “the everyday” in art involves more than this as argued by a variety of scholars. Lefebvre argues that it is in and from everyday life that “genuine creations are achieved” and that these creations in turn produce our humanity (quoted in Johnstone 2008: 31). Lefebvre further states that it is “everyday life which measures and embodies the changes which take place ‘somewhere else,’ in the ‘higher realms’” (ibid: 32). Singing about and representing the everyday as a repatriated Rastafari in Ethiopia not only brings their experiences (even the banal, repetitive ones) into visibility but also plays a vital role in shaping their new identities as returnees and marks this change for all to see, therefore shaping their relationships with Ethiopians.

One example of such a song is Ras Kawintseb’s “Bado Egir” (Barefoot). In this song, repatriated Rastafari Ras Kawintseb sings about his experience walking around Ethiopia without shoes and the kinds of reactions he gets from onlookers. His experience and decision to walk barefoot is deeply spiritual but he is also able to laugh about it. His walking barefoot is also an important performance of repatriation because it signifies a change in behavior that is seen by all and is often the point of conversation. Being *bado egir* in Ethiopia is understood in different ways. Both the Orthodox Christians and the Muslims remove their shoes before entering the churches and mosques. Ras Kawintseb extends the holiness of those spaces into all of Ethiopia.

He also pointed out to me that many Ethiopians walk *bado egir* because they cannot afford shoes and so he is walking in solidarity with Ethiopians.

The lyrics are in both English and Amharic. Verses are sung in English with the exception of the verse sung by an Ethiopian guest artist. The chorus is in Amharic—“*Be bado egir hul gize egwazallehu*”—and translates to “bare footed I travel every day.” Ethiopians and English speakers are therefore able to understand the essence of this song and appreciate not only the humor but the reverence with which Ras Kawintseb approaches repatriation. The music video for this song shows him dancing and walking with children in the community in which he stays in Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian singer with whom he collaborated points out, in Amharic, that Ras Kawintseb is walking barefoot because he is in the Promised Land, thereby helping Ethiopians understand the meaning and significance of the barefoot performance.

One of Sydney Salmon’s most popular songs in Ethiopia is “Chika” which is Amharic for mud. He sings this song every rainy season because it describes the challenges of walking through Addis Ababa when the roads are muddy. Highly acclaimed Ethiopian musician Girum Mezmur explained his admiration for this song.

The song stays true to the ska. Chika, the rhythm [of the word] itself works with reggae/ska. It's effortless. In the lyrics, there is a lot of mud and then he slipped and this old lady says ‘woyene!’ It's like a day in the life in Addis. That kind of mix is effortless. The lyrics are good. Unforced Amharic lyrics (Personal Interview 2016).

By bringing the everyday into heightened visibility and using Amharic and English, Salmon captures more audiences in Addis Ababa while asserting his place in the country. Girum also commented that what made this song successful is that the word “chika” works well with the guitar skank/strum creating a natural sound for Ethiopians and reggae lovers.

Mark Joseph, who came to Ethiopia from Barbados in his early twenties, records his own music at his makeshift studio in his home in Shashemene. He sings some songs about serious

topics but he also has comedic songs as well. He tries to use a blend of Amharic and Jamaican creole in his music. He admits that he includes some Ethiopian musical elements but that it is not always a conscious decision (Personal Interview 2015). His songs are about the experience of living in Ethiopia. One of the first ones he played for me was his song “Injera and Wot?” in which he does a play on the Ethiopian word “wot,” which means stew and the English word “what”. He makes fun of the challenges returnees encounter in learning Amharic.

Senses of Belonging/ Narratives of Inclusion

A major aspect of the songs that are sung in the Promised Land is that they emphasize narratives of inclusion. Narratives of belonging/inclusion illuminate feelings and desires of those who find themselves marginal to a society (Besson and Olwig 2005). In discussing the politics of exclusion and inclusion in Caribbean societies, Besson and Olwig assert that “this is not just a matter of cultural identification; it also concerns the social and economic rights that membership within a community confers” (2005: 9). A significant number of returnees told me that integration and repatriation go hand in hand and music plays a role in both of these processes. In order to fully integrate into Ethiopian society, it is important for the repatriated community to do this both at the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, they interact with people in their communities, eat with Ethiopians etc. At the macro level, they assert that they belong in Ethiopia, performing Ethiopianness, on big stages and in the media.

It is important to note not only what stories are told through narratives but how they are told and how they are performed (Besson and Olwig 2005, 6). Repatriated musicians assert that they belong in Ethiopia through their songs using a variety of strategies that give prominence to these narratives of inclusion. Veronis highlights the significance of narratives as a “methodological tool to understand broader processes of inclusion, belonging, and identity

formation not only for minority groups, but also for dominant groups through the eyes of minority groups” (Veronis 2015, 62). Examining the narratives that returnees disseminate through music is therefore crucial to understanding how they see themselves in Ethiopia and the terms on which they want to be accepted by Ethiopians. The narratives of inclusion also help to solidify Ethiopia-as-Zion in the minds of Rastafari and other Ethiopians.

In Sydney Salmon’s song “Neva Colonized” he sings about the beauty of Ethiopia and the strength of the Ethiopian peoples who have consistently fought off colonial powers. This song is a good example of the ways returnees mobilize narratives of belonging in their music. The ululating, use of scales, Amharic language, and Ethiopian themes that are present in “Neva Colonized” operate as signs that signify essences of Ethiopians because of their associations with unique and exceptional elements of Ethiopian traditions. Sydney performs this song often in Ethiopia and it usually receives enthusiastic reactions from audiences.

I will describe one such performance of this song which I video recorded from the audience (one of the few times I experienced this song from the audience and not from the stage) at the Addis Beer festival in February 2016. At this performance, like all his performances, Salmon started with a slower version so that audiences could clearly hear the words. The keyboardist began by playing arpeggios to provide the harmony but kept the accompaniment light so that Sydney could address the crowd in English and Amharic over the instrumental bed. He said:

And Amlak, and emena, and hutet. Itiopya tenantena, zare, wedezelalem [One God, one faith, one destiny. Ethiopia today, tomorrow, forever]. Itiopya never colonized. you have to know mama Ethiopia.

By addressing the crowd, mainly a mix of Ethiopian youth and expatriates in this way, Salmon displayed his love for the country and his dedication to learning the language. He started singing

slowly and clearly "Inna Ethiopia, we've got so many different styles, inna Ethiopia we've got so many different tribes. Oromo, Amhara, Wolayta, Tigray, and RASTA!" The word "Rasta" was emphasized by the entire band as they accent the two syllables "Ras-Ta" on the tonic chord. At this point, the crowd erupted into loud cheers. The musical emphasis also brought the phrase to a dramatic conclusion providing a satisfying cadence for listeners.

The song continued with some sung lines in Amharic. It was just enough to impress and connect with Ethiopian audiences but not so much that non-Amharic speakers would lose interest. The lyrics included: "*Fikerachin, andinetachin, emnetachin, hailachin*" (our love, our unity, our faith, our power). By including himself in this narrative (our love, etc.) he shows that he and Rastafari are part of the ethnoscape of Ethiopia all bound up in the same destiny with Ethiopians.

At the end of the slow introductory section the drummer gave a roll to usher in the more upbeat reggae section. Immediately the Ethiopian guitarist, Dereje, started playing melodic lines in the *ambassel* scale (Figure 2.1) over the chord progression. The Ethiopian *ambassel* scale used in this song also takes on a role in the narrative of inclusion. Because it indexes Ethiopianness, the sound of the scale locates the repatriated musicians within the realm of Ethiopianness. The Ethiopian backup singer, Helen, started ululating—a sound often made by Ethiopian women in churches and celebratory events. The effect brought together sounds of Ethiopia and Jamaica and sent a message that these two cultures can and should be compatible. Through such approaches, the repatriated Rastafari are incorporating elements of Ethiopia into their own personal stories while also asserting their presence into Ethiopia's history and culture.

Repatriated Rastafari in Ethiopia often speak about themselves as the 83rd tribe of Ethiopia. Both Bonacci (2015) and Macleod (2014) mention that there was a year when

repatriated Rastafari were invited to participate in an annual cultural festival of the nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia that celebrates ethnic diversity. In Ababu Minda's Master's thesis on the repatriate community in Shashemene, he discusses the ways returnees perform their identities as being compatible with the ways ethnic groups in Ethiopia are labelled and understood (1997). Through certain boundary markers that Rastafari maintain, Ababu shows how the repatriated Rastafari community can be considered an ethnic group in Ethiopia according to the framework of ethnic federalism. This partially explains why Salmon included "Rasta" in the list of Ethiopian tribes in his song "Nevah Colonized". He explained, "When I say 'Rasta' in 'Never Colonized', it is accepted and understood by Ethiopians. This country is the only country with Ras so it's not strange that Ras would return here" (Personal Interview 2017).²² Because Rastafari identify with the Ge'ez word "Ras", Sydney sees this as one of many means through which the community can fit in and belong to Ethiopia.

Ras Kawintseb also mobilizes narratives that situate Rastafari as a tribe of Ethiopia in his performances. When he performs Bob Marley's "Trench Town", instead of singing the chorus "we come from Trench Town, Trench Town" he sings "we come from Shashe, Sha Sha Shashemene". By placing himself and other Rastafari in a region outside of Addis Ababa, he and other returnees claim belonging. Being from a particular region in Ethiopia is an important part of ethnic identity in Ethiopia and this trope is used by Rastafari in many songs that center them in Shashemene. Sydney's song "We Love Shashamane" also roots the Rastafari community in a place in Ethiopia, therefore furthering the idea that they belong. By mobilizing narratives of inclusion on big stages and in the media, returnees are challenging Ethiopian nationalism to include an immigrant group. They do this by demonstrating their competence in dominant

²² "Ras" means "head" in Amharic and is also a title for a governor below a king.

Ethiopian culture (Ethiopianness) but also by highlighting their unique culture as Rastafari to show they belong as an Ethiopian ethnic group

This narrative of inclusion is also mobilized by other foreigners in Ethiopia. Beatrice Braconnier, the cultural director for the Alliance Ethio-française in Addis Ababa, works with many Ethiopian and Rastafarian musicians. Part of her job is to book cultural performances that display the artistic traditions of Ethiopia free of charge to the public. She explained that each year she has some reggae (with repatriated Rastafarians) bands perform at the Alliance Ethio-française and she considers them part of the local scene. She said, “The origin of reggae is not Ethiopia. But it is one part of Ethiopia because of Haile Selassie. Otherwise the Rastafarians would not be in Ethiopia” (Personal Interview 2015). She views the Rastafari presence in Ethiopia as being tied to Haile Selassie, which is enough for them to be seen as belonging there. Francis Falceto similarly informed me that when he was working on putting together music festivals in Ethiopia that celebrated Ethiopian music, repatriated Rastafarians were sometimes included because they were seen to represent part of Ethiopia’s diverse cultures (Personal Conversation 2016). By including repatriated Rastafari reggae music in programs that reflect local music practices, music promoters further emphasize that returnees belong in Ethiopia.

Conclusion

The variety of ways in which repatriated Rastafari approach their music in Zion not only reflects the various ideologies about repatriation and the Rastafari movement but also points to the ways they respond to their new environment. The decision to produce and partake in familiar sounds helps returnees cope with the many changes they already face in daily life while the decision to significantly change their sounds helps the community to connect with Ethiopians and foster understanding between groups. By using sounds and themes that align with dominant

forms of Ethiopianness such as language and scales, repatriated Rastafari contribute to narratives that emphasize social hierarchies in Ethiopia. In some sense, they are chanting up a system in Ethiopia that many Ethiopians might see as Babylon.

The strategies that returnees implement help the community gain more visibility in Ethiopia and therefore more recognition. The labor involved in this process is necessary for returnees to mobilize narratives of belonging in Ethiopia that they hope will result in more respect and the development of policies to accommodate their presence in Ethiopia. In the next chapter I turn my focus to the ways returnees' musical strategies combine with their space-making strategies in Shashemene and Addis Ababa.

Chapter 3

Musical Sites of Contact and Inscription in Shashemene and Addis Ababa

I had finally worked up enough courage to take my steelpan to the famous spot Mama's Kitchen in Addis Ababa to perform at the popular Monday night jam session. Most of Addis Ababa's top musicians performed there so I figured this would be a good way to meet some of them and expose Ethiopian audiences to the sound of the steelpan. I wore a button-down shirt to try to look as respectable as the typical patrons at this restaurant. It was chilly and my hands were a bit cold. The place was packed. I decided on Marley's "No Woman No Cry" because of the song's popularity. Somewhere in the middle of my performance a man from the audience came up to me on the stage and stared into my instrument. This actually happens every now and then in different countries because people are curious to know where the sound is coming from, so I thought nothing of it. He then gestured to me that he wanted to play the instrument and reached out for my sticks during the performance. I held on to them, partly because I was in the middle of a musical phrase, and also because I found it odd that he was trying to take my sticks away in front of a sizable audience. I, however, also felt that because I was a foreigner I should not be seen arguing or being aggressive with an Ethiopian. He kept asking for the sticks so eventually I thought to myself, "it's a jam session, it's informal and friendly, so why not hand over the sticks to see what he would do? This is, after all, a research strategy."

He awkwardly held the sticks and knocked around on the instrument for a bit. I stood beside him and smiled nervously. The audience looked on, perhaps as confused as I felt. After about ten seconds or so it appeared to me that was turning the sticks around so the wooden part would hit the pan (and therefore possibly cause damage to my instrument). That was it. I had enough. I went at him and tried to grab the sticks. He held on as if they belonged to him. I then

pushed him away from my steelpan. The Ethiopian band members in the background were still keeping the groove. The audience members focused on us. Other musicians who were on a break jumped onto the stage and dragged him off as soon as they realized what was happening. I finished my song and exited the stage, extremely confused about what had just happened. The band members told me afterwards that they assumed he was a friend of mine and that is why they did not intervene sooner. They explained that he was probably a bit drunk.

As I experienced, live music venues in Addis Ababa such as Mama's Kitchen are great places to connect with music lovers in Ethiopia. For repatriated musicians, these types of spaces are extremely important for maintaining contact with Ethiopians and keeping a visible and audible presence in Ethiopia while growing their fan base. These spaces facilitate intrigue, interest, and discussion but they can also facilitate contestation to varying degrees as my experience shows. Like my steelpan, repatriated Rastafari are sometimes seen as novelties or peculiar subjects by Ethiopians. Music spaces therefore allow Ethiopians and returnees the chance to share musical experiences and work towards mutual understandings. I posit that reggae venues in Ethiopia are conduits of the politics of repatriation and are contested sites in which conceptions of space, music, spirituality, and identity are negotiated. In the previous chapter I showed how returnees use music to grow their presence in Shashemene and Addis Ababa by implementing a number of musical techniques. In this chapter I show how returnees' musical strategies take on spatial dimensions as they seek to inscribe their presence into the soundscapes of Ethiopia. Additionally, I show that music venues serve as contact zones between Ethiopians and returnees that allow for the interaction that returnees desire. I argue that through these spaces, returnees are able to challenge and change their physical environment even as these spaces enact power over returnees, reinforcing their subjectivities as undocumented immigrants.

Placing Rastafari and Reggae in Ethiopia

The musical mission of returnees in Ethiopia involves significant spatial considerations. As ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice has argued, it is “important to think about the multiple social settings in which people produce, understand, and experience music” (Rice 2003: 160-162). While place is often understood to be somewhat mapable in the cartographic sense, Henri Lefebvre asserts that “physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it” and argues that space is actively produced by human agents (Lefebvre 1991: 13). Jacobsen follows Lefebvre in noting that definitions of space should foreground the actors and users who produce space. (Jacobsen 2009: 462, Lefebvre 1991). Kristen Jacobsen discusses space as being created when “specific cultural practices—such as performance—link collective senses of self to collective senses of place. These spaces are then actively created, recreated, invested, and disinvested through a variety of expressive practices” (Jacobsen 2009: 462). Anthony Seeger, who describes the different singing styles that the Suyá perform in different spaces in the Amazon region, states that these “spatial domains were endowed with meanings and associations by singing, dancing, and ceremonial activities. In this way, singing and silence were part of the constant re-creation of significant space” (2004: 69). Musicians and those involved in the processes of musicking, therefore are integral to the production of certain spaces.

Following Lefebvre that spaces are socially produced, I show that music plays a critical role in the production of space especially for Rastafari who believe that words and sounds have power to change their environment (Chude-Sokei 1992). Using music to create spaces in which they have some degree of autonomy, repatriated Rastafari assert their presence in Ethiopia while also linking their senses of selves to distinctly Jamaican aesthetics and inviting Ethiopians to experience snippets of Jamaican/Rastafari reality. Rastafari challenge preexisting, local conceptions of space in Ethiopia in multiple ways, firstly, by moving to Ethiopia and occupying

space. Erin MacLeod notes that space is of considerable importance to repatriated Rastafari who have “taken the concept of Ethiopianism and added to it a spatial dimension, transforming the idea of a symbolic Ethiopia into a reality” (2014: 95). Not only have Rastafari returned to Ethiopia to claim space by settling, they have also used music to gain visibility and audibility, making sure that their conceptions of space in Ethiopia are known at local and global levels. Roger Rouse writes that “migration has always had the potential to challenge established spatial images. It highlights the social nature of space as something created and reproduced through collective human agency and, in so doing, reminds us that, within the limits imposed by power, existing spatial arrangements are always susceptible to change” (1991: 11). In addition to claiming space for purposes of belonging and fulfilment, Rastafari use music to create spaces for themselves to live in the Promised Land and maintain meaningful social interactions with each other and Ethiopians.

In Shashemene, living amongst Ethiopians, one challenge that Rastafari face is that their conception of the land—its meaning and significance—differs significantly from how Ethiopians understand their country and environment. Erin Macleod, who follows Lefebvre’s theories on the production of space, writes that the “‘space’ of Shashemene has been produced in different ways by the people who live within its borders which have changed over time” (2014: 97). Rastafari have created a “sense of the space as blessed and divine” (2014: 97) while Ethiopians focus more on the economic value and legal claims to land. Changes in governance in Ethiopia have coincided with significant changes in policies that affect access to land and space throughout the country. These policies are currently in conflict with repatriated Rastafarians’ conceptions of Shashemene because as far as they are concerned, the land was granted to them by Emperor

Haile Selassie and such a grant cannot be revoked. Haile Selassie, as emperor, controlled to whom land was allocated throughout Ethiopia (MacLeod 2014: 100).

The *Derg* regime nationalized all land in 1975, which meant, for repatriated Rastafari, that the land they had previously been granted (as descendants of enslaved Africans) was no longer theirs but belonged to the new government. MacLeod notes, however, that although the change in governance affected the original land agreement, the *Derg* allowed the repatriates to remain on the land and treated them like other Ethiopians (2014: 107). In 1995, the EPRDF government maintained control of all land but also redivided Ethiopia into different regions along ethnic lines (MacLeod 2014: 108). This meant that Shashemene officially fell within the Oromo region. The Oromo ethnic group is the largest in Ethiopia and has historically opposed Haile Selassie and the imperial regimes of Ethiopia. Rastafari in Shashemene are therefore living on land that was granted by Haile Selassie but is now dominated by an ethnic group who did not view Haile Selassie as a good person.

Building on Erin MacLeod's work on space and place in Shashemene and my own findings, I view this town as a 'contact zone' (Pratt 1991) in which Ethiopians from different ethnic groups and repatriated Rastafari interact, work together, and come into conflict with each other as they all stake a claim to the land in different ways and all the while negotiating senses of community. Mary Louise Pratt coined the term 'contact zones' to refer to "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (1991: 34)

I also explore the idea of reggae venues within and outside Shashemene as extensions of this contact zone to a certain extent because of the ways in which Ethiopians and returnees

interact through music and dance while positioning themselves in relation to the reggae genre in different (and sometimes conflicting) ways. Hollington notes that the “reggae scene constitutes one of the major domains of contact between Ethiopians and Rastafari in Ethiopia” (2016: 144). The music in these spaces can then be seen as an “integral part of the process by which spaces are created for social interaction, entertainment and enjoyment” (Connell and Gibson 2003: 15). These reggae venues outside of Shashemene in particular allow more Ethiopians who may never visit Shashemene opportunities to interact with the repatriated community.

As previously stated, live music is an important aspect of the entertainment scene in Addis Ababa and is therefore one of the strongest means by which returnees can maintain a presence in Ethiopia. Their ability to perform live reggae is arguably also their strongest asset. Using contact zones as a lens is potentially useful for understanding this interaction because the concept takes into account that “intercultural experiences are shaped by the space in which they occur” (MacLeod 2014: 96) and that the imbalances of power within these spaces affects the types of interactions (Connell and Gibson 2003: 15). While reggae venues may not constitute “highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” as Pratt describes, or involve “conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” as James Clifford suggests (Clifford 1997: 192), repatriated musicians are many times left at a disadvantage because of their limited knowledge of Amharic (the national language), Afaan Oromoo (a major language used in Shashemene), Ethiopian music, and their undocumented status which limits their ability to secure sponsorship and negotiate fair payment. I therefore view these contact zones as contested sites that are pregnant with opportunities for visibility and recognition.

Shashemene Soundscapes: Creating Spaces and Senses of Place in Shashemene

Travelling south from Addis Ababa on the King's Highway, one of the first signs that indicate you are entering Shashemene is one with a picture of Bob Marley with the words "welcome to Shashemene" written in English, Amharic, and Afaan Oromoo. Upon entering the "Jamaica Sefer"²³ (as it known by locals) it is hard to miss the various Rastafari-owned businesses that are painted with depictions of Haile Selassie and the Lion of Judah flag. The Rastafari community in Shashemene have made sure that their presence is visible to those who pass through and to those who live in the town. What is less obvious for those who speed through on their way to other destinations is that Rastafari also make their presence known through sound.

Soon after arriving in Ethiopia for my fieldwork I was invited to Shashemene by Ras Kawintseb for a few days to attend the festivities celebrating the coronation of Haile Selassie. I was shown to a *gojo bet*, a type of mud hut, in which I would spend the night. The next morning as the sunlight crept through the cracks in the window I was struck by the cacophony of bird sounds. There was also the sound of donkeys, chickens, and dogs, then, quite unexpectedly, a loud piercing wail. I jumped up out of my bed. I immediately thought it was some unusual animal that I had never encountered and then realized that it was a human voice. It was Ras Kawintseb chanting Jaaaaahhhh Rastafaaariiii. I then heard a softer voice, almost that of a child in the distance, answer with a similar chant. Another voice, that of a man, yet further away also responded with a similar chant. I soon discovered that this chanting was a daily ritual among some Rastafari in this section of Shashemene. It was started by an elder Rastafari and after his passing, others in the area took it up. "It's our own wake up call for the village" said Ras Kassa, one of Ras Kawintseb's neighbors (Personal Conversation 2016). Ras Kawintseb said that the

²³ Jamaican Neighborhood

chanting is also a way of asserting a presence in the community. “The Christians have their chants, and so do the Muslims, so why shouldn’t we?” (Personal Conversation 2016). Although only a handful of Rastafari participate in this ritual, it is loud enough to be heard by at least ten households in the area and highlights how chanting is used on a small scale to claim sonic space.

