An Analysis of the Cultural and Theological Relationships between Ethiopian Christianity and the RastafarI Movement

by

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Abstract

In 1930, Ras Tafari was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia, assuming the title of Haile Selassie I. This coronation had an impact on African-Caribbean peoples, particularly the RastafarI movement in Jamaica who began to identify the Emperor of Ethiopia as a symbolic figure for African consciousness, redemption and unity and as aliberative divinity for subaltern groups. The thesis examines the relationships between two Afro-centric minorities:Ethiopian Christianity and the RastafarI movement.

This study has three goals. Firstly, it traces the development of the concepts, beliefs and rituals of the RastafarI movement, which are inspired by Ethiopian Christianity. Secondly, it refocuses RastafarI to its original vision as an Afro-centric and postcolonial movement of the Caribbean with a set of hybrid beliefs rooted in traditional African and indigenous religions in a diaspora community.

Thirdly, it identifies the themes of emancipation and gender through the key figure of a female leader, the Queen of Sheba, whose voice offers a feminist agenda (the exotic 'Other') taking up the cause of *autocoscienza*, significantly influencing the development both of Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI. The author reaches her conclusions by examining Ethiopian texts such as the *Kebra Nagas*t, the *Fetha Nagast* and the *Lefâfa Sedek* which are sources of inspiration for RastafarI.

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Abbreviations

BCE: Before the Common/Christian Era (BC – Before Christ)

CE: Common Era (AD - Anno Domini)

HIM: His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I

EOTC: Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

EWF: Ethiopian World Federation

JHWH or YHWH: Jehovah or Yahweh

MSS: Manuscript

WCC: World Council of Churches

Glossary

Abun (or *Abune* in Ge'ez): The head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The title of Abun indicates the Patriarch of Ethiopia. When it prefaces a name, the title is Abune. The current Patriarch is Abune Paulos and he is one of the seven Presidents of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Acephalous: Without head; RastafarI is identified as a non-defined organization. RastafarI it is more a movement rather than an organization.

Autoscienza: A term introduced and used by Carla Lonzi and adopted by feminist Italian thought between the 60s and 70s. *Autocoscienza* signifies (re)-discovery and (re)-construction of the self and of a collective sense of the self. I shall employ such a feminist category as that 'impartial' ethic of solidarity with all the oppressed (Other) who struggle for their own liberation.

Amharic: National language of Ethiopia.

Babylon: The perception of Rastas of the West which is seen as a corrupt, hegemonic and oppressive reality in world politics and religion.

Blackheart Man: A man who believes in African identity. The *blackheart man* advocates Ethiopia as the 'motherland'.

Downpression: In Rasta speech means oppression and colonization.

Dreads: A group of Rastas who follow the Afrocentric style with long dreadlock hair.

Eṣṭ rangelā: The oldest and classical script of the Syriac alphabet (1st Century BCE)

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: A member of the Oriental Orthodox Churches (or ante-Chalcedonian Churches) - Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Eritrean and the (Indian) Malankara. For a long time the Ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church was under the direction of the Coptic Church and became an autocephalous church thanks to Haile Selassie I in the middle of the twentieth century.

Ge'ez: Semitic language (syllabic script and liturgical language) of Ethiopia and Eritrea It is believed that Ge'ez ceased to be spoken between the 4th Century CE and the 10th Century CE.

Ganja: A Jamaican term for marijuana or cannabis sativa. There are some Rastas who do not smoke *ganja*.

Groundation: A Rasta assembly which is celebrated annually in Jamaica by the Rasta community. On the 'Groundation Day' Rastas read the Scriptures, meditate and engage in reasoning (talking).

Holy Piby: A book written in 1924 by Athly Rogers to spread Ethiopianism and regarded as the Rasta Bible.

InI (or *I an I)*: A Rasta expression which indicates collectiveness and substitutes for the first person, which is more individualistic. But it is also connected with the divine aspect of Jah.

Ism: Word suffix.

I-Tal: A Rasta lifestyle which is essentially natural and concerns the Rasta use of organic food and certain dietary restrictions and practices which reflect the Rasta green mind and spirit.

'Iyesus: Jesus Christ in Amharic and also in Rasta language.

Jah Rastafari: Defined as the original source of all the things, the divine power.

Kebra Negast: The Glory of Kings in Amharic. It concerns the origins of Ethiopia which come from Jewish traditions and focuses on two historical events: 1) the birth of Menelik, son of Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba of Ethiopia (970-933 BCE); 2) the Ark of the Covenant carried from Jerusalem to Axum (probably around 950 BCE).

Livity: Rasta living which combines rituals, ceremonies and philosophical teachings.

Logos (or λόγος in Greek): 1) a word not in the grammatical sense, but a word as embodying a conception or idea; 2) a saying, statement, declaration; 3) reason and mind - the Word of God; (see the *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Mansions: Rasta houses or the various classifications of Rasta communities or groups.

Overstanding: A Rasta term which converts the term 'understanding'. The term 'under' for Rastas is negative and it is replaced by "over", which is seen as more positive.

Ras: Head.

Ras Tafari: For Ethiopians this term means the 'emperor' of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I and it is used by Rasta to deify the emperor as the 'head creator'.

Rasta or Rastafarian: adherent of the RastafarI religious movement which comes from Jamaica (at the beginning of the 1930s); the Elect of God (Jah), Haile Selassie I.

Tewahedo: An Ethiopian word which means 'made One', or unified. The Tewahedo Orthodox Church considers itself the One Holy and Apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ. It is independent, with its own patriarchate in Addis Ababa established by His Imperial Majesty (*HIM*) Haile Selassie I, the founder of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in 1961. Moreover, Tewahedo is used to stress the inseparable nature of God and human beings in the One person of Christ.

List of Contents

1. Methodology: Interpreting RastafarI Identity **1**

Introduction 1

Aims 5

Historical Background to the Study of RastafarI 6

Why RastafarI and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church? 7

Towards an Empathetic Understanding 9

A Literature Review of RastafarI Studies 12

Problems in the Study 17

Main Definitions Used in the Study 19

RastafarI as a New Religious Movement 20

Exploring 'NRM' as an Ideological Source: 'New' 26

'Religious' 28

'Movement' 29

How this Study is Organized 30

2. The East: Locating Ethiopia **34**

Introduction 34

Are the Ethiopians still Pagans? 35

The Concept of Schism between East and West 37

Defining 'the Dissidents, the Others' 38

Councils and Creeds: From Nicaea and Constantinople to Chalcedon 40

Monophysitism versus Dyophysitism 47

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church 52

From Pre-Christianity to Christianity in Ethiopia 57

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: Ceremonies, Liturgies, Organization and Symbols 63

Conclusion 68

3. The link between Rastas and Ethiopian Christians: The Monophysite Doctrine in RastafarI **71**

Introduction 71

Rasta and Monophysite Outlooks 72

The Fusions of Symbols in RastafarI 75

RastafarI and its Connection with the Christian name of Haile Selassie: 'Lord of Lords and Might of the Holy Trinity' 81

RastafarI: a Syncretistic Movement? 86

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Legacy in RastafarI 88

Life and Spirituality in the Rastafarian Movement: Rituals, Symbols and Liturgies 99

The Symbolism of Colours in Rasta Thought 105

Festivals in RastafarI 108

Conclusion 111

4. Rasta Talk: A Linguistic and Metaphysical Resistance **112**

Introduction 112

Concerning Word Change: the Suffix '-ism' 113

RastafarI versus Rastafarian-ism: an Ethical Outlook 114

Changing the Meaning of Words into the Divinity: Who is Ras Tafari? 116

The Magic Ring or Circle of Solomon and the Divine Mystery of the Word Abracadabra 121

Defining Rasta Language (Rasta Talk) 126

The Speech of RastafarI 128

Rethinking the Phrase 'Blackheart Men versus White Men' 130

The Rasta Lexicon or Rasta Talk 134

Conclusion 138

5. Afrocentricity in RastafarI: The Origins of the RastafarI movement **139**

Introduction 139

Changing the Context in Rasta Livity 140
Afrocentric Theory in Rasta Attitudes and Behaviour 142
Why Africa? Rastafarian Roots and Livity 145
Garvey's Legacy in the RastafarI Movement 150
RastafarI Consciousness (Autocoscienza): Negritude 154
Afrocentricity in Dreadlocks 160
Charismatic Leaders in RastafarI 166
Conclusion 170

**6. Relocating Xaymaica:
Cultural Stereotypes in Confrontation from a 'World-Accommodating' Indigenous Culture to a 'World Resistant' African-Caribbean Community 171**

Introduction 171
The First Forms of Domination in Jamaica 174
The Earliest Phenomena of Resistance in Jamaica 182
The First Charismatic Woman of the Caribbean: Nanny and the Liberation Movement: the 'Other' World 184
RastafarI and Marronage 188
Emancipation and Oppression: a Redefinition of the Human Condition 190
Towards a Postcolonial Discourse and a Redefinition of the Oppressed Subjects 194
RastafarI versus Western Hegemony 195
Conclusion 199

**7. A Woman in RastafarI:
Liberation and Ethnic-Religious Creativity 201**

Introduction 201
The Origins of the Name of Sheba and its Queen 203
A Pluralistic portrait of a Woman: the Daughter of Lilith and Isis 206
The Queen of Sheba versus RastafarI Patriarchy 211
The Queen of Sheba and the Kebra Nagast 218
The Queen of Sheba's Legacy in RastafarI 222
The Image of the Queen of Sheba: Is she 'Black'? 225

Woman's Spirit Movement in RastafarI 229
Conclusion 230

8. The Bible and the Rastas:
The Spiritual Sources of the RastafarI Movement
From the Kebra Nagast to the Holy Piby **232**
Introduction 232
The First Literary Source in RastafarI: The Kebra Nagast 233
The Contents of The Kebra Nagast 240
The Second Source in RastafarI: The Fetha Nagast 245
The Ethiopian Pagan Sources: The Lefâfa Sedek and The Book of Enoch 252
The Final Source: The Rasta Bible - The Holy Piby 262
Conclusion 265

9. Conclusion 267

Bibliography **273**

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: New Religious Movements in Primal Societies 25
Figure 2: Eastern Christianity: the Orthodox Church 69
Figure 3: Relations between Eastern and Western Christianity 70
Figure 4: The Solomonic Pentacle 77
Figure 5: The Star of David 78
Figure 6: The Net of Solomon (1) 79
Figure 7: The Net of Solomon (2) 80
Figure 8: *Abracadabra* 123
Figure 9: The *Kwer'ata Re'esu* 165
Figure 10: Colombo Day 177
Figure 11: The Encounter between the Old World and the New World:
A Portrait of the Indigenous Women (le *donne 'selvagge'*) 178

List of Tables

Table 1: The Twelve Tribes of Israel and their Legacy in RastafarI (1) 96

Table 2: The Twelve Tribes (2) 97

Table 3: The Niah Binghi Festivities 109 - 110

Table 4: The Greek Alphabet with Numerical Equivalents 124

Table 5: The Names of God, according to the Qur'an 255

Table 6: The African Names of God 256

Chapter 1

Methodology

Interpreting RastafarI[1] identity

> On 2 November 1930, in the ancient city of Addis Ababa in the country of Ethiopia, a man named Tafari Makonnen was crowned emperor. That coronation sent a theological shockwave through a rising pan-African consciousness movement a world away in the Caribbean.[2]

Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century RastafarI originated as a way of life in the sub-urban areas of Kingston, Jamaica, and then progressively expanded as a trans-cultural and religious phenomenon counting over one million adherents and sympathizers. RastafarI emerged as a liberative[3] and post-colonial movement for oppressed people who faced the effects of European colonialism in the Americas and Africa. RastafarI is a group of people (Others) who are critical of theories concerning the superiority of western culture and power. They challenge colonial contexts (pro-western Christianity and culture), and advocating applied to colonial contexts.

Any scholarly study of RastafarI meets with a problem of interpretation. RastafarI is a complex phenomenon which cannot easily be examined in terms of conventional methodologies and analytical models. RastafarI is often recognized as a messianic and

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[1] The term 'RastafarI' indicates the belief in Ras Tafari as an African god who manifests himself in the letter 'I' and who is personified in the Word Incarnate of God, the one incarnation of the divinity (the monophysite doctrine). The 'I' is also used in Rasta language as 'InI' and thus includes the divine mystery of Jah Rastafari. Ras Tafari is the second Jesus Christ who, according to monophysite belief, is one person with one nature which became one after the Incarnation. Therefore the 'I' is One.

[2] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, (London: SPCK, 1999), xvi.

[3] The author will employ the liberative term is an Italian word and it is stemmed from Italian feminist thought and indicates a liberation group of women when they became part of emancipation (1960s). The liberative movement is applied also for RastafarI which is, in a sense, a liberating or liberation movement.

millenarian movement of 'Third World' protest. As a result, the RastafarI community has been labelled an 'escapist movement',[4] 'political cult',[5] a 'messianic movement',[6] a 'millenarian movement',[7] and a 'politico-religious protest movement'.[8] It is also defined by social sciences, such as anthropology and ethnography, as a folk religion occurring in 'traditional societies' (known also as primitive, illiterate, pre-industrial, tribal and 'poor' nations, communities and/or traditions, in contradistinction to ethnocentric, capitalist and urbanized societies).[9] In a broad sense, the term 'traditional societies' is a secular term which is associated with indigenous religions, and also with subcultures which have inherited a variety of spiritual forces and magical practices from their ancestors. RastafarI thus seems to have incorporated the archetypical myths, symbols

[4] Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religion of the Oppressed,* trans. from Italian by Lisa Sergio, (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1963), 250. See also the original in Italian: *Movimenti Religiosi di Libertà e di Salvezza dei Popoli Oppressi*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1960).

[5] Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari,* 2nd revised ed. (Montreal, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 1st ed. (Kingston: Canoe Press University of the West Indies, 1994), 23. See also George E. Simpson, 'The Rastafari Movement – Political Cultism in West Indians', in *Social and Economic Studies,* Vol. 4, no. 2 (1955), 133-149.

[6] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians: The Dreadlock in Jamaica,* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1977), 1. See also Leonard E. Barrett, 'A Study in Messianic Cultism in Jamaica', in *Caribbean Monographic Series*, no. 6, (Puerto Rico, 1968), 69-94.

[7] De Klaus Albuquerque, 'Millenarian Movement and the Politics of Liberation: The Rastafarians in Jamaica', (Ph.D. diss., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University), 1977.

[8] Sheila Kitzinger, 'Protest and Mysticism: The Rastafari Cult in Jamaica', in *Journal for Scientific Study of Religions* 8, no. 2 (1969), 248.

[9] After the impact of European colonization, occupation and segregation, many indigenous civilizations undermined, rejected and even destroyed their indigenous religious traditions to embrace organized religions. In the nineteenth century, ethnology and social anthropology emerged in England and then expanded globally thanks to their founders (from Tylor to Frazer, from Durkheim, Malinowski to Lévi-Bruhl, from Giambattista Vico to Raffaele Pettazzoni and Vittorio Lanternari) who developed classical methods of intensive fieldwork with indigenous people ('primitive' cultures), investigating their languages and religions in order to acquire their native point of view. This idealistic and a historical approach for many researchers became a sort of a cross-cultural encounter between the colonial forces (the white outsiders) and the others (those who lived in a subaltern condition. However, RastafarI argues that this approach is the outcome of Babylon which still stigmatizes people on the basis of racial, ethnic, biological and cultural characteristics, identifying them as minority groups (marginal and oppressed in terms of their access to leadership). Nowadays in our modern capitalist societies the ex-primitive Africans, Asians, and Americans have been substituted by contemporary new groups of subalterns, such as unemployed young people, women and old people. For example there is a new religious phenomenon which hits many young women and men. It is called the pro-anorexia movement. This new form of religion is very strong in our modern Western societies, with the myth of slimness-meagreness with its pantheon of living-dead goddesses, the top models, as a new cultural, religious and psychological trend.

and rituals of its African ancestors in order to glorify its African past and to identify its identity.

Behind all these provisional and hypothetical investigations, what does 'RastafarI' mean in itself? The word 'RastafarI' is from two word roots. It is formed from the word 'Ras' (the Ethiopian royal name) which means 'duke' or 'head', and 'Tafari' (a baptismal name) which means 'who inspires fear'. So, 'RastafarI' became a distinctive word which reveals first a belief in one being (Jah, God) and then the political nature of this god as an African super-leader. The people who belong to the RastafarI community, known as Rastafarians or Rastas, are followers of Emperor Haile Selassie I ('Power of the Trinity') of Ethiopia (1892-1975). Historically, the king of Ethiopia was the *negus negasta* (King of Kings, originating with King Solomon) who took control of Ethiopia and is now recognized as one of the most important African leaders who gave impetus to the Pan-African movements.[10]

[10] In 1963 Haile Selassie founded the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was then replaced by the African Union (AU) in 2002. The aims of the AU are to eradicate all form of colonialism, to establish independent movements, to defend freedom and human rights in order to promote and guarantee African unity and independence of African States. Haile Selassie I was identified by many Africans as a political hero and gave to them the salvific hope for exodus. His charisma, leadership and international diplomatic prestige are a symbol of liberation to all the oppressed people (the subalterns, including Rastas) who still live on the periphery of society. Moreover, Haile Selassie was important in assisting and supporting the Ethiopian people (meaning all the African people in the world) in the diaspora. He appointed his cousin, the physician Malaku Bayen, in New York as a representative of the Ethiopian Diaspora in America. He founded The Ethiopian World Federation Incorporated (EWF Inc.) on August 25, 1937. This organization has a pan-African focus with the aim to ensure unity, solidarity, liberty, freedom and self-determination for African people in the world. (For further details see *The Constitution and By-Laws of the Ethiopian World Federation* (1937) at the available links http://ethiopianworldfederation.com/constitution.html, http://ethiopianworldfederation.spruz.com/ and http://www.ewflocal111.com/). It is to be noted that the principles and the message 'Ethiopia Must be Free' of the EWF were vital, and not only influenced the African diaspora but the RastafarI movement as well. Under the flag of 'African Unity' RastafarI embarked upon its philosophy of liberation. RastafarI adopted and reproduced in many forms Ethiopian folklore and traditions. The EWF became a sort of ideological stance for the formation of this group. Moreover the EWF is very close to Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity (EOTC). Indeed there are a few reciprocal interactions between Ethiopians and Rasta people. One of the representative ambassadors for Rasta people, Yasus Afari, is involved in promoting the historical and cultural Rastafarian and Ethiopian alliance across the world. For further information see Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari: Jamaica's Gift to the World* (Jamaica: Senya-Cum, 2007), 210-211.

How in the twentieth century could the Ethiopian Christian emperor Ras Tafari become a new incarnation of Jesus Christ (a black Christ or avatar for Africans) in the Caribbean? For the RastafarI movement, Haile Selassie is the Messiah who returned as the incarnate Logos (the One Being) in the persona of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I to save all Africans from their long exile (slavery) caused by colonialism ('western Europe's imperialism').[11] RastafarI looks critically at the misdeeds and atrocities of the past ('Babylon abuse') and tries as a form of resistance to rectify these and in the process aims to give dignity and self-worth and freedom to the subjugated people. RastafarI is born thus as a social and dynamic movement with a multiplicity of faith positions (from paganism, the Nicene Creed, Ethiopianism, Garveyite ideas, to Afrocentric Christianity)[12] in reaction to subjugation by the colonial and missionary presence in the New World, from Christopher Columbus onwards, which was the cause of the genocide of millions of the indigenous population, both original West Indians and Africans. In doing so, RastafarI posits and locates its own Afrocentric 'philosophy of revolution', which on the one hand absorbs some features of Ethiopian Christianity, and on the other hand develops a new spirituality (*livity*). As a result, RastafarI melds Ethiopian Christianity with Caribbean indigenous religions (Arawaks, Obeah). In this way RastafarI expands a new theology of liberation[13] within the Jamaican context. In this

[11] Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America to the Civil War,* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmands Publishing, 1993), 1-3. This historian of religion discusses in his book what the Western World did in the Age of Exploration both culturally, politically and also theologically, transforming the religion (the oral traditions, 'myths' and rituals) of the American native people ('the Indians'). It is notable that the word 'myth' was employed by anthropologists to indicate something which has no empirical verification. Myth is compared with belief. But as Gaustad observes, 'Why believe when there are no (or insufficient) facts?', 3.

[12] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, xvii.

[13] The concept of minority group indicates a group (ethnic, sexual and social) that it is generally subordinated to the dominant groups in terms of the distribution of economic and social power and decisions. It is incorrect to think of minority groups in terms of numerical size. The RastafarI community constitutes a numerical majority in Jamaica but RastafarI are the objects of marginalization (subalternity)

sense, RastafarI has expressed its desire and search for the definition of a true religion and God. Thus RastafarI, like any other Third World indigenous religion, in the most concrete way makes visible its tenacious resistance in the form of Haile Selassie I (the African living God) to Western hegemony in the defeat of Italy after Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.

Aims

This thesis focuses on three important issues. First of all, it attempts to identify in a theological discourse why we have never considered how, thanks to their Ethiopian legacy – through the monophysite doctrine – Rastas make, represent and portray their *livity* (spirituality), and talk of and interpret God. The metaphysical concept of monophysitism relates to the figure of Haile Selassie I, the Second Messiah. Secondly, it describes how RastafarI extends and amplifies the liturgies, spiritualities and symbolisms of Ethiopian Christianity and culture. Thirdly, this thesis will bring to attention the often overlooked figure of the Queen of Sheba and her contribution to both Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI. She was the first woman of the South to embrace many religious practices and she played a crucial role in the development of Ethiopians, and subsequently Rastas.

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in a society with its dominant systems. The term 'minority group' is used here in preference to the notion of 'racial group' because this is controversial; even anthropologists, sociologists and scientists (such as biologists) disagree. Racial classification of people on the basis of skin colour is very complicated. Skin colour is not just a genetic feature but it depends on other factors such as climate, for example exposure to sunlight. Africans and Asians have darker colour because they live in subtropical environments. But our societies have often provided 'racial definitions' on the basis of physical traits in order to differentiate people or groups racially. However, there are no legal rules that define a 'racial category' within a given society. As a substitute concept, the word 'ethnic' is used (Greek, *ethnikos*, which simply means 'national' and it is *ethnos* that means nation). This word initially referred to the Europeans such as Italians, Germans and Poles who emigrated to the United States between 1900 and 1925. Nowadays, the term 'ethnic' is applied to the younger generation and groups who seek to establish their own cultural, linguistic and religious community, with a new sense of identity, ethics and values.

Thus what transpires in RastafarI is the interconnectivity with Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, a Church of non-western origins.[14] The purpose of this analysis, which is essentially rooted in a comparative study, aims to trace back the ancient origins of Ethiopian Christianity and also the pagan and Judaic traditions. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church is thus for Rastas one of the most important traditional African Christian theologies, and has rehabilitated the movement to its original vision as a liberating and independent agency. What this research tries to do, as a final sociological concern, is to revise and deepen our understanding of how subordinated people achieve their resistance to the dominant, hegemonic ideologies of the West, or Babylon. This is an argument which in anthropology, sociology, theology and religion ought not only to be worthy of study but also to be a broad journey.

Historical Background to the Study of RastafarI

There are still no scholarly works which have attempted to make direct comparisons between the RastafarI movement and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. However we can find cultural and historical links between the RastafarI movement and Ethiopian Tewahedo Christianity. For example, Emperor Haile Selassie I believed that Ethiopians are the descendants of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon.[15] Therefore the major focus of this study is to show how Rastas regard their movement, arrive at their beliefs (the way in which they see and communicate with the divine), and also

[14] Harold Turner, 'Christianity in the Caribbean', in *Afro-Caribbean Religions*, ed. Brian Gates, (London: Ward Lock Educational, 1980), 48.
[15] Edward Ullendorff*, The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie I: My Life and Ethiopia's Progress 1892-1937,* trans. from Amharic by Edward Ullendorff, vol. 1, (Chicago: Research Associates School Times Publications, 1997), 5.

interpret or recount their myths. All Rastas know their 'myths' and beliefs come from Ethiopia.

The RastafarI movement, in particular two Rasta mansions (The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian World Federation), tends to view itself as a 'converted' affiliation of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity. We cannot neglect the fact that RastafarI is a religion which is divorced from the Christian world, although Christianity had a major impact all over the world in the western and eastern indigenous context. It is quite impossible to find an authentic indigenous person because many tribal cultures, tongues and religions have intermingled over the centuries with western and now with eastern values. Even though RastafarI is a social movement of the Caribbean which became a form of political and cultural resistance, it is also an extraordinary example of an inter-cultural religious belief system, embodying various doctrines from Ethiopia.

Why RastafarI and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church?

