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MOVEMENT OF JAH PEOPLE:
LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND MUSIC
IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTACT SCENARIO

Abstract:

This paper is concerned with language ideologies and attitudes relating to the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia. It examines language ideologies of Ethiopians and repatriates in Shashemene and beyond, looking in particular at the Ethiopian reggae scene and music practices by analyzing lyrics, compositions and singing style with reference to three music examples. Reggae constitutes a major domain of interaction and exchange between Ethiopians and repatriated Rastafari and reveals how language ideologies are put into practice. The music examples discussed in this paper shed light on multilingual practices and the role of ideologies with regard to cultural and linguistic exchanges in a global and local perspective.

Keywords:

Rastafari ⬥ Ethiopia ⬥ Reggae ⬥ multilingualism ⬥ migration

Introduction

The notion of language ideologies has now gained momentum with regard to the study of multilingualism, while in the past the study of language ideologies has often focused on ideas and ideals of monolingualism. The idea of monolingualism, as well as the concept of language as a delimited entity expressing a shared identity, arose as Eurocentric concepts and are tied to the developments which took place in Europe during the 18th and 19th century in connection with the emergence of nation-building, the concept of national identity and a national language (see e.g. Lähteenmäki & Vanhala-Aniszewski 2010, Bonfiglio 2013). As Woolard states: "[t]he identification of a language with a people and a consequent diagnosis of peoplehood by the criterion of language have been the fundamental tenets of language ideology to which this tradition of research has attended […]" (Woolard 1998: 16). However, this perspective on language ideologies shows but one side of a multifaceted phenomenon. In multilingual societies, in Africa and elsewhere, many different ideas about language in general and about specific languages or linguistic practices in particular can be observed, which testify to the complexities of language ideologies. Language ideologies are believed to shape "social, discursive and linguistic practices" and constitute an important link between language and social human beings (Schieffelin et al. 1998, Woolard 1998). They include cultural conceptions of language, linguistic practices, linguistic variation and the role language and communication play in our social lives. They relate, among other factors, to the domains of identity, aesthetics, metalinguistics, language attitudes and epistemology (see Schieffelin, et al. 1998; Woolard 1998). Following Woolard's (1998: 3) rather broad definition, language ideologies are "[r]epresentations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world".

The present paper deals with the multilingual setting of Ethiopia and in particular with language contact between Ethiopians and the repatriated Rastafari community in Ethiopia. Rastafari, often classified as a "movement" but seen by many participants as a "way of life", emerged in Jamaica in the 1930s. Today Rastafari is a global phenomenon which can be encountered all around the world. The development of Rastafari was influenced by var-

ious discourses of significance for the African Diaspora, including Panafricanism, Afrocentrism, Ethiopianism, Black Consciousness and the Black Power Movement. Rastafari is characterized by a strong focus on Africa as the place of origin and African identity. Repatriation to Africa is a central aspect of the Rastafari worldview and illustrates the people's desire to overcome the disruption caused by the transatlantic slave trade and to reconnect with Africa.[1] The theme of repatriation is also taken up in many Rastafari-influenced reggae songs and is found in the common expression "repatriation is a must". Most famously, Bob Marley's song "Exodus" speaks about the "movement of Jah people,"[2], about leaving *Babylon*, the place of oppression, slavery and the colonial experience, and about settling in "our father's land". One focus of this contribution is on the Rastafari community in Shashemene (Oromia region, southern Ethiopia), a global town which in itself represents an emblematic (and contested) space of constructing identities. By looking at the Ethiopian reggae music scene, including a discussion of examples by three artists, however, this paper will go beyond the space of Shashemene and look at language ideologies of Ethiopians and repatriated Rastafari from a wider angle. In such a huge social space, which the Jamaican-Ethiopian connections opens up through Rastafari and music, a space that is not only multilingual, but also transnational and global, provides different perspectives on the "cultural variability of language ideologies" (Schieffelin et al., preface). As a cultural and social practice, music constitutes a site and a public sphere in which language ideologies are expressed, negotiated and put into practice, as music constitutes one of the major domains in which repatriated Rastafari and Ethiopians interact, exchange ideas and make use of each other's languages and linguistic practices. These practices, as the examples and underlying discourses will reflect, are based on highly conscious linguistic choices and illustrate the creative and deliberate use of multilingual repertoires.

Section 2 introduces Shashemene, provides a short sociolinguistic overview of the town and includes background information on the history of repatriation to Ethiopia. Section 3 looks rather generally at language ideologies in the contact scenario and discusses ideologies and attitudes of the (local) Ethiopian and Rastafari communities. Here we will also see that ethnolinguistic labels play an important role and that many Ethiopians have a desire to name languages and ethnicities. The Ethiopian Reggae scene and the language ideologies and practices reflected in the lyrics of reggae artists are the topic of section 4. In particular,

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[1]Thus in this paper I use the term repatriates to refer to Rastafari (descendants of enslaved Africans and beyond) and other members of the African Diaspora who have settled in Ethiopia.
[2]The word 'Jah' is used by Rastafari to mean 'God' and is derived from the Hebrew term *Yahweh*.

the section will introduce the songs of three reggae artists, namely Haile Roots and Daggyshash, both Ethiopian reggae artists incorporating Jamaican linguistic and musical practices into their music, and Sydney Salmon, a Jamaican-born repatriate living in Ethiopia who uses Ethiopian music practices and Amharic in his music. These examples are discussed in order to shed light on the complexity of language ideologies and practices in the multilingual and transnational contact scenario.