Chanting the name of Haile Selassie is, however, quite different from other loud chants in Ethiopia in praise of Egziabhier or Allah because of who Haile Selassie is to Ethiopians. This issue is heightened in Shashemene especially because Shashemene is part of the Oromo region and inhabited by people who already view Rastafari as a cultural threat (Ababu 1997: 90).

Bonacci states that “On the local level, in Shashemene, the Rastas support the emperor, who, in the eyes of the Oromo people, represents a coercive central power” (Bonacci 2007: 500). Ababu Minda states that the “state of Oromia is not comfortable with the presence of a group of people, within Oromia, who wish the restoration of the Solomonic dynasty” (1997: 89). This point was further solidified to me by Oromo scholar Dr. Gemechu Megerssa who expressed opposition to Rastafari coming to Shashemene and singing songs of praise to someone who he sees as one who oppressed the original inhabitants of Shashemene. He exclaimed in almost disbelief that “the Rasta is in an Oromo country but wants to sing an Amhara song” (Personal Interview 2016). He also said that such loud singing could be potentially dangerous for Rastafari because it fuels the disdain that Oromo people already may have for Rastafari.

Rastafari also chant the name of Haile Selassie in Shashemene at Nyabinghi tabernacles. There are currently two tabernacles. The main tabernacle facilitates I-ses²⁴ on Saturdays while a smaller one on the other side of the highway operates on Tuesdays. On some occasions, one can hear the chant of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the call to prayer at the mosque, and the Rastafari drumming all in one area. There is definitely an audible dimension to spirituality in

²⁴Rasta talk for “Praises”

Ethiopia and the Rastafari community is not to be left out. While Christians chant “Egzhiabhier” and the Muslims chant “Allah”, Rastafari chant “Haile Selassie.” The drums, the heartbeat rhythm, is heard throughout the community on days when Nyabinghi Rastafari keep their I-ses.

Returnee Desta Meghoo spoke to me about the Nyabinghi in spatial terms stating that the layout of Nyabingi tabernacles is important for how interaction occurs. Because participants form a circle, everyone is on one level as opposed to some people on a stage looking down on others (as it is in some Twelve Tribes of Israel gatherings) and this layout is especially suitable for interaction between Ethiopians and returnees. She further noted that the circular design of the Nyabinghi tabernacle is similar to the design of some Ethiopian Orthodox Churches and is therefore more relatable and accessible to Ethiopians.

At sessions that I attended at both tabernacles in Shashemene, I noticed that Ethiopian men were in attendance. Sometimes Ethiopian men were allowed to play the drums during the celebrations even though most do not identify as Rastafari. Members of the repatriated Rastafari Nyabinghi Order encourage this participation because it is a way of engaging the community although I noticed that some of the local Ethiopians struggled to play the Nyabinghi rhythm correctly. Unfortunately, the opening up of the tabernacles to Ethiopians in Shashemene has also brought about some contestations. Paul the Dragon Slayer said that the Oromo youth disturb the I-ses at the tabernacle and are becoming a problem. I, too, noticed that some of the young men from the area who hang around the tabernacle (and other Rastafari landmarks) try to harass visitors by asking for money to enter even though there is no entrance fee. These young men can be hostile at times. Still, Rastafari gather as often as they can to drum and chant I-ses to Haile Selassie (Paul, Personal Interview 2016).

Even louder than the drumming and chanting of the Nyabinghi in Shashemene is the sound system music and live shows that happen from time to time usually hosted by the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Desmond Martin, a repatriate who has lived in Ethiopia for over forty years, explained that when he first arrived, the Rastafari community had little means of enjoying sound system music. There was no electricity in Shashemene but he had a battery-operated record player that he brought with him from England in the 1970s and this helped Rastafari enjoy reggae music amongst themselves (Desmond Martin, Personal Interview 2016). Over the years, different returnees brought sound system equipment that added a new audible dimension to Shashemene.

Sound System operators in Shashemene host dances sometimes, giving returnees and Ethiopians opportunities to dance and enjoy themselves. Because the Jamaica Sefer is on the outskirts of the Shashemene center there are not many venues where people can go to listen to reggae music. Ras Kawintseb remembers that the Twelve Tribes of Israel headquarters used to host weekly dances but that at one point it was causing problems for nearby residents who complained about the noise. His house is about a fifteen-minute walk to the headquarters and I could clearly hear the music from there one night. Because the sound system venues are outdoors, the sound is broadcasted throughout the town and at times, due to these familiar sounds, I felt as though I were in a community in Jamaica. Ironically, as the returnees create musical spaces to build up the Promised Land, these spaces evoke senses of Jamaica through the kinds of sounds they produce.

Paul the Dragon Slayer affirmed that the sound system is a way for the Rastafari community to maintain a presence in Shashemene. He notes that “especially on particular days, the loudest thing you hear is the [sound system at the] Twelve Tribes HQ” (Personal Interview

2016). The power of the speakers can spread music far and wide and so the entire community can be aware that the Rastafari are gathering. By occupying sonic space in Shashemene, the sound system music inscribes the presence of Rastafari into Shashemene soundscapes and landscapes.

Annual live shows that Rastafari host in Shashemene also tend to be loud and draw large crowds. There are two to three major events held in Shashemene annually in which reggae music is the primary draw: The celebration of Bob Marley's birthday in February, the celebration of Haile Selassie's birthday in July, and the celebration of the coronation of Haile Selassie in November. These events usually feature live reggae music performed by a variety of singers who are backed by the Imperial Majestic Band/ Twelve Tribes of Israel Band. In addition to music, members of the repatriated community in Shashemene showcase their crafts, foods, drinks, and other items and earn income from the sales of these items. These reggae shows therefore provide a means for the extended repatriated community to promote their businesses and earn money. These events not only bring together Rastafari in Shashemene but they also encourage returnees from other parts of Ethiopia to come, bringing even more of the community together. The majority of the audiences for these events however, tend to be Ethiopians and so the events allow Ethiopians and Rastafari to come together.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel's annual celebration of Haile Selassie's birth on July 23rd is the most well-known of these. I attended this event in 2014, 2016, and 2017 and each time it attracted numerous, and mainly Ethiopian, patrons. This event is now part of the unofficial Shashemene calendar of events that also attracts tourists and other visitors—including Rastafari—from other countries. This particular show, because of its popularity and regularity, is one of the main ways that Ethiopians in Shashemene interact with returnees on a large scale.

Also important is that Rastafari have a large degree of control in this and other Shashemene venues in terms of what they say and how they decorate the venue. Ethiopians who participate in these events therefore are exposed to Rastafari culture in its fullness. In these spaces, Ethiopians gain glimpses into the returnees' visions of their Promised Land, and through music and dance, are able to participate in Promised Land living.

During the performances at this event, Ethiopians in the audience sometimes climbed on stage to dance and be seen in the limelight before quickly being removed. Crossing the border that separates audience from stage is at once a defiance of authority, shows a desire to be cool, and expresses enjoyment. Their enthusiasm does not necessarily mean that they share similar views to the repatriated Rastafari community, however. At the concert in 2016 during Sydney Salmon's performance, an Ethiopian audience member started to fight with someone causing the crowd to disperse. For many returnees, that fight "killed the vibes" of the evening. They attributed the fight to the local Ethiopian men who just do not understand what roots reggae is about because if they did, they would not be fighting. The over consumption of alcohol is also part of the issue.

These shows also foster positive contact. Ethiopian Helen Legasse, who now sings with the Imperial Majestic Band, told me that when she was a teenager she used to attend the July 23rd celebration concert in Shashemene. Even though she did not know much about the Rastafari movement, she remembers liking these concerts. This concert was her first contact with Rastafari and now she identifies as a member of the Twelve Tribes of Israel organization (Personal Interview 2016). Erin MacLeod writes about bringing an Ethiopian friend to this event in Shashemene even though he was suspicious of Rastafari. By the end of the concert he had a more

informed and positive opinion of Rastafari especially after realizing that they believe in Jesus (2014).

I have tried to represent the main spaces that returnees use in Shashemene on the map in Figure 3.1 to illustrate the kind of sonic presence they maintain. As seen on the map, most of the spaces are located on the main road, the King's Highway, in Shashemene and therefore easily attract the attention and patronage of locals and visitors. Of course, as opposed to visuals such as painted murals, sound is temporal and some of these spaces only generate sound once per week or once per month. However, the power of sound lies in its ability to transcend borders. People can neither avoid nor block out the sounds that Rastafari produce in Shashemene. What is also important here is that some of these spaces, the main Nyabinghi tabernacle, the Twelve Tribes of Israel HQ and the Bolt House have been in Shashemene for many years. They have become landmarks. Even on Google Maps, the area is labelled "Jamaican Safar". This means that Rastafari have been able to root their sounds in specific, unchanging spaces for a long time.

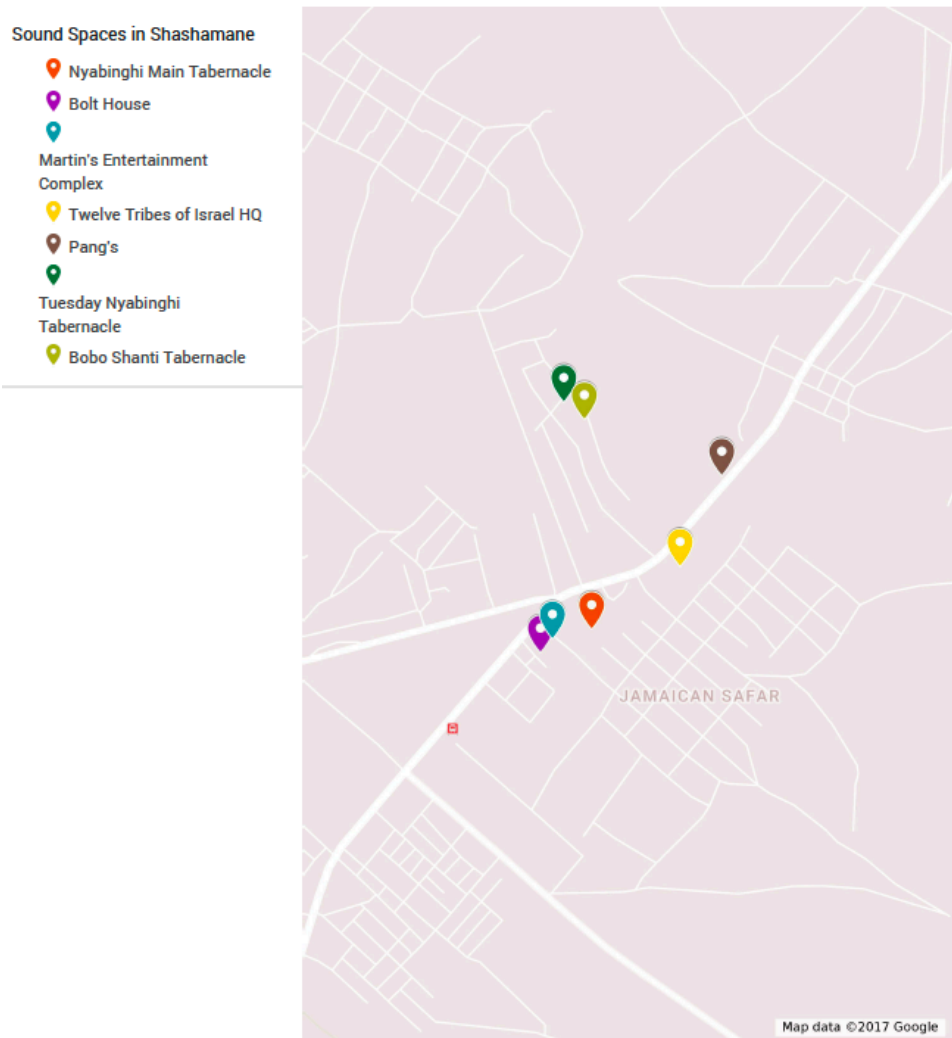


Figure 3.1: Author's Map showing Rastafari music venues in Shashemene. 2017.

By instilling visual and sonic signs in Shashemene over the years, returnees have constructed and added to new internal and external senses of the town. They have done this by using music to create and transform specific spaces into Rastafari venues. Ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes states that music does not simply provide a marker in a pre-structured social space, but the means by which this space can be transformed (1994: 4). These venues then become part of the identity of Shashemene or part of the way people sense Shashemene. Steven Feld's writing on music, movement, and sense of place is instructive here. Feld argues that

scholars should pay more attention to the many ways that places are sensed writing that “the overwhelmingly multisensory character of perceptual experience should lead to some, expectation for a multisensory conceptualization of place” (Feld 1996: 182). He notes that much has been said about how places are sensed and evoked through visual representations and asks “but what of place as heard and felt? Place as sounding or resounding?” (1996: 182). Feld argues that experiencing and knowing place—the idea of place as sensed and place as sensation—can proceed through a “complex interplay of the auditory and the visual, as well as through other intersensory perceptual processes” (ibid 185). By occupying and transforming spaces in Shashemene through sound, returnees have contributed to the ways locals and foreigners sense the town and therefore marks the community as belonging in that place.

Rastafari are able to use spaces in Shashemene to assert their presence in that community in a number of visual and performative ways. Because they have established themselves there over many decades and have claimed land, they have a certain degree of control over what types of events they can host. However, the returnees are from the cultural and numbered minority in Shashemene and even though at times they might prefer to limit the Ethiopians who come to their events (because of drunkenness and fighting), they need the patronage of the locals. Another issue they face is that for reggae musicians who want to earn a living from music, Shashemene does not provide enough options. At least five returnees with whom I worked have housing in Shashemene and Addis Ababa and move between these locations regularly. Ras Kawintseb, for example, resides in Shashemene but takes a bus to Addis Ababa every weekend to rehearse and perform. This travel is both expensive and time consuming but, for him, necessary. In the capital city, although there are more performance options, Rastafari do not have as much of a presence nor do they have as much control over the venues in which they perform.

Repatriated musicians, therefore, have a responsibility to not only maintain a presence on the land grant in Shashemene, but to also bring a piece of Shashemene, the main contact zone, to the capital through their music.

Reggae Spaces in Addis Ababa

When I started my fieldwork in October 2015 in Addis Ababa, the Jams Addis nightclub on a Saturday night was the place to be for those who wanted to experience live reggae in a setting that was relatively accessible to those living in the capital. Sydney Salmon—a repatriated Rastafari from Jamaica—and the members of the Imperial Majestic Band were pumping out reggae vibrations through Ethiopia’s capital city in this nightclub with a message of love, African unity, and devotion to the teachings of Haile Selassie. Jams Addis, located between the main airport in Bole and the Imperial Hotel, drew crowds that included Ethiopians, repatriated Rastafari, and foreigners who were staying in Addis Ababa. Like most other clubs that offered live music, the majority of patrons were between their late twenties and forties. Inside the club was a large painting of Bob Marley with arms outstretched, signifying that this is a reggae space even though there were also salsa nights. On a packed night, the club held close to one hundred people dancing and drinking.

Sydney Salmon’s song, “Jamming inna Jams Addis” (2016) captures the atmosphere of the Jams Addis nightclub but it also speaks to his vision for the role of reggae in Ethiopia as a music genre that brings people together. The lyrics further speak to issues of music, space, and place by locating the act of jamming (musicking and dancing) within the specific space of the Jams Addis nightclub and the wider geographic place of Ethiopia—the Promised Land. The chorus is as follows:

Jamming inna Jams Addis
A reggae music inna Ethiopia

Jamming inna Jams Addis
A reggae music in Addis Ababa
Jamming inna Jams Addis
A reggae music come fi push it likkle further
Jamming inna Jams Addis
A reggae music bring the people together

The lyrics of this song imagine a reggae scene in Ethiopia that brings people together from all walks of life to enjoy positive vibrations. Ethiopian pianist Sammuell Yirga who discussed the reggae scene in Ethiopia with me said “people think the reggae scene in Ethiopia is big but it's not big. There is only one place you can get reggae in Addis. Jams Addis. Few things happen in three four months but that isn't a music scene for me” (Personal Interview 2016). Will Straw defines a scene as a “cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization.” The scene also exhibits the “ongoing exploration of one or more musical idioms said to be rooted within a geographically specific historical heritage” (Straw 1991: 273). Reggae music, rooted in Jamaican traditions, can be said to form part of the popular music scene in Addis Ababa, though it is quite unstable.

The Jams Addis night club closed in early 2016, leaving the Imperial Majestic Band without a venue. This is not unusual as reggae venues tend not to last very long in Addis Ababa, as Samuel stated. Even though the venue closed, the band still performs the song “Jammin inna Jams Addis” at other shows because the lyrics relate to all of Ethiopia and not just to the specific club. Beatrice, the cultural director at the Alliance Ethio-française said that “reggae places don't stay for long in Addis. No one place for reggae here...jazz has spaces so I don't understand why reggae doesn't have a space for itself” (Personal Interview 2015). Beatrice indicated that there has not been a venue set aside for reggae music in Addis Ababa that has been able to remain open for a significant number of years. There have, however been a number of venues that have

come and gone that contributed significantly over time to the growing presence of reggae in Ethiopia. These venues are important sites of inquiry because in many ways they bring essences of Shashemene and the repatriation experience to the capital city of Ethiopia and therefore afford repatriated Rastafari greater visibility. The temporal nature of reggae venues in Addis Ababa requires that repatriated musicians be constantly on the search for new venues. This also means that the repatriates tend to perform in vastly different types of venues from time to time as they seek permanent spots and are therefore interacting with new and different types of audiences.

Reggae trickled into Ethiopia from the 1970s in the form of recordings as part of the global spread of reggae music. Ashenafi Kebede notes that in the 1960s and 1970s, “Western music, particularly of the Afro-American style, has been widely diffused and made popular by commercial enterprises of disc records” (1976: 294). It may be possible that reggae music was part of this wave. Veteran Ethiopian reggae singer Zeleke Gessesse remembers hearing reggae on the radio in the early 1970s in Ethiopia. At that time, he mainly remembered hearing Jimmy Cliff but not Bob Marley (Personal Interview 2015). The *Derg* regime that took over power in 1974 implemented strict restrictions on what came into the country and what was played on radio. For almost two decades, Ethiopians therefore had limited access to reggae music. When Bob Marley visited Ethiopia in 1978 not many people outside the Rastafari community knew who he was. Ethiopian-American Teddy Mack remembers performing with the Dahlak Band one night at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa when in came a group of disheveled Rastafarians. One of them, wearing a white shirt and torn jeans, was invited on stage to sing “No Woman no Cry”, a song the band knew but assumed it was one of Jimmy Cliff’s hits. Only much later did the band realize that this was Bob Marley’s song and this man was the legend himself (Personal Conversation 2016).

When I asked Ethiopian reggae and dancehall artiste Jonny Ragga why it took so long for reggae to become popular in Addis he responded:

It would be better for me to tell you why reggae was not popular before. We were closed off. No professional promoters, No way to promote the music. We had to force the vibe to change it to reggae. When I started performing, I saw people leaving the dance floor. Because Ethiopians are shy people. They do *eskista* when they know it. But if it [the music] is different and they don't know it, they get shy (Personal Interview 2016).

By “closed off” he is referring to the period between 1974 and 1992 in which Ethiopia was under a socialist/communist regime led by the *Derg*. During Ethiopia's *Derg* regime, nightlife was suspended and a strict curfew was enforced making it difficult for nightclubs to remain in operation. Jonny Ragga continued:

Let me give you the picture. We never had FM radio stations...Military regime. We didn't have information. People from outside used to send me music. It was really hard. When I started performing reggae music (around 1997), people didn't know reggae music. Maybe they heard a few Bob Marley songs.

The picture that Jonny Ragga paints reveals why the spatial dimensions of reggae in Addis Ababa could not exist during the 1970s and 1980s. It was not until the early 1990s when the *Derg* regime was overthrown that night clubs started making a comeback in Addis Ababa and that reggae clubs first appeared on the scene.

The map of Addis Ababa in Figure 3.2 shows the many spaces that have facilitated live reggae music since the early 1990s.²⁵ While only a few of these would have been open at any one time, this map shows that reggae venues have been all over, and in the central parts of, the capital city. The returnees' labor of constantly making sure that there is always at least one reggae venue open is a major reason for the existence of these spaces. As soon as a venue closes,

²⁵ I created this map based on a previous map created by Mariette Bonnabesse in her 2009 dissertation as well as based on venues described to me in my interviews with reggae practioners in Addis Ababa.

the returnees are on the hunt to convince another space to have a reggae night. This work is part of immediate survival tactics (they need to earn money) but also related to long term survival for the entire repatriated community. The returnees have to keep up their presence in Addis Ababa if they are ever to obtain a more humane residency status.

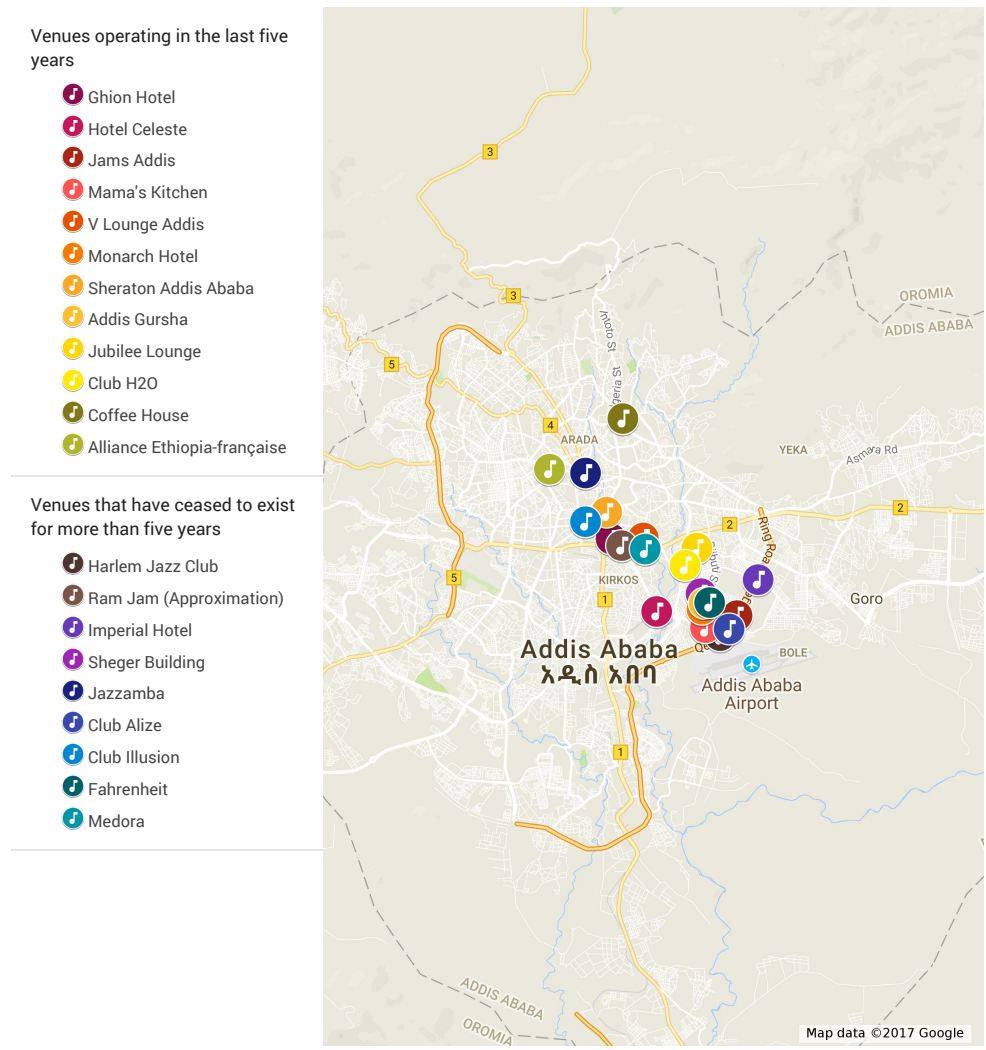


Figure 3.2: Author's Map showing reggae venues in Addis Ababa as of 2017.