In order to configure its own African identity, the RastafarI movement imagines Ethiopia with its historical hero (for example Haile Selassie I), doctrines and Ethiopian Christianity. Ethiopia emerges thus as the Promised Land and an alternative religion, the spiritual oasis for Africans of the diaspora. In an account, *The Promised Key* by Leonard Howell, the first Rasta leader, Ethiopia is described as the place where the King Alpha (Solomon) and the Queen Omega (the Queen of Sheba) dwelt, the two

keepers of the Tree of Life[16] (the Son of God, Christ). With its indigenous beliefs, customs and rituals, Ethiopia is the perfect site for the RastafarI to understand its own past and to recover its self identity. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is also an exceptional patchwork or mosaic, an amalgamation of cultures and religions including pagan, animistic, Judaic and Christian elements. Hence, RastafarI assimilates its thinking. In a sense, RastafarI's pluralistic identity traces its origin to the heterogeneity of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity. But more importantly RastafarI considers Ethiopia as a particular condition of self-determination and thus an ethnic-spiritual force. Ethiopia with its Afrocentric spirituality was the first mobilizing factor for the RastafarI movement to become a religious and political expression of its resistant ideologies. In a specific sense, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church is identified by Rastas as a sort of liberative religion with fewer western attributes. We find similarities between Rastas and Ethiopians in their symbols, images and interpretations of God. For example, the conception of the monophysite doctrine (the Incarnate One Logos) is characteristic of non-western Christianity. Indeed, God in Rastafarian and Ethiopian thinking has one nature, an alternative image of the one God (the Father-Son) where the two natures are reconciled in one (the union of opposites: the *mia-physis*).

[16] Leonard Howell (under the pseudonym G. G. Maragh), *The Promised Key,* (Accra Gold Coast: Dr Nnamdi, Editor of *The African Morning Post,* Head Office, n.d.), 13. This source is also quoted in William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 2. According to Spencer, there is also an updated version printed in Jamaica, circa 1935.

Towards an Empathic Understanding

There is a certain tendency on our part to adjust our knowledge and abilities to the standard of scientific and technical achievement and to refuse the adoption of any empathic approaches which are rooted in ethical and mutual understanding of what people do or believe. From a theoretical point of view, all too often many academic approaches examine RastafarI from an anthropological-ethnographic standpoint, with very little of consideration or discussion of the idea of RastafarI as a new religion, in theological and metaphysical terms, to be studied. What the sciences think in terms of their research is limited to a discussion of a practical nature (the making) rather than the theories (the doing) or human capacities of the theorists or thinkers. Disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology and biology have systematically demonstrated from textual works to empirical observations (fieldwork, interviews and experiments) how societies were transformed. This universal scientific standpoint, which has clearly triumphed over the discourses of philosophy and religion, is taken outside human nature or the existence of God, forgetting Augustine's philosophical and theological question of 'Who are we? We are people' ('Tu, qui es?') (*Confessions* x.6). And 'What is our nature?' ('Quae natura sum?') (*Confessions* x.17). My investigation explores and raises questions mainly about the nature of people (Rastas) who see themselves as superhuman (the monophysite doctrine) for the reason that people transfer, conceptualize and combine their human nature (from an oppressed status) with the divine (liberation).

Since the 1960s, anthropology, sociology and ethnology have pursued their ethnographic research among the Rastas, and their anthologies are recognized as

standard works for early researchers and students. Many African-American scholars, such as George Eaton Simpson, Barry Chevannes, Leonard Barrett, Horace Campbell, Ennis B. Edmonds, Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, Rex Nettleford and Charles Price, who are regarded as pioneers and authorities in the field of RastafarI culture, have done extensive ethnographic research amongst the RastafarI communities in Jamaica. Therefore these academics have given more space to an anthropological and sociological discussion of the RastafarI movement in relation to Jamaican culture and Caribbean religions and its impact on the younger generation in Jamaica. Because their academic interests in RastafarI culture have addressed issues related to political and racial ideology, they have conducted their field study on a more situated and contextualized basis. Their analysis goes in depth into the social and economic context of the RastafarI movement in Jamaica. What emerges from their research, sponsored by the University of the West Indies (UWI) and Temple University of Pennsylvania, is that not all Rastas are criminals and addicted to *ganja* (which attracted many European and Japanese young people)[17] but it is a twentieth-century Pan-African movement with a well-structured system of African norms and symbols, deep rooted in the heritage of the Maroons of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, the vast and substantial academic fieldwork and literature on RastafarI (including surveys, interviews and data resources) has thus seldom engaged the ideas and sentiments of Ethiopian Christianity in RastafarI. My approach rehabilitates the RastafarI revolutionary interpretation of Christianity, thanks to Rasta textual analyses rather than ethnographic techniques.

[17] Obiagele Lake, *RastafarI Women: Subordination in the Midst of Liberation Theology*, (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 1998), 6.

This study is thus essentially based on a phenomenological understanding[18] and comparative study of two religions. On the basis of this, the present work attempts to find the contact points between Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI and thus to organize the different religious conceptions into 'common manifestations'[19] (like worship, prayers, symbols and amulets) which belong to both Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI. One of the principal tasks of this research is to set out the comparative principles between two faiths by creating links. The approach towards RastafarI and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church is principally comparative. This comparative approach is also a model for the study of minority religious groups – in this case RastafarI – because it centres on the question of hybridity[20] (the conjunction of two or more living cultures and religions which gives birth to a new one).

This research is phenomenological and comparative because it investigates the perspectives of African people in two religious groups. In an attempt to employ a neutral but also empathetic approach, although there is a risk sometimes of being influenced by the reading of various books from different backgrounds, this work combines broad-ranging theories about the nature of two interlinked religions: RastafarI

[18] Phenomenology is a philosophical doctrine of inquiry originating in Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the philosopher Edmund Husserl, who investigated consciousness (the human experience with the world, the perception of objects through mathematical formulae). This philosophical theory was used by scholars, particularly the existentialists, at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the first academics to apply the phenomenological approach to the study of religion was Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye. For the first time in the study of religions, Chantepie used, in *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* (*The Handbook of the History of Religions*), 2 vols., (Freiburg in Baden, 1887), the concept of the phenomenology of religion. For Chantepie de la Saussaye, phenomenology became a resource for philosophy and religion. According to him, it served to examine and prepare historical information. See also Luis Henry Jordan, *Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth,* (Edinburg: T. and T. Clark, 1905), 3-28.

[19] George Chryssides and Ron Geaves, *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*, (London: Continuum, 2007), 212.

[20] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). The Asian post-colonialist scholar Homi Bahbha defined within his post-colonial theory the concept of hybridity as a prominent feature of people-societies of the diaspora (Africans and Asians: 'the Third World') after their deportation and immigration to the West.

and Ethiopian Christianity. This work, beyond investigating the nature and condition of RastafarI, places RastafarI as a culture in dialogue with another, Ethiopian culture. Therefore it will use a comparative approach, which maps out the African identity in the RastafarI movement. Exploring RastafarI and Ethiopian Christianity from a cross-cultural position implies revealing parallels between their cultures, beliefs and practices which may be invisible to each other. RastafarI and Ethiopian Christianity are examples of very different cultures, despite their similarities.

A Literature Review of RastafarI Studies

Although the first scholarly study of RastafarI was published by an American sociologist, George Eaton Simpson, in the 1950s, it is only since the 1980s that publishing houses have encouraged the circulation of RastafarI literature. The market in RastafarI literature began in America and in Western Europe, mainly Britain, in the 1980s with the cultural and ideological explosion of the reggae music phenomenon. RastafarI became therefore an institutionalized expression of protest, revolution, liberation and power for the people of the African Diaspora. African-Americans saw it as a possible theory of social change, of cultural liberation and of political transformation.

This work uses a series of books on RastafarI which have previously been edited and produced by academics, publishers and editors. Among the many works on RastafarI literature are the following: *The Religion of the Oppressed* (1963) by Vittorio Lanternari; *Rastafarians: The Dreadlocks of Jamaica* (1977) by Leonard E. Barrett; *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England* (1979) edited by Ernest Cashmore;

Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney (1985) by Horace Campbell; the first feminist criticism of the patriarchal RastafarI movement dedicated to Rasta women, *Rastafari Women: Subordination in the Midst of Liberation Theology* (1998) by the African-American anthropologist Obialege Lake; and a more recent book *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (2003) by Ennis B. Edmunds. Beyond the anthropological-ethnographic qualitative and quantitative studies by academics who have written exclusively on RastafarI, the current research explores alternative literatures on RastafarI which are rarely mentioned elsewhere in past anthologies and present scholarship.

Lanternari discusses RastafarI as a religion of oppressed people who belong to 'tribal and pre-industrial societies' which have been undermined (destabilised) by colonialism and segregation and emarginated by dominant classes (the 'white people'). RastafarI, in this sense, is a resistance religion - the religion of opposition and liberation to the hegemonic church of modern civilization. Lanternari's thought identifies the psychological aspect of RastafarI religiosity whereby the religious sense of the Rasta is analogous to that of marginalised populations. The positions of the oppressed have a common denominator: the Rasta is an oppressed person who resists the social, economic and human injustice of the contemporary world. The religion of the subjugated communities, for Lanternari, includes a series of symbols (conceptual and cultural models or patterns) which connect them with their own ancestral and liberative world. Through symbols RastafarI finds its new cultural, social and spiritual liberation from dominant societies. Thanks to the charismatic figure of Robert (Bob) Nesta Marley (1945-1981), star of the reggae music, the RastafarI movement has expressed its battle for poor and marginalised people.

A typical example of sociological analysis of Rasta resistance is given by Horace Campbell, who says:

> Rastafari must take their proper place in the Third World struggle against dictatorship and oppression. Rastas cannot become the pawns of reactionary capitalists in their attempt to maintain imperialism.[21]

Both Campbell and Leonard Barrett follow the principle of the diaspora of Africa bringing RastafarI as an African religion with African-Caribbean indigenous elements, such as Pocomania and Obeah, placing Haile Selassie I as a Messiah. But RastafarI is also viewed as a patriarchal movement where the role of women is subjugated to the man. Indeed, Barrett in his interview with Michael Bruny and Adrian A. McFarlane states about the 'Rasta Woman':

> She is the wife of a Rasta, or a friend of the Rasta. However, lately the women have begun to move. They are no more Rasta women. They are Rastas who are converted, and they have begun to trouble the waters of Rasta patriarchy.[22]

Beyond existing works on the topic of RastafarI, imperialism and patriarchy, this research seeks to identify through scholarly literature the connection of Rastas with and interaction of Rastas to Ethiopian Christianity. The only scholar, however, to describe RastafarI as the direct manifestation of Christianity is William David Spencer, who in his work *Dread Jesus* (1999) discusses RastafarI in biblical and Christian terms. He is one of the first scholars to acknowledge the influence of the Jamaican Rasta writer, journalist and filmmaker Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah, who, in her book *Rastafari: The New Creation* (1997), thinks about RastafarI as a new form of liberative

[21] Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney,* (Trenton, NJ: Africa New World Press, 1987), 173.
[22] Indigo Bethea, Michael Bruny et al., 'Emissaries of Rastafari: An Interview with Professor Leonard Barrett', in Appendix A of *The Rastafari Reader: Chanting Down Babylon*, ed. by Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 424.

Christianity amongst the oppressed. It is interesting also to note that Harold Turner defines RastafarI as a Hebraist movement because Rastas see themselves as the reincarnated Hebrews, the black elect of God, through their Jewish lineage (David-Solomon). But he does not recognise the Ethiopian Christian influence on RastafarI.

The work of the dub poet and author Yasus Afari *Overstanding Rastafari: Jamaica's Gift to the World* (2007) is recognized as an authentic source of RastafarI scholarship. This work compares RastafarI and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and traces their closeness. RastafarI responded to Ethiopia from the late 1930s when Garvey's prophecy was realised. The link between RastafarI and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church might seem doubtful, but there are various similarities between the two religions with regard to their beliefs and practices. Essentially Afari describes in his volume the birth and development of the RastafarI movement. He shows that, beyond the themes of western colonial history, global subordination and marginalization, Ethiopian Christian elements are very influential in RastafarI. According to Afari, the RastafarI movement has been inspired by 'the Orthodox Church's traditions'.[23]

On the basis of these important literary sources, this thesis provides a topical investigation into literature and documents used by Ethiopians and which have also been adopted by the RastafarI communities. Employing these materials, this research aims to map out how the RastafarI phenomenon took shape within the Jamaican context and how it stems from the Ethiopian Christian milieu. This research draws on an extensive catalogue of texts and observations of RastafarI discourse (such as its usage of the biblical term 'Babylon') in its own literature. In studying different beliefs, rituals

[23] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 231.

and symbols, the work tries to see how RastafarI depends upon the different cultural contexts, Ethiopia and Jamaica. To examine further the similarities and differences between RastafarI and Ethiopian Christianity, this research focuses on a series of manuscripts and anthologies which are the principal sources of information for Ethiopian Christians and Rasta people.

Through Ethiopian literature such as the *Kebra Nagast* (the *Glory of Kings*), the *Fetha Nagast* (the *Law of Kings*), the *Lefâfa Sedek* (the *Ethiopian Book of Life*), the *Book of Enoch,* and the *Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth,* along with the canonical Scriptures, we might conclude that the God of the Ethiopians and of the Rastas has much in common, and that the RastafarI religion is closely akin to Ethiopian Christianity. In fact, it makes 'Rasta sense' to be guided and directed by a Christian God (the 'I' or Jah, which is a variant of the Biblical Jehovah). A further prominent connection between RastafarI, and Ethiopia and the pan-African sentiments of the emperor Haile Selassie, can be read between the lines of his autobiography *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, 1892-1937: Autobiography of Haile Selassie I, King of Kings and Lord of Lords of All Ethiopia.* This first volume was published in Amharic in Addis Ababa in 1965 (Ethiopian calendar), which according to our Gregorian calendar is 1973. Written in 1937 by Haile Selassie I during his exile in Bath, England, it tells the story of the emperor's life and his royal lineage. The work was then translated into English and annotated by the British scholar Edward Ullendorff (1920–2011), historian and specialist in Semitic Studies. It appeared in 1976, published by the Oxford University Press for the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of London. The new 1997 edition has become a rich legacy for RastafarI communities. Rastas, as Ullendorff observes, are the only remains of the kingship of Haile Selassie. For Rastas

therefore it is of prime importance to demonstrate, using mainly Ethiopian textual sources and contextual analysis, that Ethiopian philosophy and spiritual life played a crucial role in shaping their non-western beliefs. Another key feature is to challenge the popular perception that RastafarI is essentially an Afro-centric movement. The aim is rather to depict it as a pluralistic phenomenon without denying its indebtedness to Africa and Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, both of which have deep roots in pluralism.

Problems in the Study

In this study, the term 'RastafarI' needs some further consideration. Is it a New Religious Movement (NRM) somewhere between the old, Ethiopian Christianity, and the new, the new African-Caribbean movements of the diaspora? And is it an Afro-centric action within a movement emerging from the RastafarI post-colonial situation? These are fundamental dimensions because each corresponds to the logic and human condition of the oppressed and the resistant groups who act and react against the dominant groups. As result of this, this study emphasises the anti-colonial discourse in the RastafarI movement, which is the condition – *conditio per quam* – of all its philosophy. Thus RastafarI manifests its anti-western position in the reading and understanding of its liberation through the history of the African diaspora in the Caribbean.

The central point of the RastafarI reaction to the West raises a series of questions. How is a religious movement conceptualised in both western and non-western contexts? What political and cultural conditions support or impede the circulation of a new theology of the Third World? How do Ethiopian culture and religion impact upon

RastafarI thinking? And why is RastafarI still at the margins? These questions will be addressed step by step through textual critique.

The Jamaican Rasta writer Jah Bones claims that the phenomenon of RastafarI has tended to be regarded in academia as a dysfunctional phenomenon whose programmes are seen as 'unlawful and disorderly'. [24] Harold Turner gives examples of this thinking:

> Other anthropologists developed the study further, both in America and in other parts of the world, giving us the terms nativistic and revitalization for these movements, seen as acculturation of phenomena, together with various systems of classification. Other human science has produced major studies, each in terms of its categories. Sociologists have seen the movements as products of social change and in relation to traditional social structure; economists have been concerned with material wants, with relative deprivation, and hence with cargo cults as a search for wealth in an irrational way; political scientists have studied the effects of colonialism and spoken 'protest' movements, and indeed earlier movements often did come into violent clashes with governments and were suppressed; psychologists have used the categories of neurosis and crisis, and investigated the psyche of founders and leaders; and historians have sought to place these new movements in their wider context and trace their development over the years, as well as to stress the place of the individual in the appearance and shaping of the movement.[25]

Sociologists such as Leon Festinger and Johan Lofland have addressed RastafarI as a deviant phenomenon, being a social protest movement stemming from the experience of the contradictions of the marginal status of residing with territorially segregated neighbours,[26] and therefore living a sense of injustice. The behaviour of these groups (such as immigrants, ethnic minorities, the unemployed, disadvantaged ghetto youth and women) who work in low-paid unskilled jobs, and have grave financial and health problems, makes them appear deviant when practising a particular religion or culture which is in conflict with the collective behaviour of the national pivotal categories

[24] Jah Bones, *One Love: History, Doctrine and Livity,* (London: Pearson and Brunlees, 1985), 4.
[25] Harold W. Turner, 'New Religious Movements in Primal Societies', in *A New Handbook of Living Religions,* ed. John R. Hinnells, (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 583.
[26] John Lofland, *Protest: Studies of Collective Behaviour and Social Movements,* (New Brunswick and London, 1985), 92.

(native-born, employed people, and ethnic majority groups). The spirit of these people who 'dance on the margin of routine'[27] is seen as ambiguous because they might exhibit either predictable (non-violent actions, religious and social activism, cooperation) or unpredictable behaviour (impulsive reactions, rebellions, insurrections, turmoil, riots and violent struggles). RastafarI is commonly regarded as a strange phenomenon (a non-violent and deviant movement), as shown in the UK studies in the 1970s by social scientists of the socio-cultural status and situation of African-Caribbean immigrant minorities. Amongst the African-Caribbeans, the RastafarI movement appealed mainly to the young and unemployed. The common denominator of all these groups was that they suffered from the racial, cultural and economic disadvantages of being African or black in a predominantly white European population. However, Rastafarl was a religious organization, and its revolutionary lifestyle, along with strong anti-social and hostile attitudes (stemming from a lack of education and steady employment, and non-mainstream behaviour such as the smoking of the narcotic *ganja* and wearing 'odd' hairstyles and clothes).[28]

Main Definitions Used in the Study

This study outlines a number of theories which purport to define RastafarI. It will examine RastafarI as a part of New Religious Movements (NRMs) studies. RastafarI is an NRM in the sense of the theories suggested by scholar Harold Turner, who differentiates the various categories of religious movements in Africa based on the interaction and coexistence of African primal elements (indigenous belief systems) and

[27] John Lofland, *Protest*, 29.
[28] Clifford Hill, 'Afro-Caribbean Religion in Britain', in *Afro-Caribbean Religions,* ed. Brian Gates, (London: Ward Lock Educational, 1980), 80-81.

Christian elements. RastafarI mixes together and reconciles 'pure' Christian religion (Ethiopian Christianity) and indigenous religions. RastafarI can be considered as a Creole religion of the Caribbean where hybridity and syncretism are 'new' forms which put together various traditional religious beliefs and practices. However, the phenomenon RastafarI is not considered a New Religious Movement in the sociological study of NRMs as deviance (John Lofland and Leon Festinger). Further, RastafarI is not 'new' according to the theories of Eileen Barker.

RastafarI as a New Religious Movement

George Chryssides and Ron Geaves, in *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*, write that 'the theologian is of necessity the insider',[29] who attempts to make sense of the key doctrinal features of the believers. We cannot study a religion without addressing some theological questions (such as how Haile Selassie can be both human and divine) and understanding the differences and/or the similarities between various religious traditions. This study explores doctrinal diversity within RastafarI, and discusses the history of RastafarI as a culture and a religion.

This section provides an introduction to some terms before introducing RastafarI. Regarding the meaning of a 'New Religious Movement', Chryssides offers his theory. In his book, *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods* which revisits the history of the New Religious Movements (NRMs), he addresses three main questions: how new religious movements come into being; how and when the term 'New Religious Movement' emerged; and how it came to be used widely by academics

[29]George Chryssides and Ron Geaves, *The Study of Religion,* 39.

instead of the terms ‘cults and sects’,[30] which imply protest, disobedience and dissidence.

The term 'New Religious Movement' was introduced for the first time by Harold W. Turner (1911-2002) who dedicated his studies and researches mainly to the African continent. According to Turner, the religious landscape in Africa was so varied and distinctive that the particular movements found there were designated by different names. But more importantly, what Turner points out is that the impact of western culture and missionary domination has changed African traditions, offering new forms of religion in what were called ‘Modern African Religious Movements’. This expression emerged between the 17th and 19th centuries with the contact between western Christianity in the shape of Portuguese, German, Dutch, French and British missionaries and the traditional religions and spiritualities of Africa and the Caribbean.

In the essay 'New Religious Movements in Primal Societies', Turner categorises religions in Africa as follows: firstly, neo-primal; secondly, syncretistic or NRM; thirdly, Hebraist; and fourthly, independent churches. [31] These terms are still employed by scholars and RastafarI would be considered an NRM of the African diaspora in the Caribbean.

For Turner, the term 'New Religious Movement' is radically new. Based on the concept of African movements as part of a global phenomenon, Turner provides an ideological critique of terminology by designating a definition and typology which is new but generally acceptable, while remaining sceptical about which term and theory ought to

[30] George D. Chryssides, *Exploring New Religions* (London: Cassell, 1999), 4.
[31] Harold W. Turner, 'New Religious Movements in Primal Societies', in *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, 583.

be used in the history of religion. Turner's first classification, neo-primal, refers to the primordial religious practices before the advent of Christianity in Africa. Hebraist movements look to the Jewish scriptures. As Chryssides points out:

> Examples of these four categories respectively are Godianism (an east Nigerian neo-primal religion), the Unification Church (which combines Korean folk shamanism with Christianity), the Rastafarians and the Aladura.[32]

Regarding the RastafarI group, it is interesting to define RastafarI both as an NRM and a post-colonial movement. RastafarI does not belong to just one of these particular four categories, but exhibits characteristics of all four. It is an NRM in the sense that RastafarI embraces Christianity, tribal religions ('pagan religions') of the indigenous African populations and the African diaspora in the Caribbean and Judaic traditions. RastafarI is like the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church in that it is entirely independent but also an amalgam of cultural and religious customs. RastafarI arises from the interaction of religions. However, we may consider different uses of the word 'syncretism', which, according to recent studies, has become highly problematic and has assumed a negative connotation. In general, the word 'syncretism' means an amalgamation of two or more elements such as ceremonies, songs, dances, feasts, diets, festivals, rituals, amulets, prayers, prophets and priests. Etymologically, the term 'syncretism' was conceived by Plutarch, in *Moralia* to refer to the Cretan people who were in a state of internal hostility and who united together to confront the enemy. Later the term was used to describe the fusion and integration of heterogeneous beliefs into a common religious perspective.

[32] George D. Chryssides, *Exploring New Religions*, 28.

Despite its controversial nature, the concept of 'syncretism' will be used for two reasons. Firstly, this term is in wide use in Italian academia. Secondly, there is a personal reason relating to the writer's cultural background, which is the result of a long process of syncretistic identity formation through experience within multicultural contexts in Italy and abroad. Italy is not a homogeneous country; even the Italian language is 'syncretistic' in nature since it combined Latin with local languages and dialects, and several local dialects are still spoken widely. Christianity is also a blend of pagan traditions, of magic, with Christianity, as in the case of 'Tarantism'.[33]

The model of 'syncretism' is also applied to and revised for the Creole religions (African-Caribbean religions), which are an interesting example of cultural and religious hybridism. Roger Bastide in *Africa Civilization in the New World* says that the religious 'syncretism' in the Caribbean juxtaposes African and Christian elements, as in the case of voodoo, in which African and Catholic symbols interact together.[34] However, hybrid beliefs like Latin and African-American religions tend to incorporate traditional indigenous practices and deities as a combination of arts and ancestral spiritualities in a new form, in order to purge all colonial elements from the 'authentic' or 'pure' tribal religions and movements.

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[33] Ernesto De Martino, an Italian anthropologist, in his work, *La Terra del Rimorso: Contributo a una Storia Religiosa del Sud,* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1961), translated into English as *The Land of Remorse*: *A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism*, examines the phenomenon of Greek pagan ecstatic cults within Christianity. His anthropological work identifies the theme of superstition and magic amongst Christian peasants in the South of Italy who, with their ritualised dance and music, heal psychosis, the evil possession believed to be caused by the bite of the tarantula spider or *taranta*. To defeat the tarantula, the possessed *tarantati* ask the help of St Paul as their healer. This is an example of a syncretic movement which mingles two traditions, paganism and Christianity. Christianity imported pagan forms, occult and spiritual elements. Thus, Christianity in practice is a syncretistic religion with traditional pagan ingredients.

[34] Roger Bastide, *Africa Civilization in the New World,* trans. Peter Green, (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1972), 154-155.