2 Shashemene, a global crossroads town

The town of Shashemene, which is located 250 kilometers south of the capital city Addis Ababa, was founded in the second decade of the 20th century (see *Map 1*). As a crossroads
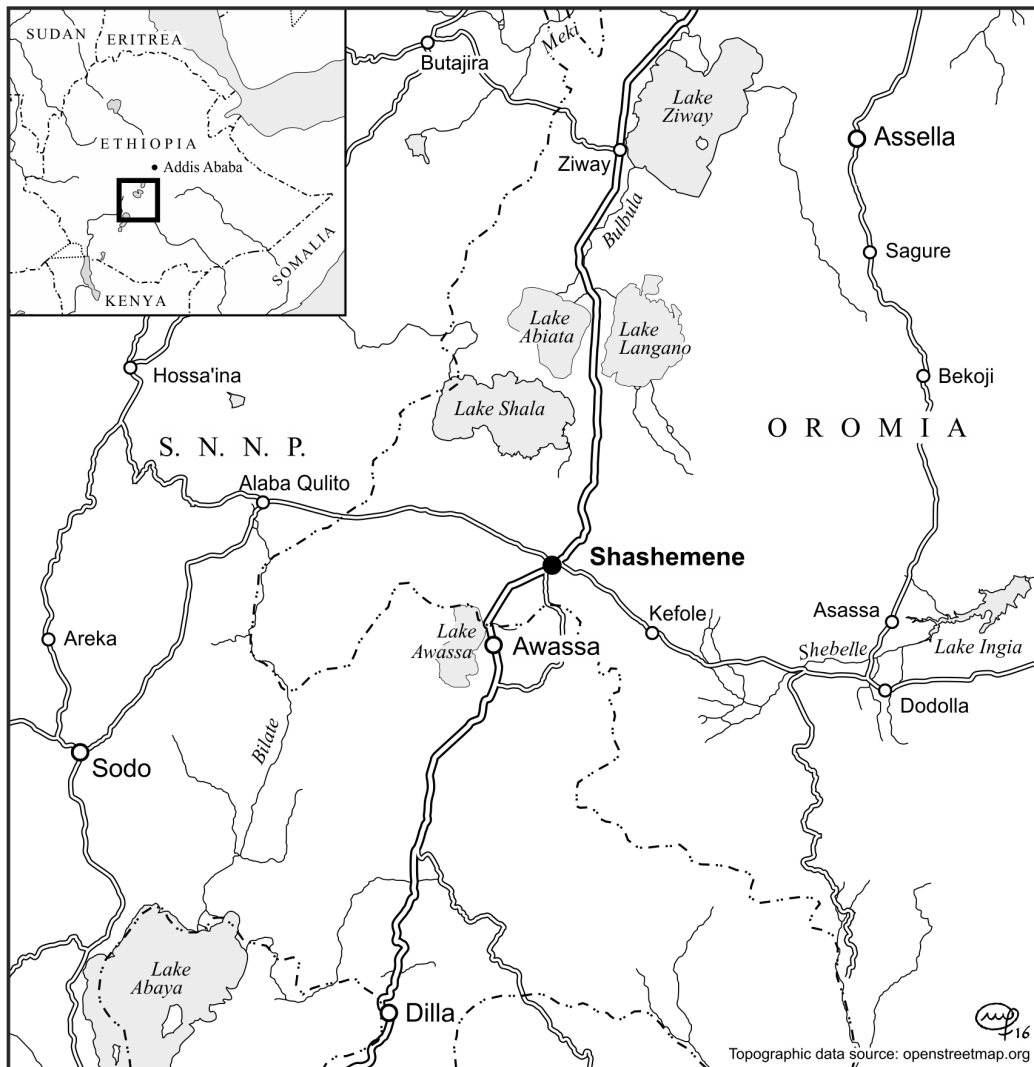
Map 1. Shasheme, Ethiopia

town it is located at a commercially strategic intersection which connects several administrative regions of Southern Ethiopia, on the highway which leads from Addis Ababa to Kenya (Getahun 2001: 269).

Ethiopia is a multilingual country (with more than 80 languages) and has been characterized by shifts in language policy. Amharic, the official language of the country, has been the dominant language in terms of institutional settings and prestige for centuries. In 1991 Ethiopia became a federal democratic republic and the government introduced ethnic federalism and ethnic regions of local administration across the country. Languages other than Amharic are used on this level and are visible in the linguistic landscape of Ethiopia. In Shashemene, located in the Oromia region, Afaan Oromo plays an important role as the regional and local language. Road signs, boards, adverts and so on are usually multilingual, exhibiting several languages, usually Oromo, Amharic and English, and illustrating the complex language policies of the country (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1. The multilingual landscape of Shashemene (photograph by the author 2014)