The points on this map show that reggae has been performed all over the capital city since the early 1990s in prominent neighborhoods and venues. Some of these spaces offer a variety of music styles depending on the night while others focus on particular types of music.

Ruben Kush and Gladstone Judah, repatriated Rastafari from England, started perhaps the first reggae club in Addis Ababa in the early 1990s called Ram Jam. Kush remembers:

Ram Jam was the place. Every night we kept true to the word ‘ram jam.’ It was packed. It brought Ethiopians together. They loved Bob [Marley]. They saw him as a freedom fighter. They relate to his lyrics. So we brought roots music” (Personal Interview 2016).

Not only was this club pivotal to introducing Ethiopians to reggae music and Rastafari but it also gave many Ethiopian DJs an opportunity to learn and develop skills in the music industry and specifically reggae through their direct interactions with repatriated Rastafari. Jonny Ragga, arguably the first Ethiopian to become successful as a reggae/dancehall artist in Ethiopia, acknowledged that he received training in DJ-ing at the Ram Jam club. Although this particular club was important to the early growth of reggae in Addis Ababa, it closed down after a few years due to issues with maintaining the club license. A new club called Medora was opened soon after in the mid-1990s that took over the reputation as being the place to be to hear reggae music.

Another early venue that was significant for reggae music was Coffee House in the late 1990s. This space was owned and operated by Ethiopians and was not a reggae club per se but Sunday nights were reggae nights for some years. It was in this venue that Teddy Afro (one of Ethiopia’s most popular singers) developed his craft as an artist and began experimenting with reggae music. Of great importance is that this was a place in which Ethiopians were singing reggae in Amharic and winning over Ethiopian audiences to the genre. The musicians at the club—the Afro Sound Band—were mainly Ethiopians and learned to play reggae from listening

to records of Bob Marley and others. When Sydney Salmon and the Imperial Majestic Band started playing at Coffee House, the Ethiopian musicians paid close attention to details of performing reggae in live settings. Ma'an Judah from the Imperial Majestic band recalls, "We used to jam with Teddy Afro's band, Afro Sound, at Coffee House. Then Sydney would say 'riddim, dubwise.'²⁶ Then the other bands started to do the same thing. Nuff times they come to our show to study us" (Personal Interview 2016). In this scenario she described, Ethiopian musicians were able to hone their skills by observing repatriated musicians in a live music setting.

Another important venue for reggae music was Harlem Jazz club located in the Bole area near to the Bole International Airport. This club operated between the years 2004 and 2010. Dereje, an Ethiopian guitarist said, "Harlem Jazz was the birth of reggae for Addis. I can say that...Everybody performed there. Every reggae singer passed through there" (Personal Interview 2016). Melaku's African Elements band and Sydney Salmon and the Imperial Majestic Band were some of the bands that performed at Harlem Jazz regularly. In a travel blog published on May 2010, two Irish friends wrote about their search for Ethio Jazz in Addis and their disappointment at only finding reggae at Harlem Jazz.

Despite the venue's name, jazz did not seem to feature at all. In fact, the band playing was Teddy Dan and Heartical Spence with the Natural Groove Band, who were mainly Jamaican musicians who now live in Shashamene, Ethiopia's rasta capital. The music was enjoyable, melodic reggae – nothing to write home about, but a good atmosphere helped by Teddy Dan's enthusiasm. The man seemed genuinely delighted to be playing to an Ethiopian crowd here in Zion, his spiritual home.²⁷

The authors' reaction to the fact that reggae was being played in a "jazz club" is understandable since they were hoping to find world-famous Ethio jazz. This also highlights the flexible nature

²⁶ These are instructions that change the reggae groove

²⁷ Colm Ó Conchúir and Raphael Ó Muirthile. "Discovering Addis Ababa's Jazz Scene". July 22, 2010. <https://addisjazz.wordpress.com>. Accessed October 26, 2017.

of music venues in Addis Ababa. Even if spaces in which live music is offered are geared towards a particular style of music, it is also possible for other styles to be performed there as well. This gives repatriated Rastafari opportunities to perform reggae in venues that are not reggae venues per se but perhaps the management is seeking to attract patrons with different interests.

Creating Reggae and Rastafari Spaces in Addis Ababa

For repatriated Rastafari, being able to exert some control over space in Addis Ababa is key to gaining visibility and facilitating contact with Ethiopians. Due to strict laws regarding business ownership in Ethiopia, returnees are not easily able to obtain licenses for nightclubs and are therefore constantly on the search for different performance venues. As “authentic” reggae ambassadors, returnees are somewhat in demand for their abilities to draw crowds who seek an authentic experience. Through their music, they are able to create spaces, pockets in Addis Ababa, in which they spread their message while publicly demonstrating their love for Ethiopia and Haile Selassie. These spaces also serve as important contact zones between themselves and Ethiopians who are not be able to visit Shashemene and meet Rastafari in the Jamaican Sefer. Just as in stage shows in Shashemene, sometimes Ethiopians find themselves on the stage dancing and shaking hands with returnees. Music venues importantly facilitate these kinds of informal interactions.

In some cases, the environment causes the music to take on a hybrid nature as the musicians feed off of the audience and vice versa. Ma’an Judah, the keyboardist for the Imperial Majestic Band stated that sometimes, depending on the vibe of the crowd, she plays some melodic lines based on Ethiopian scales. If the crowd responds to it, she keeps adding more. Ma’an Judah asserts, “A few times at Jams (the Jams Addis night club), I just get in the spirit and

I give dem a *tizita* (a scale) and I just hear someone go ‘whoa’. I love incorporating it. Whether it is wrong or whatever. It works with the music” (Personal Interview 2016) What she means is that while performing sometimes, she feels to play the *tizita* minor scale because of the atmosphere of the nightclub—the vibe—and the audience members usually respond positively. The *tizita* minor scale is one of her favorite scales because of its similarity to the harmonic minor and its dark mood. As discussed in the previous chapter, returnees incorporate Ethiopian scales into their performances to intentionally connect with their audiences. This level of spontaneous creativity often happens in an environment in which people are attuned to each other in deep ways.

Repatriated Rastafari use particular images and symbols along with their music to create spaces that reflect their lifestyles. These images and symbols are usually pictures of Emperor Haile Selassie and the Lion of Judah flag that was associated with his rule. Although these images are standard in reggae and Rastafari spaces throughout the globe, they can be a source of contestation in Ethiopia because of Ethiopians’ relationship to their political history. Images of Haile Selassie are indeed quite rare in public spaces of Ethiopia and it is potentially illegal to display the Lion of Judah flag in public. This is because the current national flag reflects the political ideologies and constitution of the current government and the use of any other flag is seen by the government as defiance. In the 2009 Flag Proclamation, article 23 prohibits the use of the Ethiopian flag without the blue and yellow emblem in the center. It also prohibits the defacement of the flag with other signs and symbols.²⁸ While this does not explicitly state that the Lion of Judah flag is illegal, the use of the Lion of Judah flag can be interpreted as a breach in the correct usage of the current flag.

²⁸ Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. August 28, 2009. <https://chilot.me/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/flag.pdf>. Accessed November 30, 2017.

The first time I noticed space-making strategies that involved signs and symbols was when I performed in Addis Ababa with Ras Kawintseb and Aetiofrika band. Ras Kawintseb is a repatriated Rastafari who hails from the island of Trinidad. The performance was in celebration of Emperor Haile Selassie's coronation anniversary and was held at the Addis Gursha club in Addis Ababa in November 2015. After the sound check, I noticed that other repatriated Rastafari in the group were busy hanging pictures of the emperor on the stage along with the Lion of Judah flag. By doing this, they reinforced the mission of the group and transformed the space into one that clearly communicated devotion to Haile Selassie. The Imperial Majestic Band similarly kept a large portrait of the emperor that they carried with them to performances to display. The keyboardist for a long time also hung the Lion of Judah flag from her instrument. Most Ethiopian musicians, however, do not use of these visual symbols because they have a different relationship to the music and to Haile Selassie.

It is important to note that repatriated musicians do not use these images in all spaces. Nightclubs such as Jams Addis and Addis Gursha were spaces owned by people who were partial to Rastafari and had no objections to the use of such imagery. When the Imperial Majestic Band performed at the more public Selam Music festival in 2016 however, the keyboardist was instructed by the band leader to remove the Lion of Judah flag from her keyboard in order to avoid any potential trouble with the law. I heard numerous discussions about how potentially dangerous it would be to get caught displaying this flag on a stage. Ethiopian singer Haile Roots told me that at a public performance in Addis Ababa in February 2015 an Ethiopian came on the stage during his performance and started to wave a Lion of Judah flag. The police took the man away and carried him to the police station for waving this flag. The man was allegedly put in prison and according to some stories, may still be there. This story was told to me by different

people on different occasions and shows that many Rastafari are aware that they must be careful where and when they use this flag. These examples point to the ways in which spaces are conduits of discourses that enforce and discipline behavior that can limit Rastafari's ability to fully perform their beliefs in the Promised Land and reinforce their immigrant subjectivities. In Shashemene, however, the flag is hung in all Rastafari spaces. In a sense, Rastafari venues in Shashemene are safe spaces for Rastafari to practice their beliefs without too much fear of being remanded. Indeed returnees were on the whole more relaxed and happier in Shashemene than Addis Ababa.

Spaces are often sites of contestation and reggae venues in Addis Ababa are no different. Repatriated Rastafari musicians and Ethiopians in Addis Ababa tend to have different conceptions of what the significance of reggae spaces. Repatriated Rastafari view performance venues as spaces in which they can carry out their mission and practice spirituality, while for many Ethiopians, nightclubs are seen as the antithesis of spirituality. Sound system operator and repatriate from the UK, Paul the Dragon Slayer asserts that the:

“turntable is like the altar and you're like a high priest. You're putting on music, praises of your God and King... Sometimes it is difficult for me to go to a party. Playing the music is sometimes difficult. Because people come to a party but that's not what I'm really about” (Personal Interview 2016).

For him, the space in which he plays music becomes spiritual. Reggae and dancehall parties in Jamaica are understood to be sites in which patrons can and perform their spirituality. Sonjah Stanley Niaah asserts that a reggae or dancehall gathering in Jamaica is not just an event but a “system of rules and codes, an institution” in which among other things, spirituality is practiced (2010: 95). Ethiopians, however do not necessarily see night clubs as spaces for spiritual practice and are not usually inclined to adhere to such codes. Discussing Ethiopians' attitudes to

nightclubs and spirituality, Ras Kawintseb further explained that “getting the message across in a club is against the Ethiopian way of thinking because music is seen as being of the devil. Some Ethiopians say that musicians won't go to heaven” (Personal Interview 2015). Since music is of the devil it follows that nightclubs, as spaces that generally promote secular music, are devoid of spirituality.

Leila Mekuria, manager for Sydney Salmon and the Imperial Majestic Band, discussed the band's code of conduct during performances. She stated:

We have rules, structure. We try to avoid songs about ganja just to show there is something more. We don't have alcohol on stage. When we perform, it's different. People are dancing with us at the stage. They are focused on the stage. Whereas other clubs people dance with each other” (Personal Interview 2016).

Because for the Imperial Majestic Band, reggae is part of a mission that involves spirituality, they refrain from drinking alcohol on stage even when they perform in a nightclub. The Imperial Majestic Band always prays before going on stage and the lead singer always greets the audience in the name of Jesus Christ. In this way, the band consistently asserts their conception of the space as both social and spiritual. Because the band transmits this spirituality through their message, Leila believes that audiences focus more on the band than on each other.

Some reggae fans in Ethiopia understand this. A foreigner living in Ethiopia described Sydney and the Imperial Majestic Band's weekly performances as “basically three-hour sermons.” One Ethiopian woman with whom I spoke understood the aims of this band and told me that coming to hear this band perform live every now and then is healing for her. She does not like Ethiopian reggae bands because the spiritual parts of the music are absent. There are also a few other Ethiopians who attend his shows religiously and appear to have a sense of the evoked spirituality.

Another source of contestation is that these venues rely heavily on the sale of alcohol in order to make a profit. For a number of repatriated Rastafari with whom I spoke, this dependence on alcohol was in conflict with their beliefs and morals. Paul the Dragon Slayer states, “the beer companies and bars support what I do the most which I don’t like. I would prefer to do more things in the daytime. More family-oriented things. I have to balance out the business side and spiritual side” (Personal Interview 2016). Ras Kawintseb also feels uncomfortable knowing that in some cases in order for him to get paid, people have to keep drinking (Personal conversation 2016). Although repatriated Rastafari have codes they try to observe in reggae spaces that align with their spirituality, they face challenges in getting Ethiopians to see these spaces in the same way. Some returnees have had to perform in venues and under circumstances that are not aligned with their beliefs because they are not able to set up their own venues on their own terms.

One-Time Spaces

While reggae spaces have opened up in Ethiopia in the form of bars and nightclubs, there have also been spaces created for specific, one-time events on a large scale. These spaces, though short lived, tend to offer more exposure and visibility to reggae and reggae musicians because of the spectacle that comes with the event in the form of high profile artists and widespread promotion. Numerous Ethiopians and Rastafari told me that the 2005 “Africa Unite” concert, for example, was a watershed moment for the promotion of reggae in Ethiopia and for the visibility of the repatriated Rastafari community. Other events such as the free concert that marked the dedication of the Bob Marley statue in Addis Ababa in 2015 helped to bring Ethiopians into reggae spaces to experience aspects of Rastafari culture. Other events such as reggae concerts headlined by international stars are not free but still draw crowds of people who are already fans but want more of these experiences.

The “Africa Unite” concert was held in February 2005 to commemorate the Ethiopian millennium and Bob Marley’s sixtieth birthday in Meskel Square, Addis Ababa. Meskel Square is a multi-road intersection in the heart of the city and is used for large church celebrations (such as Meskel) and other big events. According to the Africa Unite website, “Africa Unite” is part of a series organized by the Bob and Rita Marley Foundations with the goal of uniting the African continent. The symposium that was part of the 2005 event in Ethiopia was supposed to:

give an opportunity to African intellectuals from the continent and from the Diaspora, using Bob Marley’s songs, to examine the African condition, to debate issues, and point out problems which impede the realization of African Unity; keep the African Woman under multidimensional forms of exploitation and oppression and which marginalize African youth, cultural workers (artists, musicians, painters and dramatists) from participating fully in building a viable, free, economically self-reliant and culturally proud continent”.²⁹

This concert drew somewhere between two and four hundred thousand people who wished to be part of this historic feat (MacLeod 2014: 126). The concert itself featured members of Bob Marley’s family as well as Ethiopian superstar, Teddy Afro. Although this concert was more than a decade ago many Ethiopians who I met during my fieldwork vividly described to me how wonderful and crowded that concert was.

Many returnees similarly recounted how large and prominent the concert was and marveled that such a concert was even allowed to take place in the heart of the city. Some returnees even point to that concert as evidence that the Ethiopian government is not against Rastafari at all especially because members of the government were in attendance. Closing down this square would have been close to a logistical nightmare because of its size and its importance to traffic flow throughout the city. Because the concert was held in such a prominent space, it was a pivotal moment for the visibility of the Rastafari community. Erin Macleod, by employing

²⁹ “Africa Unite 2005 Ethiopia - Symposium Review”

<http://www.africa-unite.org/content/view/24/58/>. Accessed October 22, 2016.

techniques in media anthropology and reviewed newspaper articles, has examined the different ways Ethiopians viewed this concert. While some welcomed it, others were suspicious of its purpose and content. She notes that there was a clear difference in what the conference and symposium was meant to accomplish and how Ethiopians received and interpreted the event (2014: 130). Whatever the opinion people held, it is clear that this concert has been etched in the memory of many Ethiopians in Addis Ababa and solidified, in a major way, the presence of the Rastafari community and its attachment to Ethiopia. As Macleod notes, “Rastafari were very publicly showcased both symbolically through imagery and literally through the music and lyrics performed at the Africa Unite event” (2014: 130). In the video of the event, numerous performers and audience members could be seen waving the Lion of Judah flag, including Ethiopian singer Teddy Afro.

Desta Meghoo, one of the main organizers for the event, explained that “Africa Unite” was more than a concert but was also a three-day conference and symposium that took a lot of work to execute. The Marley family chartered a plane to fly to Ethiopia and brought with them much of the necessary sound equipment to host such a large show. Desta also highlighted that in addition to the Meskel Square show, another show was done in Shashemene, in the main Rastafari settlement (Personal Interview 2016). This was important for Rita Marley because of the significance of Shashemene to the Rastafari movement and also to her late husband—Bob Marley—who visited decades before.

Virtual Spaces

In addition to carving out physical spaces for reggae, repatriated Rastafari have played a role in creating virtual spaces, particularly on the radio. Following Connell and Gibson who assert that public spaces can be both physical and virtual (2003: 16), I now turn to a discussion of

the ways that returnees in Ethiopia claim public space through radio technology. In addition to claiming virtual space, the radio also functioned as a contact zone, allowing Ethiopians to interact with repatriated Rastafari. The main radio station that has consistently played reggae music has been Afro FM, which started in 2009 and is a privately-owned station. I-Timothy, a returnee from the US had his own show on this station called “Reggae Boat Ride” where he played conscious reggae music, both old and new. When he arrived, he wanted to educate Ethiopians about reggae music because he found that the only reggae music on the radio at the time was from the flashier artists such as Sean Paul. While he had no problem with those artists, they did not represent Rastafari so he took it upon himself to help spread what he thought was a more accurate image of Rastafari through the radio waves.

I-Timothy worked in a Tuff Gong record store in Los Angeles before moving to Ethiopia and learned a lot about the history of reggae music. He also studied radio and communication in the US so he was well suited for this job. He put together a proposal for a reggae show that would highlight the history and culture of reggae but made sure not to force the spiritual nature of reggae and Rastafari because it is viewed somewhat suspiciously in Ethiopia. He also played other types of music but his aim was to showcase Africa as much as possible.

Recognizing the challenge of educating people on the radio, I-Timothy had to be strategic about his work.

They were very touchy. I went on the air with a brief description of the coronation. Just history. And that that coronation spurred the minds of black people all over the world. The eyes were on Ethiopia on November 1930. I felt that Ethiopia needed to know things like that. So much misinformation here. The Derg, propaganda. They don't talk about the past. We don't teach that in schools. I had kids who were born after 1975 who told me they hate Haile Selassie. Then I would say 'listen to this song about Haile Selassie in the 1960s' or 'Listen to this poem from an African American about Ethiopia' (Personal Interview 2016).

The radio platform offered him a way to connect to more people than he could have done in person. By using music and poetry to convey messages that he felt he could not say, I-Timothy was able to fulfil part of his mission as a returnee. Jahnoch, another returnee Rastafari who had a stint on the radio in Addis Ababa, also had to be strategic in getting his message across. He remembers that he was not able to talk about Haile Selassie or politics and that someone was always in the room with him ready to cut the feed if his language or his music selections got too political. He viewed this as a form of censorship but he was still able to get around this by choosing songs that expressed positive and conscious lyrics (Jahnoch, Personal Conversation 2016). When I was asked to be a guest on a radio station in Addis I too felt need to negotiate the subject matter. I was asked to suggest some songs to play on the radio that would accompany my discussion on my research in Ethiopia. I wanted to choose a song in which Jamaicans sing about Ethiopia. The host was fine with this but asked me to make sure that the name of Haile Selassie was not in any of the songs. “I just don’t want my show to be political” he said.

These radio shows have, nonetheless, exposed Ethiopians to classic reggae that they might not have heard otherwise because some of the important songs are no longer popular. The shows also showcase new reggae songs, helping to keep Ethiopians up to date. I-Timothy asserted:

I played a big part in widening the reggae listenership. The fact that Chronixx is coming here. I take credit for that. We introduced his music here. Chronixx, Jesse Royal. Keznamdi. I brought this music here... We started playing these on Reggae Boat Ride. Nobody was playing those songs on radio until I started it. Lots of Rastas were here when I got here playing music but they kept it to themselves. I was on the radio” (Personal Interview 2016).

I-Timothy used his knowledge of radio and communications as well as his understanding of reggae music to promote specific kinds of reggae that might appeal to Ethiopians but also reflect

Rastafari ideologies. By choosing reggae music and artists that are aligned with Rastafari to play on the radio, returnees mobilize the “elective affinity” between reggae and Rastafari, further emphasizing these connections to Ethiopian audiences. Reggae indexes Rastafari and subsequently the repatriated community in Ethiopia who seek more recognition. The radio, like physical venues, operates as a contact zone in which Ethiopian listeners are able to encounter Rastafari through reggae music it is also a contested site as returnees face forms of censorship from Ethiopians who control the stations.

Conclusion

By using reggae as a productive mechanism, returnees are not only able to create spaces that facilitate contact with Ethiopians, but also challenge and recreate how spaces and places are sensed in Ethiopia. Returnees use reggae to inscribe themselves into specific geographies and the wider place of Ethiopia, emphasizing that they are—and have been for years—part of the country. Because Ethiopians and returnees have different perceptions of space and place, these spaces are often contested and highlight the unequal power relations between returnees and Ethiopians. Returnees, however, keep finding ways to negotiate these challenges and have managed to maintain and grow their presence in the Ethiopian soundscapes especially since the early 1990s.

The physical and virtual spaces that returnees create are important sites of contact between themselves and Ethiopians. Returnees want Ethiopians to not only enjoy reggae music but to have an experience that intersects with Rastafari. By creating reggae spaces that are also Rastafari spaces, returnees continue to solidify the connections between reggae and Rastafari to Ethiopian audiences. Reggae is therefore productive for the repatriated Rastafari community in that it fosters community building in Shashemene amongst returnees and contact with

Ethiopians, and creates a specific type of social life in Addis Ababa that is directly related to the Rastafarian' culture. Returnees, through their efforts of creating reggae spaces that are also Rastafari spaces, further emphasize connections between reggae and Rastafari, making it more difficult for Ethiopians to separate the two. In the next chapter I examine the ways Ethiopian reggae artists and musicians participate in reggae music and bring attention to the repatriated Rastafari community while distancing themselves from certain Rastafari ideologies.