The term 'syncretism' is used in this research to indicate the cultural similarities (integration and connection) between RastafarI and other African-Caribbean indigenous religions. It also shows the synthesis of Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI. RastafarI re-Africanised syncretistically ancestral beliefs, worship practices and symbols, eliminating any traces of western religions or the Babylonian religious system to return to their original-primal African-centred religion. The religious 'syncretism' of RastafarI indeed describes the creativity of cultural mixture (symbiosis) between African-Caribbean and Christian traditions. Finally, the word 'syncretism' emphasizes how RastafarI incorporated the Judeo-Christian idea into its spirituality. Moreover, we should recognise that Christianity and Judaism undoubtedly incorporated the pagan traditions of ecstatic worship, magic and spirit possession.

Turner helps us to understand the psychology of the NRMs and also to see how their origins are historically and culturally connected to Africa. Turner's scheme is also crucial in the study of the new religious phenomena because ancestral societies, primal or tribal, are particularly significant for NRMs throughout the globe. Moreover, Turner points out that most religions have been NRMs at some earlier stage of their history.[35]

On the basis of these conclusions we might observe that there are some NRMs which want to return to their origins, and which might be termed 'restorationist', with strong attachment to and nostalgia for a lost identity. And there are others which are original and are looking at new spirituality. In Turner's scheme, RastafarI should be identified as an NRM permeated with pagan, Judaic and Christian practices. But the RastafarI movement is, in its forms and features, an eclectic and syncretistic movement which, on

[35] Ulrich Berner, 'Reflections upon the Concept of New Religious Movement', in *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 12, no.1, (2000): 269.

the one hand, has strong nostalgia for Africa, specifically Ethiopia, and on the other hand, also creates authentic social values and religious practices which are far from western Christianity, while linked with non-western Christianity in the form of the Tewahedo Church of Ethiopia. RastafarI is thus an autonomous organization which treads the path of the old and new African world where its God is African and speaks directly to Africans.

Fig. 1 New Religious Movements in Primal Societies[36]

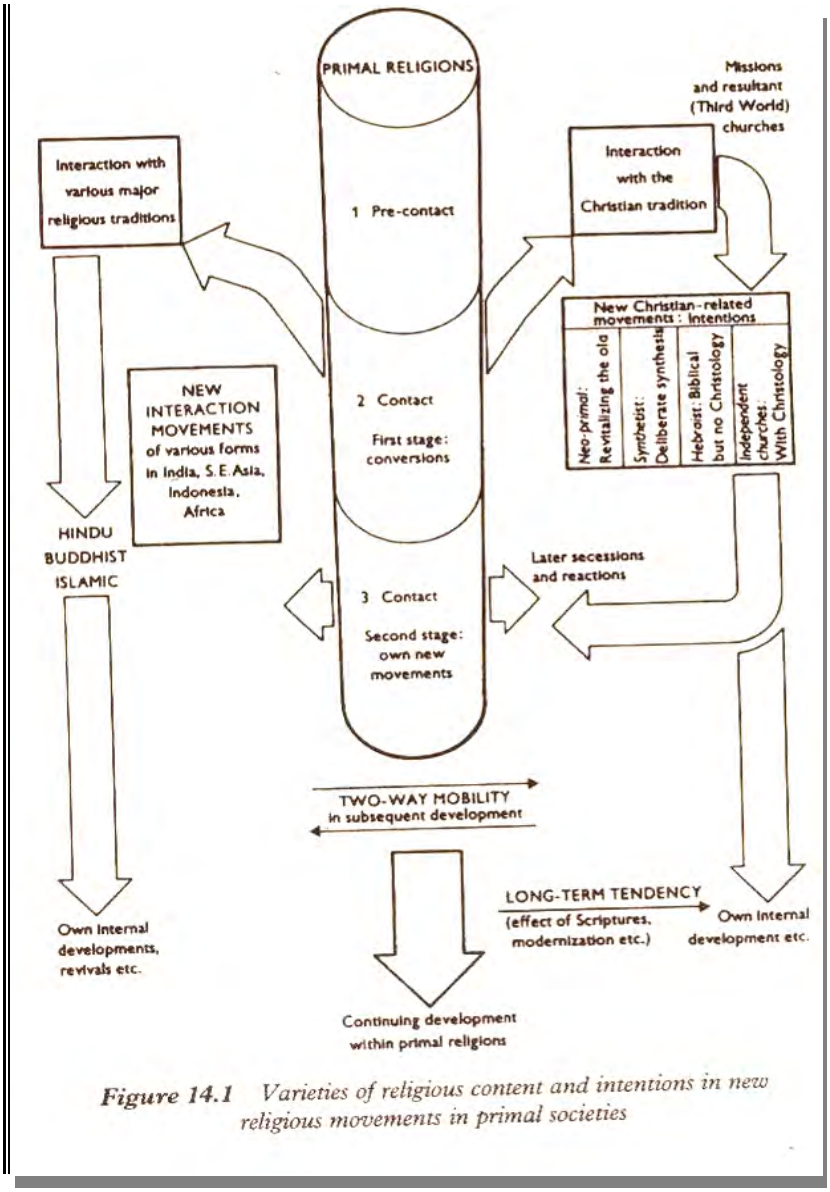


Figure 14.1 Varieties of religious content and intentions in new religious movements in primal societies

[36] Harold W. Turner, 'New Religious Movements in Primal Societies', in *A New Handbook of Living Societies,* 584.

Exploring ‘NRM’ as an Ideological Source:

'New'

In discussions of new religions we might encounter some critical objections. In this case the word 'new' is related to a belief, opinion or ideology which could be either dissonant or consonant with existing beliefs and knowledge. In the field of religion or social movements, according to the American scholar Leon Festinger (1919–1989), who propounded the cognitive dissonance theory in *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (1957) of social behaviour in relation to mental process (perception, memory, and decision-making), atypical behaviour, can destabilize an individual’s cognitive harmony. According to this theory, dominant, conforming behaviour may change suddenly in order to accommodate an emergent theory, knowledge, belief or emotion. Certain categories of people, often the ecstatic, may employ extraordinary and diverse strategies to handle everyday life. Thus the collective behaviour of participants may shift from ordinary to unorthodox, and this behaviour may appear authentic, progressive and constructive, or destructive and uncontrolled.[37]

The sociologist of religion Eileen Barker writes in her work *New Religious Movements*: *A Practical Introduction* that many a practice is seen as 'a destructive cult' and is thus condemned; however, this could be wrong and their behaviour may be decent. The members of NRMs are not so different from other people.[38] Some scholars, such as Peter Clarke and Eileen Barker, have looked at the new religions as a phenomenon

[37] Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken et al., *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World,* (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2011), 7-10.
[38] Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction,* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1989), 4.

which emerged in Britain after the Second World War. Chryssides writes in *Exploring New Religions*:

> A new religious movement, I suggest, can be defined as a 'recent' phenomenon. By 'recent' I mean recent in inception, not in its arrival in Britain or in any country in the world. Thus mainstream forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Sikhism do not count as new religions, even though they may be new to the west.[39]

So, what about the Rasta phenomenon? The Jamaican Rasta journalist Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah considers RastafarI as modern Christianity with its roots in ancient Ethiopian culture. Blake Hannah says: 'Rastafari is a religion in evolution, and philosophical discourse is continually changing the religion as it grows in size and knowledge. Therefore, RastafarI is an NRM which is always in development as it offers a new hybrid God (Haile Selassie I) and salvation for its community. It is important that 'in the eyes of the young convert, a new religion may appear caring'[40] and liberative from the chains of the old western Christianity, or Babylon.

But RastafarI is also a Christian movement which incorporates elements of Ethiopian Christianity as seen in the rituals, ceremonies, symbols and sacred texts. RastafarI, for example, revives the monophysite doctrine of one nature of the Word of God and turns such a belief into an eccentric and variable definition of divinity. What is new in RastafarI is the idea of God who is not God, but a man (Haile Selassie I), for Ethiopians. Moreover, RastafarI has various founders or charismatic leaders (Garvey, Howell and others) who are possessed of special authority and possibly divine qualities and influence over their followers.[41] RastafarI sees the Bible as a book of African history, a new tool of liberation and a new manifestation of the truth. RastafarI also

[39] George D. Chryssides, *Exploring New Religions,* 3.
[40] Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements*, 11.
[41] Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements*, 13.

makes use of other writings, unknown to the West, such as the Ethiopian Book of Life, the *Fetha Nagast* and the *Kebra Nagast* which are recognised by Rastas as valuable sources.

'Religious'

The words 'religion' and 'religious' derive from the Latin *religare* which literally means 'to bind together', where people with common beliefs and practices come together in order to give significance and sense to human life. Religion has become a means to realize the supernatural and to come into contact with God. More importantly, religion explores the relation between God and the believer, and thus posits the hypothetical existence of God. However, the word 'religion' is very problematic for Rastas in the sense that the West has posited the existence of 'white' God and personified him with European traits. Often God is theorised and assigned anthropomorphic 'white' qualities.

The RastafarI movement in this discussion is defined as a group of people operating as a religion. Being a religion, RastafarI tries to seek a radical remedy and spiritual comfort for its adherents' suffering and oppression. Rastas, moreover, view their human condition and seek to change their life and make it as it should be with a liberative God who makes community life operative and free. RastafarI is indeed a religion which involves a different God with 'black' features, worships the divine, and has a sense of justice. Rastas enter into contact with their God through their own prayers, meditation (through smoking the 'holy herb' or *ganja*) and chanting. As Blake Hannah says:

> This youth smokes herb and the herb expands his consciousness and make them ask question about himself and relation to humanity. He establishes a bond with others like himself who understand without speaking the thoughts and feelings that carry them from day to day, and this youth dwells more

> and more in Rastafari until he can fully feel himself Rastafari, until he can look a dreadlocks in the eyes and to have to speak because the eye (I) contact is enough, until can remove his oversized, shake his lock out free in the wind and cry:
>
> 'JAH!! RASTAFARI ! [42]

'Movement'

The term 'movement' is used in different ways. The Oxford dictionary defines the verb 'to move' (from the Latin *movere*) as to change position or situation, to provoke, to prompt or incline a person to an action. But when we talk about a religious movement, we refer to the body of persons involved in that group. Movement is used in religion, for example, as the spontaneous manifestation of religious people who are moved from one position to another. The movement usually starts as a social and ideological action by one or more persons who are looking for change from one status to another, a process which moves in a specific manner and at a certain speed. Any movement is similar to a 'current'[43] because the person becomes involved, or he or she takes control, and he or she begins investing in it. At the initial stage a person in the movement seeks other people who are similar to him or her. In religion, the word 'movement' requires further consideration. A movement is not an especially complex organization. It allows the members to connect and be coordinated for political, legal and administrative functions. Any organization, in order to increase efficiency, has to have a living structure and constitution. People are the living or organic beings of that body and they are thus systematically defined and united as single entities within the whole. In addition, a person who is part of any organization, whether social, cultural, sporting or

[42] Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah, *Rastafari: The New Creation*, (Kingston: Jamaica Media Productions, 2002), 3. [Text as original].
[43] George D. Chryssides, *Exploring New Religions*, 17.

religious, has to subordinate her or his individuality to the organisation which she or he serves. Therefore, the organization may be an institution with a stable and hierarchical structure and an institutionalised leader, or it may be somewhat amorphous without an established form or order, and not regulated by any relevant law. In the latter case, the leader of the movement is a charismatic person. In the case of religious movements, people act spontaneously and these groups are often supported mainly by charitable contributions from the participants. The administrations of organizations and foundations are sponsored by the help of members who work for the benefit of others, especially those in need or distress. Thus the movements are charismatic rather than organized through institutionalised structures.

How This Study is Organized

Chapter Two has two foci. First, it deals with the history of Ethiopia and brings out its heterogeneous past which has its roots in both the East and the West. The central aim of this chapter is to tell the story of multi-ethnic religious groups, and their diverse traditions within the Ethiopian milieu, which have made the culture of Ethiopia rich and vibrant. It also focuses on how Ethiopia was represented in ancient and colonial writings. Second, it will explore the evolution of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from pre-Christianity to Christianity. The central themes of the chapter are the following: firstly, the philosophy and spiritual life of the Ethiopians as a syncretic or hybrid mixture of different religions, Jewish, Christian and pagan; secondly, events and personalities from the Queen of Sheba to Frumentius and the Nine Saints; and finally the autonomous organization of Ethiopian Christianity in 1958. Secondly, the first

chapter describes the architecture of the Ethiopian Church. The Churches of Ethiopia are a patchwork of multi-religious features, i.e. exhibiting pagan, animistic, Judaic and Christian symbolism. Thirdly, it also discusses the importance of the sacred texts as a valid source of stability and identity for Ethiopian Christianity, and the Monophysite notion of the One Nature of God and the consequent identity between God and Christ. Finally, the chapter analyses the genealogy of Ethiopia with some historical data: the schism as a consequence of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon and the cause of the separation between the West and the East.

Chapter Three investigates the multifocal aspects of the RastafarI movement. In general, this chapter will focus, unusually, on the interaction between RastafarI and Ethiopian Christianity. It will emphasise the following: the influence of the monophysite idea on RastafarI; the Christological concept in Rastafarian belief; Haile Selassie and RastafarI; and the presumptuous claim behind the title of Emperor Haile Sellassie - 'The Lion of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia' - and the claim to be God incarnate. RastafarI will be shown to be a syncretistic, hybrid movement or a mixture of religions. Turning from Ethiopia to Jamaica, the main concern is with the question of the origins of RastafarI and its subsequent links with Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity. The RastafarI movement and its spiritual life stem from Ethiopian beliefs and rituals, so that the RastafarI religion cannot be understood without its African heritage. The African influence in RastafarI is something unique and creative in its various forms: firstly, the hierarchical structure of the liturgies, symbols and festivals; secondly, the impact of the Ethiopian rituals and symbols on RastafarI; and thirdly, the importance of Ethiopian customs, from clothing to diet and fasting.

In Chapter Four some theoretical consideration will be given to the importance of the language known as the 'Rasta Talk' to the development of RastafarI identity. This helps us to understand the thinking of the revolutionary group that shaped the ideological, political, cultural and religious mission of the movement.

Chapter Five reviews the origins of the RastafarI movement and traces the theories of Afrocentricity which advocate pan-African movements rooted in the framework of revolution. This section will use insights from a number of thinkers which are necessary to locate in religious studies the development of RastafarI as an Afrocentric movement with a revolutionary perspective. The section will map out the historical and cultural links between Africa and Jamaica in the development of RastafarI ideology. Such links will help to clarify the evolution of Rastafari. It will also look at the politics of the slave trade. It will explore how the West represented Africans and West Indians as 'uncivilised' people. In essence, the contention of this thesis is that RastafarI is a post-colonialist phenomenon which came from oppressed societies actively struggling for their own liberation from any form of coercive measures.

In Chapter Six**,** a post-colonial approach is used to understand the RastafarI movement. The claim of the chapter is that the Jamaican Rastafarian movement grew as a liberative and anti-colonialist movement. It will be seen that RastafarI is not a western religion but a melange of beliefs whose historical background, beyond the Ethiopian Eastern Christian elements, combines the animistic and polytheistic beliefs of the native Jamaican population, the *Tainos*, the earliest inhabitants, with tribal indigenous and Christian traditions. The contention of this thesis is that RastafarI is not a monolithic religion but a melange of various faiths. Foremost among the themes of this chapter is

how a *liberative* movement has over the years become an anti-colonial movement. Historical, political and cultural evidence will be provided, using various post-colonial perspectives, to show what led to such social change within RastafarI.

Chapter Seven presents evidence concerning one of the forgotten figures of the RastafarI lineage. Haile Selassie has always been accorded a prominent place in the Rastafarian movement, but the importance has been overlooked of the Queen of Sheba, who played an equally prominent role in shaping the form of the movement, and in particular had a great impact on gender issues. This chapter will also narrate the often overlooked story of Rasta women and their contribution to Rasta thinking. Above all, the discussion traces the legend of the Queen of Sheba in world religions and emphasises this queen as a super-diverse or inter-religious figure.

Chapter Eight explores the Rasta view of the Bible and other literary sources from the Ethiopian milieu, the *Kebra Nagast*, *Fetha Nagast* and *Lefafa Sedek*. This chapter will analyse the way the Bible, known as *Holy Piby*, has been appropriated by RastafarI. In doing so, it will highlight the text they use, the authority accorded to the Bible and the hermeneutical presupposition that lies behind this interpretation.

The conclusion, Chapter Nine, restates briefly the themes discussed throughout the thesis, putting into practice one of the most important arguments advocated nowadays: that RastafarI is a New Religious Movement which defends and transforms its own true origins and identity (Ethiopia), and has legitimized its postcolonial discourse within a colonial culture. RastafarI has re-Africanised syncretistically Jamaican beliefs and practices from the dominant religion of the West.

Chapter 2

The East
Locating Ethiopia

As Socrates said to Meno in one of *The Five Dialogues of Plato on Virtue*:

> All persons, therefore, who are good, are good in the same way; for they are good by being possessed of the same qualities.[1]

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the historical and theological growth of Christianity in Ethiopia, and to reveal how Ethiopian Christianity has over the course of years taken and re-rooted a variety of symbolism and ritual in its own doctrines. All doctrines, rituals and practices of Ethiopian Christianity play an influential role for the RastafarI movement. However, the present section attempts to deal with only the theological and doctrinal matters of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity which have had a great impact on RastafarI. The themes of this chapter are: firstly, the history of the establishment of Christianity in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian pagan features alongside Christianity; secondly, Theodosius's prohibition of paganism as the starting point for numerous controversies between West and East; thirdly, the advent of eastern Christianity and the doctrinal disputes such as monophysitism (related to the nature of Christ) that led to a long period of disharmony between the western and eastern churches; fourthly, the origins of Ethiopian Christianity and its liturgical practices; and finally, the often overlooked figure of the Queen of Sheba, who played a critical role in the development of the Ethiopian religion.

[1] *The Meno,* in *'Ion' and the Four Other Dialogues of Plato,* ed. by Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910), 76.

Are the Ethiopians still Pagans?

The word 'pagan'[2] derives from the Latin *paganus*, an adjective and noun referring to an inhabitant of a country, or a member of a community or tribe. The most recent edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines the word 'pagan' in various ways, depending on its connotations for people's beliefs and customs. 'Pagan' indicated for classical Roman literature a country dwelt in by a group of people who worshipped a pantheon of divinities. In Latin Christian literature (for example in the *Codex Theodosianus*) from the fourth and fifth century CE to the Middle Ages, the term 'pagan' was used in a pejorative sense and was associated with the cults of dubious and obsolete deities, magic and divination. The pagans and their 'superfluous' cults were not tolerated and were therefore persecuted.[3] In Ethiopia, the adoption of Christianity as the state religion occurred in the fourth century under King Ezana. Christianity played a crucial role in Ethiopian art and literature. Ethiopia was influenced by the Coptic Christianity of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, which stemmed from the Latin Christian traditions). The development of Christianity in the reign of Ekana was, of course, not immediate. Ethiopia in its pre-Christian time used symbols such as the full moon on its coins, but this was later substituted by crosses.[4]

When westerners showed an interest in Ethiopia at the end of the 9th century of the CE, they identified Ethiopia and its religion with the Byzantine world, which is not the case.

[2] In the OED there are several controversial definitions of the terms 'pagan' and 'paganism'. 'Pagan' and 'paganism' indicate a beliefs and/or practices of a person or nation which does not 'worship a true God'. 'Paganism' is also used in a pejorative sense to identify a group of people who are opposed in religious belief to the revealed religion. It is surprising how nowadays there is still a certain prejudice in the use of the term 'pagan'. A pagan is also a person who has no religion and faces the world with an uninhibited search for sensuality, hedonism and materialism. For further information see: http://www.oed.com

[3] Ian N. Wood, 'Pagan Religions and Superstitions East of the Rhine from the Fifth to the Ninth Century', in *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians*, ed. Giorgio Ausenda, (San Marino: 1995), 253-303.

[4] Georg Gerster, *Churches in Rock: Early Christian Art in Ethiopia,* (London: Phaidon Press, 1970), 36.

Ethiopian identity has grown by the acceptance of the Christian teachings preserved in the Graeco-Hebrew Bible. Christianity replaced the pre-existing religious identities in Ethiopia, for example paganism.[5] Behind Ethiopian Christian identity there was a multi-religious substratum of the pagan, Judaic and Muslim worlds originating in the Middle East and the Orient (known as Afro-Asiatic, of Berber, Cushitic, Egyptian, Semitic, and Oromo background). Ethiopian culture shares its traits with other African and Asiatic beliefs which remained largely unknown in the eyes of the West. Ancestral cults still survive in Ethiopian culture. The local people pay homage to their pantheon of divinities or spirits (called *qolle* and considered by Ethiopians as 'masters of the country'). The sacrifice at Lake Tana brings Christians, Muslims and Jews together.[6] The cult of spirits of place (*kolle or qolle*), the sacrifice of a cow, and the cult of the spirits called *qolle*, takes place in the Amhara region. The first ceremony of the Lake Tana event takes place in Agawemeder, Gojjam province. In this ceremony, held on Saint Kiro's day, three men with a basket of bread and a glass of beer offer a sheep to be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled. The second sacrifice is of a cow. The priest goes into a trance, after being anointed with the cow's blood and adorned with its peritoneum. The priest steps into a wood fire and the god protects him from burns. The god also speaks to him and he prophesies to the congregation. The god has various names which reflect the co-identity of god and the priest.

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[5] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Life of Takla Haymanot in the Version of Dabra Libanos, and the Miracles of Takla Haymanot,* (London: Privately Printed for Lady Meux, 1906), 44, 52, 130-131. It is said in this apocryphal story that the names of gods (Gor, Gudale, Maqawazay and so on) are applied to their priests. According to the manuscript, Takla-Haymanot died in 1313 and the story was written in the early sixteenth century. It said that one day when the pagan priests were dancing in the fire and invoking the names of the gods, the pagan king and the monk invoked God: 'As soon as he heard the sound of the voice of Our Father, Satan left the magicians, and they were burned up, and became like ashes.' In Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Life of Takla Haymanot,* 52, 130-131.

[6] Jacques Mercier, *Art that Heals: The Image as Medicine in Ethiopia,* (New York: The Museum for African Art, 1997), 38.

Moreover, as Wallis Budge points out in *Legends of Our Lady Mary: The Perpetual Virgin and Her Mother Hanna,* the Virgin is venerated as the queen (the protective and healer goddess) of all women. She is the Christ's 'spiritual Womb', 'his Treasure of Pearl', 'the Ark of the Son of Adam'. Mary has reached the 'seventh Heaven'.[7] In her there is Paradise, the Son of God. Mary is a virgin who gives birth to a child without compromising her virginity. She is as powerful as a goddess because she maintains her status as a virgin. In Ethiopian Christianity the Virgin Mary is therefore considered divine. The Monophysite doctrine believes that the nature of human and divine blended in one incarnate nature in Christ, and so Mary is the Mother of God.[8] The cult of the Virgin Mary began in Ethiopia in an undefined period. Pictures of Mary are very close to the figure of Isis in Egypt. The holy water, oil and crosses serve to invoke God, to heal any diseases and to get rid of Satan. Without faith there is no strength, redemption and health for the soul.

The Concept of Schism between East and West[9]

The controversial period of the East-West Schism within the Christian world was characterised by the separation of the Roman Church from the Eastern Orthodox Churches (the 'Dissident Churches',[10] the non-Chalcedonian or pre-Chalcedonian Churches between the 4th and 5th Centuries of CE). The eastern churches are described as Oriental Churches and are classified as monophysite or Nestorian (the Assyrian or

[7] Wallis E. A. Budge, *Legends of Our Lady Mary: The Perpetual Virgin and Her Mother Hanna*, (London: Medici Society, 1922), xxxviii. It was translated from the Ethiopic manuscript into English, having been collected at Makdala by King Theodore, and is now in the British Library.
[8] Wallis E. A. Budge, *Legends of Our Lady Mary,* xxxviii.
[9] For a further understanding see the following figures (Fig. 2 and 3) at the end of this chapter which expresses the development of Christianity.
[10] Abba Ayala Takla Haymanut, *The Ethiopian Church and its Christological Doctrine,* (Addis Ababa: Graphic Printers, 1982), 23-39.

the non-Ephesian Orthodox Churches). The monophysite churches exist in Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Syria, Armenia and India. Today monophysite churches have assumed the name of miaphysite churches, or the Oriental Churches: Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian Tewahedo, Eritrean and (Indian) Malankara.

The word 'schism' comes from a root which literally signifies 'breaking'. In a religious and biblical sense, it is discord or divergence of belief, but it is also disunity within the Church. This is a most important concern discussed in the Bible, in the Old Testament (see Genesis 11:1-9), in the story of the Tower of Babel which alludes to a division of people and languages. The separation is not only within the Christian family (for example, the separation of the Assyrian and the Oriental Orthodox Churches); it is also applied to other religious communities (Jews and pagans) for their non-conformist ways of worship. The word 'schism' is also used to refer to the Great Schism (1378-1417), the Papal Schism resulting from a disputed election to the papacy, the most notable schism, which was the East-West split commonly called the Great Schism.