While the area is mainly inhabited by Oromo, who constitute the largest linguistic group of Ethiopia and who inhabit vast areas of Southern Ethiopia, Shashemene has also become the home of many other Ethiopian people due to its strategic location and its role as a commercial center. Amhara, Wolaitta and Gurage constitute the numerically larger groups, but a significant percentage of the population is also comprised of Kambaata, Tigrinya and Tigre (Getahun 2001: 269). In terms of linguistic classification these languages belong to different language families within the Afro-Asiatic phylum, namely Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic. While Amharic, a Semitic language, is known as the general *lingua franca* of Ethiopia, Afaan Oromo, a language of the Cushitic branch, constitutes another dominant

language in the area and plays an important role in local administration. The history of Shashemene reveals that the town has always been characterized by multilingualism. In fact, the theme of migration and multilingualism is even reflected in the narrative of the origin of the name 'Shashemene' (which is an Amharic rendering of the name *Shashe* and *mana*, the Oromo word for 'house,' thus meaning 'house of Shashe'). According to oral traditions, Mama Shashe, whose statue was erected in the town of Shashemene (see *Figure 2*), was a woman who had come from the North and opened a guest house or coffee house for traveling merchants at the crossroads where Shashemene is now located.

The linguistic situation of this crossroads town became more complex with the repatriation of members of the African Diaspora, in particular Rastafari. In 1948, Emperor Haile Selassie granted a piece of land near the town of Shashemene to the members of the African Diaspora, in particular to members of the Ethiopian World

Figure 2. The statue of Mama Shashe has been under refurbishment for several years

Federation (EWF). Subsequently, people from the U.S. and the Caribbean and ultimately from all over the world repatriated to Ethiopia. The repatriated community in Shashemene is estimated to consist of approximately 600-800 members who have repatriated from more than 20 different countries across the world (Ras Mweya Masimba n.d.). This community, which is located approximately five kilometers from the center of Shashemene at the outskirts of the town and in the immediate vicinity of the village of Melka Oda, also attracts international visitors and has turned the place into a global town.[3] Giulia Bonacci has studied the history of repatriation to Ethiopia and traced the origins of the early settlers and

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[3]During my stay in Shashemene in 2014 I found that members of the repatriated community had come from Jamaica, Trinidad, St. Vincent, Bermuda, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Sierra Leone, Kenya, South Africa, Mexico, Sweden, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, England, USA and Japan. This is certainly not a complete account and the community is quite heterogeneous, scattered across a wider territory which is also inhabited by Ethiopians. Apart from such estimations there is no census of the repatriated community.

families that constituted the beginnings of the community (Bonacci 2015). Her in-depth study reveals the complexity of entangled histories and experiences which has characterized the community from the onset. On repatriation, Rastafari come to Ethiopia with a range of expectations and ideas of Ethiopia, including language ideologies, and they face various challenges when settling. Some of those challenges and especially the perceptions of repatriated Rastafari by the Ethiopian population are discussed by MacLeod (2014). Language ideologies in this scenario do reflect some of these complex issues, but also show a mutual appreciation for each others language(s), as the next section will establish.

3 Language ideologies in the complex contact scenario of Shashemene

It is not surprising that such a heterogeneous society as in Shashemene, which is characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity, also exhibits complex and divergent language ideologies and attitudes. In this section we will look at some basic trends and tendencies, although it should be pointed out that there are many different opinions and individual perspectives which resist overall generalizations. Some general observations with regard to attitudes towards the languages of others can be made. However, it is important to stress at this point that not only the communities and their ideologies are heterogeneous but also that a clear distinction between Rastafari and Ethiopians is impossible, especially with regard to the reggae scene. There are also numerous Ethiopian Rastafari who adopt the signs, practices and beliefs of Rastafari to varying degrees. In other words, these are not two opposing groups and there are intersections and smooth transitions. To speak of general attitudes of the repatriated Rastafari in relation to those of Ethiopians is therefore a somewhat artificial abstraction which can only reflect certain tendencies and common ideas; the actual picture is much more nuanced and complex. This section will introduce Rastafari language ideologies in general and with regard to the Ethiopian setting and then turn to an Ethiopian perspective.

Rastafaris' linguistic practices are based on distinct language ideologies which reflect the anti-colonial stance of Rastafari. The English language, and Jamaican Patwa, which is seen as being based on English[4], are considered deceptive languages of the oppressor and their words are full of incongruity. Rastafari require a clear correspondence between sound and meaning, thus words are manipulated or 'corrected' in order to achieve this balance. Havenol Schrenk (2015), who, after Zuckerman, refers to this process as "phono-semantic

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[4]The so-called creolized language spoken in Jamaica (often referred to as *Jamaican Creole*, especially by linguists) is called *Patwa* (with various spellings, e.g. *Patwah, Patois*) by many Jamaicans and others.

matching", based on an ideological principle which she calls the "positive-negative phenomenon", amply demonstrates how these language ideologies are put into practice. The language thus created by Rastafari through manipulating the lexicon is often referred to as "Rasta Talk", "Dread Talk" or "Iyaric" (Birhan 1981; Pollard 1994; Schrenk 2015). There are other word-formation processes in Rasta Talk, some of them involving the letter/sound 'I' /ai/, which is of particular significance for Rastafari (see Pollard 1994). Recent discussions have shown that in many cases language ideologies and linguistic practices are not in accordance (see Lüpke 2014). For instance when monolingual language ideologies prevail in societies characterized by multilingualism as in the 'Global North', or when language boundaries are ideologically produced while practices reveal that speakers use complex and boundless repertoires rather than separating languages. Here, however, the creation of Rasta Talk and the various conscious and deliberate processes involved in creating the lexicon show Rastafaris' efforts to put their ideologies into practice.