Chapter 4

Ethiopian Musicians Negotiating Proximity and Creating Pathways for Returnees

In a section in the 2007 *Rough Guide to World Music*, Ethiopian popular music expert Francis Falceto wrote:

Do not expect much from Ethiopian reggae. It really didn't exist until the recent fame of Teddy Afro, following in the footsteps of Alpha Blondy or Lucky Dube. It's true the word 'Rastafari' comes from Ras Tafari Makonnen, the title and surname of Haile Selassie, the last emperor of Ethiopia, but rasta fetishism has no special meaning in Ethiopia, despite the admiration for Bob Marley common to the whole of Africa (2007: 111).

Since then, however, reggae has become increasingly popular among Ethiopians to the extent that some musicians and consumers of music in Addis Ababa now view reggae as part of Ethiopian popular music scenes. As evidence of this trend, Ethiopian musicians and reggae fans in Addis Ababa often pointed to the growing number of reggae songs appearing on albums in Ethiopia. In this chapter I look at the varied ways that Ethiopians have created reggae music and how their involvement in reggae over time has affected the repatriated Rastafari community's efforts of creating a Rastafari Promised Land for themselves. I show that because Ethiopian reggae singers align with Rastafari ideology to varying degrees, they serve as a gateway to the repatriated Rastafari community for Ethiopians who view this community with ambivalence.

Ethnomusicologist Timothy Rommen uses the phrase "negotiation of proximity" (2006) to describe the process by which non-Rastafari gospel musicians use reggae music to evoke "style" and/or spirituality while distancing themselves from Rastafari ideology. Rommen's "negotiation of proximity" is a particularly useful lens through which to understand the globalization of reggae and the ways artists, who do not fully identify with Rastafari beliefs, use roots reggae in particular to evoke senses of spirituality and social consciousness. He further

argues that “while reggae is localized wherever it is performed, Rastafari meanings are not as easily separated from the contexts within which they were initially articulated...and this is especially so when the musical project at hand is a specifically sacred one” (2006: 258). He draws on Nathan Murrell’s assertion that for many, “to feel the reggae beat is to think Rasta” (Murrell 1998: 9), while recognizing that this is not always the case. I argue that Ethiopian reggae singers, in efforts to be perceived as authentic and to remain relevant locally, make their reggae music signify Rastafari—but not too much. The more that Ethiopian reggae artists signify Rastafari in their music, the more authentic they appear and the more attention they give to the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia—thereby helping to legitimize the presence of this community. The more Ethiopian reggae singers distance themselves from Rastafari ideologies the more they are able to create new and more localized meanings associated with reggae that can potentially take attention away from the repatriated community. .

Although the Ethiopians who perform reggae are not gospel artists, I believe Rommen’s framework is still useful because the Ethiopian reggae artists whom I discuss all identify as Orthodox Christian and are expected by Ethiopian audiences to maintain this specific Christian identity. Many singers whom I interviewed self-identified as Orthodox Christian but also held affinities to Rastafari. Ethiopian reggae singers and musicians therefore constantly engage in this negotiation of proximity to Rastafari—in appearance, sound, and lyrics—because, although they have an affinity to reggae music, they cannot be seen or heard fully aligning with Rastafari ideologies.

In addition to reggae music, other signifiers such as dreadlocks and the Lion of Judah Flag are often associated with Rastafari even though they are also linked to Ethiopia’s history. Alton Rickets, a repatriated Rastafari from Jamaica, told me that many times Ethiopians would

see him with a flag or shirt with the Lion of Judah or the Red, Green, and Gold colors and point and say “Rasta.” He would respond, “no, this is Ethiopian.” He wanted Ethiopians to understand that Rastafari signifiers are Ethiopian. The overlap of Rastafari and Ethiopian material signifiers makes it somewhat difficult for Ethiopians to perform Ethiopianness and not be perceived as Rastafari. On the other hand, the overlap allows Ethiopians to resignify reggae to suit local contexts.

Ethiopian Popular Music

Ethiopian reggae artists, in addition to negotiating their proximity to Rastafari, also negotiate their proximity to non-Ethiopian sounding musics—including reggae. Ethiopian bassist Dagmawit Ali stated that if you want to perform reggae in Ethiopia, “you can’t go for the international reggae sound. You will not make it” (Personal conversation 2016). His statement reflects Ethiopians’ commitment to their own culture(s). Ethiopian musician Girum Mezmur, reflecting on the foreign influences on Ethiopian popular music, told me that although instruments and genres were imported into Ethiopia, Ethiopians always maintained Ethiopian flavors in the music (Personal Interview 2016). He explained that when Ethiopians play the saxophone or accordion they find ways to add certain ornamentations and colors that reflect Ethiopian melodic styles. This commitment to local sensibilities helped to usher in the distinct sounds that came to distinguish Ethiopian popular music as unique.

Ethiopian popular music is largely characterized by the blending of foreign genres and styles with traditional musics. Francis Falceto traces the history of Ethiopian popular music back to the reign of King Menilik when Tsar Nicholas II of Russia sent brass instruments to Ethiopia in the late nineteenth century (2001: 18). From that time onwards, musicians fused traditional Ethiopian musical elements with jazz and other popular forms of music in Addis Ababa.

Ashenafi Kebede notes that the

end of the Italian-Ethiopian war in 1941 formally marked the beginning of a ‘new’ era called *addis zemen*. The contemporary music of Ethiopia has also been known as *zemenawi muzika*, ‘modern music’ of the new era. In contrast to *bahlawi* (traditional), the word *zemenawi* refers to elements in the culture that are ‘new’ or borrowed; it also refers to characteristics that are alien (1976: 291).

In the 1940s, Haile Selassie named Alexander Kontorowicz, a violinist and native of Lithuania, his music director and made him responsible for setting up an Ethiopian musical academy and organizing the palace’s evening concerts (Falceto 2001: 53). Austrian band leader, Franz Zelwecker took over from Kontorowicz in the late 1940s and he became known for including jazz compositions in the repertoire of the various bands. Various institutional music ensembles such as the Imperial Body Guard, Army, Police and Municipal Bands performed repertoire that fused such styles as mambo and boogie-woogie with Ethiopian styles (Falceto 2001: 53). Although many bands adopted European and American music forms, much of the music still retained aspects of traditional Ethiopian music practices (Zenebe 1987, Ashenafi 1976).

With the appeal of a modern cosmopolitan music scene also came anxieties of the loss of traditions. Ashenafi Kebede describes some steps taken to ensure the maintenance of Ethiopian culture amidst the dawn of a cosmopolitan era.

In reaction to and against westernization, there sprang into being social clubs as well as government agencies whose interest and purpose focused on the presentation, revival, and promotion of all spheres of Ethiopian culture. A great deal of care and concern was made also apparent about how Ethiopia could interact internationally with other nations without wiping out its heritage under the flood of external alien influences (1976: 294).

The growing reggae music scene in Addis Ababa is, in many ways, a continuation of the cosmopolitan atmosphere that began during the “golden age” of Ethiopian music in the mid-twentieth century. Thomas Turino uses the term cosmopolitan to refer to “objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are widely diffused throughout the world and yet are specific only to

certain positions of the populations within given countries” (2000: 7). Within the context of Zimbabwean music scenes, he discusses how “local people deeply internalize foreign ideas and practices and make them their own” (2000: 8). Although this may seem to work against nationalist movements, he argues that cosmopolitanism plays a part in nation building because even if the cultural formations are derived from foreign influences, they are also highly localized. This chapter, therefore, examines the ways reggae is glocalized into Ethiopian music scenes.

Towards an Ethio-reggae Style? Creating Reggae while Remaining Ethiopian.

Before launching into a detailed discussion on Ethiopian reggae, the question of genre terminology is of some importance. Is there such a thing as Ethio-reggae as there is Ethio-jazz? In some of my interviews with Ethiopian musicians we spoke about the existence of Ethiopian reggae as a distinct style. One of the main musicians who discussed the qualities of Ethiopian reggae with me was Girum Mezmur. He is a well-known and highly regarded musician, producer, arranger, and teacher who has worked for decades in Ethiopian music scenes. Girum, who previously never thought of Ethiopian reggae as a distinct style, began to work out his thoughts with me.

Maybe it is time to think about the idea of Ethio-reggae. Ethiopian music takes influences from Latin and jazz music. Sometimes I hear music and I wonder why producers do a song in reggae? Some have too many melodies. So why reggae? Some arrangements have worked. Some I like and some I don't like. I tend to arrange in reggae when I can contain it in a groove... a continuous bassline. In the 2000s, arranging in reggae became vital. Almost six songs on an album were reggae-influenced. The songs weren't composed with reggae in mind but the arrangers put reggae for them.

Maybe now we can define a category of Ethiopian reggae. East African influences like pentatonic, melismatic melodies, new chord changes. A surprise chord change for no reason (towards the end of the song), just because it is beautiful...as long as you can identify these elements, you can argue that Ethiopian reggae is a genre. I am open to change my mind and accept that Ethiopian reggae exists (Girum Mezmur, Personal Interview 2016).

By identifying musical characteristics, Girum was able to argue for an Ethio-reggae genre while

noting that some manifestations of Ethio-reggae work better than other. These elements, he says, are present in most Ethiopian popular music and are not exclusive to Ethiopian reggae. When combined with reggae music, however, these elements produce a unique sound that may be considered Ethio-reggae. He also preferred to use the phrase “reggae-influenced Ethiopian music” to describe some of the songs that have noticeable reggae elements but are not considered reggae. Understanding how these elements are implemented is important for understanding how Ethiopian artists are able to stay true to their local traditions while at the same time participate in the global reggae genre.

While Girum believes that an Ethiopian reggae style is emerging, Ethiopian singer Haile Roots, who incorporates Ethiopian elements into his music, rejects a label of Ethiopian reggae.

Speaking in Jamaican creole he said there is

no such ting as Ethiopian reggae. Mi nuh wan put borders on the music. If you say Ethio-reggae that's gonna limit your vision. Anybody who does reggae does their own thing. It is worldwide. There is no French reggae or England reggae. If we say Ethiopian reggae it will limit us (Personal Interview 2016).

Haile Roots foresees negative effects of labelling the genre Ethio-reggae. He instead recognizes that reggae is itself a diverse genre that takes on different characteristics wherever it is localized. This reflects sociologist Sarah Daynes' assertion that reggae operates as a changing same because it is continuously being modified and remade in various parts of the world, especially in Africa (2004: 33).

Ethiopian pianist Samuel Yirga believes an Ethiopian reggae can be achieved once reggae music is respected for what it is. He said:

If you don't have those feelings it will be difficult to have Ethiopian reggae. You must know and love reggae music otherwise you can't create Ethiopian reggae. It should be more Ethiopian but with the reggae feelings. Otherwise you are abusing others' culture. You must respect the culture. The respect will show in the music (Personal Interview 2016).

Samuel's point on the feeling of reggae is important because "feeling" is usually the element that most repatriated musicians believe is most lacking in Ethiopian reggae. Because Ethiopians do not express a similar feeling in the music as Jamaicans do, some Ethiopian and repatriated musicians think that Ethiopians are not actually playing reggae but only something similar to reggae. The topic of feel is an important one and will be explored in more detail in chapter five.

In this Chapter, I use the term "Ethiopian reggae" to mean music that is composed and performed by Ethiopians that intentionally draws on key reggae elements but also retains distinct Ethiopian flavors. It should be noted that Ethiopian musicians create reggae in different ways, giving weight to reggae elements or Ethiopian elements depending on their preference. The degree to which Ethiopian musicians replicate reggae sounds is also tied to the negotiation of proximity to this somewhat foreign genre and Rastafari ideology. Therefore, if there is such a thing as Ethiopian reggae, it exists on a spectrum and encompasses diverse elements. Girum Mezmur said that "to make real reggae in Ethiopia, you have to compromise something. Jonny Ragga and them have a unique mix. They have also been more influenced by mainstream reggae.... Still there are elements in their music that don't conform to mainstream reggae" (Personal Conversation 2016). Girum acknowledges that Ethiopian reggae singers such as Jonny Ragga who try to adhere to styles typical of Jamaican music still maintain some elements of Ethiopia in their work. Ethiopian reggae singers make sure to keep their music sounding Ethiopian and reflecting Ethiopian values. To do otherwise would be the end of one's career.

With the help of Ethiopian musicians and producers I have pinpointed some musical elements that exist in Ethiopian reggae that make the music sound distinctly Ethiopian. The use of pentatonic scales and modes, and other Ethiopian scales is the most prominent distinguishing

element. Abegasu, a revered Ethiopian musician and producer, stated that the use of sustained background chords is also distinct in Ethiopian reggae (Personal Conversation 2016). The use of sustained harmony is heard in much Ethiopian popular music because, he says, Ethiopian singers “don’t like to feel naked.” In reggae, the sustain sound stands out especially because the genre is known for its aesthetic of space. Girum, however, recognizes that some Jamaican reggae music also features sustained harmony, particularly in the more “pop” type of reggae songs. He does, however, believe that brass lines in Ethiopian reggae music tend to sustain more pitches than in Jamaican reggae because Ethiopians are more concerned with the beauty of the melodic lines, while Jamaicans play melodic lines in a more rhythmic manner. Another musical element important to this discussion is the bass and its significance in Ethiopian music. Reggae music has been described as bass/bottom heavy because of the prominence of the bass sound in the music (Hitchins 2013). Much Ethiopian popular music, however, does not feature strong a bass.

Another element that remains strongly Ethiopian in Ethiopian reggae is the emphasis on the first beat of each bar. It was saxophonist Wondwosson Woldeselassie who pointed this out to me as he explained why it is sometimes difficult for him to play reggae horn lines. He and other Ethiopians are not accustomed to starting melodies anywhere else but on the first beat. In reggae, melodies sometimes begin on the third beat and this adds to the flavor and groove of reggae music. When too much emphasis comes on the first beat, the reggae feel is somewhat lost.

The use of the Amharic language in Ethiopian reggae is also a significant characteristic that gives the music a distinct sound. Because the structures of language inform the metrical organization of lyrical phrases (Morand 2018 forthcoming), Ethiopian music in Amharic is structured differently to Jamaican music. Sung poetry in Amharic-speaking regions of Ethiopia may be unmeasured or comprising measures of different lengths (Morand 2012). When this style

of composition is arranged in a reggae style, the unequal or “irregular” phrases evokes a distinct Ethiopian sound.

With reggae’s development in Ethiopia, artists and musicians have mobilized stronger associations between Ethiopian reggae and mainstream reggae in terms of lyrics and musical elements. The earliest Ethiopian reggae band, Dallol, was formed in the early 1970s and is often hailed as the group that created a pathway for other Ethiopian reggae bands. The band started after a group of friends, Zeleke Gessesse, Mulugeta Gessesse, Melaku Reta, Ruphael Woldemariam, and Dereje Mekonnen left Ethiopia in the mid 1970s for the USA where they continued to pursue their passion for music while attending school. They performed different kinds of music but they were particularly fascinated by reggae and, by way of an introduction to Rita Marley, went on to become Ziggy Marley’s backup band in the 1980s (Zeleke Gessesse, Personal Interview 2016). The Dallol Band represented the first significant connection between Ethiopians and reggae music. Some of the members of this original band, Zeleke and Melaku, eventually returned to Ethiopia and helped to train and nurture younger Ethiopians in reggae music performance.

In Ethiopia, reggae elements slowly crept into the music of some prominent artists such as Getachew Kassa, Aster Aweke, and Tilahun Gessesse in the 1970s and 1980s. Aster Aweke, a powerhouse in Ethiopian popular music released “Eshururu” –a reggae-influenced Ethiopian song—in the 1970s. This song may have been one of the earliest examples of an Ethiopian reggae style. In the recording, the musicians attempted to capture a reggae feel. However, the drummer put the accent on the first beat of each bar instead of the third beat. Girum Mezmur, an accomplished Ethiopian musician and arranger with decades of experience in the music business, told me that perhaps the drummer heard reggae and assumed that the accented third beat—the

one drop—was actually the first beat. The reggae feel is put on its head because of the heavy accent on the “one”. When I played this song for Ethiopians many of them said that it is not, nor was it ever intended to be reggae. Girum, who knows some of the musicians on the recording, however confirmed that it was intended to be reggae.

The image displays a musical score for the opening of Aster Aweke's "Eshururu". It is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for Voice, Keyboard, Bass Guitar, and Drum Set. The second system includes staves for Voice, Keyboard (labeled "Kbd."), Bass, and Dr. (labeled "Dr."). The music is in 4/4 time and features a reggae feel with a heavy accent on the first beat. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and chord symbols.

Figure 4.1. Author’s Transcription of the Opening of Aster Aweke’s “Eshururu”.

The transcription in Figure 4.1 shows the bass and snare drum sounding on the downbeat of each measure. Because the drum pattern is shifted, the song does not quite feel like reggae.

Another reason that this song does not feel like reggae is that each harmonic cycle is organized by three phrases whereas in most reggae songs, phrases are in groups of two or four (Witmer 1984).

Ethiopian Keyboardist Samuel Yirga said that he remembers Ethiopian singer Getachew Kassa singing a song that had a reggae feel to it in the 1970s but that most Ethiopians probably did not think of it as reggae. Ethiopian saxophonist Wondwossen affirmed this saying, “if Ethiopian artists sing reggae, it is still considered Ethiopian music. Once the melody, lyrics, and language are Ethiopian, the music is Ethiopian” (Wondwossen Personal Interview). Getachew’s song “Tiz Balegn Gize”, released in the 1970s certainly has a reggae feel with the one drop rhythm in the drums and the guitar skank (even though it is understated) but it also maintains a strong Ethiopian character in other ways. The melody lines (bass, vocals, horn interludes) all begin on the downbeat. Also, as pointed out by Girum, the horn lines are not executed in a percussive manner so the notes are allowed to sustain longer than in Jamaican reggae. The sustained keyboard sound in the background also keeps the music sounding Ethiopian. Girum admitted to me that this song is a good example of a reggae-influenced Ethiopian song because the Ethiopian elements are so prominent. These early reggae-influenced Ethiopian songs were not quite “reggae enough” to completely win over Ethiopian audiences to the reggae genre but they helped to slowly train Ethiopian ears to the sounds of reggae and prepared Ethiopians for the reggae revolution that happened decades later.

In order to understand how Ethiopian musicians incorporated reggae elements into these songs, a brief understanding of the composition process is necessary. Girum Mezmur explained

that “there is no concept of songwriting as such. There is the melody writer, there is the lyrics composer (some do both) and the arranger. Sometimes these people don’t meet. The owner of the project is the link between these people” (Personal Interview 2016)). He emphasized to me that in Ethiopia, “lyrics really matter. It could be the reason why the song is a hit or not.” When a singer releases a new song, people ask “*min ale?*” (what did he say?). The melody writer (*zema derasi*) composes melodies that are often tailored to the singer and has little concern for what genre or style of music the end product will be. After the lyrics and melody are completed, the song is sent to a producer who decides on an arrangement for the music. In addition to the harmonies, the producer/arranger also has to compose an introduction and instrumental interludes. This process shows how much emphasis Ethiopians place on lyrics and melody. Harmony (*heber*), rhythm (*met*), and form are somewhat secondary to these. What this means is that the melody writer creates melodies without much of a concern for chord progressions, rhythmic patterns, or genre. This is certainly not the case for all music production in Ethiopia but it is a model that has been widely used for popular/commercial music, especially in Addis Ababa. Girum further noted that after the melody and lyrics are written, sometimes the singer or the arranger decides that the song should be in a reggae style. It is then up to the arranger to use his skill to make the reggae groove work under the already-composed melody.

The method of song production plays a significant role in the way Ethiopian-made reggae sounds. Girum Mezmur spoke to me about creating a reggae song from an already-composed melody. One of the main challenges entails creating a chord progression that remains consistent in each section of the song. He said that many songs require constantly changing chords at irregular times, which does not work for reggae. He described one particular song of which he was quite proud. “‘Yekerebign’, is a love song. It is a successful reggae song. I tried to keep four

chords for the entire song. Different melodies but four chords. A downward progression. A minor to G major to D major to A minor.” But when it goes to the G chord, instead of a G major he used a suspended fourth on half of the G then to the full G. This was so it could fit the melody. “In a subtle way it fits better. I have to be cunning with the arrangement. I thought about it a lot. Otherwise I would have had to put in more chord changes.” Girum demonstrated an intimate understanding of how reggae works and what it takes to make Ethiopian music fit with reggae. His description of creating reggae from already-composed Ethiopian melodies shows that the process is, in many instances, forced.

More recently, there has been an increase in Ethiopian singers who intentionally compose reggae music. Unlike the method of song composition described by Girum, these singers write their own melodies and lyrics with the intention of setting it to a reggae groove. These Ethiopians also intentionally ensure that their music sounds both Ethiopian and reggae oriented. The ways in which these singers approach their craft reveals the intentionality behind Ethiopian reggae as a genre in order to appeal to Ethiopians and international audiences.

Ras Jany, an Ethiopian reggae artist, is one such singer who intentionally composes songs in reggae and dancehall styles but is also keen to maintain Ethiopian flavors. He explained his decisions to incorporate Ethiopian scales into this reggae saying “all the churches use St Yared’s melody.³⁰ Even track number two [on his album] is coming from Yared” (Personal Interview 2016). By referencing St Yared’s melodies he is pointing to the use of particular Ethiopian scales. In Chapter two I argued that although Ethiopian scales have been recently codified and constructed, people make connections between these scales and ancient forms of Ethiopianness. Ras Jany connects these scales with the history of Christianity in Ethiopia and claims that track

³⁰ Ethiopians believe that St Yared composed much of Ethiopia’s liturgical chants hundreds of years ago.

number two, “Wedalehu” on his album *Selamta* is composed using a scale from Yared. His song “Anchihoye” is another example of his use of Ethiopian scales as an indexer of Ethiopianness. Not only are his vocal melodies and instrumental lines based on the anchihoye scale (Figure 2.2) in this song, but the chord progression also matches and supports these melodies as shown in Figure 4.2. With his haunting melody and a chord progression moving from G# minor to G major, this song has a somewhat unusual sound for reggae even though the signature reggae rhythms are present in guitar, drum, and bass.



Figure 4.2 Author’s transcription of the opening of Ras Jany’s “Anchihoye”.

Speaking about his intentions in the composition process he states, “I create the idea with my empress [wife] to create *tizita* reggae. I teach myself guitar. I know the scales.” Here he explains that with his wife he came up with the idea to compose reggae songs based on various Ethiopian scales—in this case the *tizita* minor scale. By using his guitar during the composition process, he shows that he is thinking about the final reggae product from the onset of composition—a departure from compositional methods that make use of different individuals and their skills. He further states that “the plan is to attract international reggae artistes. The anchihoye riddim is good for other reggae artistes to use. It’s a unique thing” (Personal Interview 2016). His aim is not only to appeal to local audiences but to international reggae singers who may be seeking new sounds and ideas.