For a long time the ancient Ethiopian Church belonged to the 'Monophysite' East and was the enemy of the West. Monophysite Christianity was regarded by the West (Rome) as a 'dissident religion' due to their alternative creed and form of worship, and to doctrinal divergence which was influenced by the Egyptian pagan polytheistic images and language; there were also political and economic reasons.

Defining the 'Dissidents, the Others'

The historian Charles Freeman, in *AD 381: Heretics, Pagans, and the Christian State*, describes the politics of Theodosius I (347-395 CE), Roman Emperor, who controlled

the Eastern territories, the Graeco-Roman world. Theodosius protected Roman Christianity against pagan cults. He destroyed the temples within the *pagus* (rustic districts and uncultivated lands, the wild community). In doing so, he promulgated the Edict of Thessalonica (381 CE) to support and establish Christianity as the sole state religion. Christianity was the true faith given by the Apostle Peter to the Romans. The Edict states:

> It is Our will that all peoples ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practice that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans...this is the religion followed by bishop Damasus of Rome and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity: that is, according to the apostolic discipline of the evangelical doctrine, we shall believe in the single deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
> We command that persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of the catholic Christians. The rest, however, whom We judge demented and insane, shall carry the infamy of heretical dogmas. Their meeting shall not receive the name of the churches, and they shall be smitten first by Divine Vengeance, and secondly by the retribution of hostility which We shall assume in according with the Divine Judgement.[11]

Such an edict exhorted the Romans to follow only the Nicene apostolic teachings which had not co-mingled with other impure cults. The Christians had to believe the doctrine: God is the Father, Jesus is his Son, and the Holy Spirit is their union, under the notion of 'equal majesty'. Theodosius was a strong supporter of the Nicene Creed, and he banned all polytheistic religion (391 CE):

> No person shall pollute himself with sacrificial animals; no person shall slaughter an innocent victim; no person shall approach the shrines, shall wander through the temples, or revere the images formed by mortal labour, lest he become guilty by divine and human law.[12]

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[11] Charles Freeman, *AD 381: Heretics, Pagans and the Christian State,* (London: Pimlico, 2009) 25. See also John Stevenson*, Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church,* revised by W.H.C. Frend, (London: SPCK, 1980), 150. Stevenson's and Freeman's sources are from the *Theodosian Code.* The original is in Latin: *Codex Theodosianus*, XVI.1.2.
[12] John Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 151.

Theodosius's law inflicted severe punishments and prohibitions on those who 'remained in heretical errors'[13] and were devoted to their pagan religion within their villages, houses and temples. Theodosius's orthodoxy wanted to eradicate all the pagan cults which were considered a dangerous pollutant for the Christian communities. This confirms how extremely influential Christian authority over pagan spirituality was after the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) and the Edict of Constantinople (313 CE), which claimed the orthodoxy of a unique Church in the West, East, North and South.

Councils and Creeds: from Nicaea and Constantinople to Chalcedon

To explain Eastern Orthodoxy without discussing the matter of the *filioque* clause (the phrase 'and the Son') in the Nicene Creed is impossible. Ethiopian Christianity, having been part of eastern Christianity until 1955, recalls the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. These councils are necessary to understand the relations between Eastern and Western Christianity. Eastern Christianity, including Ethiopian Christianity, cannot be understood without discussing the theological debate concerning 'the Son'.

The crisis of the fourth century was an internal divergence within the Great Church. The Nestorian crisis, at the Council of Ephesus of 431 CE, cannot be clarified without the creedal debate on the nature Christ as fully God, and without considering issues concerning the political authority of the Church. The vital issue of divergence was previously discussed at the Council of Nicaea (325 CE), the most important of the four councils. The Council of Nicaea originally took place in Ankara, and brought together 318 bishops who had been convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine I to deal with the Arian controversy and thus to formulate what became the Nicene Creed, which is

[13] Charles Freeman, *AD 381,* 25.

also sometimes called the Creed of Chalcedon.[14] Many Christians (Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians) recite the Nicene Creed during their Eucharist and/or Mass as follows:

> We believe in one God,
> the Father, the Almighty,
> maker of heaven and earth,
> of all that is,
> seen and unseen.
> We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
> the only Son of God,
> eternally begotten of the Father,
> God from God, Light from Light,
> true God from true God,
> begotten, not made,
> of one Being with the Father;
> through him all things were made.
> For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
> was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
> and was made man.
> For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
> he suffered death and was buried.
> On the third day he rose again
> in accordance with the Scriptures;
> he ascended into heaven
> and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
> He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
> and his kingdom will have no end.
> We believe in the Holy Spirit,
> the Lord, the giver of life,
> who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
> who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
> who has spoken through the prophets.
> We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
> We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
> We look for the resurrection of the dead,
> and the life of the world to come. Amen.

It is to be noted that the Nicene Creed is not the same as the creed of the 381 at Nicaea (known as the Nicaea Creed)[15] which is the following:

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[14] George D. Chryssides and Margaret Z. Wilkins, *Christians in the Twenty-First Century,* (Sheffield and Oakville: Equinox, 2011), 42-126.
[15] George D. Chryssides and Margaret Z. Wilkins, *Christians in the Twenty-First Century,* 126.

> We believe in One God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made, Who for us men and for our salvation came down, and became incarnate (from the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary), and was made man, (And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate), (And) suffered (and was buried) And rose on the third day (according the Scriptures), And ascended into heaven, (And sits on the right of the Father), and is coming (again) with glory to judge living and dead, (Whose kingdom shall have no end), And in the Holy Ghost, (the Lord, the Giver of Life).
> But those who say, There was when the Son of God was not, and Before he was begotten he was not, and the came into being from things that are not, or that he is of another substance or essence, or that he is mutable or alterable – the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes. [16]

The intent of both creedal formulae was to define the nature and person of Christ and also to ensure the unity of Christianity (under the One Apostolic Church). Christ is described as *homoousios tô patri*[17] (consubstantial to or of 'one substance with the Father'). This definition of 'the Son of God, begotten of the Father' led the Church to a controversy between the two leaders Athanasius and Arius as to how Christ could be divine and human at the same time.

According to Athanasius, Jesus Christ was of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father. Christ is fully God, the creator of all things, the Word or Logos. The Council of Nicaea approved Athanasius's position while formally rejecting Arius's[18] creed ('the Arian controversy'). Arius's theology was formally examined and condemned by the Council of Nicaea, and then with the second Council held in 381 CE at Constantinople

[16]John Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies,* 350-351.
[17]Aidan Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study of Schism,* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010)*,* 53.
[18]Arius (256-336 CE) was a priest, presbyter and martyr of Alexandria, coming from Libya with a Berber background. He was beatified by the Arian Catholic Church in 2005. See Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, 2nd ed., (London: SCM, 2011).

Arius was expelled from the Catholic Church[19] while he was accepted by the Church of Antioch. Arius and his school were accused of having embraced an unorthodox position and thus earned the image of being 'unspiritual' (the 'Arian heresy' or 'archetypal Christian heresy'). Arius's character may have been that of a 'liberationist' who was interested in philosophy and theology. Arius argued that:

(i) God was not always a father. There was a time when God was all alone, and was not yet a father; only later did he become a father.

(ii) The Son did not always exist. Everything created comes from nothing (*ex ouk or oukh onton*), all existing creatures, all things that are made; so the Word of God himself came into existence out of nothing. There was a time when he did not exist (*ēn pote hote ouk ēn*); before he was brought into being, he did not exist. He too had a beginning to his created existence.

(iii) For God used to be on his own (*monos*), and his Word and Wisdom did not yet exist. But then God wanted to make us; and only then did he make some kind of being (*hena tina*) that he dubbed Word, Wisdom and Son, so that through him he might make us.

(iv) So there are two 'Wisdoms'; one is proper to God and exists together with him (*Indian kai sunuparchousan*), and the other is the Son who has been brought into being in the Wisdom; only by participating in this Wisdom is the Son called Wisdom and Word. 'Wisdom', he says, 'comes into existence through Wisdom, by the will of the God who is wise'. Likewise he says that there is another Word in God besides the Son, and the Son, participating in this Word is, once again, called Word and Son by grace-and-favour.

(v) Like all else, the Word himself also is subject to change (*treptos*); he goes on being good as long as he wants; he too, just like us, is able to change his ways, because is changeable by nature. For it is because of this, that God, knowing in advance that he would be good, gave him this glory in anticipation, the glory he afterwards had as a human being on account of his virtue. So it was because of his actions, which were known in advance to God, that God made him become the kind of being he in fact is.

(vi) Again, the Word is not true God (*theos alethinos*). He may be called 'God' but he is not '*true* God'. It is only by participating in grace, like all others, that he too is called by the name of 'God'. All beings are, in respect of the substance (*kat' ousian*), alien to God and unlike him (*xenon kai anomoion*); and so too the Word is entirely different from and unlike the Father's substance and properties (*idioetos*).[20]

The Arian assertion did not recognize the co-essential and consubstantial (*homoousios*) essence of the Word Logos with the Father. For Arius, God was the Father, the Eternal

[19]John H. Newman, *The Fourth Century,* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901), 1.
[20] Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition,* 100-101.

One (I Am), the Wisdom and the Word, and Jesus Christ was not 'true God' because 'the substance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit', as he says, are 'separate in nature, alienated and cut off from each other, foreign to each other and having no participation (*ametochoi*) with each other'.[21] He made all things, visible and invisible, and He was the Creator of the World. His nature is subject to change. The Arian thinking argues that the Son was a created being (*poiema*), and he could be not be God because He is incomprehensible to the Son. Christ was not of the same essence (consubstantial) as God and he was a created being (*ousia*). God was invisible to his Son[22]. Therefore, Christ was merely semi-divine. His nature, like the rest of the worldly creatures, was susceptible to metamorphosis. To support this thesis, Arius also adduced biblical references (Proverbs 8:22-31). Such a metaphysical discussion thus denied the principles formulated by the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea, and it did not recognize the trinity of the God of Athanasius. Indeed, the Athanasian Creed in the sixth century CE discusses the doctrine of 'tri-unity' of One God. The deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is One and coeternal, based on the theory of the triangle which indicates that God is Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[23]

Other theological controversies on the Word or Logos were discussed at three Ecumenical Councils: the Council of Constantinople (381 CE), the Council of Ephesus (431 CE), and the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE). The Nicene-Constantinople Creed was formulated at the Second Ecumenical Council which took place in the Church of Hagia Irene in Constantinople in 381 CE, attended by the Assyrian, Oriental Orthodox,

[21] See section vi in Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition,* 100-101.
[22] B.B.M. J. Mackenzie-Hanson, *Who was Arius?* See http://www.arian-catholic.org/arian/arius.html.
[23]The doctrine of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is explained by triangle and the diagram is found in some churches. See George D. Chryssides and Margaret Z. Wilkins, *Christians in the Twenty-First Century,* 130.

Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches. This Creed confirmed what was expressed in the Nicene Creed with minor modifications, and expanded the last words of the Nicene Creed: 'we believe in the Holy Spirit'. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed added this thesis concerning the existence of the Holy Spirit 'who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke through the prophets'.[24] The aim of the councils was to confer universal authority on Roman Christianity: 'We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church' (see the above Nicene Creed). At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, the dispute on the *filioque* clause divided the West and the East and continued till the Great Schism of 1054, in which the Eastern Orthodox Churches repudiated the primacy and leadership of the Roman Catholic Church and its creeds formulated at Nicaea and Constantinople.

The Council of Chalcedon was convened by the Emperor Marcian in 451 CE and the successor to Pope Leo I, Anatolius, in the city of Chalcedon in Asia Minor. This was the fourth Ecumenical Council and followed that of Ephesus in 431 CE, which aimed at religious unity.

> The Church is one. Her unity follows of necessity from the unity of God; for the Church is not a collection of persons in their separate existence, but a unity of the grace of God, living in a multitude of rational creatures, submitting willingly to grace.[25]

In 451 CE, the Council of Chalcedon endeavoured to institute a common *lex* (the 28 canons which assured the supremacy of the orthodox Catholic creed). Although the Council attempted to build a conciliatory dialogue between East and West – indeed, Rome sent her bishops as conciliatory mediators between East and West - it enshrined Catholic propaganda, denying and rejecting the creed of the 'monophysites' or, more

[24] John Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 206.
[25] Nicolas Zernov, *Orthodox Encounter*, (London: James Clarke, 1961), 3.

respectfully, the 'Oriental Orthodox'. The Church of Rome remained a strong defender of the orthodox canons established by the Nicene Creed.

The Council of Chalcedon criticized the union of divine and human in Christ (the theological position of Cyril) stemming from the Monophysite movement ('the Dissident Churches'). The 'monophysites' were declared 'heretics' according to the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 680-681CE for their conviction that the nature (hypostasis) of Christ was a single concrete being (the single hypostasis of the Word incarnate). The denial of the two natures of Christ (Nestorius) was one of the major accusations levelled at the Eastern Churches. The Monophysite Churches accepted Cyril's theology on the unity of the person of Christ.[26]

In conclusion, the debate on the nature and status of Christ at the Council of Chalcedon led to a division between non-Chalcedon Orthodox Churches and Chalcedon Christianity. For postcolonialist and feminist hermeneutics, this separation was due mainly to the hegemonic and patriarchal attitude of the Roman Empire (as being at the centre of the World, the only 'One') which feared the supremacy of its sees in the East (in particular the Church of Alexandria, which boasted a high reputation for its great vitality), and the Bishopric of Rome attempted to re-establish its own privilege and project itself as embodying the 'state-church ideal'[27]. For Rome the Church represented the 'universal religion which all men felt to be necessary...the Empire in return gave force to the Church rulings, and high position and privilege to its officers'.[28] This ecclesial claim was further reinforced by the support of the State. The State became the arbiter of truth: 'Truth became a thing for the Emperor to regulate and for disputants to

[26]Aidan Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 84.
[27] William A. Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites*, (London: The Faith Press, 1923), 3.
[28] William A. Wigram, *The Separation of Monophysites*, 1.

sharpen their wits on, rather than a revelation from on high that should give life and freedom'.[29]

Monophysitism versus Diophysitism

As mentioned above, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE marks the first schism between Chalcedonians (the West) and non-Chalcedonians (the East). The Council of Chalcedon showed that Monophysitism and Dyophysitism were causes of dispute between East and West in the history of Christianity. This doctrinal and theological battle underlined the real discrepancies and misinterpretations that lay behind the Greek terms for 'nature' and 'person' and how they were interpreted by the representatives of the prestigious Schools of Antioch and Alexandria, the epicentres of theological thinking. The non-Chalcedonian Churches affirmed that Jesus Christ is consubstantial and coeternal with God and human beings:

> Incarnate from the Holy Spirit and from the Virgin Mary, the God bearer; one and not two, for both his miracles and suffering which he willingly underwent in the flesh are of one person.[30]

These political and religious divergences unleashed irreconcilable differences among the greatest Churches. To the Chalcedonians, the Monophysites were harmful to the Church and should be punished.[31] However the Emperor Justinian aimed to restore the Roman Empire geographically, so he remained faithful to the law of the Roman Empire, accepting and supporting the four Ecumenical Councils but with the Chalcedonian formula of the two natures of Christ.

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[29] William A. Wigram, *The Separation of Monophysites,* 4.
[30] Paul R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church: A Collection of Legal Documents to AD 535,* vol. 3, (London: SPCK, 1996), 924-953, which is quoted in Adrian Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches,* 95.
[31] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 221-222.

It is not simple to unravel the controversy, which was steeped in theology and politics, but it might seem that the real reason for the division between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches was determined by three important factors: firstly, the desire of the Eastern Orthodox Church to manage its own public affairs, through emancipation and becoming an autocephalous Church; secondly, the demand by the West for the East to accept the Christian tradition of the patriarchate of the West; and finally, the dispute over the nature of Christ and the various interpretations.

At the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE, which was convened by the Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius II (408-450 CE) and by patriarch Nestorius (380-451 CE), both of Constantinople, there were already a number of issues with respect to human salvation and the nature of Christ to be addressed. Nestorius was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon.

Wigram states: 'Given the full deity of God the Son, how is this divine being also man?'.[32] Both the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools came up with an answer of their own. The mystic Alexandrian School admitted the unity of Christ; while the rationalists of Antioch emphasized the unity of the dual nature of Christ with the formula two Natures in one Person. The Alexandrian school started with the theological notion of the unquestionable unity of Christ and how his duality could be reconciled with this. However, the Antiochian School began with the duality of Christ and consequently had to reconfigure his unity. Alexandrine Christology was the continuation of Apollinarius[33]

[32]William A. Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites*, 5.
[33] Apollinarius (310-390 C.E.) bishop of Laodicea in Syria, was popular for his writing concerning the sacred scriptures and also his thinking against Arian and Neoplatonist philosophy. His ideas influenced the East (the Alexandrian school and thus Monophysite or Miaphysite Christology).

and Eutyches which were against the thinking of Nestorius.[34]The non-Chalcedonians questioned the Council's simple understanding of Monophysitism as advocating a single nature (*mia physis*) of Christ. In contrast, the Antiochian theology of Nestorius believed in two natures which are adored in the one Person (Christ) in a perfect conjunction between the divine and human hypostasis. Nestorius's thought was opposite to the Arian concept of Christ (one Nature in One Person) and this was taken up as a doctrinal debate at the Chalcedon Council.[35]

> Both taught that in Christ the Logos had taken the place of the human intellect; both understood Christ as one being or nature; but while this unity implied for Arius the 'creatureliness' of the Logos…for Apollinarius it meant the conception of Christ as a 'heavenly man' whose whole vitality and dynamism resided in the Logos.[36]

These schools of thought paved the way for the Monophysite and Diophysite movements which led to doctrinal disputes about Christ, and political divisions separating Western Roman Empire into two factions – the West on one side and the East, Armenia, Egypt and Syria on the other.

This schism between Oriental and Occidental Churches had socio-political implications. Each Church wanted to manage its local affairs, and promote its own customs, traditions, and especially its own language, and identity. Scholars such as Nicolas Zernov and John Meyendorff have pointed out there were different cultural-linguistic nuances attached to words like 'body' and 'identity'. Their usage demonstrated two different philosophical and intellectual approaches:

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[34] The literature on this subject is vast. For a critical introduction to the debate, see John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 29-46.
[35] W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement,* 1-49.
[36] John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 15.

> The difference between the two mentalities is provided by the interpretation of the word 'body'…The West follows the Latin use of this word. *Corpus* in Latin means both an organic body and a legally established institution, while the East retains the Greek meaning of *Soma* which can only be applied to living creatures.[37]

And Meyendorff writes:

> Leo's Latin terminology could not, however, satisfy the East. The Trinitarian quarrels of the fourth century had already shown what misunderstandings could result from the parallelisms *persona* and *substantia-natura*.[38]

In addition, the political and religious goal of these great powers was to maintain their control and primacy. Hence, the Council of Chalcedon decided to impose doctrinal uniformity in the Church, in favour of the bishop of Rome.

The whole controversy was about the doctrinal formula of Monophysitism. The Monophysite theology was attractive to ascetic-minded Orientals and the mystic movement of the School of Alexandria.

> The Orient was a land of monks, and the monks, who included practically all the Bishops, were the force of the age in the Church…Hence, the Alexandrine teachers had no difficulty in spreading their doctrine among the monks everywhere, and particularly in Palestine, and in the 'Orient' at large.[39]

The doctrinal idea of Monophysitism was the hypostatic union between human and divine essences in Christ's sole nature-being. Hence, Monophysitism, believing in the principle that the nature of Christ was only one, thought that the person of Christ possessed essentially divine and human characteristics whose nature before the union was dual, but after the union of divinity and humanity in the incarnation was of one

[37] Nicolas Zernov, *Orthodox Encounter*, 91-92.
[38] John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 25.
[39] A.A. Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites*, 21.

nature.[40] In addition, in the view of Cyril of Alexandria and then Anastasius, the earliest Monophysites, Christ was seen as the Word-Logos Incarnate of God 'the Word', rather than as the Son of Man'.[41] In fact, as Cyril said in the first *Letter to Succensus*: 'When we conceive the way in which the incarnation came about, we see that two natures became united without separation, without confusion and without transformation'.[42] Iain Torrance reiterates the idea that Monophysitism is a 'mixture',[43] where 'two or more ingredients do not overwhelm each other, but, as it were, balance each other, producing a new 'third entity' which is different from all of them'.[44]

At Chalcedon, the opposition to Monophytism came from Emperor Marcian of Rome, Pope Leo I and Theodore the Emperor. According to their views, the Monophysites exaggerated Christ's unity. For the Chalcedonites, Christ's unity was expressed in one person, but two natures. They defined the relation between human and divine in rational and dualistic terms. Thus, the Western Diophysites or Chalcedonites affirmed the Trinitarian formula of 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', and that Christ was truly the Logos (Word) of God, and the Incarnation of God in 'two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation'.[45]

Thus, the meanings of the terms 'Monophysitism' and 'Diophysitism' are the keys to understanding the religious schisms which were marked by theological and cultural separation and thus intolerance. 'Monophysitism' has become a contested word. The non-Chalcedonians firmly believed in one nature 'out of two', 'one united nature', 'a

[40] John Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies,* 335.
[41] John Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies,* 335.
[42] John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 20.
[43] Iain R. Torrance, 'Monophysitism', in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Hart A. Trevor, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 379.
[44] Ian R. Torrance, 'Monophysitism,' in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, 379.
[45] John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 26.

composite nature' or 'incarnate nature' and not 'a single nature'. On the basis of the past record, they would call themselves 'mia-physites' or simply 'orthodox'.[46]

The Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo*[47] Church

Ethiopia and its Church have always been independent of the rest of the world. Ethiopian civilization, culture and spirituality is mentioned several times in the Bible and the Qur'an, being one of the richest centres of the ancient world, with its own ethnic, linguistic and religious identity. The Tewahedo Church is the national Orthodox Church of Ethiopia. It is close doctrinally to the Oriental Churches: the Coptic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Indian, Iraqi, Romanian, Russian, Syrian, Ukrainian and other Eastern Churches. 'Tewahedo', which is a transliteration, literally signifies 'made one', or 'unity'. The Orthodox Church considers itself the one Holy and Apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ. It is independent, with its own patriarchate in Addis Ababa established by His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, the founder of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (1961). Moreover, *tewahedo* is used to stress the inseparable nature of God and human beings in the one person of Christ. In some historical periods the emperors of Ethiopia were considered to be priest-kings, combining both spiritual and temporal powers. The emperors were appointed, according the traditions of the Old Testament, as the 'Elect of God', 'King of Kings', and 'Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah'. The Amharic title conferred on the emperors was *Seyoum Egzihabire.* Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity was considered a

[46] Matthias F. Wahba, *Monophysitism.* Available at: <http://www.coptic.net/aticles/MonophysitismReconsidered.txt>. [Accessed 19 June 2008].
[47] For further information see: Yohannes Petros's note in Giulia Bonacci's *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the State 1974-1991: Analysis of an Ambiguous Religious Policy,* (London: Centre of Ethiopian Studies, 2000).

'state religion'[48] similar to that of the Roman Empire. Thus, there is a close relationship between State and Church which 'is similar to that of a dual-personality which guides, inspires and informs the celestial and terrestrial life of the Ethiopian Nation'.[49] The Emperor is the one who has complete power over the churches, and wields authority in the same manner as the Abuna (the head of the Church) and is in fraternal relations with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Article 126 of the Ethiopian constitution confers on all Emperors, Haile Selassie I in particular, the important title of 'sacred and inviolable'[50] head of state who collaborates with the Church of Ethiopia to achieve a common aim: the sense of patriotic harmony and regal splendour.

> The State and Church operate on the basis of mutual consultation, knowing that Church as well as State need and depend on each other for the peace and unity of Ethiopia.[51]

According to historical evidence, Christian life flourished at Aksum, which was the epicentre of the national culture, economy and politics. Christianity took firm roots at Aksum with the conversion of King Ezana and subsequently with the arrival of the Nine Saints who introduced monasticism. However, this Christianity exhibited Jewish influences. As Frend says:

> Today, the Ethiopian Christianity is monastic and Monophysite but is imbued throughout its ceremonial and expression with strong undercurrents of Jewish practice.[52]

Around the 5th and 6th centuries there were a number of Monophysite Churches of Alexandria in Ethiopia. The Nine Saints who migrated to Aksum brought their teachings and doctrines, as well as established the residence at Debra Dame which

[48] Matthias F. Wahba, *Monophysitism*.
[49] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 233.
[50] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 233.
[51] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 234.
[52] W. H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 304.

became the first monastery with Monophysite ideals. The monastic rules of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church derive from the founders of Egyptian monasticism, St Anthony and St Pachomius.[53] Hence, Ethiopia reinforced its attachment to the Coptic Church of Egypt. The monks brought to light the Alexandrine-Coptic Christology as well as the literature and scriptures translated into Ge'ez. The Ethiopian Community adopted and instilled these doctrines, which spread throughout the land.