Furthermore, as Africa is regarded as their original home and as Rastafari promote their African identity, African languages are highly esteemed. Amharic, in particular, the *lingua franca* of Ethiopia and the language of His Majesty Haile Selassie, has a special prestige among many Rastafari. Worldwide, there are examples which show that Rastafari learn and use some Amharic, which can be seen in song texts, prayers, writings in Rastafari institutions, posters, the social media etc. There are also different ways in which Amharic and the Ethiopian script *fidel* are used emblematically in public spaces, for example when Amharic letters are used to represent words in Latin script (see Hollington forthcoming). Within the global Rastafari community, there are certain Amharic words and expressions (or renderings of them) which have been made popular through music or public use. For instance, the word *wadada,* derived from the Amharic verb ወደደ *wäddäda* 'love', is used by Rastafari and occurs in a range of reggae songs. Moreover, there are popular reggae songs by Jamaican reggae artists and bands like Peter Tosh's *Igziabeher (let Jah be praise)* or the Abyssinians' *Satta Massagana*. There have also been formal and informal Amharic language courses among Rastafari communities, particularly in Kingston, Jamaica's capital (Yawney 1994). All 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.

With these ideologies forming the foundation, repatriated Rastafari in the Ethiopian context have a strong desire to learn Amharic (and other Ethiopian languages). While the prestige

of Amharic among Rastafari in general is ideologically motivated, in the Ethiopian setting learning Amharic also has a practical value: it helps the repatriates in daily communicative situations and may constitute part of their efforts to integrate into Ethiopian society. While individual repatriates learn Amharic to varying degrees, all Rastafari I spoke to have expressed their desire to master the language.

 In addition to Amharic, the Rastafari in Shashemene encounter Oromo on a daily basis. While Oromo is not a language Rastafari outside Ethiopia usually focus on, the community in Shashemene is located in a chiefly Oromo-speaking area and thus knowledge of (some basic) Oromo has a practical value. Many of the repatriates know at least some Oromo words, especially greetings, and some try to engage more with the language, learning in informal contexts through interactions with neighbors, vendors, friends and others. As the knowledge and use of African languages helps returnees from the Diaspora to reconnect with Africa, ideologies of language and words play a role again when people connect languages through 'perceived similarities': For instance, some Rastafari in Shashemene have pointed out to me the similarity between the Oromo word *fayyaa* (various spellings in the folk orthography), which has a range of meanings and occurs in certain greetings and ritualized phrases (e.g. *fayyaa* 'health', *fayyaa tayi* 'you're welcome') and the English word *fire* (or the Jamaican rendering *faiya* (in various spellings), which is of special symbolism in Rastafari discourse (e.g. *fireman* being a common expression for a male Rastafari). Such similarities are taken as unifying factors. *Figure 3* shows a painted house in Shashemene and illustrates the connection between Rastafari discourse and the Oromo language involving the word *fayyaa*.

Moreover, since the community started more than half a century ago, there have developed second and third generation dimensions to the community. The children of repatriates born in Ethiopia grow up speaking Amharic and many of them also learn Oromo, since it is a dominant local language. This is also enforced through education, as Amharic and Oromo are both taught at school in Shashemene. Depending on their backgrounds and their parents' migration history and linguistic biographies, the second and third generation repatriates have quite complex multilingual repertoires.

Furthermore, Gǝ'ǝz, the ancient Ethiosemitic language and the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, serves as an emblem of Ethiopian history and tradition in this context, and a few Rastafari in Ethiopia have studied some Gǝ'ǝz, especially those more involved with the Orthodox church.

Thus, even though there are challenging factors on the ground when learning Ethiopian languages in Shashemene, repatriates' attitudes towards Amharic in particular and African languages in general are positive, while even in the Diaspora, people of African descent learn African languages as a means of reconnecting with the continent.

Figure 3. Wall of a house in Shashemene (photograph by the author, 2014)

The attitudes and ideologies of Ethiopians towards other people and languages in Ethiopia and in particular towards the Rastafari community are quite complex. Erin MacLeod (2014) discusses Ethiopians' perceptions of and attitudes to the Rastafari community in Ethiopia in detail and examines the different narratives of repatriates and Ethiopians in a contested space. She illustrates that the concepts of 'Ethiopianness' underlying the identity constructions of Rastafari and Ethiopians are not congruent. While Rastafari focus on a unified concept of Ethiopianness and repatriates see themselves as Ethiopians, Ethiopians' ideas

of what Ethiopianness constitutes are more versatile and controversial (see ibid). 'Ethnic names' and 'ethnic labels,' reinforced since the advent of ethnic federalism, are very important in Ethiopia and people are, in certain contexts, defined by their ethnicity. Therefore, there is a desire to label the repatriated Rastafari. While the repatriated Rastafari see themselves as Ethiopians, most Ethiopians see them as foreigners and refer to them as 'Jamaicans', regardless of their actual background and country of origin.[5] This is due to the Jamaican prominence in Rastafari. Despite its now global dispersion, Rastafari is often regarded as a Jamaican phenomenon due to its emergence in Jamaica. Jamaicans are a dominant group among the repatriated community in Ethiopia.[6] However, the repatriates come from all different parts of the world, being unified by shared ideologies, beliefs and practices, and by a desire to be 'Ethiopian'. Thus, many Rastafari in Ethiopia reject being called 'Jamaican,' which reflects a disruption caused by divergent identity constructions from within and without.