Ras Jany does not try to distance himself from Rastafari very much. He has dreadlocks

that are wrapped tightly in fabric on his head. He looks like a member of the Rastafari community and identifies with certain Rastafari beliefs even though he is Orthodox Christian. His wife, Jerusalem, said to me “he's not imitating Jamaicans. He is the son of Haile Selassie. Jamaicans are trying to look like Ethiopians. Dreadlocks is our thing” (Jerusalem, Personal Interview 2016). Ras Jany does not see Rastafari as completely foreign to Ethiopia or his own sense of what it means to be Ethiopian. He therefore maintains a close proximity to Rastafari through his appearance and sound, which appeals to Ethiopian youth.

Ethiopian singer Haile Roots used Ethiopian rhythms to create a more Ethiopian version of reggae. By combining the 6/8 *chik chika* drum rhythm with the reggae skank, he and producer Elias Melka, came up with the chiggae style—a combination of the words *chik chika* and reggae. Haile Roots has dreadlocks and is often seen wearing khaki suits in performances—the type of suit Haile Selassie often wore and many Rastafari choose to wear. His appearance is completely like a Rastafari. He sings mostly in Amharic but, like other Ethiopian reggae singers, sings some parts in Jamaican creole as well. The actual song called “Chiggae” was engineered in a studio with Ethiopian producer Elias Melka and the musicians were asked to learn this style for live performances. When asked why *chik chika* was blended with reggae, Haile—who spoke in Jamaican creole—replied “*Chik chika* is more popular in Ethiopia...Dem [different ethnic groups] have dem own music. But dem play this the most. Each of di tribes dem play it.” He sees *chik chika* as the most popular Ethiopian rhythm even though it is not part of the local traditions of most ethnic groups. He went on to explain that he as an Ethiopian artist one must “dance a yard before u dance abroad. So I have to connect with my people. I wanted to put our ting into reggae. So we have a riddim called chiggae. We bring it into reggae.” Here he demonstrates an understanding that he must appeal to local audiences before international audiences...”dance a

yard before you dance abroad”. His fusion is intentional and strategic to capture local audiences with the aim of also capturing international audiences.

The main *chik chika* drum rhythm is slightly altered when used in chiggae. The keyboard and guitars keep the skank and bubble patterns and therefore provide the characteristic reggae sound while the *chik chika* drum rhythm maintains an Ethiopian sound and feel to the music. Members of the chiggae band all made sure to point out that the drum pattern in chiggae is slightly different to *chik chika*. Ashenafi, the current drummer, demonstrated this difference to me. The rhythm was altered slightly so that the reggae feel could be accommodated. Usually when Haile Roots and his band perform this song live, audience members can be seen dancing the *eskista*³¹—a sign that they have made the connection between his version of reggae and Ethiopian traditions. The skank pattern in the rhythm guitar (Figure 4.3) gives the song a reggae feel while the busy drum pattern in 6/8 evokes a more familiar sound to Ethiopian audiences.

The image shows a musical transcription for three instruments: Electric Guitar, Bass Guitar, and Drum Set, all in 6/8 time. The Electric Guitar part is in treble clef and features a skank pattern of chords (F#2, F#3, F#4) with a 7th fret barre and a 7th fret bend. The Bass Guitar part is in bass clef and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and a 7th fret barre. The Drum Set part is in a 6/8 time signature and features a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and a 7th fret barre.

Figure 4.3: Author’s transcription of an Excerpt of Haile Roots’ “Chiggae”.

In addition to musical elements, Ethiopian reggae artists try to appeal to wide audiences and negotiate their proximity to Rastafari-sounding reggae through the use of language. Although many Ethiopian reggae artists sing in Amharic, they also sing in Jamaican creole

³¹ Ethiopian shoulder dance

sometimes to demonstrate their abilities to produce “authentic reggae”. Ethiopians’ usage of Jamaican creole indexes Jamaicanness and therefore a certain amount of authenticity (Hollington 2016). Hollington writes that for Ethiopian reggae artists,

the incorporation of Jamaican-influenced English and Rasta Talk fulfil two functions... Firstly, they connect the music to Jamaica, which is often regarded as the original and authentic home of reggae music, and second, they give the otherwise Amharic songs an international touch, since English, the language which is internationally most commonly used in reggae music, is often strongly Jamaican-influenced and features Patwa and Rasta Talk, as reggae songs from all over the world testify (Hollington 2016: 148).

Jonny Ragga, an Ethiopian, who often sings in Amharic but mainly deejays in Jamaican creole explained his strategies:

I have deejayed on my album in Amharic. The nature of Amharic...it's a bit difficult than English to deejay. Oromignya is nicer. To make up a word in Amharic it's a lot of work. The shape of the mouth...It takes a lot of time. You have to pick the right words. My song “Shukentus”...the deejay part on my album is in Amharic. Had to take time to choose the words to make it work comfortably. It is more difficult. Oromignya might be easier.

His admission of the difficulties associated with deejaying in Amharic partly explains why there are not many examples of artists deejaying in Amharic. The way the language is structured does not fully lend itself to dancehall deejaying in the way that Jamaican creole does. He believes that the Oromo language may be better suited to dancehall.

While Jonny Ragga uses Jamaican creole because of the flow, Daggy Shash stated that he uses Jamaican creole when he wants to say something in his music that may be controversial. “If you sing in Amharic they understand it very well but if you sing it in Patwa or English version it tek long for them to figure out what it mean really. So I-man sing in Jamaican Patwa. So it tek time to figure out wha gwan. I put the strong words into Patwa” (Personal Interview 2016). By using Jamaican creole for his stronger words he tries to navigate issues of censorship in Ethiopia. Both Jonny Ragga and Daggy Shash, through their usage of Jamaican creole, encourage

Ethiopian youths to learn this Jamaican language. This in turn, brings Ethiopian audiences closer to Jamaican cultural forms and potentially opens up the scope for more interaction with the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia. Because their songs are mainly in Amharic, the Jamaican creole are not dominant enough for the artists to be perceived by Ethiopians as straying too far from their culture.

With Ethiopian reggae singers singing in Jamaican creole, the line between Ethiopian reggae and Jamaican reggae becomes more blurred. Jamaican creole allows a certain type of flow in deejay parts that, when done convincingly, indexes Jamaicanness. Towards the end of my fieldwork I met a dancehall artist from the southern region of Ethiopia who sang in Wolayta and other southern languages. While there is a reggae scene growing in Southern Ethiopia, it is yet to break into mainstream markets and I have had little exposure to the music.

Connecting Ethiopia with Reggae

In July 2017, I attended a press conference in Addis Ababa that was organized to promote a new concept called “Ethnopia”, developed by Walter Rizzi and Addis Gessesse, whose first project was to send eight Ethiopian “reggae ambassadors” to Spain to participate in the popular Rototom reggae festival. According to the media kit for this press conference:

The Rototom organizers have extended an invitation to Ethiopia under the theme Celebrating Africa. Rototom being a huge platform that brings people together from diverse background, this is a unique and valuable opportunity to promote Ethiopian music artists, promote Ethiopian products, culture and Ethiopia as a destination for travelers on a worldwide stage. With that in mind, and to help build the Ethiopia brand, a long term project called Ethnopia (Ethnic Ethiopia) has been developed. Ethnopia is both a band and a project that will represent Ethiopian music and culture worldwide.

The Ethnopia concept is geared towards celebrating and promoting the ethnic diversity of Ethiopia through the arts. Interestingly, the first project involves reggae music—a genre that was not created in Ethiopia and only started gaining in popularity in Ethiopia over the last ten to

fifteen years. During the press conference, a few Ethiopians asked for further explanation from the organizers on why reggae music was being used as part of a promotion of Ethiopian music. The organizers then had to explain that reggae music has been used by Rastafari for years to promote Ethiopia and that reggae certainly fits into ideas of what Ethiopia is. They also believed that a reggae festival was a great place to take advantage of historical representations of Ethiopia in reggae and further promote Ethiopia as a tourist destination. Although many people were not able to articulate the reasons for reggae's association with Ethiopia, there was a sense that reggae was a powerful medium through which Ethiopia can be promoted and it fits in with the official tourism slogan of "Land of Origins".

This press conference highlighted that just as Rastafari reggae artists have constructed Ethiopia as their Promised Land, so too do Ethiopians use reggae music to construct and promote a version of Ethiopia that suits their own purposes. It is clear that both Rastafari and Ethiopians see Ethiopia as unique and exceptional, however each group views this exceptional country through different lenses and for different purposes. While in some ways Ethiopians are helping returnees to create their Promised Land through reggae, in other ways Ethiopians may be challenging the type of Promised Land that Rastafari want to create. In the press conference, for example, there was much talk about Ethiopia's beauty, history of victory of colonizers, and as the land of origins. However, there was no discussion of Ethiopia as the land of Haile Selassie. This shows that Ethiopians are working to formulate their own meanings and relationships to reggae music that are distant from the ways Rastafari relate to reggae.

One main question that came out of the press conference centered on how reggae is connected to Ethiopia and what kind of connection it is. Although I explored this question in chapter one, in this section I examine how these connections are mobilized and discussed in light

of Ethiopians who create reggae. The ways in which Ethiopians relate to reggae is important for understanding what is driving the recent development of Ethiopian reggae. The various ways Ethiopians connect to reggae also allows Ethiopian reggae singers different options for situating themselves within reggae so that, even if aligning with some Rastafari ideology, they are still perceived as Ethiopian. Louis Chude-Sokei argues that because reggae has been popularized by the Rastafari movement out of an experience of displacement from Africa, African reggae artists tend not to be viewed as authentic reggae artists. He explains that although African reggae artists may be talented, their “primary handicap” is that “they are not directly produced by the symbolic gestures and romantic themes of exile and racial trauma that emerged as a result of the Atlantic slave trade” (Chude Sokei 2011: 77).

Ethiopian reggae singers therefore have to find ways to legitimize their use of reggae music that relate to their cultures and worldviews. For Ethiopian reggae artist and deejay Daggy Shash, reggae does not only belong to Jamaica but belongs to all of Africa.

When u go through Africa there are millions of rich music. Africa is rich in music. Reggae is mine. I respect the legends. They made it big. I belong to reggae and reggae belongs to me. When u go to our church. There is reggae everywhere. I can feel the reggae in the Orthodox Church for sure. That's what I feel. And music by nature, there is a copy paste in every step. If you go to Sudan you can hear Ethiopian flavor. When you hear hip hop there is Jamaican flavor. I don't think reggae belongs to Jamaica. Reggae belongs to people of Africa. Even these people are African. They took the music to Jamaica so it doesn't belong to Jamaica it belongs to Africa. That's what I believe (Personal interview 2016).

By claiming African ownership of reggae, Daggy Shash inserts himself into the genre as a somewhat authentic entity. Growing up in Shashemene around the repatriated Rastafari also gives Daggy Shash a sense of ownership of the music and culture.

Just as Daggy Shash mentioned that he feels a connection between reggae and the music of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, so too did other Ethiopian musicians and singers. Zeleke

Gessesse also told me that the drum (*kebero*) patterns in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are the foundations for the Rastafari Nyabingi rhythm, and therefore connected to reggae (Zelege Gessesse Personal Interview 2015). Ras Jany said “even reggae come out of the Orthodox Church. Because it's the heartbeat in the *kebero*. And the old artistes like Abyssinians they say reggae music is hymnal beat from church” (Personal Interview 2016). Not only does Ras Jany connect reggae with Orthodox Church drumming but also draws from what he heard the Jamaican group Abyssinians say about the connections between reggae and church music.

Sami Dan, one of the most popular Ethiopian reggae singers explained that the connection between Ethiopia and reggae is tight. Every artist from Jamaica always calls Ethiopia and Rastafari because there is a big connection...The other thing, if you see the beats, it's kind of similar to traditional music in Ethiopia. If you take Guraginya and reggae and some Oromia and Ago [ethnic groups in Ethiopia] music...it's kind of similar (Personal Interview 2016).

Sami Dan understands that reggae singers from Jamaica focus on Ethiopia in their lyrics and that some reggae rhythms are similar to Ethiopian musical elements. This is enough for him to conclude that there must be a musicological link between reggae and Ethiopia.

Ethiopian reggae artist and deejay, Jonny Ragga was clear in his stance that reggae was created in Jamaica and discussed with me the evolution of Jamaican popular music. He notes that:

Reggae music has its own history. Ethiopia has a lot to do with the message of reggae music. The music promoted Ethiopia and Ethiopian culture. I don't believe reggae music came from Ethiopia. Could come from Africa through blues etc. We have to give credit to Jamaicans to come up with those things... But people knew Jamaicans love Ethiopia and Haile Selassie. So everyone is aware of that. Ethiopians feel closer to Jamaica because of that vibe. The vibe that Jamaicans give. The next thing is that it is still African music. Geographically it is outside but culturally it is connected.

By referencing Jamaicans' love for Ethiopia and Haile Selassie as narrated through reggae music, Jonny Ragga highlights a way that Ethiopian reggae artists can connect themselves to

reggae music. Because reggae music is linked to messages about Ethiopia then it certainly makes sense for Ethiopians to participate in the creation of reggae music. His comment reflects the power of the discourse I discussed in chapter one in which reggae became known as a strong medium through which Ethiopia and Africa are positively promoted. Now, this musical discourse is encouraging Ethiopians to find their place within reggae music, which potentially helps them be more open minded to the repatriated Rastafari community.

In the midst of those Ethiopians who made connections to reggae, there were others who questioned the nature of these connections. Gemechu Megerssa, an Oromo with a Phd in anthropology from SOAS reflected on the ways Ethiopians connect to reggae music.

Music in this society is traditional. Reggae is not a traditional song in this place. Let alone having anything to do with any of the Ethiopian cultures. It's just the bullshitting the whole population that there is something between Rasta and Ethiopia therefore there is something between ragga, reggae, and Ethiopian music. [Me: Where do u think that is coming from?] That's the question I want to ask you. Where is it coming from? This is madness. How can u associate a Rasta with Ethiopia? (Personal Interview 2016).

While Dr. Gemechu understands the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the need for a Promised Land in Africa, he sees the stories that Rastafari mobilize as baseless at best and perhaps dangerously misleading at worst. About Rastafari he said, “I really like my brothers in the West. I support them. I welcome them to come back to Africa. Whether it is Oromia or Ghana. Let them come back. They are entitled to the land, the air, everything” (Personal Interview 2016). Gemechu empathizes with the Rastafari community but does not want them singing about and worshiping Haile Selassie, who he sees as a vicious ruler.

Jonathan Banes, a UK music collector, wondered whether the connection between Ethiopia and Jamaica has been somewhat forced and stated that:

most people [Ethiopians] haven't even thought of reggae necessarily. Ethiopia is already full of music. Thousands of years' worth. Reggae is something we have defined and created in our space that happens to have a back story related to Ethiopia. Rastas had a

fantasy. They dreamed they were coming back to how we created Ethiopia to ourselves (Personal Interview 2015).

He is not sure that most Ethiopians connect with reggae music in meaningful ways but he realizes how reggae was created to be connected to Ethiopia. Because he spent time in different villages outside Addis Ababa his impression is that most Ethiopians are not even aware of reggae music. They may have heard the music but do not necessarily know it to be reggae or the full significance of the genre.

Kofi Ababio, a British independent anthropologist of Ghanaian and Ethiopian origins, believes that for Ethiopians, reggae music is a means to access senses of modernity. He said:

reggae plays a role in creating “nation” in the urban Addis Ababa sense. Apart from Bole Airport, what makes Addis Ababa modern? Ethiopia doesn't have English. If reggae comes onto the scene in the cities, people can say, look this makes me modern. They still don't know the English. They still can't pronounce Bob Marley's name” (Personal Interview 2016).

For Kofi, reggae music is a means through which Ethiopians can access modernity. It looks and sounds cool and it has international appeal. I, too, got this sense from some Ethiopians who were more attached to reggae music for its image and place in global popular culture. Reggae is seen as modern in part because of its global appeal and success.

Kenny Allen, an American musician who lives and performs in Ethiopia but who is not Rastafari, sees how Ethiopians have connected to reggae even without fully understanding the full history of Rastafari:

The concept of reggae plays into the Ethiopian dialogue. It is a big up to the Ethiopian culture in one aspect. It is a rebel music. It comes with this expression that one can actually justify being different. The culture behind the reggae music is appealing. Thematically...there's a small percentage of Ethiopians who even understand what Rasta stands for outside of Ethiopia” (Personal Interview 2015).

Like Kofi, Kenny has observed that reggae is aesthetically appealing to Ethiopians in ways that have little to do with Rastafari ideologies.

Ebony J, a returnee of Jamaican heritage from the UK, was also aware and appreciative of the ways in which Ethiopian reggae musicians connect to reggae and, in so doing, help the repatriation mission. She said that the Ethiopian reggae artistes are “creating a pathway for us”. She recognized that the Ethiopian artists were able to amass more fans because they know how to appeal to local audiences but that their work also exposed Ethiopian audiences to the sounds of reggae. She continued, “Because of Teddy Afro and Eyob more Ethiopians are getting used to reggae. Even though the message might not be Rasta. It's okay. We shouldn't be forcing our ideology on them. It might turn them off. It will take time. Our time will come” (Personal Interview 2016). Here she demonstrates that there is space for reggae singers to disassociate themselves from Rastafari ideology but that reggae is able to link the music to Rastafari eventually.

As demonstrated through the above discussions, there are different and conflicting ideas on how reggae relates and can relate to Ethiopian audiences. The quotes from the singers and musicians also reveal that Ethiopians are able to connect to reggae without much reference to Rastafari. Although returnee Ebony J believes this is not a problem, other returnees would prefer Ethiopians to associate reggae with Rastafari more often in order for the repatriated community to gain more recognition within Ethiopia.

Mobilizing the Connection to Rastafari and the Promised Land

Although Ethiopians are able to connect to reggae while distancing themselves from Rastafari ideologies, there are cases in which Ethiopian reggae artists' create music that aligns closely with Rastafari-produced reggae. Most Ethiopians whom I encountered had an understanding that Jamaicans love Ethiopia and Jamaicans express this love through reggae music. This is a major point that connects reggae to Ethiopia and Rastafari is a major part of it.

The nature of this connection is mostly unclear throughout Ethiopia however as most Ethiopians believe that the connection is born out of Jamaicans' love for Haile Selassie because he brought rain to Jamaica during his 1966 visit.³² Ethiopians also communicated to me that Jamaicans have been singing about Ethiopia and Africa for years through reggae and this demonstrates a strong love for Ethiopia.

Ethiopians find various ways to connect to reggae that intersect with Rastafari ideology to varying degrees. There are also Ethiopians who sing love songs in a reggae style. Those songs do not do much to mobilize connections to Rastafari but they nonetheless keep the sound of reggae in the ears of Ethiopian audiences. As stated previously, the main ideology that Ethiopians and Rastafari have in common concerning Ethiopia is that it is a special and unique place because of its history of resistance to colonialism and it being hailed as the land of origins. Some Ethiopian reggae songs intersect with Rastafari ideology in particular ways that aid in solidifying the relationship between Ethiopia, Rastafari, and reggae, and ultimately help to create senses of a Rastafari Promised Land even as they emphasize more local conceptions of Ethiopia.

Numerous Ethiopian reggae love songs follow a similar thematic formula heard in Ethiopian popular music. Key terms such as *yene mar* (my honey), *anchi konjo* (you, pretty lady), *ewedeshalehu* (I like/love you) are prominent in Ethiopian reggae. These songs do not intersect much with the returnees' mission of repatriation but these are popular themes that appeal to a wide listenership. There are some Ethiopian singers who prefer to use reggae to express their feelings or what happens in daily life in Ethiopia. There are many who also explore themes of love through reggae music. They believe this is just as authentic for reggae because

³² Erin Macleod, drawing on actual footage of the event, shows that this story is not fully accurate and demonstrates how wide the gap is between what Ethiopians know about the Rastafari movement and what it actually entails (2014).

Bob Marley also sang many love songs.

Sami Dan is one such Ethiopian reggae singer who has a passion for reggae but chooses not to sing about Haile Selassie. His name “Sami Dan” is influenced by Rastafari beliefs, however, as it reflects that he is from the tribe of Dan.³³ He therefore uses some Rastafari elements as part of his performance image but stays away from other elements. Ethiopian band manager Leila Mekuria said this about Ethiopian reggae artistes who do not sing about Haile Selassie: “I don’t blame them. There are limitations. Ethiopians were not able to appreciate his majesty in the way Rastas have. It’s harder for them to big up his majesty’s work and find the sponsors. It’s easier to sing love songs” (Personal Interview 2016). She notes that Haile Selassie’s significance to people outside of Ethiopia is in some ways greater than within Ethiopia so Ethiopians cannot easily make a living from singing about him.

Some prominent Ethiopian singers, who have spent time with repatriated Rastafari, know more about the Rastafari movement than most other Ethiopians and have done much to emphasize connections between reggae and Ethiopia because they themselves share some of these ideologies. They do this by referencing dominant themes in roots reggae and presenting them to Ethiopian audiences. Some of these Ethiopian singers have also brought attention to the Rastafari community in Shashemene, further emphasizing the relationship between reggae, Rastafari, and Ethiopia. Two main themes that Ethiopians mobilize that emphasize their connections to Jamaica/reggae are Bob Marley and Haile Selassie.

Kofi Ababio shared with me his thoughts on Haile Selassie and Bob Marley and what those figures mean for reggae in Ethiopia:

³³ Members of the Twelve Tribes of Israel Rastafari mansion believe that everyone is from one of the twelve tribes of Israel in the Bible. One’s tribe is based on the moon cycle or the month in which one is born.

What reggae does today in the 21st century for Ethiopians in terms of connecting them to this global stream in whatever way, is exactly the same thing that Haile Selassie did for Ethiopians in his generation. You can actually say that Haile Selassie was the first to make Ethiopia a global presence. So Bob Marley--take him as the iconic image of reggae--and Haile Selassie could be put on two sides of the same coin for giving Ethiopia a global presence (Personal Interview 2017).

Ethiopian singer Ras Janny also theorized reggae's relationship to Ethiopia using the metaphor of a coin.

Ethiopia and Haile Selassie...when you hear every reggae music...the teachings start from him. So it's like one coin [Haile Selassie and reggae]. When u listen to reggae you should know Haile Selassie, Bob Marley, Ethiopia. Bob Marley wouldn't be here if he didn't get the inspiration from Ethiopia and Haile Selassie (Personal Interview 2016).

The figures of Bob Marley and Haile Selassie are iconic and indexical to Rastafari. Ethiopians perform their relationship to Rastafari using these signs while also keeping some distance from Rastafari ideologies. In addition to the figures of Bob Marley and Haile Selassie, I also discuss how Ethiopian reggae artists' songs about their country, Ethiopia, somewhat intersect with Rastafari reggae themes.