Soon after the Council of Chalcedon, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity was associated with the Eastern Monophysite sees. Ethiopia became involved in the heretical struggle of the Monophysites from the year 451 onwards.[54] About the middle of the 10th century, with the royal families of the Zāgwē, drawn from pagans, Jews and Christians, and around the 13th century with the help of Egyptian monks and later with the king Za'ra Yāqob (1434-1468), the Solomonic dynasty was restored. Thus, Monophysitism became consolidated and its identity firmly established in Ethiopia. During this dynasty, Christian unity was given a boost, thus paving the way for closer ties with the Coptic Church.

Even if there was an agreement on the Monophysite formula which emphasized the unity between the human and divine natures, there were questions related to the notion of God and the identity of Jesus Christ. Some monks rejected the belief in the existence of Three Persons in the Trinity (the Trinitarian doctrine). Others held the view that God has form and nature and so he is incapable of incarnating himself through human nature. Moreover, the cult of Mary was criticised. As Budge notes, some saw 'the cult of the

[53] Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 103.
[54] Jean Doresse, *Ethiopia*, trans. from French by Elsa Coult, (London: Elek, 1959), 62.

Virgin and the Cross as blasphemous'[55] and some even denied that 'Jesus Christ was not of the same nature as ours'.[56] Although there are controversies about the natures of God and Christ, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church affirms that there were not two persons: there were not even two natures. There was in Christ only the one nature of God, the Word. At the incarnation the human nature was absorbed into the divine.[57] Thus, in philosophical and Christological analysis, the human and divine natures were united without confusion and separation. This is further supported by Budge:

> God is One and Triune…The Word was made man for the redemption of the world. In the Incarnation, the human Nature was absorbed in the Divine, or disappeared, as some say, but others think that the human Nature was united to the Divine Nature in such way that there remains only One Nature.[58]

Ethiopia's conversion to Christianity was based on the idea of Monophysitism. However the Creed of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is very close to the Chalcedonian Creed. Indeed, nowadays Ethiopian Christianity is actively engaged in interfaith dialogues for mutual understanding and cooperation with other Christian traditions. The creed of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is recited in the Mass, called '*Amakniyo* of the Apostles'.[59] It runs as follows:

> We believe in One God, Maker of all the creation, Father of our Lord and our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, because his nature is unsearchable.
> As we have before declared, he is without beginning and without end, but he is ever living, and he has light which is never extinguished, and he can never be approached.
> He is not *two or three* [emphasis mine], and no addition can be made to him, he is *only one* , living for ever, because he is not hidden that cannot be known, but we know him perfectly through the law and the prophets, that he is almighty and has authority over all the creation.

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[55] Wallis E. A .Budge, *A History of Ethiopia*: *Nubia and Abyssinia,* vol. 1, (London: Methuen, 1928), 154.
[56] William E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia,* vol.1, 154.
[57] A.A. Luce, *Monophysitism Past and Present: A Study in Christology,* (London: SPCK, 1920), 17.
[58] Wallis E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia*, 156.
[59] Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, 1970), 43.

> One God, Father of our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who was begotten before the creation of the world, the only-begotten Son coequal with him, creator of all the hosts, the principalities and the dominions.
> Who in the last days pleased to become man, and took flesh from our Lady Mary, the holy Virgin, without the see of man, and grew like men yet without sin or evil; neither was guile found in his mouth.
> Then he suffered, died in the flesh, rose from the dead on the third day, ascended unto heaven to the Father who sent him, sat down at the right hand of Power, sent to us the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, and saved all the world, and who is co-eternal with the Father and the Son.
> We say further that all the creatures of God are good and there is nothing to be repented of, and the spirit, the life of body, is pure and holy in all.
> And we say that marriage is pure and childbirth is undefiled because God created Adam and Eve to multiply. We understand further that there is in our body a soul which is immortal and does not perish with the body.
> We repudiate all the works of heretics and all schisms and transgression of the law, because they are for us impure.
> We also believe in the resurrection of the dead, the righteous and the sinners; and in the day of the judgement, when every one will be recompensed according to his deeds.
> We also believe that Christ is not in the last degree inferior because of his incarnation, but he is God the Word who truly became man, and reconciled mankind to God being High-Priest of the Father.
> Henceforth let us not be circumcised like the Jews. We know that who had to fulfil the law and the prophets has already come.
> To him, for whose coming all people looked forward, Jesus Christ, who is descended from Judah, from the root of Jesse, whose government is upon his shoulder: to him be the glory, thanksgiving, greatness, praise, song, both now and ever and world without end, Amen.[60]

The Church of Ethiopia accepted and redefined the creed formulated at Nicaea. Their above creed stresses the doctrine of Monophysitism where God, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the same and God is one and not two or three. Christ is therefore coeternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is one in three (one nature).

[60] Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 43-45.

From pre-Christianity to Christianity in Ethiopia

Edward Ullendorff in his book *The Ethiopians* draws attention to the close link between Monophysitism and Ethiopian Christianity:

> Monophysite Christianity is not only the official religion of the Ethiopian Empire, it is also the most profound expression of the national existence of the Ethiopians.[61]

The spiritual life of the Ethiopians influenced the history, culture and politics of Ethiopia. Sylvia Pankhurst in her work *Ethiopia*: *a Cultural History* declares: 'Ethiopia entered into the early Christian community with intense devotion and fervour'.[62]

There are various important events in the development of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church which are regarded by the Ethiopians as historical facts. The first event goes back to the Jewish elements which the Queen of Sheba brought back with her from her journey to Jerusalem where she met Solomon, the King of Israel.[63] The event second goes back to the New Testament times when, according to the Acts of the Apostles, the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace was converted and baptized by the apostle Philip (Acts 8). The status and identity of the Ethiopian treasurer has been a contested issue. Popular perception and mistranslation has led to the belief that he was a eunuch. But now this misperception has given way to the proper rendition of the Greek word which means 'high officer', probably a financial officer. Recently, from study of the works of Homer and Seneca, Clarice Martin has shown that 'Ethiopian' was a generic term in the ancient world denoting a dark-skinned person. She cites Snowdon

[61] Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians,* 93.
[62] Sylvia Pankhurst, *Ethiopia: A Cultural History*, (Woodford Green: Lalibela House, 1955), 117.
[63] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son, Menyelek*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 39.

to support this claim: 'Blackness and the Ethiopian were…in many respects synonymous…*Ethiopians were the yardstick by which antiquity measured colored peoples*'.[64] Martin has also pointed out that there were misinterpretations of the geographical position of Ethiopia. Ethiopia was located in the South and the ancient writer Strabo in *Geography* identified Ethiopia as the southernmost region.[65] Therefore, the Ethiopian conversion fulfils the words of the resurrected Christ:

> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).[66]

The third event was the missionary work undertaken by Frumentius, a Roman citizen in the fourth century CE. The fourth event was the arrival of Nine Saints in 502 CE. These monks, headed by Apa Micheal Aragawi, were involved in the spreading of Christianity and the translation of the scriptures.[67]

Before the arrival of Christianity there were various pagan forms of worship such as that of the serpent, where annually a virgin was tied to a tree and sacrificed. The serpent (*Arwe*) worship has a connection to the Queen of Sheba and Solomon.[68] According to the legend the Queen was the virgin who was to be sacrificed but then was rescued by a stranger called 'Angabo. But she accidentally stepped into a pool of blood and had her feet turned into the hooves of an ass. The Qur'an has it that it was Solomon who healed her when she visited Jerusalem:

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[64] Clarice J. Martin, 'A Chamberlain's Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation', (*Semeia* 47, 1989), 111.
[65] Strabo, *Geography,* Book XVII. This book is available online and contains the history of Africa. For further information see: http://rbedrosian.com/Classic/strabo17.htm.
[66] Clarice J. Martin, 'A Chamberlain's Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation', 117.
[67] W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 305-06.
[68] Jean Doresse, *Ethiopia,* 15.

> She was asked to enter the lofty palace. But when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs. He said: 'This is but a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass' (Sura 27. 44).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is a mixture of pagan, Judaic beliefs and other African tribal religious practices. There are a number of pagan and Judaic religious ceremonials which have merged with the Ethiopian ethos. Firstly, there is the particular presence of magic which was already present in the Cushite indigenous culture and became prominent in Hebrew culture and the Old Testament. It is said that amulets, the Shield of David, the net of Solomon, and phylacteries were worn to ward off evil. As Budge notes, the Ethiopians gave up their own magical practices for Jewish ones:

> Tradition says that the Abyssinians abandoned their pagan cults and all their various magical practices at the command of the Queen of Sheba, who under the influence of Solomon's teaching had embraced Judaïsm, but this even if true, only means that they had exchanged native for Judaïc systems of magic.[69]

Secondly, the Ark of the Covenant, which is believed to have been carried away from Jerusalem, is considered an important tool of prayer within the Ethiopian tradition. According to the Ethiopian traditions, the original Ark of Covenant is host at the Our Lady Mary of Zion and it was given by Moses to the Israelites during the Exodus. All Tewahedo Orthodox churches have a copy of the Tablets of the Law (*tabot*). It is 15 cm square and made from alabaster, marble and acacia. The *tabot* is used during the ceremonials of Ethiopian Christianity and also symbolizes the Ark of Covenant. The reverence accorded to the Ark, and the songs, dances and beating of musical instruments which accompany the Ark, resonate with the Hebrew scriptures' account of David and people dancing around the Ark (2 Samuel 6:5, 14-16). More importantly, the

[69] Wallis E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia,* vol.2, 582.

Ark also guarantees the legitimacy of the Solomonic dynasty where the power was seen as transferred from Jerusalem to Aksum. Thirdly, the Hebrew temple provided the model for the architecture and construction of Ethiopian Churches. These Churches derive their pattern from the three-fold form of the Jerusalem temple – the one part which is open to the people, the central part reserved for priests, where the lay people have access, and the innermost part where the Ark was kept, open only to the high priests. Fourthly, there is the practice of circumcision on the eight day, which is practised by both Jews and Ethiopians, and fifthly, the practice of the Sabbath.

It is thus evident that certain Jewish influences were incorporated into the culture and religion of Ethiopia. As Aziz Suryal Atiya points out:

> It may be noted that Ethiopians observe the Sabbath on Saturday, practice male circumcision, and shun numerous items of food as unclean – all of which are customs of Judaic origin.[70]

Thus, Ethiopian Christianity was the result of miscellaneous religious practices but principally those taken from the Hebraic Old Testament. The *Kebra Nagast* (The Glory of Kings), written in the fourteenth century in the sacred language, Ge'ez, which is still used by the Ethiopian Church in its liturgies, presents the Ethiopian people as the chosen people of God, heirs of the Israelites, and describes the genealogical relationship of Ethiopian royalty to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The *Kebra Nagast* (to be discussed further below) records the legendary figure of Makeda (the Queen of Sheba), who gave birth on her ascent to the throne to Menelik I, 'the founder of Solomon's line of Emperors'[71] and descendent of Christ himself. The Queen of Sheba

[70] Aziz Suryal Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity,* (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1968), 158.
[71] Sylvia Pankhurst, *Ethiopia*, 98.

was said to have 'introduced the religion and culture of Israel in Ethiopia'.[72] The *Kebra Nagast* also mentions that

> the Queen of the South shall rise up on the Day of Judgement and shall dispute with, and condemn, and overcome this generation who would not hearken unto the preaching of My word, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.[73] (Matthew 12:42 and Luke 11:31)

This book is seen as part of the national heritage and contains theological elements which sustain Ethiopian Christianity. The Ethiopians claimed to be the direct descendants of the Jewish people due to the Makeda connection. The Queen of Sheba (Makeda) wished for her own inhabitants a more harmonious and spiritual life after what they had learnt from the Wisdom of Solomon. Moreover, the *Kebra Nagast* tells that the Glory of Zion, the Tabernacle of the Law of God, was the principal aim of God and the prime strategy of Solomon. This tablet was saved and carried off by Menelik I and hidden in Ethiopia. Every year, elaborate ceremonies are offered to the Ark as a tribute to God, through dances, singing and other rituals in the Ethiopian Church.

In this vast panorama of different religious practices, Christianity took its place. Christianity was introduced officially into Ethiopia during the 4th century CE (between 327 and 330 CE), by the Roman Frumentius, also called Abba Salama (Father of Peace). He was the first bishop in Ethiopia to disseminate Christianity throughout the region. He worked as chancellor for Queen Sophia, teaching Christian principles to her son Ezana, who was known in Ethiopic as Abreha (He Illuminates) and the new Constantine. Because of the great efforts of Frumentius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, Athanasius, himself a magnetic personality,[74] appointed him as metropolitan bishop of the Ethiopian

[72] Sylvia Pankhurst, *Ethiopia*, 98.
[73] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son*, 16-17.
[74] Sylvia Pankhurst, *Ethiopia*, 121.

Orthodox Tewahedo Church. In this way Ethiopia and Egypt were very closely linked. Thus, the Ethiopians remained devoted to Athanasius and the Monophysite Coptic congregation.

The first version of the Bible in the Semitic language Ge'ez was introduced in Ethiopia in the 5th and 6th centuries CE, by the Nine Saints. They were Syrians and their aim was to find refuge in the East. After the Councils of Ephesus (431 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE), the Nine Saints went to India and China, and subsequently to Egypt and Ethiopia (Abyssinia). They were condemned and persecuted by Rome for their belief in the Monophysite doctrine.[75] They introduced the monastic life and their ascetic literature, and founded the first monasteries in Ethiopia, which were named after these Nine Saints. This monastic life was based on the spiritual precepts of Pachomius and Saint Anthony, who both expounded their doctrines in Egypt.

The conversion to Christianity was a most important event in the life and spiritual growth of the people of Ethiopia. In spite of all this progress, there was a setback due to the Arab invasions from the 7th century CE onwards.[76] The growth of Christianity was somewhat hindered, and Abyssinians returned to their ancient pagan, magical and indigenous spiritual habits and Judaic traditions. As Budge has written:

> The conquests of the Arabs gave new life to the pagan cults, and as their power increased that of Aksūm declined, and Christianity fell into disrepute. There was no recognised head to the Church, and those who professed the Christian religion mingled so many pagan practices and superstitions with their observances of its teachings that its essentials were forgotten and its characteristics lost. Under the influence of the all-conquering Arabs the cult

[75] Wallis E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia*, vol.1, 153.
[76] There were several Muslim invasions between the seventh century CE and the Middle Ages which had a great impact on Ethiopian culture. However, Ethiopia was over the centuries deeply rooted in pagan, Judaic and Christian traditions. Ethiopian artistic, liturgical and theological works are infused with several elements which flowed from the Solomonic dynasty.

> of Judaism increased, and many people abandoned the Christian religion and all that it inculcated.[77]

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: Ceremonies, Liturgies, Organization and Symbols

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has an affiliation with the non-Chalcedonian Churches and adheres to the creedal statement of One Incarnate nature of God in the Word believing in a sole human and divine nature in Christ. The Ethiopian Church has a close connection with the Patriarchate of Alexandria but became independent between 1955 and 1959 as a result of the negotiations undertaken by Ras Tafari (Haile Selassie I). This allowed the Ethiopian Church to have its own religious identity, while maintaining its contacts with the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Patriarchate of Alexandria which in the past had its secular and religious primacy, but now has only 'only moral and spiritual primacy'.[78] Thus, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity became autonomous and the first Patriarch of Ethiopia was Abuna Basileos.

From the beginning, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church like other eastern churches, had its specific regulations. There are articles in its constitution that relate to the main religious rites and ecclesial matters. But Ethiopian Christianity also plays an active role in secular matters such as politics and economics, and posits itself as an ideal State. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is one of the few churches of antiquity, and is regarded as the only Tewahedo, an independent Church in Africa that preserved the Christian faith without interruption and is the only one which is the

[77] Edward A. W. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia,* vol.1, 153.
[78] Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 14.

official state religion.[79] Therefore, the position of the Church in the Ethiopian government is central. The Church administers its own affairs. As Wondmagegnehu and Motuvu point out, Ethiopia is a Christian State,[80] but if the Emperor is unable to exercise the imperial office, a Regency is established and the Patriarch must be a member (Article 10, Revised Constitution).[81] The Emperor must be a member of the Orthodox Church (Article 126). The Church manages the seminaries for the training of priests, and freely lays down the curricula with the help of the Ministry of Education.[82]

The Tewahedo Church has a hierarchical structure: at the top is the Patriarch or *Abūn*, who is selected from among the monks, and then come priests and deacons. The monks take considerable decisions about the administration of the ecclesiastical and secular affairs of the Church. It is acknowledged that the figure of the monk is decisive in the life of the Ethiopian people: besides being a spiritual guide, he is also an expert in social, economic and political issues.

Churches in Ethiopia are always built on elevated sites. The interior of an Ethiopian church is characterized by beautiful decoration and paintings, and is subdivided into three parts, 'the threefold plan'.[83] This triple division symbolises both the Trinity and the 'tabernacle or temple to be erected in the New Jerusalem'.[84] In *Churches in Rock,* Georg Gerster describes the Ethiopian Christian Orthodox building as metaphorical and hierarchical:

[79] Abba Ayala Takla Haymanut, *The Ethiopian Church and its Christological Doctrine*, 25.
[80] Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church,* 17.
[81] Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church,* 15.
[82] Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church,* 15.
[83] Georg Gerster, *Churches in Rock*, 45.
[84] Georg Gerster, *Churches in Rock,* 45.

> 1. *maqdas*: the sanctuary with the altar, which may only be entered by the priest conducting a service; 2. *qeddest*: the place for the non-officiating clergy and the distribution of the Eucharist to the people; 3. *qenē māhlēt:* the outermost ambulatory for choristers and the people.[85]

Each church is the architectural combination of old and new ideas. The design of the African hut is incorporated into the modern cathedral architecture of Addis Ababa. The mixing of African and European values gives dignity and prestige to the Church. The result of the amalgamation of many religious and cultural practices, it is clear in the art, decoration and inscriptions the extent to which elements from pagan, Judaic and Christian cults are present in the Ethiopian buildings. The obvious examples of this are the rock-churches of Lalibela, the rectangular sanctuary of Saint Mary of Zion at Aksum and the two Cathedrals of St George and the Holy Trinity in Addis Ababa. Budge notes:

> The first church built in Abyssinia is said to have been that of St Mary of Syon in Aksūm. Tradition says that it was built by Queen Candace after her conversion to Christianity by her eunuch, who had met St Philip and been baptized by him, and the Abyssinians say that they were, in consequence, the first Christians in the world.[86]

Central to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church are the daily ceremonies, liturgies and festivals. As the above quotation from Budge states, the church is built in three parts. The external part is called *Kene Mahlet,* and it is the place where hymns are sung and where *Debteras* or cantors (singers) stand.[87] The internal chambers are the *Keddest*, the nave, where communion takes place, and the *Makdas,* the sanctuary, where the *tabot* and the ark are situated. No-one enters the *Makdas*. The women enter towards the south, while the men enter towards the north. The priests enter the Church towards the rising sun. This ritual stems from ancient pagan traditions. The Ethiopian community

[85] Georg Gerster, *Churches in Rock,* 45.
[86] Wallis E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia*, vol.1, 160.
[87] Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 46.

expresses its profound spirituality in its worship of the Almighty, the Creator. This regular expression of worship is not purely a ritual occasion, but an integral part of Ethiopian spiritual life. Devotion and prayer are evidence of the inner development and growth of Ethiopian spirituality and so the faith becomes the heart of each inhabitant of 'the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8).[88] There are special rituals, events and occasions where the people are involved. The ceremonies consist of blessings, processions, and consecrations such as the intercession of the Saints and worship of the Virgin Mary, as well as the ceremony of the washing of the feet (according to the Ethiopian liturgical calendar)[89] 'on Maunday Thursday'.[90] The other rituals include remembering and communing with the angels, saints, and the long departed souls. On such occasions the spirituality becomes transcendent where humanity and divinity coalesce.

The festivals are special occasions for the Ethiopian Orthodox Community and are celebrated in honour of the Lord, the Virgin Mary, saints and angels. During the procession of the festivals, the *tabot* becomes a special symbol and is venerated as a divine object alongside the liturgical dances, songs and music. The most characteristic religious and social events are held on special dates and in particular seasonsFor example, New Year's Day, *Maskaram,* is celebrated at the end of the rainy season on the 11th September; the fasting days are Wednesdays and Fridays during which food and drink is forbidden before midday and only a strict vegetarian diet is permitted all day; the holy and rest days are Saturday and Sunday, when any form of work is prohibited.

[88]David Buxton, *The Abyssinians*, (London: Thames & Hudson), 1970, 34.
[89]The Ethiopian calendar is based on the Julian calendar and thus seven years behind the Gregorian calendar. The New Year for the Ethiopians is on 1 September of the Gregorian calendar and the year is twelve months and thirty days.
[90]Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motuvu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 47. The word *Maunday* is from the original.

The Ethiopian Christmas is on 7th January and the Feast of the Virgin Mary is on 9th May. On these special occasions:

> The villagers around Debra Berhan would assemble on this day on convenient hillocks or rocky ridges for a sort of village picnic - an occasion vastly enjoyed by young and old. After a general sharing round of food and drink the elders of the village gathered together, stood on the ridge facing eastwards, and one after another uttered prayers and supplications to 'Our Lady Mary' for the welfare of the village.[91]

The *tabot*, which is kept in the *Makdas* or holiest part of the church, is a symbol which comes from a most important Hebrew tradition, and even bears some reference to Egyptian pagan cults. According to Gerster, the *tabot* is an item which is essential to every Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The bishop consecrates not the church but the *tabot*, which then confers sanctity and honour on the whole place.[92]

The *tabot* is an essential element in the spiritual life of Ethiopia. The priests confer on the *tabot* cultic sanctity. The original meaning of *tabot* was 'chest' and it refers to its contents, the Tables of the Law, as Ullendorff has shown. The priesthood and the laity of the Ethiopian Church consider the Ark of the Covenant a symbol to which prayers are addressed. It may be called a totem in the intercession with God when asking for help and healing. Budge highlights its significance**:**

> The Deity was supposed to be present in the stone, and the bread and wine were placed upon it…In ancient Egypt the Benu-stone was believed to be the dwelling place of the Sun-spirit or Sun-god, and it is possible that a reminiscence of the cult of the stone, or the stone of worship, of their pagan ancestors was preserved unconsciously by the Egyptians when they adopted Christianity. The tabot is now usually made of wood on which is cut a cross…above it is carved Alpha and below it Omega.[93]

[91] David Buxton, *The Abyssinians*, 68-69.
[92] Georg Gerster, *Churches in Rock,* 45.
[93] Wallis E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia,* vol.1, 162.

During celebrations, rituals and liturgies, the Ethiopians employ a complete system of symbols as an expression of links between the natural and metaphysical worlds. There is a vast number of sacramental objects: the chalice in silver and gold, the incense burner in bronze or copper, as well as the holy water and the rosary. Crosses remain a mystic manifestation of man with God and become an essential ingredient of Ethiopian worship, and episcopal crosses in particular are regarded with great veneration.[94] There are more than one hundred kinds of crosses, pendant and ceremonial, each varying in its shape and decoration. The cross symbolises eternal and universal truth, an *imago mundi* and therefore the essence of wisdom, a means to live in communion with the world of the Supreme. The cross is the seal of Christ and the Trinity and therefore the place where God is. Ethiopian Christians (women more than men) wear crosses, received at baptism, around their necks, or they have crosses tattooed on their foreheads. Many Ethiopian churches have their own ceremonial crosses which are used during sacraments, services and processions.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the heterogeneous spirituality of the Ethiopians but more importantly has illustrated the development of Ethiopian Christianity. It has offered a portrait of Ethiopia as a refined civilisation, where for several centuries culture, religion and commerce have attracted and amalgamated both the western and the eastern traditions. This chapter has also explored conceptual, theoretical, philosophical and Christological portraits of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia.

[94] Wallis E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia,* vol.1, 163.

The major part of the chapter has been spent tracing the legacy of Monophysitism and its significance for the Ethiopian context. The contention of the chapter is that Monophysitism grew out of the African milieu and drew from various Judaic, pagan and Christian elements. This chapter is also an introduction to the Monophysite doctrine, which is also significant for the RastafarI movement.