The Ethiopian people who live among the repatriated Rastafari react quite differently to the presence of the community. Some Ethiopian women have married and started families with repatriates, while other Ethiopians work together with Rastafari in various enterprises such as music, educational institutions (like the *Royal Kindergarten* of the *Twelve Tribes of Israel*, which employs Ethiopian teachers), shops (especially arts and crafts), restaurants and guest houses (such as the *Zion Train Lodge*). Moreover, many Ethiopians interact with Rastafari on a daily basis in the space of Shashemene. However, negative perceptions of the Rastafari prevail among some Ethiopians. Some of these attitudes, especially of those who live in Shashemene but are not in direct contact with Rastafari, are based on general beliefs and stereotypes rather than on personal experiences (e.g. "drug abuse"). There are certain beliefs and practices in the Rastafari worldview of which many Ethiopians do not approve. With regard to the struggle for integration and recognition, the repatriates in Ethiopia can be regarded as a marginalized community in Ethiopian society. However, despite some negative attitudes and hardships that members of the community face on the ground, the linguistic skills of the repatriates are highly regarded among Ethiopians: the 'English' of the 'Jamaicans' enjoys high prestige. While the repatriates come from various backgrounds and thus have different linguistic repertoires with a range of varieties of English,

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[5]This labeling may, viewed from another angle, also be an attempt of Ethiopians to integrate the repatriates into the society, as the practice of labeling (ethnicities) is common. However, most repatriates, especially those not from Jamaica, reject being called 'Jamaican' and would prefer to be referred to as 'Ethiopians'.

[6]As pointed out earlier, there is no census of the repatriated community. According to estimations by members of the community, the largest groups among the repatriates are constituted by people from Jamaica and Trinidad.

the 'English' they speak is considered better than 'Ethiopian English' by many Ethiopians. There are some Rastafari who work as teachers in Ethiopian schools (also in Addis Ababa) and there are a few Rastafari-initiated educational institutions like the already mentioned *Royal Kindergarten* and the *JRDC (Jamaica Rastafarian Development Community) School*.[7] Moreover, numerous Ethiopians in Shashemene have learned English and/or Jamaican Patwa from repatriates in informal contexts. Generally, English is more prominent and is used more in Shashemene than in other rural towns of Ethiopia. Especially within the reggae scene and among youths, Jamaican Patwa is also very popular and is used in music, youth language and beyond (see Hollington 2015, 2016; Tomei 2015).

The reggae scene constitutes one of the major domains of contact between Ethiopians and Rastafari in Ethiopia. In the next section we will look more closely at linguistic practices in music and see how some of the language ideologies outlined in this section are reflected in music. There are some general observations concerning reggae and ideologies which can be made. First of all, many people consider reggae music (in local as well as global contexts) to be a vehicle of the Rastafari message and ideology. Jamaican reggae is popular all over the world and has inspired and sparked the emergence of local reggae music scenes in many places. Ideologies and knowledge of Rastafari have spread across the globe through these processes. In many African countries (including Ethiopia), reggae music is very popular, it gets significant airtime on radio stations and many reggae concerts and festivals with Jamaican and local artists are organized. This has also led to the promotion of reggae culture and the popularity of reggae and Rastafari symbols. In many parts of the world, Rastafari and reggae are connected through people and shared practices. However, it is far too simple to equate the two. There are some Rastafari (in Shashemene and elsewhere) who reject or discourage reggae music because it is commercial music and hence part of the Babylon (capitalist) system. Instead they emphasize *Nyabinghi*[8] as Rastafari music. On the other hand, many Rastafari are actively involved in or listen to reggae music and acknowledge the power of the music to spread ideas and beliefs. In Shashemene, the Twelve Tribes of Israel, one of the major Rastafari mansions, sometimes (in particular on

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[7]See for instance http://www.shashamane.org/?page_id=14 (accessed: 26 January 2016).
[8]Nyabinghi (found in various spellings) here refers to the ceremonial and ritual drum music of Rastafari, which is based on African drumming styles (Reckord 1998). The term Nyabinghi can also refer to a Rastafari mansion (subgroup) or ceremonial Rastafari gatherings which include Nyabinghi drumming.

special days in the Rastafari calendar) organize events which involve reggae sound systems. Sydney Salmon, a Jamaican repatriate and reggae musician who lives in Ethiopia and whose music will be considered below, posted on his Facebook page (2014):

> Nuff a dem now start fi chat seh Reggae a nuh Rasta muzik. Well you tell me something. A which other muzik call di most ppl to the movement? A which other muzik give Jamaican, Rastafarian and poor ppl round the world more international recognition and prosperity? A which muzik promote Ethiopia all over the world and defend Ethiopia's Pride and Integrity? A which muzik gonna teach dem a lesson?[…] Sydney Salmon, Facebook status update 29. November 2014)

Thus, the popularity of reggae in Ethiopia contributes to the dialogue and contact between Rastafari and Ethiopians on the ground and has also created a platform of mutual exchanges and influences.