Bob Marley

The Government of Ethiopia designated a Bob Marley Square in Addis Ababa in 2005 and supported the installation of a Bob Marley statue there in 2015. This is a noticeable means by which Ethiopians have publically mobilized the figure of Bob Marley as being relevant to Ethiopia. Ethiopian artist Bizuneh Tesfa designed and sculpted the image, which was commissioned by Ethiopian brothers Addis and Zeleke Gessesse. The statue was erected in the middle of a roundabout in a high traffic area between two major hubs, Bole and Meganegna. It is life sized and depicts Bob Marley with a guitar around his neck, looking up and pointing to the sky. At the base of the statue are the words "one love" in English, Amharic, Arabic, and French.

The statue was taken down in 2017 due to traffic flow issues in the high-traffic intersection and there are plans for its relocation.

Ethiopians have mixed feelings about this statue and the ways Bob Marley relates to their country. Zeleke Gessesse told me that he and his brother pushed for this statue because it is related to their personal histories, having been signed with the Tuff Gong record label in 1981. He also believes that Bob Marley and Rastafari are related to Ethiopia's history, dating back to the early 1800s through Ethiopianism and Marcus Garvey's teachings in the West (Zeleke Gessesse, Personal Interview 2015). The sculpture is, thus, for him, a sign that connects Rastafari with Ethiopia. Other Ethiopians with whom I spoke had mixed reactions ranging from "what has Bob really done for Ethiopia and why aren't there statues of Ethiopian singers?" to "we know that he loves Ethiopia and Africa and had a good message for the continent."

I highlight this statue and its place (though brief) in Addis Ababa to show that the figure of Bob Marley is a means through which Ethiopians mobilize connections to reggae music. Ethiopia reggae musicians also use Marley's music in different ways to show their connections to reggae music. MacLeod notes that "[G]iven that Bob Marley is the image of reggae (if not Rastafari) in the popular Ethiopian imagination, Marley's music provides a model for how to present reggae, should one wish to do so" (MacLeod 2014: 180). In many clubs and bars where live music occurs, it is almost certain that an Ethiopian singer will sing at least one Bob Marley song. "I Wanna Love You", "Africa Unite", "Waiting in Vain" are some of the most popular Bob Marley songs that I encountered in different venues in Addis Ababa. Although these songs do not necessarily reflect dominant Rastafari ideology, they are songs made famous by a Jamaican Rastafari and are therefore linked to Rastafari.

Some Ethiopian artists incorporate Marley's music into their repertoire. When Haile

Roots performs his song “Chiggae” live, the band starts with the *chik chika* rhythm in the drums and the introduction to Bob Marley’s “I Wanna Love You” in the melody instruments. This is to show that even though they are using *chik chika*, the music can still be reggae because it works with a Bob Marley song. Haile Roots pointed out to me that Marley’s “I Wanna Love You” has a 6/8 feel which is why *chik chika* works with it. Linking their music to Bob Marley gives authenticity to their reggae music, while the *chik chika* rhythm and other elements also provide senses of Ethiopianness.

Teddy Afro’s song “Bob Marley” is a tribute to the legend of reggae music. This song and its music video form strong sign vehicles for the construction of Ethiopia as the Promised Land for a variety of reasons. It opens with a sample of Bob Marley’s voice saying Jah, Rastafari. Ever living, ever faithful, ever sure ...Selassie I”. While this signals Bob Marley’s connection to Ethiopia it also aligns Teddy with Bob Marley’s feelings towards Haile Selassie. However, it is important that Teddy is not the one heard saying this but Marley, and it is therefore a way of creating distance from Rastafari ideology. The song is mostly sung in Amharic with a few lyrics in the chorus in Jamaican. Haile Roots, another Ethiopian reggae artist, sings a section towards the end in English/Jamaican creole. Teddy’s lyrics not only describe Marley’s passion for Africa and for Ethiopia but also give accounts of key elements of Marley’s life such as when he famously brought together the prime minister and leader of the opposition at the One Love Peace Concert in 1978.

The melody is based on the dorian mode of the D major pentatonic scale. This helps to give the song a distinct Ethiopian sound and separates it from mainstream, diatonic, reggae music. The reggae skank and bubble patterns can be clearly heard throughout the song as well as the “heartbeat” Nyabinghi rhythm. This situates the song within the genre of reggae and some

would argue, roots reggae, because of the slight presence of Nyabinghi drumming.

The music video is shot entirely in Shashemene with repatriated Rastafari. Teddy is even in some shots playing the Nyabinghi drums with Rastafari. Teddy Afro brought a lot of attention to reggae music and by extension to the Rastafari community in Shashemene. His interaction with Shashemene in a sense authenticated Shashemene as a place for Rastafari for many Ethiopians. Teddy and other Ethiopian reggae singers have sung about Shashemene or mentioned the town in their songs, solidifying in the minds of Ethiopians that Shashemene is indeed a place for Jamaicans. It authenticates Shashemene as the Promised Land. Teddy's work in combining the sounds of reggae music, with lyrical content about Bob Marley, together with a music video shot in Shashemene with repatriated Rastafari brought together different signs that helped to reinforce the strong connection between reggae, Rastafari, and Ethiopia. In this way, Teddy Afro has done much to reinforce Ethiopia as being the Promised Land.

Haile Selassie

Much of reggae music coming out of Jamaica includes explicit references to Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia. The Promised Land in Ethiopia is only possible because of Haile Selassie and he is therefore at the center of Promised Land narratives. In Ethiopia, however, Haile Selassie is tied to history and politics in ways that make people prefer to avoid singing about him and Ethiopians usually have strong views on Haile Selassie as a historical figure. For some Ethiopians, Haile Selassie was a good king who did much for infrastructural development, healthcare, and education. For others, he was a heartless tyrant.

As discussed, the topic of Haile Selassie is one of the main elements that distinguishes the lyrics of Ethiopian reggae from Rastafari reggae but in some cases, Ethiopians blur this distinction bringing Rastafari ideology closer to senses of Ethiopianness. Because the figure of

Haile Selassie represents the strongest element that connects Rastafari with Ethiopia and the Promised Land, the extent to which Ethiopians mobilize similar ideas to Rastafari about Haile Selassie show how Ethiopians also participate in the Promised Land's construction. Erin MacLeod asserts that the "reality of Haile Selassie's position in Ethiopian culture and history is that of a king. Divinely ordained as a leader, perhaps, but a human being, imperfect and mortal" (2014: 66). In Macleod's work she shows that Ethiopians and repatriates have different understandings of Haile Selassie and that many Ethiopians reject the Rastafari premise that Haile Selassie is God.

It is in the celebration of Haile Selassie as a good king and leader that Ethiopians are able to express their love for His Majesty. Numerous Ethiopian singers and musicians told me that they have a lot of respect for Haile Selassie and they are happy to sing about him. They do not see their disbelief in his divinity as a hindrance to their connections to Rastafari. The continuous combining of the figure of Haile Selassie with reggae music plays a significant role in solidifying Ethiopia as the Promised Land. When these signs are combined by an Ethiopian, the affective potential of the sign is increased.

Ethiopian pianist Samuel Yirga explained to me his process of choosing reggae repertoire for a band while negotiating the topic of Haile Selassie. He said:

For example, my own side. I wanted to choose songs when I wanted to start a reggae band. Most songs though talked about Haile Selassie as a god but I couldn't choose them. I can't perform those songs. If it comes from a Jamaican it's ok but if it comes from an Ethiopian it will be a fight (Personal Interview 2016).

Samuel noted that songs about Haile Selassie as a good king was a perfectly acceptable theme since many Ethiopians love and respect Haile Selassie. He also noted that Jamaicans in Ethiopia can get away with singing about Haile Selassie more than Ethiopians can because of Jamaicans'

distant proximity to Ethiopia.

While some Ethiopians are cautious about singing of Haile Selassie, I observed that other Ethiopian reggae singers chant his name quite often. Ras Jany always says the name “Haile Selassie” in his live performances and said there is no problem with singing about Haile Selassie as an Ethiopian. He also says he is the only Ethiopian other than Teddy Afro to sing about Haile Selassie. No one has ever tried to censor him (Ras Jany, Personal interview 2016). Other popular artists such as Haile Roots, Jonny Ragga, and Yoyo can also be heard saying Haile Selassie’s name onstage. Helen Legasse, an Ethiopian singer with the Imperial Majestic Band loves to sing about Haile Selassie as well. She constantly spoke to me about the amazing work that he did and she laments that her people do not know enough about him. She thinks it is good to sing about him but, like other Ethiopians, does not believe that he is God (Helen Legasse, Personal Interview 2016).

Teddy Afro’s song “Germawi Neto” (His Majesty) featuring Jonny Ragga was one of the first and only songs sung by an Ethiopian that explicitly spoke to the greatness of Haile Selassie. In this song, Teddy praises Haile Selassie as Africa’s father and champions him as a leader in Pan Africanism. For this reason, many Ethiopian and repatriated Rastafari greatly respect Teddy Afro even though he himself does not identify as a Rastafari. Jonny Ragga, who performed the song with Teddy Afro said that the song originally had more references to Haile Selassie before it was recorded but Teddy changed some lyrics so that it could be more about African leadership, including other great African leaders (Jonny Ragga, Personal Interview 2016). The lyrics were changed because there was a concern that he might get in trouble for singing about Haile Selassie. Teddy Afro, however, has a number of songs that focus on one person so this song about Haile Selassie fits in with his style. His keyboardist, Teddy Aklilu, told me that one reason

people could not say anything bad about Teddy Afro’s song “Germawi Neto” is that Teddy Afro also did a song about Haile Gebreselassie—Ethiopia’s most respected athlete. “If he can praise Haile Gebreselassie then why can't he praise Haile Selassie?” (Teddy Aklilu Personal Conversation 2016).

Teddy Afro’s song is an important one for repatriated Rastafari because it closely aligns with their mission and beliefs and it is sung by an Ethiopian. Although the song does not refer to Haile Selassie as God, it speaks to his influence in the development of Africa and his teachings—these are also important to Rastafari. It shows that Ethiopians and Rastafari can be on the same page. In the chorus, Teddy sings “Germawineto...yeAfrica Abbat Haile Selassie” (His majesty, Father of Africa, Haile Selassie). These lyrics connect Haile Selassie with pan-Africanist ideologies that align with Rastafari. On two occasions that I attended the birthday celebrations for Haile Selassie in Shashemene, this song was performed live by an Ethiopian singer. This is important because the celebration is put on by repatriates but the majority of the audience is Ethiopian. The repatriates encourage an Ethiopian singer to perform this song because it expresses positive feelings for Haile Selassie in Amharic and in reggae.

The bassline of “Germawineto” emphasizes the first beat of each measure and therefore maintains the Ethiopian feel to the song. Also, there are numerous chord changes over the course of the song and a repetitive harmonic groove is not really established. In some performances uploaded to YouTube Teddy Afro is seen performing in front of a screen with images of Haile Selassie to further emphasize his message.³⁴ Towards the end of the song, Jonny Ragga has a deejay part in which he sings in Jamaican creole. He uses the word “Selassie I” which is the way many Rastafari refers to Haile Selassie. He also emphasizes the name Selassie over and over at

³⁴ Teddy Afro “Haile Selassie” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=---s455yg4Fs>. Accessed October 2, 2017.

unusual points in the flow. This also aligns with the Rastafari way because Ethiopians do not refer to the emperor as “Selassie” because it is not a name by itself in Ethiopia. Here, even as Jonny Ragga sings in Jamaican creole, his style still reflects Ethiopian aesthetics. His deejay part is more melodic than is typical for a Jamaican because he is following Ethiopia’s melodic traditions (Jonny Ragga Personal Interview 2016). Additionally, in the background, Teddy Afro repeats the word(s) “Rastafari”. This is a play on words as it signifies both Ras Tafari (the name and title of Haile Selassie before he became emperor) and Rastafari. His pronunciation of the “I” as in Rastafar-I shows that he is somewhat aligning his song and message with that of the Rastafari movement.

When Ethiopians sing about Haile Selassie in reggae music (although rare) it combines particular signs that signify the Rastafari movement and the connections between reggae, Rastafari, Jamaica, and Ethiopia. These connections are important for advancing the case that Ethiopia is the Promised Land and that Rastafari belong there. In one way, Ethiopians can sing about Haile Selassie as part of their history and culture. However, because Haile Selassie is a strong index of Rastafari beliefs, these songs also point to the Rastafari movement and ideologies. By avoiding singing about Haile Selassie as God or in overtly divine terms, the Ethiopian singers are, therefore, able to distance themselves slightly from Rastafari.

Ethiopian Promised Land?

Themes of Ethiopia and Africa as Zion permeate much of global reggae repertoire. Here I briefly discuss the extent to which Ethiopians participate in this discourse through reggae music and how this positions them in relation to Rastafari ideology. When non-Ethiopian Rastafari sing about Ethiopia, it is usually within the context of the Promised Land, but when Ethiopians sing about Ethiopia it is connected to feelings of nationalism. Because of Ethiopia’s adoption of

ethnic federalism, the concept of nationalism is particularly slippery but some Ethiopian singers still try to evoke senses of a united Ethiopia at times. While linking Ethiopian nationalism with reggae music is in some ways related to Rastafari practices, it is also a means of Ethiopians expressing love for their country. Kofi Ababio discussed the notion of the Promised Land with me in Addis Ababa and how this factors into Ethiopian conceptions:

The thing about the Promised Land is it's too Zionist or Judaic. That's not gonna work for Ethiopians. Because they all want to leave. Well, the thing is, there is so much diversity in Ethiopia...there are also many Ethiopians who love Ethiopia and don't want to leave. But this has nothing to do with pan Africanism, or the Promised Land. It's just for a literal love of the soil of this country, the air, the sunshine, the hospitality, the rolling hills of the countryside. A lot of people have that strong feeling...but that has nothing to do with the Promised Land (Personal Interview 2017).

Ethiopians view their country as a unique and exceptional place but not in the same way that Rastafari do. The songs about Ethiopia that Ethiopians sing display a love for the land that in some ways aligns with Rastafari ideologies but not exactly.

Teddy Afro is seen as one of the main proponents of Ethiopian nationalism in the popular music scene and he is also known as the most famous Ethiopian to sing reggae (MacLeod 2014). His 2017 hit "Ethiopia" (not a reggae song) can be heard constantly on radio stations in Addis Ababa. Teddy Afro's 2005 reggae-influenced song "Yasteseryal" was as popular as it was controversial. In this song, Teddy Afro expresses political dissent and therefore uses reggae as a medium through which to offer sociopolitical critique in the ways Jamaican artists have done. MacLeod writes: "Teddy is not simply utilizing the sound and rhythm of reggae, but he is also utilizing the mode as a political instrument—a mode that has a history that connects itself to Africa and is a tool for communication and the dissemination of ideas" (MacLeod 2014: 179).

In addition to being political, this song is about the history of Ethiopia and it is a call for unity. In this way, the song expresses themes about Ethiopia that are similar to themes that Rastafari express about their Promised Land. MacLeod notes that “[L]ike reggae lyrics sung by Rastafari, his lyrics call for social justice, the questioning of power structures, and the development of a unified Ethiopian national identity in a broad sense” (MacLeod 2014: 179). “Yasteseryal” galvanized dissent communities among the Ethiopian diaspora (Shelemay 2009: 12) and inspired Ethiopians all over the world to reimagine their country as a unified nation. The song, however, is different to the ways Rastafari sing about Ethiopia in that it is specific to Ethiopia’s political climate and therefore appeals to Ethiopians in deeper ways.

In the chorus, Teddy Afro sings “Jah Yasteseryal” (God forgives). By using the Rastafari word for God (Jah), he clearly aligns with the Rastafari movement to a certain degree. Erin Macleod notes, however, that in the lyrics of the song, he still aligns himself with Christianity even as he references a Rastafari/ reggae trope. Teddy uses the Amharic word “Amlak” for God in the line “Qim beQel kiffu new, ke Amlak yaleyal” (Revenge is bad and separates us from God), which shows his connection to Christianity. MacLeod further states that “While connecting himself to the Ethiopian population by means of a Christian reference, he is at the same time making use of the Rastafari notion of music as a site for discussion and negotiation of political and cultural beliefs” (MacLeod 2014: 178). This is a clear example of Teddy Afro negotiating proximity to Rastafari through the use of reggae music. He draws on the spiritual and socially conscious nature of reggae (that comes from Rastafari) but maintains his identity as a Christian.

In addition to using reggae to sing about Ethiopia, Teddy has also sung about Africa. His song “Oh Africa” expresses love for the continent calling it “Africaye” (my Africa). Referring to

his, sometimes forgotten African identity, he poetically sings “cold does not make you warm and summer does not make you cold. Your identity does not change. That is who you are”.³⁵ He makes the point that he is African and nothing can change that. By combining reggae music with themes of “Mama Africa” as a homeland, he again aligns himself with a Rastafari consciousness.

Ras Jany’s 2014 hit single “Selamta” from the album *Selamta* evokes themes of Ethiopian nationalism through its verbal guided tour and history of the country. It is a song in which he greets people throughout Ethiopia and wishes them peace: “selamta le Etyopia...selamta le Addis Ababa” (peace to Ethiopia, peace to Addis Ababa). By calling out names of places in Ethiopia he instills pride in people from those areas. Repatriated Rastafari Ras Mweya believes that the practice of singing about Ethiopian places in reggae was started when reggae artist Tony Rebel visited and performed in Ethiopia years ago (Personal Interview 2016). This, Ras Mweya says, inspired Ethiopian artists to do the same. While his assertion is difficult to prove, Ras Mweya highlights a similarity in the ways Ethiopian and returnee reggae singers express love for Ethiopia.

Haile Roots’ song “Ethiopia” features Jamaican singers Luciano and Mikey General, and strongly incorporates Rastafari ideology. The song opens with the familiar Ethiopian greeting “Selam Selam, Tenayistign” (peace, I wish you good health). The song is a call for Ethiopians and Africans at home and abroad to unite. Not only is Haile Roots aligning with Rastafari ideology but he is also seen and heard collaborating with a famous Rastafari singer from Jamaica, Luciano. Haile Roots sings “Yes I, Yes I, Yes I. Ethiopia ene lai lai”. The phrase “Yes I” is used by Rastafari in greetings or in positive affirmations and is therefore an example of Haile Roots performing a Rastafari identity.

³⁵ Yared Brhan helped me with some of these song translations and interpretations in Seattle.

The video for “Ethiopia” is shot in Shashemene and, like Teddy Afro’s “Bob Marley” video, gives the repatriated Rastafari community exposure to Ethiopian audiences. The song can be interpreted through the lenses of nationalism or pan Africanism and is therefore a good example of a way in which an Ethiopian reggae artist helps to mobilize Rastafari ideology and the concept of Ethiopia as a Promised Land. This song and video, therefore, shows how Ethiopian musicians, by collaborating with Jamaicans, and incorporating Rastafari themes in their songs can help to create a pathway for the repatriated reggae singers in Ethiopia.

Conclusion

As Ethiopian reggae music developed over the years, it began to sound more like international reggae and aligned somewhat with Rastafari ideology to varying degrees. The earliest forms of reggae-influenced Ethiopian music most likely did not register as reggae to Ethiopian audiences but prepared them for the full reggae style by slowly bringing it into mainstream attention. Ethiopians’ engagement in reggae comes not only from reggae’s groovy appeal, but also because of reggae’s associations with Ethiopia and the place of reggae on the global stage as a cosmopolitan music genre. Ethiopians who perform and promote reggae actively help to change the popular music tastes in Ethiopia and usher in new ways to be modern and cosmopolitan even as they become more aligned with the local repatriated Rastafari community who are viewed in Ethiopia with ambivalence.

Similar to the ways returnees try to capture more Ethiopian audiences (Chapter two), Ethiopians’ participation in reggae also introduces new audiences to this style of music. By promoting reggae in Ethiopia in an Ethiopian style, Ethiopian reggae artists help to broaden the Ethiopian fan base for reggae music, thereby connecting more Ethiopians with Jamaica and, to an extent, Rastafari. In this way, Ethiopian reggae artists create a pathway for repatriates.

Ethiopians, however, also deviate from Rastafari ideologies in reggae and mobilize newer more localized meanings to reggae. This can potentially drive Ethiopian audiences away from the music of returnees by providing Ethiopians with ways to participate in reggae without any problematic references to Rastafari ideologies.

By aligning their music with Rastafari themes and sounds, Ethiopian reggae singers exhibit “authenticity”. On the other hand, retaining Ethiopian music elements allows the singers to demonstrate their Ethiopianness. By keeping their proximity to Rastafari ideologies close but not too close, Ethiopian reggae singers are able to carve out a market for reggae music that is both “authentic” and local. The Ethiopians’ actions show that they, too, participate in the construction of the Promised Land for returnees while also capitalizing on reggae’s capacity to bring them more success and attention. In other words, Ethiopians are able to use reggae as a productive mechanism to create local and international careers for themselves while creating sonic pathway for returnees that help to legitimize their presence in the country. In the next chapter I show how returnees seek out musical collaboration with Ethiopians as a strategy to ensure that they are seen working together with Ethiopians and not as separate entities.

Chapter 5

Musical Collaborations and Development in the Promised Land

When I attended one of my first rehearsals with Ras Kawintseb's band in Addis Ababa in October 2015, I discovered early on that a major component to the musical mission of repatriated Rastafari involved collaboration with Ethiopians. I found myself sitting in a dimly lit room on a small stool with my back to the wall looking around at the dreadlocked musicians who were all focused on their instruments. One musician was from Trinidad, one from Bonaire, some from Martinique, and the rest were Ethiopians. I was the only Jamaican. Ras Kawintseb gave instructions in English, French, and Amharic. In this tiny room in a tucked away neighborhood in Addis Ababa, reggae music brought people together from different backgrounds and required cooperation for the task at hand, which was preparation for a concert. Although Ras Kawintseb was in charge, sometimes the Ethiopian keyboardist (Wubeshet) would make suggestions that the rest of the band might adopt. One of the first stages of musical collaboration that I observed was in the musical exchanges between repatriated and Ethiopian musicians in rehearsal settings such as this. After learning from each other and exchanging musical ideas in rehearsals, they perform together in public where collaboration is visibly and audibly put on display, thereby promoting the idea that Ethiopians and returnees can work together.

Working together to develop Ethiopia is the ultimate goal for returnees and demonstrating their abilities to work with Ethiopians through music is an important strategy. Mientjes emphasizes that musical collaboration can come to stand for social collaboration through a series of interpretative moves (1990). Collaboration is established through the ways musical styles are fused and is perceived differently by various interpreters based on their

“unique set of accumulated sociopolitical and cultural experiences” (Mientjes 1990: 37). By examining the micropractices (Brinner 2009) of repatriated and Ethiopian musicians in collaborative settings, I show how Rastafari use reggae music to build bridges (and be seen and heard building bridges) between themselves and Ethiopians. I argue that because of the collaborative nature of reggae music and the meanings associated with the genre, returnees are able to use reggae as a tool for collaboration and development from small to large scales in Ethiopia. In this way, returnees are not just using reggae to construct the Promised Land, but to develop it.