An outlook to the development of Christianity

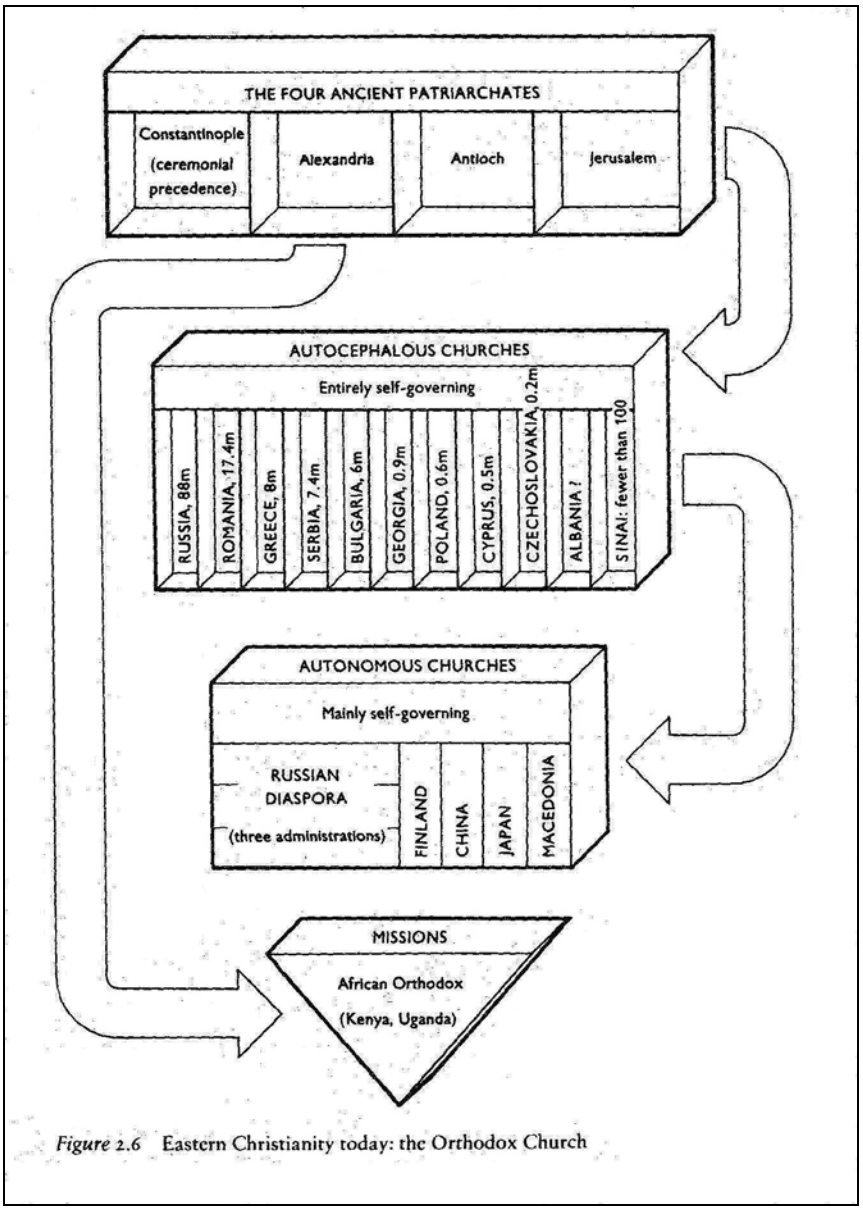


Figure 2.6 Eastern Christianity today: the Orthodox Church

Fig. 2. Eastern Christianity: the Orthodox Church[95] (from Andrew Walls, 'Christianity', 130)

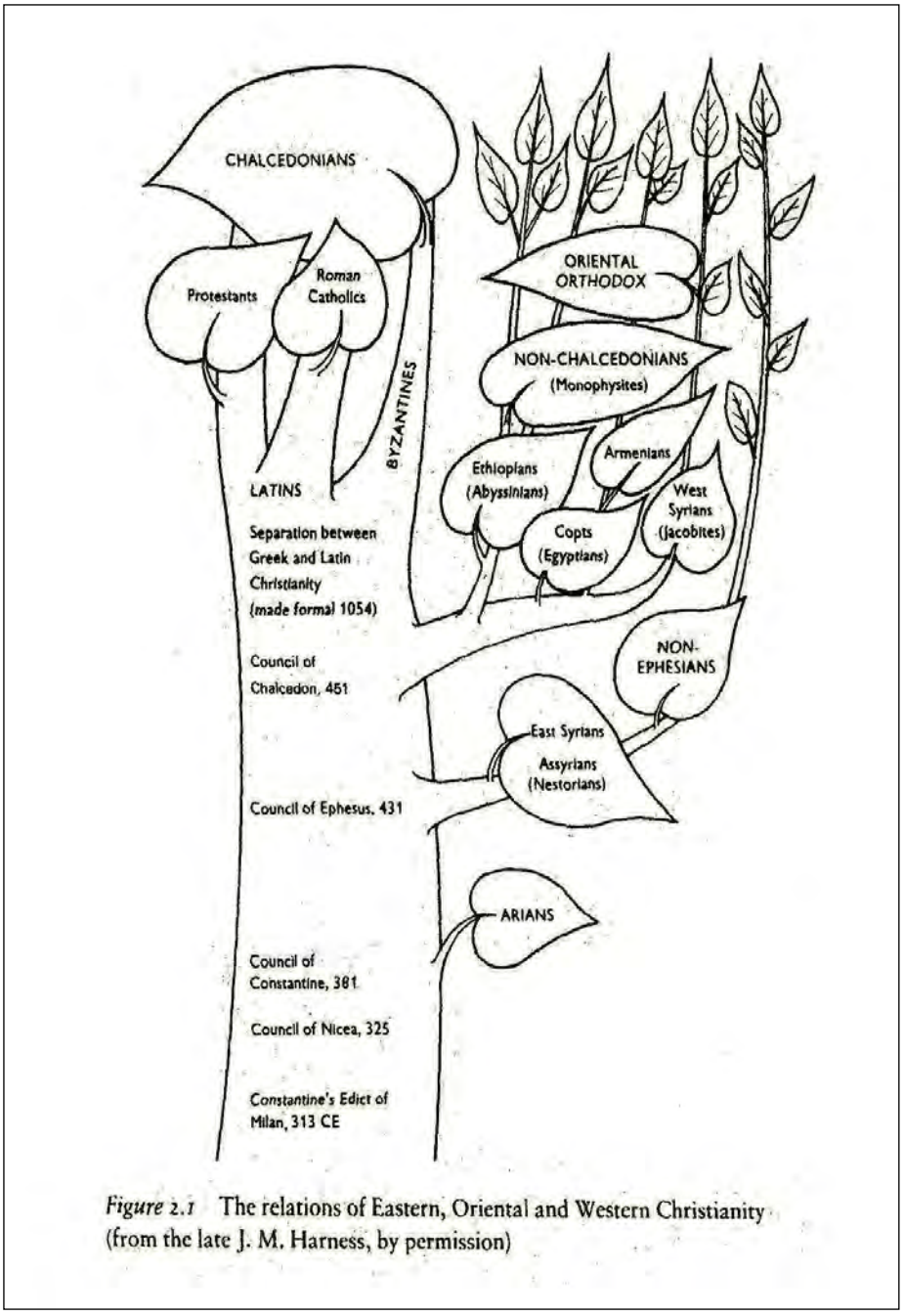


Figure 2.1 The relations of Eastern, Oriental and Western Christianity (from the late J. M. Harness, by permission)

Fig. 3. The Relations between Eastern and Western Christianity[96] (from Andrew Walls, 'Christianity', 78)

[95] Andrew Walls, 'Christianity', in *A New Handbook of Living Religions,* ed. John R. Hinnels (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 130.

[96] Andrew Walls, 'Christianity', 78. These two sources (figs. 2 and 3) are from the late J. M. Hornus, by permission.

Chapter Three

The Link Between Rastas and the Ethiopian Christians: The Monophysite Doctrine in RastafarI

Systems of belief provide cult movements with a major source of power. This power, as we have seen, derives not from a body of systematic or logical truths but rather from the psychological, emotional content of the ideology. This is especially true of the Rastafarian beliefs.[1]

Introduction

Chapter Two described the history of Ethiopian Christianity as a potential source for Rasta identity, and it is also a theological input for the psychological development of RastafarI. Chapter Three will further demonstrate the interrelationships between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and RastafarI. Many beliefs and teachings in RastafarI are introduced by the Monophysite theory of the Ethiopian Christianity which holds that Christ has one nature. This doctrine is regarded by Rasta people different from the western belief, the Dyophysite theory, in which God has two separated natures (divine and human).

RastafarI is a liberative religious movement that is deeply bound to Ethiopia, the Promised Land, and the primordial homeland. The name 'Ethiopia' appears in the Old Testament: 'Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will submit herself to God' (Psalm 68:31). The conclusion of this thesis might be stated thus: 'Rastafari is rooted in,

[1] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, 103.

returning to, is retrieving, or reinventing African heritage and identity'[2] through the metaphysical change of the historical figure Ras Tafari into the 'King-God' Haile Selassie I.

This chapter investigates the use of Monophysite doctrine in the RastafarI movement. Monophysitism is not only one of the keys to understanding Ethiopian Christian belief, but also includes *inter alia* a philosophical and theological discourse which locates the RastafarI movement vis à vis Ethiopian Christianity. The second part of the chapter describes the different houses or branches, known as 'Mansions'[3], of the RastafarI movement. In addition, it investigates the major Rasta festivals, which are also influenced by Ethiopian Christianity.

Rasta and Monophysite Outlooks

The ideological and theological structure of RastafarI is modelled on the principles of Monophysitism. According to the Monophysite idea, a metaphysical interpretation, Haile Selassie I is portrayed as a returned Messiah. As with Ethiopian Christianity, the Rasta tendency is to define *a priori* the human and divine nature of Christ as mediator between God and humanity. RastafarI as a system of religious thought offers a Monophysite formula which sees a resemblance between Jesus Christ and Haile Selassie I (H.I.M), and asserts that H.I.M. was God incarnated as a human being. Ernest Cashmore in *Rastafari* claims: 'The acceptance of Jah Ras Tafari as the only God

[2] Richard C. Salter and Ikael Tafari 'Rastafarianism', in J. Lindsay ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 7622.
[3] The term 'mansion' stems from the Bible: 'In my Father's house there are many mansions' (John, 14:2).

became inevitable and it constitutes the natural facts of life and liberation for Rasta reality.'[4]

RastafarI identifies Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia, as the incarnation of the divine king who was personified in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Word Incarnate of the True God, the one incarnation of God the Word.[5] God is made flesh, excluding the possibility of a division between the human and divine natures. This concept places the figure of Haile Selassie I in the Christological formula of the one indivisible and inseparable person or nature (*physis)* of Christ. This is crucial to the understanding of Ras Tafari as Son and Lord, only-begotten Son of the Father, without confusion and separation. Leonard E. Barrett echoes the view of the Rastafarian Repatriation Association:

> We know before that when a King should be crowned in the land of David's throne, that individual would be Shiloh, the anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ returned in the personification of Rastafari. (On his vesture and his thigh is a name written, King of Kings, and Lords of Lords.) He (Ras Tafari) is the Ancient of Days (the bearded God).[6]

Hence this theological interpretation holds that Haile Selassie I and Jesus Christ are one and the same. This belief originates from the first African activist leaders such as the Jamaican Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940), Leonard Percival Howell (1893-1981) and Mortimo Planno (1929-2006), who launched RastafarI and were responsible for the struggle for independence for the subordinated African-Caribbean people. What lies behind their thoughts is the Christological notion that Selassie I, 'the Conquering Lion', is the new manifestation of Jesus, 'the Lamb to the Slaughter', who has returned not as a

[4] Ernest E. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafari Movement in England*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), 141.
[5] A.A. Luce, *Monophysitism*, 5.
[6] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, 104-05.

victim nor as a sufferer but to struggle and bring redemption to the African people. Haile Selassie I is considered an African God, made man with power and leadership, and is invoked during the RastafarI worship. Millard Faristzaddi says:

> JAH, Faada, Son and Spirit…the Mighty Redeemer, JAH, Bright and Morning Star, I and I, Father Almighty, Most High, JAHOVAH, RASTAFARI, HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, Negus of Ethiopia, Might of the Hola Trinity, Shiloh of Judah, Beginning without End, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Prince of Peace, King Alpha… Melchizedek, Iesus, Adonai, King of Salem, Hola One of Israel, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Repairer of Breach, Root of David, Elect Himself and Light of His World, 225th King of 3,000 year Royal Solomonic Dynasty, Ascendant of King and Queen Makeda of Sheba, Protector of all Human Faith and Ruler of the Universe.[7]

It was this vision which led Garvey, Howell and the Rastas to overstate the idea of God as a 'black' person, the only one liberator for Africans and the 'ruler of the universe'. In his work on RastafarI, William David Spencer stresses the image of God as black, and quotes Garvey's point as the promoter of God as black:

> If the white man has the idea of a white God, let him worship his God as he desires. If the yellow man's God is of his race let him worship his God as he sees fit. We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no colour, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, and since the white people have seen their God through white spectacles, we have only now started out (late though it be) to see our God through our own spectacles. The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob let Him exist for the race that believes in the God of Isaac and God of Jacob. We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God – God the Father, God the Son, the Holy Ghost, the One God of all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship Him through the spectacles of Ethiopia.[8]

In the extract above it is possible to recognize some key elements which have become the core of RastafarI thinking. Firstly, there is the re-appropriation of God as Ethiopian Supreme Being. It was Garvey who deliberately advocated such an idea and propagated the notion of looking to Africa, and the doctrine of

[7] Quoted by William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 35. [Capitalization as original]
[8] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 10. Original in: Marcus M. Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey,* vol. 1, (New York: New York Times, 1968), 44.

repatriation to the African continent. Secondly, there is the claim of Haile Selassie's divinity, which was mooted by Leonard Howell. Ennis Edmonds and Robert Hill emphasize Howell's propagandistic view. Edmonds writes in his *Rastafari*: 'Howell clearly cast himself in the role of charismatic messenger of God (Selassie)'.[9] And Hill depicts Howell as 'the catalytic agent in the igniting of the radical millenarian consciousness that based itself on the doctrine of the divine kingship of Ethiopia's Ras Tafari'.[10]

The deification of Haile Selassie is an integral part of the RastafarI ideology, which is tied to its traditional African roots as if by an umbilical cord, and which fed black people's need for liberty and independence.

The Fusion of Symbols in RastafarI

Reading the Ethiopian *Book of Life,* the *Lefâfa Sedek*, and the *Kebra Nagast* has brought to light various issues: the meaning of the word I (or 'InI') which is associated with the divine mystery of Jah Rastafari whose teaching is from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Such a doctrine (Monophysitism) compares Ras Tafari with Christ, whereby Christ is one person with one nature which became one after the Incarnation; therefore, RastafarI is the second Christ, the one incarnate nature of God the Word. Such a complex hypothesis can be explained through two important symbols: the five-pointed unicursal star (known as the Solomonic Pentacle), and the six-pointed star (the Star of David). According to the Ethiopian *Book of Life,* these symbols were found on Solomon's ring. Indeed, the ring served various purposes: first, it indicated the high

[9] Barrington E. Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Cultural Bearers,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 37.
[10] Barrington E. Edmonds, *Rastafari*, 37. See also: Robert A. Hill, 'Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in Early Rastafari', *Jamaica Journal* 16, no. 1, (February 1983), 24-39.

status of the King and identified him with a divinity; second, it was considered an amulet which captured righteousness and rejected all evil; third, it was engraved with the name of God (Jah); and finally, it incorporated two star-shaped geometrical figures, the five-point unicursal star (the Solomonic Pentacle) and the six-pointed star (the Star of David), used by several traditions such as the Egyptians, Jews and Christians. Interestingly, the Solomonic ring that is in itself a symbol and amulet reflects the fusion of the symbols of the various elements, from crosses and figures. Such an array of symbols became influential in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and RastafarI and is still used during their worship, prayers, rituals, chanting, music and dance. Moreover, such figures lead us to pursue some important theoretical considerations concerning Monophysitism (monism) on the one hand and Dyophysitism (dualism) on the other.

The Solomonic Pentacle is a mistype for five (a star figure) which starts and ends with the same vertex. This recalls the observation of Ian Torrance on Monophysite doctrine, that three or more constituents produce a 'new third entity'.[11] The star is like a mixture of several components: five points, three equilateral triangles (see also the triangle in which the word *abracadabra* is written and which gives the equivalent number three), which represent the Trinity and which are inscribed in the star. This demonstrates that the union of all three triangles (the triangular triads of Pythagoras) produces the third entity: the geometrical pentagonal figure. Another curious fact is that beyond this formula the Monophysite theory can be inferred. The Solomonic Pentacle is like an open path which starts and ends on the same vertex, and in which the human and divine natures become one nature. This union of triads and triangles, which suggests the

[11] Ian R. Torrance, 'Monophysitism', in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, 379.

Trinity, has its synthesis in the five-pointed star: the emanation or manifestation of divine omnipotence (Fig. 4). This pentagram has been used both by Ethiopians and Rastas as a charm against evil.

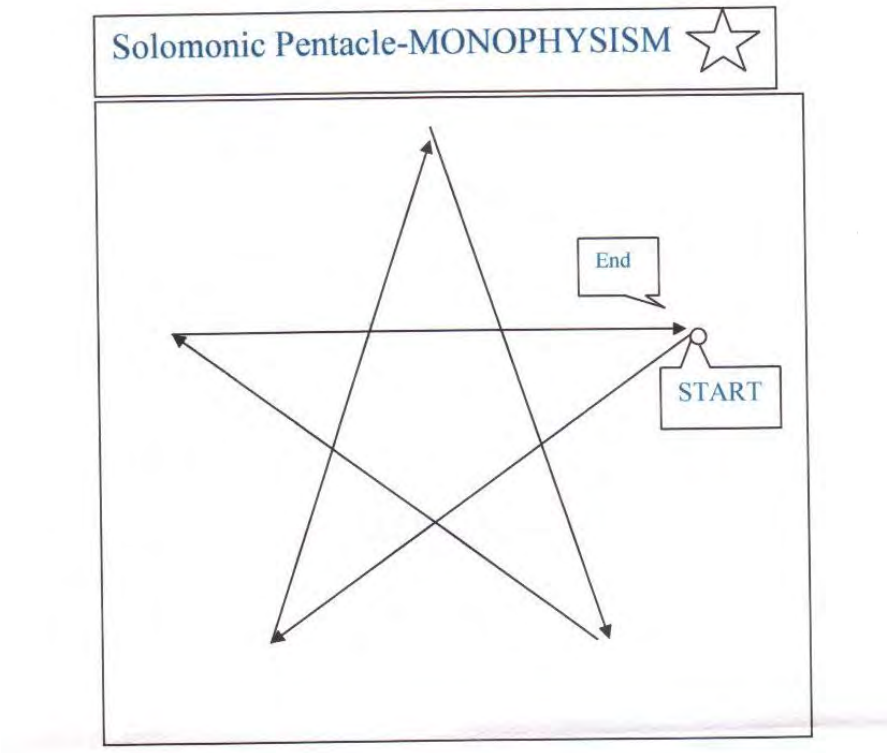


Fig. 4. The Solomonic Pentacle[12] - the Star as a third entity: symbol of Trinity and of the Monophysite idea. After the hypostatic union of the two natures (divine and human) there is one nature 'without separation, without change and without confusion'.[13]

[12] John Schouten, *The Pentagram as Medical Symbol*: *An Iconology Study*, (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1968)
[13] Figures 4 to 7 have been thought out, created and drawn by the author to explain how Rasta belief and its cult objects work. In order to understand how the monophysite doctrine works, see also the quotation of 'organic union' in Ian R. Torrance, 'Monophysitism', in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, 379. See also Istituto di Ricerche Urusvati, 'Psicometria della Sezione Aurea: Idee, Formule e Forme per una Nuova Cultura/Civiltà', (Psychometric of Aurea Section: Ideas, Formulae and Forms for a New Culture/Civilization), paper presented at the 2010 International Conference *Changing Gods. Between Religion and Everyday Life*, organised by CESNUR (Turin, 9-11 September, 2010). For further information please contact the Urusvati Research Institute at: urusvati@urusvati.org.

The Star of David (Fig. 5) is composed of two triangles which make a hexagonal star. These two triangles can be associated with the Dyophysite doctrine, which portrays the two natures (human and divine) in one person (Christ). Therefore, Christ is both flesh and God (*dyo-physis*): two natures after the union, the Incarnation.

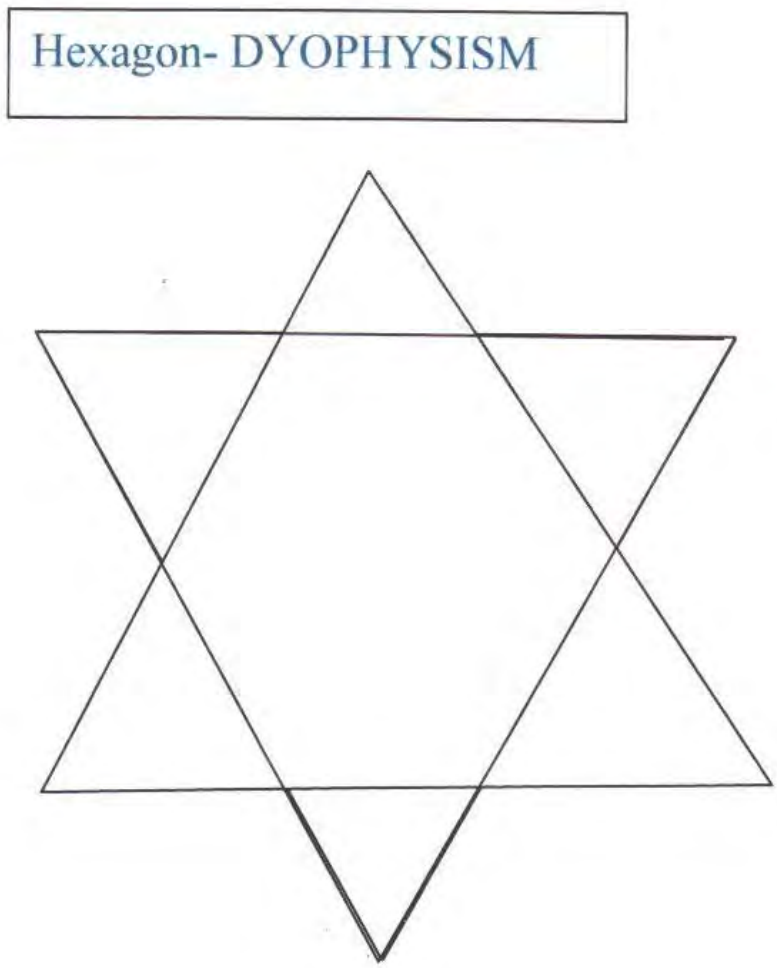


Fig.5. The Star of David.[14] The star is formed of two equilateral triangles which combined create six triangles. They represent the two natures of the Word of God. This is used as a Rasta symbol in worship and healing.

[14] See Istituto di Ricerche Urusvati, 'Psicometria della Sezione Aurea: Idee, Formule e Forme per una Nuova Cultura/Civiltà', (Psychometric of Aurea Section: Ideas, Formulae and Forms for a New Culture/Civilization) presented at the 2010 International Conference *Changing Gods. Between Religion and Everyday Life*, organised by CESNUR (Turin, 9-11 September, 2010). For further information please contact the Urusvati Research Institute at: urusvati@urusvati.org.