4 Reggae and linguistic practices in Ethiopia

Music constitutes an essential part of Ethiopian culture. As MacLeod (2014: 167) puts it:

> "Music plays constantly in Ethiopia. All bus drivers and taxis play music. The Orthodox Church utilizes chanting and ceremonial drums in all its ceremonial practices and the members of the growing Protestant population are an active audience for the huge numbers of popular *mazmul* (sic)[9], 'sacred music' singers […]. Streets full of music shops can be found in the market district of Addis Ababa, each selling a wide range of popular Ethiopian music on cassette and CD."

Since music is such a predominant aspect of Ethiopian culture it constitutes an interesting and important site on which (linguistic) identities can be constructed, and reveals many aspects of the peoples' ideologies of language. This involves not only the making of the music and the singers who perform certain linguistic practices, but also the audience, the people who listen to particular kinds of music and the role these musics play in their lives. For instance, many Ethiopians have learnt or improved their English with the help of reggae music in Shashemene and beyond, especially through the music of Bob Marley, which is highly appreciated by many people. As MacLeod (2014: 167) testifies: "Teaching in a local college in Shashemene, I would often listen to students practicing Bob Marley songs as a

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[9]Mezmur, sometimes referred to as "Ethiopian Gospel music", is actually a quite complex music genre with Orthodox and Protestant subgenres and is sung in a range of Ethiopian languages, particularly Amharic and Tigrinya.

means of demonstrating their English language knowledge." Beyond Bob Marley, it is music, reggae in particular, which serves as a connecting element between the repatriated Rastafari and Ethiopians. Drawing on Fikru Gebrekidan, MacLeod (2014: 167f) further states: "the major impact of Rastafari presence in Ethiopia can be seen in music." Reggae music thus represents an important domain in which repatriated Rastafari and Ethiopians participate, exchange ideas and work together.

As MacLeod (2014: 169) further argues, "[i]n order to address the relationship between Rastafari and Ethiopians it is also essential to look at the importance and impact of music – specifically reggae music – in Ethiopia." While a range of the repatriated Rastafari are musicians or singers or otherwise involved in the music scene, there are also numerous Ethiopian reggae artists. In this broad scene with transnational networks in a local environment a lot of exchange takes place – musically between Ethiopian music styles and reggae, as well as dancehall practices, and linguistically between Ethiopian languages (mainly Amharic) and English, Jamaican and Rasta Talk. People acquire and create complex repertoires – musically as well as linguistically – and use them in their compositions and lyrics in innovative practices. For instance, Ethiopian Reggae artists may sing in Amharic but bring in English and Jamaican influences by inserting certain phrases or expressions in English, Jamaican or Rasta Talk (e.g. Haile Roots' 'Leman Biye' which we will look at more closely below or Jonny Ragga's 'Give me the key'). Repatriated Ethiopian-based Reggae artists like Sydney Salmon and Ras Kawintseb sing in English, Jamaican and Rasta Talk, but also incorporate Amharic into their lyrics.[10] An example of reggae and Ethiopian repertoires being combined musically is discussed by MacLeod (2014: 176-7). She interviewed the Ethiopian reggae singer Haile Roots, who recorded a song which demonstrates the combination of the two musical practices. The singer also reflects on his belief in the mutual compatibility of the two genres: "I want to put my own cultural things in the music. . . . [Chikchika] is one of our cultural rhythms . . . one of our musics. And then I mix it into reggae music. It is near to our rhythm, so I just blend it together. We call it 'chiggae.' They can work together. We have proven it" (MacLeod 2014: 176). The song 'Chiggae', as MacLeod (ibid.) explains, brings together the Ethiopian Chikchika rhythm and reggae (hence "chiggae"). Chikchika, one of the classic Ethiopian rhythms which features not only in folk music but also constitutes the basis of many popular songs, bears some semblance to the

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[10]See for instance Ras Kawintseb's song 'Qedamawi' on Youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFFq5juV_F8 (accessed 26 January 2016).

bass-driven off-beat rhythm of reggae music. Chickchika is a 6/8 rhythm and these rhythmic patterns are found in many African musics and have made their way into the New World, where they feature prominently in various folk (and popular) music styles in the Americas and the Caribbean. The fusion created by Ethiopian singer Haile Roots is also reflected in the lyrics of the song, which brings together Amharic and English.