Collaborative projects that lead to economic and social development are pivotal to the repatriation mission. After the fall of the *Derg* regime and the changing economic situation in the 1990s in Ethiopia, there was a discursive shift among returnees and Ethiopians towards development (Bonacci 2015). Ethiopia, under the leadership of Meles Zenawi, began to “assert itself as a new regional power which was in the process of developing an original path towards economic growth” (Prunier and Ficquet 2015: 2). For returnees, repatriation to Ethiopia became more than just a matter of “fulfilling the prophecy” but geared towards the development of the country” (Bonacci 2015: 366). Bonacci further notes that this credo of returnees was expressed in the words “Africa awaits its creators”, which many interpret to mean that the African diaspora have a responsibility to return and develop the continent. Repatriated musicians and artists in particular frequently mentioned this phrase to me because they see themselves as creative creators and therefore particularly vital to the mission.

Erin MacLeod devotes a chapter in her book to the various ways that repatriated Rastafari and Ethiopians work together on projects that lead to some form of development at the local level in Shashemene. She argues that if repatriated Rastafari continue to build businesses and

engage in developmental projects with the community, they may be able to gain “cultural citizenship capital”, which may translate into more meaningful levels of acceptance and political recognition (MacLeod 2014: 227). The developmental and collaborative projects that MacLeod outlines include water harvesting, school building, and the creation of businesses such as hotels and restaurants that bring tourists into Shashemene. These projects are vital to the mission of repatriation and have the potential to improve the ways Ethiopians view the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia. In terms of music, repatriated musicians work with Ethiopian musicians, training them to perform live reggae music and helping them hone skills in an international music genre that can lead to further opportunities. Some returnee reggae artists are connected with other development projects and use their visibility as performers to promote and contribute to these development projects. Collaboration between returnees and Ethiopians in music settings also helps to bring people together who can learn from each other and set an example of others to do the same. In other words, collaborative projects that are visible and audible demonstrate to wider audiences that returnees and Ethiopians can indeed live in harmony.

Musical Collaborations In Ethiopia

“Keep it there for now. Just let it groove for a bit.” Sometimes in our rehearsals in Addis Ababa, Ras Kawintseb would close his eyes and ask us to keep the reggae groove going for a few minutes to develop the rhythmic feel. His body would sway to and fro, simultaneously feeling the music and demonstrating the feel he wanted from the band. Repatriated Rastafari musician, Ras Kawintseb’s reggae band, Aetiofrika, mainly comprises Ethiopian musicians who enjoy reggae and identify with Rastafari philosophy to varying degrees. Cultivating musical feeling, though a small and intimate example of collaboration, is the first stage to larger ways that collaboration and development take place in and through reggae music in Ethiopia. By

helping Ethiopians develop the right feel, returnees are equipping Ethiopians with vital skills to launch international careers in reggae.

In some ways, the nature of the music forces musicians to come together in intimate ways, resulting in stronger social bonds. Reggae was born out of recording studios in Kingston in collaborative environments (Hitchins 2013). Musicians from different backgrounds contributed their own musical ideas to each recording while becoming acquainted with each other's styles so well that they were able to "lock in" and produce groovy polyrhythmic masterpieces. In order for other musicians to reproduce this style of music, they too have to learn to lock in with their fellow musicians, a process that takes skill and requires time spent playing together. Discussing his first experiences playing reggae music, Ethnomusicologist Ray Hitchins notes that the "difficulty associated with generating the appropriate musical response...could only be acquired with prolonged immersion in the music and remaining perceptive to how musicians interacted and responded to a wide variety of forces" (2013: 36).³⁶ This can be said about many kinds of music from salsa to jazz but what makes reggae more conducive to collaboration in the scenario I present in this chapter is its strong associations to themes of collaboration as manifest in Pan Africanism and African unity.

Ethiopian musician Teddy Aklilu told me that reggae is the lingua franca of Africa (Personal Interview 2016). While it is clear that this does not mean that all Africans are naturally fluent in reggae or that all Africans want to be fluent in reggae, it represents an attitude that explains why many Africans are interested in reggae music. Because many famous reggae songs comprise themes of African unity, many Africans see in the genre a means to communicate across ethnic and national borders. The combination of these senses of unity in reggae themes

³⁶ For a more thorough discussion on feel in reggae music see Hitchins, R. (2013).

with the collaboration required in the performance of the music, strengthens reggae's efficacy in encouraging collaboration on small and large scales.

To demonstrate how reggae musicians manipulate and articulate the feel and how this feel impacts music, I offer one of my experiences performing with Sydney Salmon and the Imperial Majestic Band in Addis Ababa. Whenever I performed with this band I always preferred to set up my steelpan beside the keyboardist, Ma'an Judah, because I liked her performance energy and she gave clear instructions on what was coming next. The following is an excerpt from my field notes:

"While keeping the reggae skank pattern going in her left hand, the keyboardist played a melodic line with her right hand and said to me "play this". I tried to quickly pick out the melody. As soon as I had it, she switched to the bubble pattern with two hands playing chords in an alternating manner. The bubble pattern cradled the guitar skank in a way that caused me to bounce up and down as if the sounds themselves were moving me. Further along in the song Ma'an raised her eyebrows at the drummer who then skipped the first beat and they both came crashing down on the third beat—emphasizing the one drop feel. I missed that cue. She was rocking back and forth, leaning into the one drop with her body. My body fell in sync with hers. All the different sounds seemed to revolve around and orient themselves to this accent on the third beat—as if a gravity-like force was at work. A few bars later she yelled "dubwise" and the rhythm guitar and I dropped out of the texture leaving mainly bass and drums. The guitarist strummed chords out of time to imitate an echo effect. Although the drum rhythms became more busy and active, the "out of time" sound from the guitar made the music feel even more laid back. I was being pulled in different directions. I inserted a few improvised melodic lines into the spaces making sure to respect the disorienting feel. After a few cycles of this we returned to the original groove."

Within this song, there were different sections that required specific musical attacks, rhythms, and spaces for which prior knowledge and experience is important. While this experience was not new to me as a Jamaican musician, I noticed that my performances with this band over time became more natural as I became more accustomed to the way they played. I had to understand not only the music, but how these musicians execute phrases and ideas. I had to learn to communicate without speaking. After some time, I began to feel the "sameness" that

Turino identifies, arising out of musical performances such as this one (2008). He states: “[W]ithin the bounded and concentrated frame of musical performance that *sameness* is all that matters, and for those moments when the performance is focused and in sync, that deep identification is *felt* as total” (Turino 2008:18. Emphasis in original). Ma’an, a Filipino American Rastafarian, demonstrated not only an intuitive sense of what sounds were required for each section but she was also able to communicate and initiate these requirements with gestures and body movement. Even though she did not grow up in Jamaica, she has developed a strong feel for reggae through immersion in reggae bands and the Rastafari movement. What happens in musical settings such as this one is that Ethiopian musicians begin to pick up the feel from her and other repatriated musicians in the band.

Picking up the feel is a social process as much as it is musical. Bodies become in sync with each other in a way often described as entrainment. Picking up the feel also requires that people spend time with each other, not just playing music but also socializing and becoming used to speech patterns and mannerisms. Good musical relationships index good human relationships and therefore require continual work to sustain (Turino 2008 (20). Ethiopians with whom I spoke told me that they learned a lot from performing with returnees, and that they learned not just musical knowledge but cultural knowledge as well.

Renowned Ethiopian pianist Samuel Yirga is one such musician who spent time playing with the Imperial Majestic Band and admitted that he “took lessons” from repatriated musicians Ma’an, Alton, and Sanjay and learned how to achieve the right rhythmic feel from them. He explained, “the bass player should be a bit behind... The connection of my bubble with the bass line and the hi-hat with the bubble and... everything is related. And unless you really got the feeling, it's just a technique and not the music” (Personal Interview 2016). He performed with

Sydney and the Imperial Majestic Band for three years and still performs with them if they need a keyboardist. By crediting the band with helping him develop his musicianship, he shows one way that returnees are contributing to Ethiopia, even though it is on a microscopic level.

The Ethiopian saxophonist for the Imperial Majestic Band, Wondwosson Woldeselassie, who brings a distinct Ethiopian flavor to the music said that he sometimes had trouble knowing when to come in with his melodic lines, especially when he first started playing reggae. Melodies in reggae feel different for him because they do not consistently begin on the first beat of the bar like they do in many Ethiopian songs. He also said that it took him a long time to understand some of the cues that Ma'an gives on stage. He recognizes that there is a certain type of communication that occurs between Ma'an and Alton that he does not quite get yet but he is getting better at understanding the connection (Personal Interview 2016). In some cases, these challenges may have caused frustration both for himself—an expert saxophonist—and other band members, but through his commitment to the music and the band's commitment to him he is now much more comfortable performing reggae. According to the band's press kit, the Imperial Majestic Band was formed “from a desire to unite the Rasta and Ethiopian community, developing an environment of cultural exchange through the love of reggae music.” The band itself is made up of repatriated Rastafari, Ethiopian Rastafari, and Ethiopians who are not Rastafari. This band's composition, therefore, represents unity between Ethiopians and Rastafari.

Returnee and singer from the UK, Ebony J, also spoke at length at the ways she and other returnees teach Ethiopians about reggae. Ebony is known in Addis Ababa for her strong and soulful voice but also for her collaborative work with Ethiopians. She explained:

A lot of Ethiopian musicians and singers don't feel reggae. Even big stars come in on the wrong part of the bar... even on their own songs! They don't feel it like us...It comes naturally to us. Not them. They can learn though. We have helped them in terms of live music. Even if they don't admit it. We have taught them a lot. Especially with vocal

harmonies. Now Ethiopians are saying things like “wheel, pull up” Where did they learn that from? Us! (Personal Interview 2016)

Noting that Ethiopians can and do learn to perform reggae, Ebony J highlights the potential for musical development in Ethiopia. By emphasizing that the reggae feel comes naturally to returnees who have usually grown up with the music, she positions returnees as ideal candidates to help Ethiopians hone their musical skills. Part of the reason that reggae is challenging to some Ethiopian musicians is that much of Ethiopian music tends to emphasize melody more than harmony and groove (Girum Mezmur, Personal Interview 2016). Girum further commented that “the way Jamaicans groove is related to how they talk and think and move” (ibid). Differences in approach to groove are perhaps related to Jamaican music practices being mostly influenced by West Africa and not East Africa.

Ebony went on to explain the challenge she faced one day trying to demonstrate to an Ethiopian drummer how to count and come in on Bob Marley’s song “One Drop.” As challenging as it is to teach the feel of reggae she has shown that she is committed to working with Ethiopians over the years. I attended some performances of an Ethiopian band named Zayla that she and her husband mentors. The collaboration between Ebony and the band members is evident in that she only sings a few songs with the band but has other Ethiopian singers on the lead the majority of the time. For some songs, she sings backup vocals for the Ethiopian lead singers. This type of collaboration shows willingness to work with Ethiopians but also shows humility. It is clear in her performances that she does not need the spotlight and that she is happy to have Ethiopians gain experience and benefit from these experiences. The Ethiopian manager for a club in which Ebony performed with this band told me that he loves seeing Ebony on stage working with, not overshadowing, the other performers.

Many repatriated musicians spoke to me about the importance of building relationships with Ethiopian musicians and working with them. Teddy Dan, a popular Jamaican singer who repatriated to Ethiopia years ago, stated:

I work with Jonny Ragga, Ras Jany, Haile Roots [Ethiopian reggae artists]...We have very good relations. I look pon dem as family, brothers, children. It gives you that mixed emotion. It's your son, brother, friend. I love the relationship with young artists in Ethiopia because it's their time. It's time the message come out of Ethiopians. It's the other half of the story that has never been told.

For Teddy Dan, seeing Ethiopian musicians as family is a key step to collaboration. He also points out that he wants Ethiopian reggae artists to succeed at their craft, showing that he is fully supportive of their development. Further describing the ways he has helped Ethiopian reggae singers, he states,

I encourage Ethiopian artistes to sing in English and Amharic. Helping them structure the format of the music. Sometimes encourage them...when you go on stage you cya just turn yuh back on the people and face the band. That is a sense of fear. Overcome the fear. Pick a spot on top of the tree or something and focus pon dat spot. If you come to entertain the people, you can't turn your back on the people. So it's really giving basic tips (Personal Interview 2016).

From his many years of performing on international stages, Teddy Dan is able to pass on his experience to Ethiopian singers. I, too, noticed that some Ethiopian singers were a bit shy on stage and needed some encouragement to more confidently face their audience. Teddy Dan, however, has a vibrant and energetic stage presence through which he is able to deeply engage audiences. His performance tips and points of advice help Ethiopians to advance their careers and shows Ethiopians that returnees are willing to help them.

Sydney Salmon also said that he enjoys collaborating with Ethiopian musicians and artists because it shows that he—and the repatriated Rastafari community—are willing to work with Ethiopians (Personal Interview 2016). During one rehearsal with the Imperial Majestic

Band During we started to practice Bob Marley and the Wailers' song "Simmer Down". Sydney spontaneously started translating the main hook "simmer down" to the Amharic phrase "*tele gaga*". He stopped the band and asked the Ethiopian guitarist Andualem (Andi), "Is that right? I can say that?" Andi smiled and said "Yeah that's right". Andi explained that *tele gaga* means cool down, calm down, relax. Sydney then told the backup vocalists to sing "*tele gaga*" in place of "simmer down". Sister Pat, a returnee from the UK, tried to repeat "Tele kaka? What?" A fit a laughter ensued from all present. "No. Gaga. Tele gaga." Sydney responded. "That's what I said" said Sister Pat jokingly. The laughter in this instance represents the enjoyment that returnees and Ethiopians experience during these moments of collaboration. In this scenario, the Jamaican band leader, Sydney, deferred to his Ethiopian guitarist to make sure that he was saying the right phrase in Amharic. When Sydney then performs songs such as these and introduces Amharic phrases he is seen as being integrated into the culture. This is one example of many in which returnees learn from Ethiopians and demonstrate their knowledge publically.

By grooving together in rehearsals and on stages relationships are formed and cultural exchanges occur. Ma'an said:

a lot of Ethiopian musicians have passed through our band. Whether us or Ras Kawinteb's band. We always want to incorporate Ethiopian musicians. It's a cultural exchange and sometimes spiritual exchange. A lot of the musicians have played with us. As big as Girum Mezmur or Wubeshet and Binnyam. It's like a reggae school" (Personal Interview 2016).

Ethiopian singer Sami Dan affirmed the importance of this cultural change also stating:

I had to have a good starting point...After I joined Sydney Salmon and Imperial Majestic...It was a great experience to understand the culture and people. It was a great experience. I played there like for one year. We used to perform at Jams Addis where I sang only reggae" (Personal Interview 2016).

As Sami Dan's career as a reggae artist continues to grow, he acknowledges the time spent with the Imperial Majestic Band as being important. He further pointed out that he recorded some of his own songs with this band and looks forward to future collaboration.

Beyond connecting with returnees musically, Ethiopian keyboardist Samuel Yirga was also exposed to the repatriate community in Shashemene because of his involvement in the band. "I had a very nice time knowing the Jamaican community in Shashemene. Because of Sydney I had a chance to be there. I stayed at Sydney's place. I had the chance to visit [Jamaican] restaurants of Shashemene...The first thing I saw is they have a big respect for Ethiopians" (Personal Interview 2016). This are examples of the ways reggae bands help to connect Ethiopians and repatriated Rastafari both musically and socially that establish a foundation for further collaboration.

Ras Kawintseb expressed an interest in working more with Oromo musicians and affirmed that it is important for people to see Rastafari and Oromo people getting along especially in Shashemene. As discussed in Chapter three, Shashemene is in the Oromia region and the Oromo ethnic group, because they disdain Haile Selassie, are particularly distrusting of the Rastafari presence in their region. In 2015, Oromo singer Habib Kemal shot the music video for his song "Qubee Jenereeshiin" in Shashemene and asked Ras Kawintseb to be in the video.³⁷ The song is reggae-influenced and this is probably why the singer wanted Rastafari in his video.

³⁷ "Qubee Jenereeshiin" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2rN-NQjl48 Accessed October 3, 2017.



Figure 5.1. Screenshot of “Qubee Jenereshiin” music video from YouTube.

In the video, Ras Kawintseb and other Rastafari in Shashemene are seen playing musical instruments even though they did not participate in the song’s recording. As seen in Figure 5.1, the video makes it seem as though the Rastafari musicians are the musicians with whom the singer worked when recording the song.³⁸ Ras Kawintseb was happy to be part of this because he believes it helped to strengthen the somewhat strenuous relationship between Rastafari and the Oromo ethnic group.

Turino notes that “[I]deal human relationships emerge only in those special moments—of music making and dance, of lovemaking, of sports teamwork and timing, of seamless conversation, of comprehended silences, of ritual *communitas*—and then they are gone” (Turino 2004: 20). In the moments of music making in which I participated with returnees and Ethiopians, I was able to feel the connections about which Turino writes. In these fleeting moments, returnees and Ethiopians experience glimpses of a Promised Land in which its inhabitants can get along. By participating in bands comprising Ethiopian and repatriated musicians I could observe and experience the challenges of feeling the music both in myself and

³⁸ From left to right in the picture is Ras Lee-I, Habib Kemal, Alberto Romero, and Ras Kawintseb.

others. Discussing the dynamics of playing together, Nachmanovitch states that “each collaborator brings to the work a different set of strengths and resistances. We provide both irritation and inspiration for each other—the grist for each other’s pearl making” (Nachmanovitch 1990: 95). To feel the music better, therefore, musicians must spend time playing together and working through the irritation while recognizing each other’s strengths. The exchanges that happen in these sessions are much more than musical ones. Relationships are formed and people are brought closer together. It is not just the act of playing together but feeling together—a much deeper experience—that achieves this sense of togetherness.

Processes of Fusion

In addition to playing together and learning from each other, the processes of musical fusion also reveal and facilitate acts of collaboration between returnees and Ethiopians. Benjamin Brinner argues for the importance of examining the process, and not just the product, of musical fusion because recordings only give a partial impression and “some of the most interesting and significant negotiations of diverse musical resources take place in rehearsal and performance” (2009: 216). I therefore offer some discussion on these processes and show how they impact the repatriated community in Ethiopia.

Ma’an Judah, repatriated Rastafari and the keyboardist for the Imperial Majestic Band, explained how they started using Ethiopian scales in their songs: “We had a horn section at one time. They were Ethiopians. We used to play a ska song...old ska song. And someone said ‘let’s play *ambassell* [Ethiopian scale] on this.’ That was the first time” (Personal Interview 2016). What is notable here is that the inclusion of Ethiopian scales in their reggae came from a spontaneous collaboration between returnee and Ethiopian musicians during a performance. Returnee musicians such as herself learned about the scales from Ethiopian musicians during

rehearsals and shows. In rehearsals with the band she would sometimes take out her notebook to explain to me which scales to use or she would refer to an Ethiopian musician in the room.

Ethiopian guitarist, Dereje, has performed with most reggae singers in Ethiopia and has had many experiences working with repatriated Rastafari musicians in different bands.

Describing his contribution to the Imperial Majestic Band he said:

Me and Sydney used to talk about using Ethiopian scales in the music. The first time we did that *bati* (Ethiopian scale) thing... we were rehearsing “Mamaye”, I remember, at the house in Summit, three, four years ago. We took a break for a while...and within that progression I heard like the *bati* major so I played it and Sydney said ‘wait wait, what’s that? Yeah put that in there.’ So I put it in the intro...I know that before that Sydney wanted to do that. I’m not saying I’m the one who gave him the idea. But he feels more comfortable with it now (Personal Interview 2016).

Dereje, by spontaneously playing the *bati* scale, showed Sydney the potential for its inclusion in the song “Mamaye”. This moment led to a more consistent use of the scale in further performances of the song.

These moments of interaction between Ethiopians and returnees lead to creative outcomes and later signify to audiences integration and collaboration. These examples show the extent to which this returnee-led band is open to suggestions from Ethiopian musicians. When the Imperial Majestic Band performs on stage, audience members hear Ethiopian elements fused with reggae elements (to varying degrees) and see Ethiopian musicians playing alongside returnees.

One major collaborative song undertaken recently by the Imperial Majestic Band is “Abbay”. Sydney Salmon wrote the lyrics, which describe a trip that the band (myself included) took in December 2015 to January 2016 to the Western region of Ethiopia where the Nile river begins. We went to perform for a New Year’s Eve party for the workers on the dam but it was the journey there that made the experience particularly special. The bus ride took two days and

traversed through breathtaking landscapes. Since that trip, Sydney constantly recalled how much he enjoyed it, the sites, the people, the time spent with everyone. He, and other band members, found the experience really special. He tried to capture this experience in the lyrics of the song:

I took the trip of my life
With my band and my wife
To a place called Abbay
Which is the source of the Nile

As I was leaving Ethiopia in 2016 he had put his lyrics to a melody that worked over a particular riddim just so he could start performing it, but he assured me that he wanted something more unique and special. By the time I returned to Ethiopia in 2017 he was putting the final touches on the new version of the song, which was built on the *ambassel* scale. The song featured a verse, which is based on an Ethiopian folk song describing the beauty of the Nile. The combination of Sydney's original lyrics based on his experience with the Ethiopian folk song is a major aspect of the song's communicative power. This also requires an Ethiopian singer to perform the song with him as a duet.

The day Sydney played the song for me he also had two traditional Ethiopian musicians, a *masinko* player and a *washint* player, at his house to record parts for the song. Because there was an Ethiopian folk melody in the song and the song was built on an Ethiopian scale, the instrumentalists had no trouble adding melodies. The result was a song that spoke to the beauty of Ethiopia, included returnees and Ethiopians, and incorporated traditional Ethiopian instruments with typical reggae instrumentation.

The band performed this song at Villa Verde in August 2017 to a large, thick crowd (Figure 5.2). Sydney sang the lead and the Amharic part was sung by Ethiopian singer, Ema Elfeyes. The *masinko* and *washint* players were sonically and visually on display as well. When the *masinko* player played a solo interlude Sydney stepped aside, and demonstrating his *eskista*

skills, danced “to” the *masinko* thereby emphasizing its presence. Many enthusiastic audience members took out their cameras to film this phenomenon. Jamaican-styled reggae fused with an Ethiopian folk song and Ethiopian traditional instruments is a rare phenomenon in Ethiopia. In this context, audiences were able to see and hear an example of successful collaboration between returnees and Ethiopians.



Figure 5.2: Sydney Salmon (left) performing with the Imperial Majestic Band and *masinko* and *washint* players at Verde. August 2017.

The repatriated musicians sometimes also perform reggae with Ethiopian singers who sing Ethiopian songs and this, too, operates as a form of musical fusion. Ma’an explains:

We back Ethiopian singers sometimes but we "majestify it". We give it the reggae feel. The reggae is the bass. It only gives trouble when Alton [the drummer] has to change the beat to an Ethiopian beat....The drum has a lot to do with it. If the drum isn't solid with the reggae then I can't think of the shuffle or skank. But it works. As crazy as it sounds, it works (Personal Interview 2016).