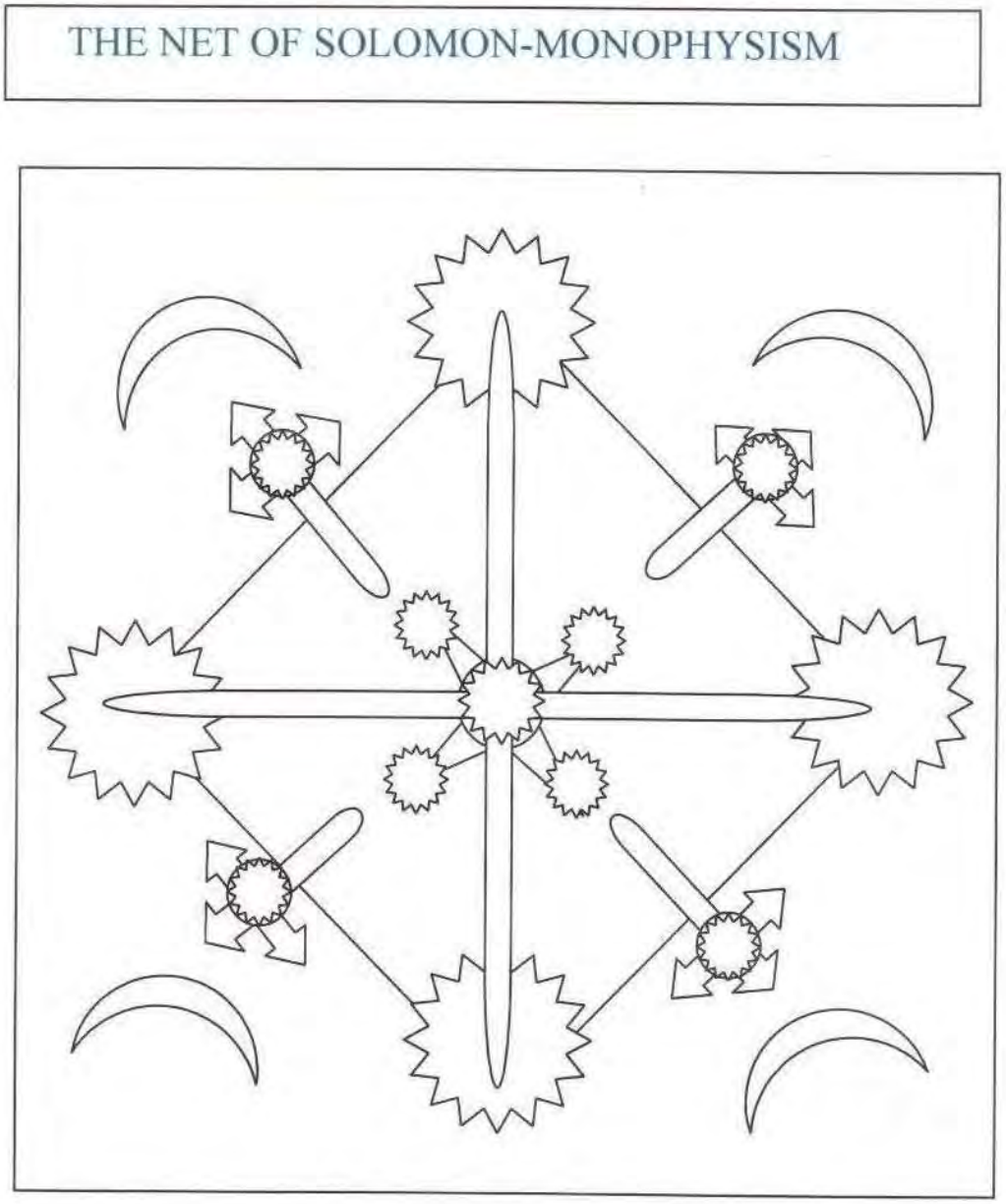


Fig. 6. The Net of Solomon (1). The net is used as an amulet against evil. Also in this symbol are inscribed three equilateral triangles with the word *abracadabra*. These three (the number of perfection and the Trinity) can be linked to Monophysitism.[15]

[15] Wallis E.A. Budge, *Bandlet of Righteousness: An Ethiopian Book of the Dead,* (London: Luzac & Co., 1929), xiii. (See the figure of the Net of Solomon in Budge's preface).

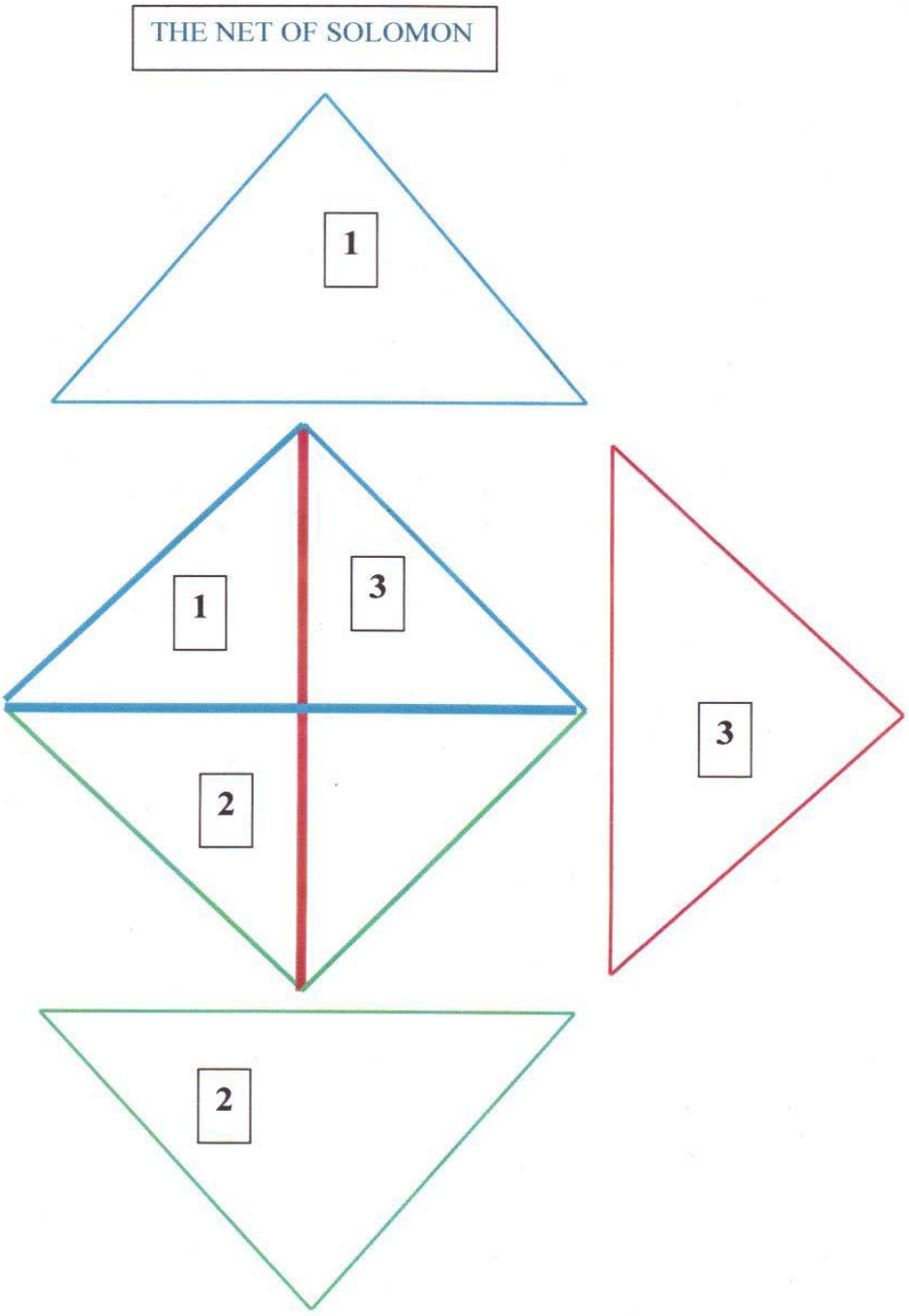


Fig. 7. The Net of Solomon (2).

In light of the two figures above, the symbols represent for the Rastafarian movement a link with Ethiopia. However they also add further meanings. As Yasus Afari shows in his book *Overstanding Rastafari*, the Star of David represents the physical and spiritual

side of human beings; it is Earth and Heaven and it balances our lives and preserves the soul.[16] Equally, the five-pointed star is Man, Christ, and the 'black' Christ.

RastafarI and its Connection with the Christian name of Haile Selassie: 'Lord of Lords and Might of the Holy Trinity'

Rasta people have coined the word 'RastafarI', which draws upon multiple meanings, each of them linked to the titles of His Majesty Haile Selassie I. Ethiopians believe that the Emperor Haile Selassie, born on the 16th of Hamle 1884[17] (23rd July, 1892), was the descendant of the royal Solomonic line and was anointed King of Ethiopia in the name of David. The Lion of Judah had prevailed. 'Haile Selassie I, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia'.[18]

The baptismal name of Haile Selassie I was Khāyla Selassē or Lidj Tafari Makonnen ('Lidj' means 'male child' or 'son' and 'Tafari' means 'creator'),[19] while Makonnen was his father's name, (derived from the Hebrew word meaning 'mercy' and 'favour'). In recognition of his precocious childhood, he was appointed to the following ranks: firstly, Dejazmacth at the age of 13 on the 21st of Teqemt (1st November, 1905)[20] (the title means 'Commander of the Door', the title of district chief); secondly, Ras (Duke) Tafari on the 17th of Mäskäräm 1909 (27th September, 1916), when he became Crown Prince of Ethiopia and Regent Plenipotentiary;[21] and finally, Negusa Nagast (King of Kings or Emperor) Haile Selassie I. 'Haile' means 'power' and 'Selassie' means 'trinity' or

[16] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 102.
[17] Edward Ullendorff, *The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie*, vol.1, 14.
[18], Edward Ullendorff, *The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie 1,* vol.1, 230.
[19] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 35.
[20] Edward Ullendorff, *The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie I*, vol.1, 20.
[21] Edward Ullendorff, *The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie 1*, vol.1, 65.

'triune', and therefore 'Haile Selassie' means 'Foremost Power of The (Holy) Trinity or Triune'.[22]

RastafarI introduced these theological connotations, thus holding onto both Trinitarian and Unitarian doctrinal positions. Although Spencer observes that the Trinitarian concept is incidental to the Christian title of Haile Selassie I as 'Might of the Holy Trinity', Rastafarians are not unduly worried by such considerations. As one of Spencer's interviewees put it: 'I don't know this Trinity and not Trinity and there's so many confusing things. And people keep putting their own ideas on top of it'.[23] The majority of Rasta followers believe that the Trinitarian element in Haile Selassie is already functionally present in the Monophysite formula, which accepts one divine and human nature in Christ and the identification of God with the human being: 'Christ and Father are the same…I am the Father…I and the Father are one'.[24]

The epithets 'Almighty', 'Most High' and the title 'Might of the Holy Trinity' are intensifying forms of aspects attributed to Haile Selassie I as Jah-God and creator of the universe and humankind. This Rasta formula of Jah is similar to the formula in the monotheistic religion of Judaism (in relation to Jehovah). According to Barrett, Jah is linked to the biblical Jehovah whose name is invoked in the prayers of followers of Judaism. Barrett states:

> The inception of the movement is grounded in some key words of the Old and New Testament. First and probably most convincing of those is Revelation 5:2-5.[25]

[22] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 38.
[23] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 126.
[24] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 126.
[25] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians,* 83.

Thus, 'Jah-Ras-Tafari' embodies Man-God, as guide and symbol of worship and unity for the RastafarI movement. In the last analysis, the theological concept of Christ's divinity in Rastafarian thought is based on the doctrine of Monophysitism. This goes back to the Christological notion of One or Monad which has its philosophical basis in Platonism and Neoplatonism. As discussed in the previous chapter, through employing the philosophical and religious ideas of Plato and Plotinus, both Nestorius and Arius disputed the one nature of Christ and God. Spencer writes:

> Neo-Platonism flowed like a waterway between pagan culture and the Christian faith that sought to reach out to it.[26]

The Greek philosophers made the ontological argument for the existence of God literally means 'craftsman', but then later came to express the primordial intellect or One-Being-Energy of the universe), who transcends or goes beyond the material world towards the eternal and perfect, the world of the Forms of Good (*nous or noumenon*: 'thought' or 'soul'). These Forms are immanent in visible things, participating in and actively modifying the physical world. The One via the Forms is present *a priori* in the world as well as being transcendent and the main aim is to set free the soul (*noumenon*) from the body (*phenomenon)*. In this Platonic/Neoplatonic thinking it is possible to recognize the theism of Nestorius, Lucian and Arius in the Monophysite formula of Christ as the Word-Logos Incarnate of God who is the pure essence of the universe. According to Spencer:

> Arius, as Lucian before him, affirmed the neo-Platonic view of the transcendence of God. Only God is eternal, only God is unique, only God is indivisible. Therefore, he reasoned God's essence of being can never be shared with any other being. Whatever Jesus was as the Son of God, Arius concluded, he could clearly not have shared the ultimate divine essence.[27]

[26] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 131.
[27] William Dadid Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 131

Besides Arianism's Neoplatonic view, there are other ontological arguments of Aristotle which have been incorporated into Monophysite Christology. As Luce states:

> Aristotle gave to humanity the conception of a God who transcends the world, and yet is immanent in it, as form is in matter. Thus Greek philosophy in Aristotle attained that spiritual monotheism which supplied the foundation for the Christian doctrine.[28]

However, it is important to note that in this particular Christological concept there is a theological link between Monophysitism and the RastafarI interpretation of 'Jah live' as an example of the 'creatureliness' of the Logos who lives in human beings. In this perfect harmony between Jah and the Rastafarians a holistic idea of divinity as 'one in all and all in one'[29] is being mapped out. Therefore, there is a Christological kinship between the incarnate Christ of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and the personification of Haile Selassie I for the Rastafarian movement as 'Jah lives; always will'.[30] [31] Cashmore points out how the English Rastafarian congregations have formulated theologically Haile Selassie's divinity:

> (1) Haile Selassie was still alive; his death was a fabrication of the Western world and its allies.
> (2) He simply assumed another form.
> (3) His death was inconsequential because Haile Selassie was merely a 'personification' of God.[32]

What these ideas point to is a form of docetic understanding which sees Haile Selassie as a person appearing in the flesh while maintaining his divine attributes in the

[28] A. A. Luce, *Monophysitism*, 21.
[29] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 77.
[30] Ernest Cashmore, *Rastaman*, 61.
[31] Barrington E. Edmonds, *Rastafari*, 55.
[32] Ernest Cashmore, *Rastaman*, 60.

hypostatic union through the formula 'two natures before, but only one after the union'.[33]

Historically, the RastafarI movement grew in Jamaica at the beginning of the 1930s, which coincided with the coronation of the Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia (1930) of the Solomonic lineage. To quote Afari again:

> The Conquering Lion of Judah, born July 23rd over the Zodiac sign of the lion, is the 225th active monarch from the line of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (3500 BC), of the Ancient House of King David.[34]

Here we may recognize the basis of Rasta belief, where Ras Tafari is identified with the living God in one nature. Therefore, Ras Tafari is the true God 'Jah Live' - this appears also in Bob Marley's song, *Jah Live*. George Simpson, one of the first sociologists in the study of Rasta communities, sarcastically echoes one of the Rasta interviewees: 'Do you see any resemblance between Jesus Christ and Ras Tafari?'[35] Thus Rastafarian Christology sees Ras Tafari as a reincarnated second Christ. Spencer may be correct when he postulates that Selassie is Jesus-God returned. But this theological claim of Ras Tafari's divinity has caused a debate among theologians and scholars, which has cast doubts on the very theological and philosophical identity essential to the RastafarI movement. According to some interpreters, the Christological position advocated by RastafarI is illogical and simplistic:

> Rastas believe that Selassie is the returned messiah, that he is Jah, or God…That he is regarded as God incarnate seems patently absurd. It is not clear whether Selassie believed himself to be a God. And moreover: there is no still organized set of doctrines and teachings that constitute Rastafarianism, and no organized Rastafarian church, temple, or worship space exists.[36]

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[33] A. A. Luce, *Monophysitism ,* 36.
[34] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 38.
[35] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 12.
[36] Barrington E. Edmonds, *Rastafari*, viii-xi.

It is important to explore and understand what kind of movement RastafarI is, whether it is indeed a religious phenomenon with dubious theology, and this necessitates an impartial interpretation of the movement, its structures and its theology.

RastafarI: a Syncretistic Movement?

The birth of the RastafarI movement was influenced by the ideologies of Howell and Garvey, both pioneers who developed the movement for Jamaicans and black people. They turned RastafarI into a trans-religious and cultural phenomenon largely based on African identity (Afrocentrism). The Garveyite messianic prophecy, which looks to Africa for the crowning of a king to know that redemption is nigh,[37] embodies the key RastafarI beliefs which are impregnated with an extreme Afro-centric ideology. The RastafarI movement is a syncretistic movement which incorporates various interfaith elements which have their roots in Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, and Monophysite doctrinal thought. Ethiopia gave to RastafarI the Christian image of God and Christ. Although RastafarI is rooted in Christian origins, it is also an expression of the combination of Judaic, pagan and African tribal religious elements, which have had a profound influence on the religious ideas and practices of RastafarI.

From a theological perspective, RastafarI might be seen simultaneously in two ways. On the one hand, the Rastafarian movement is a syncretistic belief system, which traces its ancient origins to Eastern and African pagan traditions. On the other hand, RastafarI is an authentic or hybrid religion, which is an organic mix of different elements,

[37] Barry Chevannes, 'Introducing the Native Religions of Jamaica,' in *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, ed. Barry Chevannes, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 10.

'producing a new third entity'.[38] This third entity could be termed a 'third space' where elements from different cultures are critically amalgamated to form a new phenomenon. The Rastafarian movement recognizes its own identity both in the messianic revelation of Garveyism of Selassie's divinity, and in the African/pagan/Christian symbolisms, which are deeply embedded in their own rituals and religious practices. Such a view is questioned by Chevannes, who argues that RastafarI is 'a fairly uniform system of beliefs'[39] which are deeply rooted in the African-Christian religions. According to this perspective, RastafarI is seen as a simplistic religion independent of any other theological traces or legacies. Such a view also maintains that RastafarI has no political or structural cohesion.

The overall perception is that RastafarI is a syncretistic religious movement. Its syncretistic symbolism is acknowledged by Niall Finneran in *The Archaeology of Christianity in Africa*, in that Ethiopian Orthodoxy is a rich symbolic belief which is influenced by both Judaic elements and animist rituals and beliefs, so producing 'a mélange of shared religious traits'.[40] Therefore, after centuries of African slavery, the RastafarI movement emerged as a patchwork of belief systems and religious practices in Jamaica, the wider Caribbean and elsewhere as a reaction to and protest against western oppression.

RastafarI fits in with what Italian feminism calls 'autocoscienza'.[41] *Autocoscienza* is about protest, self-identity and self-determination. And *autocoscienza* wants to achieve self-awareness and re-construction of the self, establishing one's own freedom.

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[38] Iain R. Torrance, 'Monophysitism,' in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, 379.
[39] Barrington E. Edmonds, *Rastafari,* 25.
[40] Niall Finneran, *The Archeology of Christianity in Africa,* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2002), 125.
[41] Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp, 'Introduction: Coming from the South,' in *Italian Feminist Thought: A Reader*, ed. Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 9.

RastafarI, therefore, is a singular amalgam of different habits and beliefs, giving its own religious character and perspective as a new religious movement and theological nucleus.

In spite of their monotheistic ideals, religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam coexisted with polytheistic beliefs. For centuries, there has been a pluralistic atmosphere where western and eastern beliefs lived side by side. Luce recognized this pagan legacy in Christianity as complementary and strengthening in its multiple religious origins. Luce writes: 'There flourished for a while and died fantastic eclectic creeds, pagan theosophies masquerading as Christianity'[42] and he goes on to say that Monophysitism was almost Neoplatonism in Christian dress. The ethos of the two systems is the same, and the 'doctrinal resemblance is marked'.[43]

Historically there have always been meetings and mixtures of many faiths depending on the theological, political and geographical circumstances. The Rastafarian movement seems essentially to be a new form of religious hybridism which has not neglected the past. RastafarI has moulded itself, absorbing variegated and inter-religious teachings, by configuring a portrait of Christ dressed up in various cultures.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Legacy in RastafarI

According to Bastide's principle of 'juxtaposition',[44] RastafarI is a new religious phenomenon resulting from a mosaic of religious elements and rituals drawing on various traditions. Although the Rastafarian movement is a combination of Judaic,

[42] A.A. Luce, *Monophysitism*, 44.
[43] A.A. Luce, *Monophysitism*, 45.
[44] Stephen D. Glazier, 'Syncretism and Separation: Ritual Change in an Afro-Caribbean Faith,' *Journal of American Folklore* 98, no. 387, (1985), 51.

Christian and pagan rites, RastafarI is a separate, loose, autonomous and 'acephalous'[45] movement without its own official, institutional and united structures or a recognized leadership. The Rastafarians, unlike other religious groups, have not yet had their own formal building for religious services, or a main house for their own celebration of their religious practices and spirituality. There are branches where the members can plan and arrange their internal regulations, and also share beliefs, worship and rituals. However, in spite of RastafarI not having a space and not being organized centrally, in the 1970s Ras Sam Brown established the first Rastafarian Movement Association (RMA);[46] providing cooperation and intercourse[47] for all Rastas. Barrett describes the movement's loose but inter-related structure:

> The Rastafarian movement is not a movement with a central focus. All Rastafarian movements in this country have an affinity with each and other. In every Parish of the island, you will not just find one here and one there. You can find sizable colonies of Rastafarians all over, along with thousands of sympathizers too. In every colony of Rastafarians you have brethren who see to the guidance of the youth who must be taught the philosophy of the movement. What affects Rastafarians at Morant Point becomes the concern of those Rastafarians at Negril Point. We do not look at it as just a personal and isolated case. We look at it as something that the whole structure of the movement must set right.[48]

The following are the aims and strategies of RMA: firstly, to remove any false teachings within the Rasta groups; secondly, to improve the social, economic and political situation in Jamaica; and finally, to cooperate with the Jamaican government to create a better quality of life for all citizens. This centrally organized movement led to the initial draft for the Rastafari International Theocracy Assembly or the Assembly of Elders of

[45] Barry Chevannes, 'Introducing the Native Religions of Jamaica', in *and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews* ,31.
[46] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, 181.
[47] Patrick D. Taylor, 'Perspectives on History in Rastafari Thought ', in *Studies in Religion*, 19, no. 2 (1990), 203.
[48] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, 173.

about 72 members.[49] Patrick D. Taylor says that the Rasta Assembly is an umbrella group which facilitates communication and organization.[50]

In spite of this endeavour to create an all-inclusive congregation, the Rasta nature was basically free and anarchist, which claims 'Man free'[51] and thus 'do as you feel justified to do'[52] believing only in 'Jah Rastafari'.[53] RastafarI does not want to make any compromises or to come under a main structure which may limit and control compulsorily the spiritual life of each believer, but rather it seeks an open confrontation. Indeed, as Chevannes states:

> Except among three very specific sects – the influential Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Bobo led by Prince Emmanuel Edwards and the remnants of Claudius Henry's church – the Rastafarian refuses to surrender his freedom and autonomy by joining any organization, Rastafari or not.[54]

Even if RastafarI is independent of any church, it is closely connected to Ethiopian Christianity.[55] The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has a great influence on the major part of the Rasta cultural and religious activities. The Rastas largely conform to the liturgical life of the Ethiopian Tewahedo tradition, although many Rastas are not members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. It may be certain that the Rastafarians learnt and followed the teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, in particular its rituals, which have been introduced into their own services. 'What seems certain is that a strong syncretism of RastafarI and Ethiopian Christianity is

[49] Barry Chevannes, 'New Approach to Rastafari', in *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, 32.
[50] Patrick D. Taylor, 'Perspectives on History in Rastafari Thought', 203.
[51] Barry Chevannes, 'New Approach to Rastafari', in *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, 32.
[52] Barry Chevannes, 'New Approach to Rastafari', in *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, 32.
[53] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians,* 208.
[54] Barry Chevannes, 'New Approach to Rastafari', in *Rastafari and Other African - Caribbean Worldviews*, 32.
[55] For further analysis see the EWF on-line at: http://ewfinclondonlocalofficeofthechaplain.webs.com/.

about to take place'.[56] In contradiction to the three typologies identified by Chevannes, Afari enumerates seven:

1. Naih Binghi
2. Ethiopia-Africa Black International Congress (EABIC), otherwise called Bobo Shanti
3. 12 Tribes of Israel
4. Ethiopian World Federation (EWF)
5. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church
7. (The newly emerging) Haile Selassie I School of Vision and Bible Study.[57]

Such clarification highlights a different perspective from the previous studies and leads to considering RastafarI as a revolutionary idea. Like the Ethiopian Tewahedo Church, the Rastafarian movement has a hierarchical structure where its own principal activity is methodically and regularly to organize itself around the issues that unite the community.[58] These issues differ by age, category and topic. Each group has its own religious and internal regulations by which they may be classified as Afari has done above.

The *Nyabingy* or *Niah Binghi* is the earliest and most orthodox order of all the Rastafarian houses. The term 'nyabingy' comes from the first African anti-colonial religious movement, born in East and Central Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, and means 'she who possesses many things'.[59] This religious group was formed by people who opposed colonial rule. In other words, it means 'death to all downpressors or death to all black and white downpressors'.[60] This house believes that Haile Selassie I is God as well as the head of the *Nyabingy* Order, the one who fights and guides his followers

[56] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians,* 209.
[57] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 203-04.
[58] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 203.
[59] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 64.
[60] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 204.

for the liberation of the African oppressed. The main goal of the *Nyabingy* is to create a new and united system of organization for the RastafarI movement, encouraging collective honest work and respect for each other. The *Nyabingy* Mansion and the EWF are the main social, political and religious administrations which order Rastafarian life and faith, including liturgical events and the appointment of delegations. The *Nyabingy* Mansion, unlike the EWF, seems to have only Elders as members, who are the source for the Rastafarian programmes and the only ones who arbitrate ecclesial and secular affairs. In this sense, the *Nyabingy* is the most important institution which is recognized by the Rasta community.