Apart from the music, Haile Roots and other Ethiopian reggae artists such as Jah Lude or Jonny Ragga make use of many other signs indexing Rastafari and reggae culture. These signs include hairstyle (dreadlocks), clothes and accessories (especially the use of the colors red, gold and green) but also the use of Jamaican influenced English and Rasta Talk, Rastafari rhetorics and linguistic expressions (e.g. metaphors and idioms) which reflect Rastafari conceptualizations. In his song 'Leman biye,' which is mainly in Amharic, Haile Roots starts off with an introduction in Jamaican-influenced English and Rasta Talk, which contains common expressions in reggae culture and Rasta Talk:

(1) Intro of Haile Roots' 'Leman Biye' (my emphasis)

> This one is *live and direct* from *di* region of
> *righteousness fire bless*
> No more pretending upon *I and I*
> just be yourself

These short lines are full of expressions and concepts that feature prominently in reggae discourse and/or Rasta Talk. The expression *live and direct* is frequently used in reggae discourse, in lyrics as well as by MCs[11] or presenters and also as sample in the dancehall or on the radio. In the same line the Jamaican *di* ('the') is used (which would be rendered /ze/ in Ethiopian English). Moreover, the words *righteousness, fire* and *bless* occur very often in Jamaican reggae lyrics and in Rastafari linguistic practices, *righteousness* being an important principle of Rastafari; *fire* (with reference to the biblical fire) being an important (biblical) concept and commonly used word in various contexts among Rastafari; and *bless* likewise being a common word that occurs in greetings, songs, praises etc. Furthermore, the use of *I and I* clearly signifies Rastafari ideology: *I and I* is used to replace other personal pronouns and charged with a signifying and spiritual meaning (see McFarlane 1998). Ras Mweya Masimba (n.d.), a British-Jamaican repatriate and member of the Nyabinghi Order in Shashemene, writes in his glossary of his publication *Shashemene*

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[11]An MC (master of ceremonies) moderates and comments on the music played by a sound system.

Lighthouse: "'IanI' [I and I], means 'the I, within I. It's used to replace the Words: You, Me, We or Us."
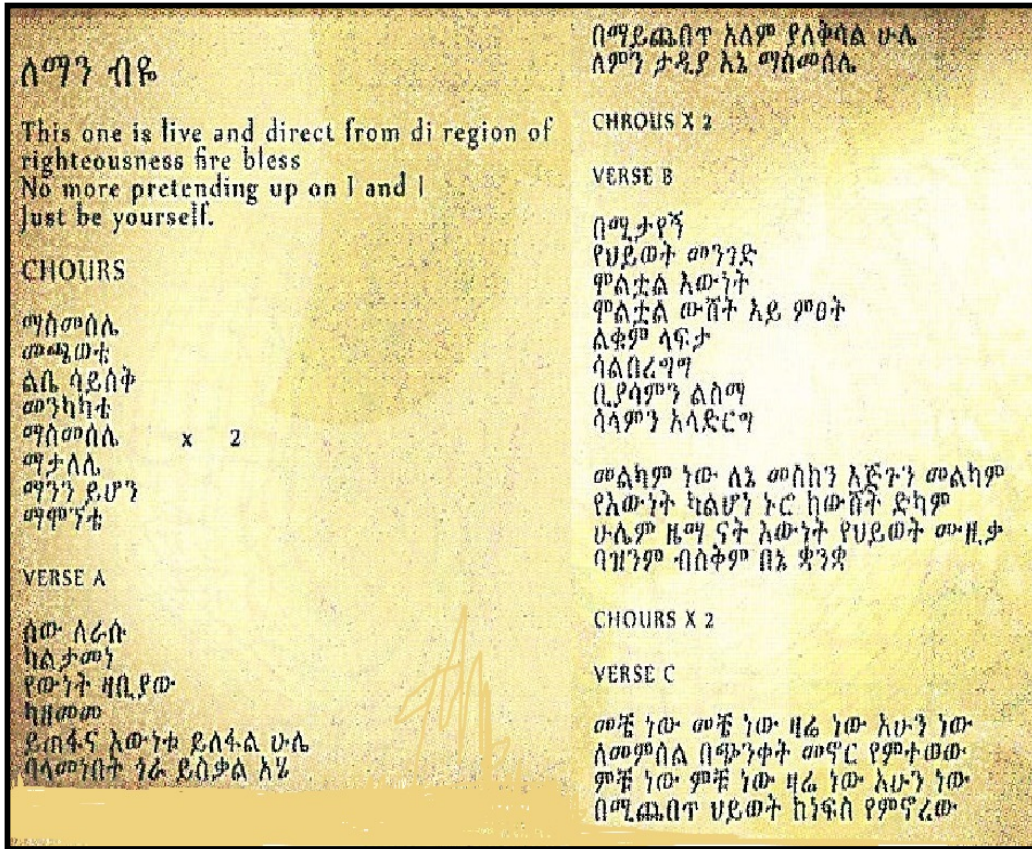

Figure 4. Lyrics of Haile Roots' song 'Leman Biye' in the booklet of his Album 'Chiggae'

The use of these signs – linguistic and non-linguistic – by Ethiopian reggae musicians is based on an ideology about reggae and its expressive culture which transcends national and continental boundaries and focuses on shared concepts, experiences and attitudes to life. Language and linguistic practices play an important role in this regard and the incorporation of Jamaican-influenced English and Rasta Talk fulfills two functions based on this ideology: Firstly, they connect the music to Jamaica, which is often regarded as the original and authentic home of reggae music,[12] 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

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[12]In fact, using Patwa and other Jamaican 'markers' can be observed in reggae scenes all over the world. Appropriating and incorporating Jamaican linguistic and music practices may fulfill a function of indexing authenticity and closeness to the Jamaican 'original'.