By using the word “majestify” she is referencing her Imperial Majestic Band but also the kingly quality that Rastafari ascribe to reggae music. For her, Ethiopian music and reggae can be successfully fused especially when approached by a band such as hers who are experienced in

the foundational aspects of reggae music. The “majestification” of Ethiopian music by the Imperial Majestic Band is therefore an important means of performing repatriation. They are able to achieve a sound that is directly caused by the process of repatriation and this sound reinforces what it means (at least for them) to be repatriated. After all, many repatriated Rastafari aim to “majestify” Ethiopia by promoting the work of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie.

Being seen and heard together with Ethiopians is important for Rastafari who wish to live peacefully in Ethiopia. Demonstrating visibly that they can work together with Ethiopians in public platforms such as performance stages and music videos is a first step for showing Ethiopians they want to work with them on larger developmental projects. While in many cases successful, due to differences in culture and ideology, sometimes musical collaboration also creates challenges.

Challenges

Some repatriates lament that after working with and training Ethiopian musicians in the reggae art form, the Ethiopians leave and start their own bands and careers. While returnees are happy that Ethiopians are developing their skills and progressing, returnees are constantly looking for new Ethiopian musicians who they will need to teach. Conversations surrounding the search for a reggae bass player were common while I was in Ethiopia. One returnee band leader explained to me that he would love to get a “yaard man” (someone from Jamaica) to play bass because he would fit right in and maybe have the exact feel they need. Responding to himself he stated, “but we are in Ethiopia and we have to work together with the Ethiopians. It's better to mix like this”.

Ras Kawintseb, who has been especially committed to working with Ethiopian musicians, also shared that many Ethiopian musicians can be difficult to work with because they

drink, chew *khat*,³⁹ and smoke too much marijuana sometimes. This combination, he feels, affects their performance and conduct in strong ways. It is also difficult to work with Ethiopian musicians who do not share the same Rastafari ideologies as he does. He told me of a performance in which his band performed Teddy Afro's "Germawi Neto" with an Ethiopian singer. At the end of the chorus, instead of singing the words "Haile Selassie," the singer sang the name of the then current prime minister "Meles Zenawi." This was a serious problem for Ras Kawintseb who viewed this as disrespectful to the mission of Rastafari and the mission of his band. The differences in ideology and spirituality come out in instances like this in musical performances and are some of the biggest challenges that returnees face in achieving collaboration. Sydney Salmon, whose band prays before every performance, expressed dismay that some Ethiopian musicians do not want to pray with them because of differences in spirituality. For Rastafari, there is a spiritual element to musical collaboration that does not always work with Ethiopians.

True collaboration and exchange should involve exchanges in both directions. In most cases, I noticed that Ethiopians were learning more about reggae than returnees were learning about Ethiopian music. Most Ethiopian musicians were seeking out opportunities to perform with repatriated musicians to learn about reggae, in part because it is an internationally recognized genre and a certain amount of cultural and economic capital to be gained from being competent in reggae music. However, repatriated musicians were not as committed to learning about Ethiopian music for a few reasons. Firstly, Ethiopian music does not necessarily give the type of economic and cultural capital to returnees that reggae gives to Ethiopian musicians. Secondly, part of the Rastafari repatriation mission is to teach Ethiopians and help them develop

³⁹ Leaf that when chewed acts as a stimulant.

skills that can provide them with better lives. In a sense, repatriated reggae musicians are giving skills more than taking because it is part of their mission. Also, for returnee musicians, maintaining an identity as Rastafari is important so they do not stray too far from reggae music. Reggae is what makes them distinct in Ethiopia and keeps them grounded in their identities.

While returnees do work with Ethiopian musicians to incorporate Ethiopian musical elements into reggae songs, the result is not always seen as successful by Ethiopian musicians. The scales do not always work with the chord progression and the diatonic vocal lines. Also, there are specific ways to play and ornament the scales that if not done properly, may not be recognized as Ethiopian. Some Ethiopian musicians told me that some returnee music sounds a bit cheesy when Ethiopian elements are added because it is tacked on. The inclusion of the scales therefore is only mildly perceived as Ethiopian by Ethiopians although many appreciate the attempt. Ethiopian musician Girum Mezmur who performed and recorded with the Imperial Majestic Band remembers being asked to play lines based on Ethiopian scales on some tracks to add Ethiopian flavor. He said he tried his best to make it work in a suitable way but still felt that the end result was not a natural fusion (Personal Interview 2016).

I observed that even when Ethiopian musicians are invited to add scales or incorporate local musical instruments with returnee reggae bands, the process does not always allow the fusion to happen successfully because the chord progressions and vocal and instrumental melodies are usually already set by the returnees. I observed, for instance, returnee musicians trying to teach an Ethiopian *masinko* player a melodic accompaniment. The lead singer, a Jamaican, sang a diatonic melody and asked the *masinko* player to play it, however the *masinko* player just could not play the half step interval because he is not accustomed to playing diatonic scales on his instrument. Perhaps if the returnees had allowed the *masinko* player to create his

own melody as opposed to them providing a foreign melody, the fusion may have been more successful. In these cases, people are “playing across a divide” (Briner 2009) but are not fully connecting with each other because the terms of collaboration are set by one party.

Another example where collaboration does not appear to be as successful is in the control of the microphone. An Ethiopian reggae singer who is trying to make his mark in the reggae music scene told me that he thinks returnee musicians such as Sydney Salmon and Ras Kawintseb keep themselves in the spotlight too long in stage shows. He explained that Ethiopian audiences enjoy variety and that it would help these returnees to have more Ethiopian singers in their shows, to give more Ethiopian artists a chance. This sentiment was also expressed by the owner of a reggae venue. He felt that Sydney Salmon dominated the microphone too much. Reggae projects in Ethiopia reveal in many ways that “the dynamics of collaboration, representation, and appropriation create new, complicated political and subject positions that shift with increasing frequency” (Taylor 1997: 197). Some returnees, although wanting to be seen as collaborating, at times end up being perceived as dominating. In a country whose citizens are proud of resisting colonialism and forms of outside domination, this can rub Ethiopians the wrong way and negatively affect the repatriate mission.

Ethiopian musicians and singers also want to collaborate with returnees and this happens to varying degrees of success. One Ethiopian singer told me that he tried to speak to Ethiopian authorities about the citizenship issue on behalf of returnees. He said, however, that many returnees are not trying hard enough to learn Amharic and are therefore making it more difficult to work together. He also told me that he paid the exit visa for a returnee musician so that he could travel with the band for a tour. The returnee musician went on tour with the singer but never came back to Ethiopia.

If not done carefully, collaboration can turn into forms of appropriation that can cause people to feel wronged. Some returnees lamented that Ethiopian reggae artists just take elements of reggae music that can make them quick money but do not pay enough tribute to the roots of reggae or to the Rastafari community in Ethiopia. On the other hand, some Ethiopians have expressed that Rastafari have appropriated elements of Ethiopian culture in reggae music for years so Ethiopians should also be able to partake in reggae music. An Ethiopian singer told me that he went to Jamaica and tried to shoot a music video there because he wanted to show his love for Jamaica. The Jamaican video producer charged the Ethiopian a price that was way over his budget. The Ethiopian understood that video production is pricey but also stated that the producer had taken on an Ethiopian name and was only using Ethiopia to advance his image. Other Ethiopians told me they, too, felt that some Jamaicans and Rastafari only use Ethiopia to make money and do not do enough to help Ethiopia. It is partially for this reason that Ethiopians feel justified in their use of reggae music.

Music and Development Projects

Returnees are interested in larger scale projects that are geared towards development through collaboration. Numerous returnees spoke to me about wanting to maintain a music school. In the late 1990s a few returnees including Ras Kawintseb, Alton Ricketts, Ras Zylon, Ras Ibi, and Asher started a music school in Addis Ababa where they taught children reggae music. It was called Rastafari Goh (rise) Musika Academy. Some of the students were Ethiopian while others were the children of foreigners who worked in Ethiopia. They were not able to sustain the school for a long time but for them it was special to be able to use music to connect with people even for a while in that way (Ras Ibi Personal Interview 2016).

Other repatriated musicians also expressed their desires to start a music school and connect with Ethiopian youths through music. Sister Bernice, a returnee from France, invited Ras Kawintseb and me one day to play music at the Yawenta Children's Center which she manages. This is a safe space for children who are orphaned or infected with HIV or other diseases and require special care. She desperately wants the arts to be a major part of the interventions at the center and asks other returnee musicians to come in from time to time. The day I went there, I played a few songs with Ras Kawintseb and had the children play a few notes of a song on my steelpan for them to have that experience.

Jamaican returnee Desta Meghoo moved to Ethiopia with an understanding that the arts are a powerful way to transform society. She initially went to Ethiopia as a representative of the Bob and Rita Marley Foundations to organize the 2005 Africa Unite Concert. After seeing how much that concert achieved, she realized that there was more to be done in Ethiopia through the arts. She spoke to me about a center for children that she established soon after arriving in Addis Ababa with her family. Her vision was to have a space in which children could learn to express themselves through the arts with the understanding that this would be vital for their development. The space also allowed children and artists within the community (Rastafari and non-Rastafari) to interact and learn from each other. On the property she had her own office where she did consulting work as well as a recording studio, an art gallery and a kitchen where they prepared food for close to one hundred children each day. She explained,

Every day they [the children] were bombarded with music and pan-African type messages and art. We let them know they are not alone. We have seen the power of the arts in the lives of these children. Jah Lude (Ethiopian reggae artist) came through the Jungle Studios. Since the studio was on the camp he was there. When he went through hard times they allowed him to live on the camp for several months" (Personal Interview 2016).

She spoke to me passionately about the need for returnees to work with Ethiopians. She has also worked to host reggae shows and art exhibitions that feature both international reggae acts with local returnee and Ethiopian acts.

She also noted some challenges associated with connecting with Ethiopians. She explains, “You have to find ways to connect to people on their terms. We call ourselves Ethiopians and Africans but we're viewed as guests. We have to be sensitive. Doesn't mean compromise who we are but we have to be conscious.” Connecting with people on their terms involves understanding the culture and the needs of the people. Through her various projects, Desta Meghoo tries to use the arts to bring people together for the development of Ethiopia in collaborative and sustainable ways.

Another development project that is often linked with music is the work being done to run a school in Shashemene. The Jamaican Rastafarian Development Community (JRDC) is a Rastafari run NGO in Shashemene that, among other things, owns and runs a high school. This is a major aspect of development that returnees use to show the work they are doing in the community. The Imperial Majestic Band sometimes performs concerts to raise funds for the school and the lead singer, Sydney Salmon, constantly promotes the school on various platforms such as during his performances in Addis Ababa and on radio and television interviews. The chairman of the school board is repatriate Desmond Martin who told me that the main aim of the JRDC is to “help people through education” and that “it's music that raises a lot of the funds” (Desmond Martin Personal Interview 2016), referring to the concerts that happen once or twice a year that contribute to the running of the school.

Leila Mekuria, who manages the Imperial Majestic Band, noted that some Ethiopian artists are easily profiting from reggae but not giving back to the source in Shashemene enough.

She believes that they are more about fame, but she is passionate about development and thinks that “music is a key means of development here but it needs more support” (Personal Interview 2016). She would like to see more Ethiopian reggae artists supporting the school in Shashemene. While recognizing the contribution of Ethiopian reggae artists to the Rastafari mission she also expressed her views on how these musicians could contribute more:

It's great for those who have brought Ethiopian music in reggae. I would love to see them come together. Show reverence to Shashemene and the pioneers. Don't have to cut off the meaning behind their music. Just come together. The unity that we need in Shashemene. To be able to edify. Maybe we can't edify but there are people who can. To educate the people” (Personal Interview 2016).

She is explaining that there is a need for Ethiopian artists who have used reggae and Shashemene to advance their careers to also explain the significance of Rastafari and the repatriated community to Ethiopian audiences. This would help more people in Ethiopia understand more about why Rastafari are settling in Ethiopia and what they want to achieve. This also points to the fact that many Ethiopians are not fully aware of how reggae and Ethiopia are associated in the first place through reggae. The people who know tend to be the ones who spend time with repatriates such as musicians. Returnees therefore hope that these Ethiopians can help with the mission.

Tourism and Music Festivals

Tourism is another means through which returnees and Ethiopians have tried to collaborate, using music as a key tool. During my fieldwork I spent time with two different groups of tourists who came to Ethiopia as part of a tour of the Promised Land. The tour organizers included a businessman from Norway, a repatriated Rastafari from Sweden and some Ethiopians in the tourism industry. They all explained to me that music was a major part of their marketing and live music was significant to the tour package. Foreigners who love reggae music

understand the connections between reggae, Rastafari, and Ethiopia and want to experience the music and culture of Rastafari in Ethiopia. One woman from Holland who participated on one of these tourism packages to Ethiopia explained that even though she is not a Rastafari she is a reggae music DJ and felt it necessary to come to Ethiopia. She said that it is important for DJs who are serious about the roots and message of reggae music to come to Ethiopia and that lots of artists and sound systems go to West Africa but they don't come to Ethiopia. For her, it was important because "so much reggae is about Ethiopia" (Personal Conversation). These tourism projects, small though they are, are expected to grow over the next few years and are expected to bring in money and attention to the Rastafari community but also to Ethiopia and Ethiopian businesses.

Returnees see tourism projects that involve reggae music as significant ways that they can work with Ethiopians that will benefit all involved. Many returnees would like the government to be more supportive of their efforts at using reggae and the repatriated community to bring visitors to the country. Anthropologist Kofi Ababio discussed the potential of reggae and tourism in Ethiopia with me:

What is ...the question is why haven't Ethiopians capitalized on this? Why is it left to the Jamaicans? With this access, you have infinite marketing potential. It shouldn't be left to Sydney or whoever. The present government does not see the potential for continuing...to bring to people's awareness this place through this [reggae and Rastafari]. Why are they stuck with Lalibela? With Axum? With a couple of tribes in the south?

Kofi believes that there is a large market for young foreigners interested in the Rastafari connection with Ethiopia and that reggae music would be a major attraction. He makes references to historical sites such as Lalibela and Axum that Ethiopia promotes to tourists as insufficient marketing strategies.

At a press conference for the Ethiopian Reggae Ambassadors in Addis Ababa (described in chapter four), Yohannes Tilahun, the CEO of the Ethiopian Tourism Organization—a government appointed position—gave encouraging words about working with the Rastafari community and reggae music to bolster Ethiopia’s tourism. A representative from the Ethiopian media asked:

Media Rep.: The first thing that pops up to our mind when we hear the word reggae is Rastafarians. The Rastafarian community is one of the most passionate communities about Ethiopia and the ideas of Ethiopianism that I know of. Ethiopia doesn’t seem to use the Rastafarian community to promote itself. Such a passionate community can be used. What is your plan in that regard?

Yohannes: You’re absolutely right, we have a huge Rastafarian community...So have we done anything with the reggae Rastafarian community until now? I have not and I don't think my predecessors to the best of my knowledge have. But should we be successful with our trip to Spain and should the Rototom organizers decide to do the show in January here...

The way I envision it, we would be engaging with them [the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia]. Because they would be part of the stakeholders. I look forward to working with the January group and figuring out how we can work out a partnership.

This response is perhaps a sign of future collaboration between the Ethiopian state and the repatriated Rastafari musicians. At the press conference I noticed that terms such as “using” or “taking advantage of” were spoken at times in relation to reggae music and the repatriate community. Laurel Sercombe has noted that the language used to describe cultural exchange, collaboration, hybridity, and cross-cultural negotiation implies a “range of social and power relationships” (Sercombe 2016 149). If a section of the Ethiopian government decides to work with the repatriated community in a long term project there will probably need to be a great deal of negotiating and compromising on the part of returnees. The response of the tourism official at this press conference, still, is at least an acknowledgement that more collaboration needs to happen because it will benefit all parties and seems hopeful.

Conclusions

Collaborations between Ethiopians and returnees in musical settings have much to offer in the analysis of the types of interactions that occur and are possible between the groups on larger levels. The micropractices in intimate rehearsal settings are amplified when bands perform on the stage and audience members can see and experience the coming together of musicians from different backgrounds. The process of playing together and locking in with each other creates social relationships that help returnees integrate into Ethiopian society in different ways. Through these relationships, returnees learn musical and cultural modes in Ethiopia that they can use to navigate the Promised Land more effectively. Bands that comprise returnees and Ethiopians perform and demonstrate collaboration in visible and audible ways that come to stand in for possibilities for future collaborative and developmental projects. Challenges to effective collaboration are rooted in the differences in backgrounds and worldviews between the various actors. These differences are constantly being negotiated and require patience and compromise. Larger development projects that require collaboration through music help Rastafari to promote their mission to wide audiences as well as allow Rastafari to achieve their sense of purpose of developing the Promised Land.

The day before I left Ethiopia on my last visit in 2017, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that repatriated Rastafari would be granted identification cards and the necessary documents to reside in Ethiopia within a systematic procedure. While this still does not grant them citizenship and the rights that come with being citizens, it is an immense achievement for the community because they will be able to move about more freely to advance their mission. This recent development is a result of decades of negotiations between returnees and the Ethiopian government. Although many factors led to this new policy, it is undeniable that music has played a major role here because it is what the community is most known for and

the main medium through which returnees assert their presence in Ethiopia. The visibility that Rastafari have gained in Ethiopia due to reggae music, for instance, has brought them more recognition and respect.

Throughout this dissertation I have shown how various actors use music to negotiate, transform, and in some ways construct their realities. I brought together the Rastafari concept of “word, sound, power” with ethnomusicological and anthropological theories of practice to highlight the ways words and sounds (as forms of human action) give life to, reproduce, and challenge systems. Through critical discourse analysis, I have been able to interrogate the systems of power in which Rastafari are imbricated both in the West and in Ethiopia. Multimodal discourse analysis throughout this dissertation has shown that Rastafari and reggae musicians in Jamaica and Ethiopia mobilize discourses that lead to repatriated Rastafari in Ethiopia gaining visibility, recognition, and semblances of cultural citizenship. Rastafari have drawn on Africa/Ethiopian signs to identify with Africanness and Ethiopianness and chant down Babylon for decades as part of an Afrocentric discourse. Once repatriated, they continued to utilize these signifiers to chant up Zion from within the Promised Land. At the same time, some of these signs, although working against Babylon from outside Ethiopia, are associated with Ethiopia’s own Babylon systems. Rastafari therefore chant down Babylon, chant up Zion, and also, in some ways, chant up Babylon.

The spaces that returnees create for themselves and their mission serve as visions-made-real of the Promised Land even as these spaces somewhat resemble the ones left behind in Babylon because they are created with a distinctly Jamaican music and Jamaican imagining of Ethiopia. These spaces operate as contact zones in which returnees and Ethiopians come face to face with each other’s realities. Music provides a buffer for these encounters even though the

spaces are at times highly contested. Repatriated Rastafari also use music as a means to collaborate with Ethiopians to develop the Promised Land. This is ultimately what they aim to do but have been severely constrained by the lack of a governmental policy to allow them to work and access resources. With the introduction of a new identification system it is hopeful that returnees will be able to embark on larger projects that will contribute to the economic and social development of Ethiopia.

Ethiopians, too, participate in the ways in which the Promised Land manifests for Rastafari in different ways. Ethiopian audiences' musical tastes force returnees to create music in particular ways and in particular spaces and places. Ethiopian musicians and singers who perform reggae music, even if not referencing Rastafari ideologies, expose Ethiopian audiences to the sounds and grooves of reggae. The Ethiopian reggae singers who incorporate Rastafari ideologies even more open up the repatriated community to Ethiopian audiences by introducing Ethiopian audiences to the Rastafari ideas that might be common to Ethiopian worldviews. Timothy Rommen's concept of negotiating proximity has been a useful framework for thinking about reggae music's role in repatriation. Returnees and Ethiopians negotiate their proximity to each other in order to maintain their identities even though they borrow musical styles from each other for various reasons. These negotiations that occur in the domain of music reflect and construct the ways these groups relate to each other and to Ethiopia.

Reggae functions as a productive mechanism for Rastafari not only by engendering diaspora identities that connect to Africa (Chude-Sokei 2008), but also by providing the means by and through which they can make their Promised Land real and habitable. Reggae in Ethiopia therefore serves as a productive mechanism by facilitating the creation of social relationships, spaces that lead to visibility, ideologies that connect Rastafari with Ethiopia, income for

returnees, and opportunities for development. Created in the city of Kingston decades ago, the music continues to function in ways that bring about social change in a variety of contexts.

The lyrics and music video to Sydney Salmon's song "Africa is our home" captures the tasks that returnees set out for themselves in repatriating to Ethiopia and making it their home.⁴⁰ He begins the verse with the lines, "I know a place where we can call our own, fix it and build it up and make it our home." Just as Ras Mweya said that he has created his utopia in Ethiopia (in the introduction to this dissertation), Sydney Salmon also demonstrates in this song the importance of creating a home in the homeland. By singing "I'm never gonna give it up, never gonna say goodbye" later in the song, Salmon demonstrates a lifelong commitment to Africa and his Ethiopian home. Ras Mweya, who believed in the power of word-sound to create his Zion, passed away in 2016 but this same spirit is alive and strong within the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia. Rastafari in Ethiopia continue to chant up their Promised Land, always innovating and adapting to circumvent whatever forces tries to silence their word-sound.

⁴⁰ Sydney Salmon. "Africa is our Home".
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtUYiznMN8c>. Accessed November 2, 2017.

Interviews Conducted

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Ashenafi Ali. May 25, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Beatrice November 10, 2015. Addis Ababa.
Christine Smith Stone. December 1, 2015. Addis Ababa.
Dagmawit Ali. August 5, 2016. Addis Ababa
Daggy Shash. February 9, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Dereje. January 19, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Desmond Martin. February 29, 2016. Shashemene
Desta Meghoo. August 1, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Ebony J. June 22, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Ema. August 8, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Gemechu July 1, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Girum Mezmur. June 21, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Haile Roots. August 10, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Helen Legesse. March 14, 2016. Addis Ababa.
I Timothy. May 19, 2016. Addis Ababa
Jonny Ragga. August 3, 2016. Addis Ababa
Jonathan Banes. December 19, 2015. Addis Ababa.
Kenny Allen. December 2, 2015, Addis Ababa.
Kofi Ababio July 1, 2016. Addis Ababa. July 17, 2017. Addis Ababa.
Leila Mekuria. August 9, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Ma’an Judah. April 19, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Mark Joseph. December 9, 2015. Shashemene.
Paul the Dragon Slayer. December 24, 2015. Shashemene
Ras Ibi. June 7, 2016. Arba Minch
Ras Jany. May 23, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Ras Kawintseb. November 6, 2016. Shashemene
Ras Mweya Masimba. January 24, 2016. Shashemene
Ras Seyoume. May 5, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Ruben Kush. August 11, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Sami Dan. August 2, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Samuel Yirga. February 2, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Sydney Salmon. March 15, 2016. July 14, 2017. Addis Ababa.
Teddy Aklilu. December 2. 2015. Addis Ababa.
Teddy Dan. February 29, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Wondwossen Woldeselassie. June 23, 2016. Addis Ababa.
Zelege Gessesse. October 29. 2015. Addis Ababa

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