Talk, as reggae songs from all over the world testify. In this sense, Jamaican linguistic practices have become part of a global repertoire of reggae and can be combined with the respective local linguistic practices and languages in various contexts – in Ethiopia and elsewhere in the world.

The next example to be discussed illustrates another aspect of Jamaican linguistic and musical practices in Ethiopian reggae, namely the singing style. In his song 'Gizze,' the Ethiopian artist Daggyshash *deejays*[13] over the *riddim*[14] in a Jamaican-influenced style.[15] Moreover, he makes use of the technique using a high head voice or falsetto while deejaying – a style that is commonly used in modern Jamaican reggae and dancehall songs. He also uses Jamaican in this verse while the majority of the song's lyrics are in Amharic. Thus, while in the other example the artist had adopted the Jamaican language as well as Rastafari linguistic practices, here the singer also adopts a way of talking, or rather, deejaying, which testifies to the complex ideas people have about Jamaican linguistic and musical practices and the importance of mimetic practices in a transnational musical genre.

Another significant singer in the Ethiopian reggae scene is Sydney Salmon, a Jamaican-born reggae artist who repatriated to Ethiopia in 2001, after having lived in the United States. The artist and his band represent transnational reggae in an Ethiopian setting:

> Since his formal repatriation, Sydney founded the Imperial Majestic Band with some of the core 12 Tribes of Israel band members from Shashamane, and through diligent determination, built up a sizable following in Ethiopia for authentic Reggae music. Having learnt the Amharic language, Sydney's lyrics weaved its way into the hearts of Reggae loving Ethiopians with his unique brand that incorporates traditional Ethiopian styles and melodies, with a pulsating Jamaican drum and bass.[16]

The Imperial Majestic Band comprises musicians from Jamaica, England, the USA and Ethiopia and is an example of repatriates and Ethiopians working together and sharing practices. The singer Sydney Salmon, as the above quote suggests, uses English, Jamaican

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[13]*Deejaying* in Jamaican music culture refers to a singing style which is a rapid 'toasting' or 'talking over' the *riddim*, similar to rapping, in a melodious style and with a distinct flow which often defines the artist's style.

[14]*Riddim* is the Jamaican name for a reggae instrumental.

[15]Find the song on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxaEmeIJ8FA (accessed: 26 January 2016).

[16]Extract from the biographical information on Salmon's reverbnation profile, available at: http://www.reverbnation.com/sydneysalmon (accessed 26 January 2016).

and Rasta Talk as well as Amharic in his lyrics. As mentioned earlier, the desire to learn Amharic, and on a larger scale, other African languages, plays an important role in Rastafari language ideology; as an alternative to the colonial language English these practices can be seen as contributions to decolonization (in the sense of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind,* 1986). The use of Amharic thus represents an ideologically-grounded linguistic overcoming of colonialism and (linguistic) oppression and symbolizes reunification with Africa, lived through repatriation. Amharic in this context (used by Sydney Salmon and by other members of the repatriate community in Ethiopia) serves as a strong emblematic marker indexing Ethiopian identity. For instance, in the song 'Ethiopian never colonized', Sydney Salmon sings about one aspect of Ethiopian history which constitutes an important theme not only for Rastafari but for Afrocentric and Pan-African thinking on a larger scale, namely that Ethiopia has never been colonized. The verses of the song are sung in English and Amharic and the singer makes various references to Rastafari and repatriation, while telling and highlighting the history of the battle of Adwa and Ethiopia's successful resistance against colonialism.[17] Last but not least, it is important to mention that singing in Amharic helps repatriated reggae artists to reach and be understood by Ethiopian reggae fans and thus may not only increase their popularity in the country, but also help the artists to bring their messages to the Ethiopian people.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted some aspects of the complex language ideologies and attitudes in Ethiopia with regard to the repatriated Rastafari community by looking at the Ethiopian reggae scene and at both musical and linguistic practices in songs. Despite the fact that the Rastafari have been present in Shashemene, and in Ethiopia in general, since the 1950s, they still constitute a marginalized group in Ethiopian society. Nevertheless, driven mainly by the above-discussed language ideologies and attitudes, repatriates and Ethiopians make use of each other's linguistic practices, ways of speaking and other communicative signs, which – on both sides – serve as markers of identity in a particular context and index specific values. In the case of Ethiopians using Jamaican, Rastafari and English language practices this includes using a language of high prestige (English) and expressing internationality, as well as – in the context of reggae music – connecting to Jamaica, which stands for authentic reggae.

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[17]Find the song and video on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeZh6ysxcW8 (accessed: 26 January 2016).

In the case of repatriated Rastafari, using Amharic and other Ethiopian language indexes Ethiopian identity and serves to reconnect them with Africa on the linguistic level, based on an ideological rejection of the English language as the language of the colonial system and the oppressors.[18] Music, which constitutes a major domain in which repatriated Rastafari and Ethiopians interact and exchange ideas, thus serves as an important tool for expressing and negotiating identity, authenticity and belonging (to the local and the global). The music examples discussed here illustrate how language ideologies are put into practice and are manifested in music, and how they are expressed and enacted in a public space.

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[18]This does not mean that they do not use the English language, but rather reflects their attitudes towards the language.

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