The *Bobo Shanti* is the other orthodox order with a large number of adherents in Jamaica. This group has strong principles and male-centric perspectives based on ascetic practices such as the preservation of severe morality, austerity and the exclusion of women (especially during their menstruation, since, according to biblical interpretation, a menstruating woman is seen as a symbol of sin and weakness). This order aims at an ascetic lifestyle with rigorous practise such as poverty, wearing rough ragged clothes, fasting or being vegetarian, which are seen as means of training in self control, and awakening a healthy morality and expiation of sin. Concerning RastafarI dietary restrictions, more detail will be given in Chapter Eight. Rasta ascetism is more or less like that of the Greeks, particularly the Cynics and Stoics, and the Roman and Egyptian priesthoods, as well as the pre-Christian Indian sages. In fact, the ascetic life is an integral part of much Christianity, especially the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The *Bobo Shanti* order, with its partner *Nyabingy*, is the first active organization in the Jamaican context to grow in the 1950s. The oldest head was Prince Emmanuel Edwards,

also called 'Bongo Eddie'[61] or 'Dada',[62] which means 'father', as in the Revival variant of the name 'Daddy' (as in 'Daddy Sharpe'), which highlights the *spiritual* relationship between 'charismatic leaders and their followers'.[63] This group basically differs from other houses on two counts. The first of these is a belief in Prince Emmanuel as divine, combined with an idiosyncratic reading of the Bible. Prince Emmanuel and his followers make simplistic parallels between Palestine and Jamaica. Thus Ackee Walk in Jamaica became Nazareth, as Chevannes points out:

> Ackee Walk was Nazareth, where Jesus came from; Harris Street was Galilee, where Jesus went after leaving his native home; Eighth Street, Capernaum; and Ninth Street, Bethlehem; for it was there that Jesus, Rachel's son, was born. The settlement in Bull Bay they named Mount Temon, where God is supposed to have come from, according to a passage from Genesis.[64]

These biblical allusions were made by Prince Emmanuel and his followers. The sacred land was chosen in a sacred spot in Ackee Walk, a Jamaican City on a 'Hill'[65] which was the settlement of the Bobo Shanti until 1968 (when it was demolished). The name of Jesus is Emmanuel. The second way in which this *Bobo Shanti* order differs from other houses is that the traditional Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has its modern equivalent in King Haile Selassie I, the Prophet Garvey and the Priest Emmanuel. Such a theory strengthened the idea of the superiority of men, 'King-man or God-man',[66] over women.

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[61] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 205.
[62] Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 172.
[63] Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, 175.
[64] Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology,* 174.
[65] Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology,* 172.
[66] Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology,* 172.

The *Bobo Shanti* are well organized, with their own strict social and religious roles. Such a disciplined group encourages cultural conservatism or traditionalism. Each member is expected to follow certain rules: firstly, to cover the hair with a turban, wear robes and practice the Mosaic or Judaic law, and observe the liturgical calendar of the Sabbath and keep to vegetarian food which is comparable to the Ethiopian fasting diet; secondly, to place high value on the holy herb marijuana; finally, to adhere to the idea of God as 'black', who is incarnated in Haile Selassie I, and the exodus back to Africa. Woman has no equal footing with man; she is subordinate to men. There is an overbearing male superiority which controls and subdues everything. Thus, the role of woman is limited. She is excluded from all political and religious activities and she has no visible and positive role, becoming alienated, discriminated against, in this 'silence of woman'.[67] All these social and gender inequalities reflect an intolerance towards women, whose identity is made invisible.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel is a Rasta Mansion which was established in 1968 in Jamaica by Vernon Carrington (referred as the 'Prophet Gad').[68] Gad is the name of a son of the Tribe of Israel and Carrington was believed to be the incarnation of Gad, whose aim was to reunite the Twelve Lost Tribes of Israel. He is considered one of the four angels (Book of Revelation, 7:2) and a central figure for the movement. They believe themselves to be the direct descendents of the Twelve Sons of Israel. This particular Mansion is open to women and there is no distinction of race (all people are the same), and it exists in Jamaica, the United States of America, New Zealand, Europe and Africa. Women are involved in all religious and social meetings. The anthropologist Obiagele Lake in *RastafarI Women* states:

[67] Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp, *Italian Feminist Thought*, 151.
[68] See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/rastafari/subdivisions/twelvetribes.shtml

> Based on one of my fieldwork trips in 1984, I observed that women in this group were more prominent in religious ceremonies than they are in other Rasta groups.[69]

The engagement of women in RastafarI activities is unusual, and it is significant that for the first time Rastafarian women can take part in the social and religious life of the Rastafarian community. This order follows some of the precepts and roles of the *Bobo Shanti*, with strict diet and sober vestments both for women and men. It is interesting to note how each member of this group is free to make her or his own choice. Indeed, there is certain flexibility in this organization, although there is a hierarchal and somewhat 'elitist'[70] structure. The Twelve Tribes resembles thus a vertical movement, starting with monks or prophets, priests and then kings (the Elders). This hierarchal structure is closely related to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church where at the top there is the figure of the Abun or Patriarch, followed by monks, deacons and priests. The Twelve Tribes and the *Nyabingi* are well organized and are the principal houses in Jamaica. They are composed of Rastas from the middle class such as the Reggae celebrity Bob Marley and his family. They are the first to support the value of RastafarI as an official religion. For this reason they are devoted to reading the Bible and 'encourage members and non-members alike to read the scriptures' – 'a chapter a day'.[71] Lake writes, on the basis of the fieldwork by van Dijk:

> The Twelve Tribes accept the Holy Book, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, unreservedly and without any restriction. Preference is given to the *Scofield Bible* (1976), but other versions will do as well. That the [white] man corrupted the bible when he translated it from the original Amharic, as some Rastas claim, is nonsense according to the Twelve Tribes.[72]

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[69] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 64.
[70] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 63.
[71] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 63.
[72] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 63.

The Bible provides a resource for the Rastafarian movement and nourishes its beliefs. The Twelve Tribes symbolize the twelve sons of the Israelite Jacob and correspond to the twelve months of the Hebrew calendar, starting with Reuben and April. The Judaic faith is significant in Rasta religious identity, and the Hebrew connection has been accepted by Rastas as a root of its beliefs. Lake states:

> Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph and Benjamin (Genesis, 29-30,35). Each name corresponds to a month of the year (beginning with April, Reuben) and each is associated with particular body part, color, and personality trait. These traits correspond to those of the astrological zodiac sign, but Rastas repudiate any connection to this aspect of Babylon.[73]

Tribe Name	*Month of Birth*	*Tribe Colour*	*Body Part*	*Tribe Function*	*Apostle*
Reuben	April	Silver	Eyes	Strength	Andrew
Simeon	May	Gold	Ears	Faith	Simon Peter
Levi	June	Purple	Nose	Will	Matthew
Judah	July	Brown	Mouth and Heart	Praise	Judas
Issachar	August	Yellow	Hands	Zeal	Thaddeus
Zebulon	September	Pink	Stomach	Order and Compassion	James Son of Alpheus
Dan	October	Blue	Back	Judgement	James Son Of Zebedee
Gad	November	Red	Reproductive Organs	Power	Philip
Asher	December	Gray	Thighs	Understanding	Thomas
Napthali	January	Green	Knees	Love	John
Joseph	February	White	Calves	Imagination	Bartholomew
Benjamin	March	Black	Feet	Elimination	Simon the Zealot

Table 1. The Twelve Tribes of Israel and their Legacy in RastafarI (1)[74]

[73] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 64.
[74] For further information see: http://www.uvm.edu/~debate/dreadlibrary/thayer.html.

See also Lake's table (Appendix E).[75] In Lake's chart (Table 2) she shows only 11 tribes (she has forgotten to insert Gad).

Twelve Tribes	*Hebrew Months*	*Julian Months*
Reuben	Nisan (Abib)	March-April
Simeon	Iyyar (Ziv)	April-May
Levi	Sivan	May-June
Judah	Tammuz	June-July
Issachar	Ab	July-August
Zebulun	Elul	August-September
Dan	Tishri (Ethanim)	September-October
Asher	Chislev	November-December
Napthtali	Tebeth	December-January
Joseph	Shebat	January-February
Benjamin	Adar	February-March

Table 2. The Twelve Tribes (2)[76]

Lake has attempted to demonstrate how the Rasta calendar has affinity with the Twelve Tribes of Israel and how it has been incorporated into the life of every Rasta.

Furthermore, there is the EWF, which is closely connected to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), and this is attributable to two reasons: first, the EWF has a recognized constitution written by the Emperor Haile Selassie I; second, the EWF received fertile land of 500 acres in Shashemane, Ethiopia. These helpful and supportive acts of Selassie I were not followed up by the governments that succeeded him, who labelled the Rastafarians monarchists and religious fanatics.[77] The Rastafarian World Federation (RWF) wished to obtain official recognition from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. To grant this, the EWF imposed some restrictions. As Cashmore notes:

[75] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 159.
[76] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Women*, 159.
[77] Barbara Makeda, Blake Hannah, *Rastafari,* 117.

> The Church's Abba in London consented to conduct baptismal duties in 1976 but at the same time took the opportunity to declare two correctives which struck at the core of the Rastafarian belief system.[78]

The Rasta members were expected to respect the Ethiopian Orthodox faith. They were asked to follow a number of practices: firstly, they should cut off their dreadlocks; secondly, they should give up the 'erroneous and confused' belief [79] in Haile Selassie's divinity as the personification of God. The Rastafarian Ethiopian World Federation (REWF) adopted and incorporated into its own services some teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, such as rites, ceremonies and other symbolism. The REWF seeks, however, to maintain its own individuality. As Cashmore notes:

> In such way, they were able to remain an EOC (or EOTC) member without impairing their Rastafarian status.[80]

Finally, the other order is called the 'Haile Selassie I School of Vision and Bible'. This is a new group, which has emerged in Jamaica, founded by the priest Dermot Fagan[81] as the first Church for the Rastafarians. Moreover, as Afari has pointed out, there is a close link between the recent order and another group called a cadre,[82] where all the Rastas are united by a pact of reciprocal respect and fidelity without any compromise and dependence on each other. This 'independent intelligentsia'[83] consisted of large a number of 'intellectuals and social activists comprising artists, musicians, writers, students, artisans, craft workers, farmers, entrepreneurs, engineers, technocrats, business people and other professionals'.[84]

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[78] Ellis Cashmore, *Rastaman,* 62.
[79] Ellis Cashmore, *Rastaman,* 62.
[80] Ellis Cashmore, *Rastaman*, 62-63.
[81] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 211.
[82] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 212.
[83] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 212.
[84] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 212.

This cadre is significant for the RastafarI community because it has created relationships, dialogue, democratic cooperation and integration, both at national and international level, among 'the institutes, infrastructures, amenities, provisions and functions of a Nation-State in contemporary times'.[85]

Life and Spirituality in the Rastafarian Movement: Rituals, Symbols and Liturgies

RastafarI spirituality is influenced by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo legacy. Such influence can be seen in the daily life of the Rastas. There are considerable links with Ethiopian Christian daily practices such as dietary habits, prayers, festivals and the liturgical calendar. As previously mentioned, the Bible plays a significant role in the life of each house or organization. The Bible is looked on as one of the major sources, alongside other sacred books, the *Kebra Nagast* (the Glory of Kings), the *Fetha Nagast* (the Law of Kings), and the *Lefafa Sedek* (the Ethiopian Book of the Dead), which guides the spiritual life of both the Rastafarians and the Ethiopians. The Rastafarian ideology is traced back to these holy books which reinforced the beliefs in Haile Selassie as the living God, the Messiah and the second Jesus Christ, and in Ethiopia as Israel, their homeland or Promised Land. These syncretistic prophecies are identified in the scriptures and are the key beliefs of RastafarI. The sacred texts are read and undergo exegesis during RastafarI religious practices and rituals, for instance, in their worship services, in chanting and in other forms of meditation or reasoning,[86] through Reggae music with its African spiritual roots, and also during meetings such as the *Niah Binghy* Groundation on 12th April. This is an important Rastafarian event, which

[85] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 212. [Text as original]
[86] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 89.

commemorates the visit to Jamaica of Haile Selassie. This celebration takes place in the interior of the island, in the mountains. The Rastas believe that 'his foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord [Ras Tafari] loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.' (Psalm 87:2).

The Rasta faith is a creative continuation and reconfiguration of Ethiopian Christianity. RastafarI is deeply inspired by Ethiopian religious traditions, not only, as pointed out earlier, by the sacred books, but also by other iconic images such as crosses, vestments and special sacred objects which are used during their ceremonies. The Ethiopian ceremonies, liturgies and festivals are like an umbilical cord to the Rasta faith. During these Rastafarian festivals, especially in the Groundation, the Rastas celebrate their Lord, prophets and spiritual leaders such as Garvey, Howell and Prince Emmanuel. On these special Rasta occasions there is a wide range of common symbols of Ethiopian Christianity, which play a vital role. The main icon is the *tabot* or the Ark of the Covenant, which symbolizes the presence of God and therefore is venerated, paid homage to, and petitioned for help. This Ark can be compared to a totem in which 'above it is carved Alpha and below Omega'[87] and embedded within it is the Mosaic Law (the tablets of Moses). The *tabot* represents for both Ethiopians and Rastas the Judaic legacy, an idol and object before which prayers are offered, hymns are sung and chanting and dancing take place. Beyond this symbol, for Rastas the Christian chalice, the incense made from their holy herb ganja or marijuana and burnt and smoked in the copper is mixed with the holy water. This is seen as a sacrament which symbolizes the body of Christ and it is a manifestation of reasoning[88] and meditation.[89] In such events

[87] Wallis E. A. Budge, *A History of Ethiopia,* vo.1, 162.
[88] Reasoning is a term used by Rastas which indicates understanding, insight and interpretation but in a spiritual sense. For further information see: Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 89

there is a spiritual meeting between the human and the otherworldly. The Rastafarians, on this particular occasion, 'pray without ceasing'[90] and the relationship achieved between soul and body represents that between the natural and supernatural worlds.

According to Afari, the role of the chalice is to establish a contact and thus to create communion with Haile Selassie I, 'The Most High and the cosmic intelligence'.[91] This ritual of smoking is also present among the Ethiopian and Egyptian monks. There is a wide range of other symbols closely connected with Ethiopian traditions and which play a crucial role in the lives of Rastas. Characteristic Rasta symbols are the colours and the flag of Ethiopia, crosses, in particular a variant of 'the ankh',[92] numbers, the lion or lioness and the rainbow, thunder and thunderbolts. The flag of Ethiopia in red, green and yellow is a symbol of African unity. The lion is found both in RastafarI and Ethiopian Christianity, a symbol of the King of Kings. There are a number of crosses which are similar to those of the Ethiopians, with minor differences. As Afari notes:

> The ankh is a variation of the cross, symbolizes life, the sacrifice of tribulation and the Power of Redemption.[93]

This wooden walking stick, also characteristic of Rastas, is similar to the Ethiopian prayer stick and it may symbolize 'support, comfort and stability'.[94] Although there are many symbols which are connected with Ethiopian tradition, with Rasta allusions to the Bible, it is uncertain whether or not they are related to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. An example is the rainbow, which identifies, as Afari states, the 'Covenant between

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[89] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 89.
[90] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 89.
[91] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 92.
[92] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 99.
[93] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 99.
[94] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 101.

humanity and the Almighty'.[95] According to biblical interpretations, the rainbow is seen traditionally as the bridge between the two worlds, the material world and the other world, and so 'between the sky and earth'.[96] This physical phenomenon includes the seven colours. Therefore RastafarI draws on these for its own system of beliefs. Although there are these similarities, it is not always easy to make the link with Ethiopia. As Afari notes, these symbols are listed in the RastafarI log, as is the symbol of the lioness, which represents the female gender, 'the Empress and Goddess, The Mother of Mothers'.[97] There is also the crown, which symbolizes the Trinity and the divine authority of 'The Most High to rule with Honour, Majesty and Righteousness, on earth as it is in heaven'.[98] Moreover, the six-pointed Star of David derives from Hebrew tradition and thus reaches RastafarI via Ethiopia, perhaps thanks to the contribution of the Queen of Sheba, who, after her meeting with Solomon, exported Judaic cultural-spiritual elements to the kingdom and incorporated them within her pagan traditions. This kinship between the Judaic and pagan elements, from which Ethiopian Christianity and then RastafarI originated, as mentioned in Chapter One, was symbolized by this woman, the Queen of Sheba. It seems paradoxical that Ethiopian Christianity and the RastafarI movement lack acknowledgement of the role of women when an oriental, pagan woman, the Queen of Sheba, was responsible for development of their faith. The Queen of Sheba's introduction may be an antidote to the prevailing chauvinistic attitude within the monotheistic world (both for the Ethiopian Christians and Rastas), however much this may contradict Rasta beliefs, which tend to exclude the role of the woman in religion. The Queen of Sheba is often identified with the Greek Athena or Roman

[95] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 97.
[96] Frédéric De Portal, *Sui Colori Simbolici: Nell'Antichità, Nel Medioevo e Nell'Età Moderna*, (Milano: Oriental Press, 2003), 7.
[97] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 99.
[98] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 100.

Minerva, the goddess of struggle, wisdom, intelligence, justice, arts and fair trade, and as also with Aphrodite or Venus, the goddess of beauty and love. Whatever her role, the Queen of Sheba appears as protector of Rasta women and she provides hope for all oppressed people by changing the view of women. The importance of the Queen of Sheba and her ideals, her achievements, her concept of freedom, and most importantly her contribution towards the emancipation of women will be discussed in Chapter Five.

For RastafarI and Judaism, the star represents perfection, equilibrium, the essence of everything, in other words, the All. Its points represent contact between human beings and the supernatural. It refers both to this material world (between the physical and spirit-soul-self), 'the earth',[99] and that transcendental world (the Being-absolute-divine), 'the heavens'.[100] Finally, the dreadlocks, the Rastafarian hair style, and the drum, are expressions of identity and are a link between RastafarI and the deity. As Afari says:

> The locks are living functional symbol and covenant of our devotion to The Most High, RASTAFARI. They are the Roots that anchor us in the Cosmic Mind, Intelligence, and Consciousness of The Most High, as well as the Antennae that connect us to the spiritual existence. In essence, the 'dread locks' is the tangible testimony, extension, identity and the manifestation of the Faith and Covenant between The RASTAFARIANS, and The Most High, JAH RASTAFARI.[101]

The locks represent the ancient roots which anchor RastafarI with Africa and Ethiopia. The locks are also the philosophical and theological paradigm of Rasta authority represented by these three figures: the wise man, the charismatic religious leader, and the possessor of spiritual-magical power, a sorcerer. The drums are used during the RastafarI festivals, and they are always accompanied by 'chants of (pra)ises, redemption

[99] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 102.
[100] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 102.
[101] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 103

and defence'[102] conferring thus stability, tranquillity and protection. The music satisfies the desire for freedom through which human beings can gain happiness, peace and serenity. The drum signifies 'the heart beat of the people'[103], the struggle for freedom, equality and dignity. This is deeply entrenched in the African-Ethiopian dream, where each man and woman is made equal (echoed in Martin Luther King's famous speech 'I have a dream…').

All ancient, traditional African-Ethiopian symbols appear to be an integral part of Rastafarian spirituality that is pivotal for its ascetic and liturgical life. RastafarI and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are very devoted to their own calendar. There is a large number of religious and cultural events which are celebrated by the Rastafarian community. The most important events are the Ethiopian Christmas on 7th January, the historic Battle of Adwa which commemorates the Ethiopian victory over Italy in 1896, the commemoration of the visit of the Negus (Haile Selassie I) to Jamaica on 21st April, 1966, the birth of Haile Selassie I on 23rd August and other special occasions. These festivals or commemorations are called 'Groundations'[104] and last for several days.[105] All the celebrations are in honour of Africa-Ethiopia, which was the homeland as well as the motherland. In such celebrations there are also special banquets of food (*I-tal* food or vegetarian), music and dancing. All the people are involved; families, relatives and friends of different classes, genders and ages gather where food is shared, prayers are offered, and chanting and dancing are performed. The role of prayer is central both

[102] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 103.
[103] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 103.
[104] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 106.
[105] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 106.

in the liturgical life and in 'RASTAFARI Livity',[106] innermost contact with the almighty, the creator.

The Symbolism of Colours in Rasta Thought

In all cultures, colours have symbolic meaning, and play a role in religious thought and art. Since ancient times, the symbolism of colour was considered an integral part of the religious life, and of spiritual significance. Polychromy has always been used in sacred art to ornament temples. The use of colour was largely determined by indigenous regulations and cultural restrictions, and in most cases some symbols were banned. As Plato in the *Laws* pointed out, in the Egyptian temples artists were prohibited from modifying some hieroglyphs which had sacred values. The symbolism of each epoch and civilisation has been influenced by the dominant religious and political ideas[107] of the times. Hindus, Egyptians, Romans and Greeks used to paint their temples, vestments and sacred objects in luminous colours instead of merely opaque or dull colours.

Symbolism of colour is closely linked to divinity and representations of the Godhead, as claimed by the French historian and archaeologist Baron Pierre Paul Frédéric de Portal in the 19th Century. In *An Essay on Symbolic Colours*: *in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times,* Portal identifies three symbolisms of colour: divine, sacred and profane. Even if Portal evokes a theological and allegorical dichotomy between god and goddess and West and East, his endeavour is to advance an open-minded theory of religious multiplicity. The symbolism of colour varies according to epoch (antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times), culture and religion. The ancient civilisations such as India,

[106] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 89.
[107] Frédéric De Portal, *An Essay on Symbolic Colours: In Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, in Three Sections, trans. by W. S. Inman, (London: John Weale, 1845), 6.

China, Egypt, Greece and Rome adopted a code of colour reflecting their own philosophies and religious beliefs. Seven colours may be identified scientifically: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red, whereas artistically we may confine ourselves to five: white, yellow, red, blue and black. For several centuries, the symbolism of colour influenced religious discourse, and is expressed in figurative and liturgical languages. For instance, as Portal reminds us, the paintings in the Egyptian temples, the portraits of Mary, Jesus Christ and the Saints in Christian Churches, the allegories and metaphors around colour found in various sacred texts such as the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta (the Persian prayer book), and above all the Bible contain and describe symbolic connections between humanity and divinity. Therefore, such allegoric interpretations define a kinship between the material and transcendental worlds. As Portal notes, the language of colour is allusive and is especially linked to the divine world.

Portal's theory can be applied to understanding the main features of Rasta symbolism, where colours play a crucial role, and can be an approach to understanding Rasta everyday life. For Rastas, colour is the expression of divinity. The choice of colour is founded principally on the Christological and Trinitarian notions of Ethiopian Christianity. Thus red represents divine love, beauty, and the struggle for human rights, and the Holy Spirit or Sanctification.[108] The Holy Spirit according to St Cyril is the fruit of the divine essence.[109] Green is seen as representing divine creation, birth and so regeneration, and thus God, who is incarnated in the Son. Yellow is the final colour in Rasta symbolism and is associated with the colour gold, though they differ in their

[108] Frédéric De Portal, *An Essay on Symbolic Colours*, vol. 2, 1.
[109] Frédéric De Portal, *An Essay on Symbolic Colours*, vol. 2, 1.

luminous intensity. Accordingly, yellow and gold are associated with divine warmth, love and especially the sun. Hence, yellow/gold is the divine light, the vital energy and the Word of God.

Portal also observes that the symbolism of colour of RastafarI might also be connected with Hindu traditions. According to Hindu philosophy, red symbolizes fire, green the earth, and blue the air. Blue in Portal's view, emanates from red and represents the ethereal fire; its signification is the '*celestial love of truth*'[110] and white indicates the truth of faith; 'it is related to the living water of the Bible; it is related to natural baptism'.[111] In his body and totality, Vishnu the supreme god represents three deities, the Hindu triad, which is akin to the Christian Trinity. This triple division represents a cyclical view of life. Shiva is the air, Vishnu's head, and so the god of fire, passion and love. He is symbolized by blue, which represents divine wisdom. As Vishnu, 'God the Creator is always coloured blue… the eternal mind, the word of God'.[112]

Similarly, a key feature of RastafarI is its colour symbolism which has its roots in Ethiopian culture. This suggests that the colours of RastafarI are not only aesthetic, but also in harmony with other religious and cultural symbols. Two more colours are added: white and black. They are the active ingredients and signify everything and also nothing, namely the absolute, the totality but also nothingness. White and black are the balance of the other colours, their measure. White and black reflect the binary opposites of light and darkness, sun and moon, male and female, good and evil, creation and destruction and so forth. Here are some examples: white signifies in religious contexts purity and eternal light. 'His vest was pure as the snow and he was covered with a white

[110] Frédéric De Portal, *An Essay on Symbolic Colours*, vol. 2, 19.
[111] Frédéric De Portal, *An Essay on Symbolic Colours*, vol. 2, 19.
[112] Frédéric De Portal, *An Essay on Symbolic Colours*, vol. 2, 18.

cloak and his hair was white and pure as wool' (Daniel, 7: 9-10). Prophets, monks and priests indeed wear white robes. White is universal, and found in the paintings, iconic images and in sacred texts such as the Bible and Hindu religious texts. For the Greeks *leuκos*, white, means gladness, cheerfulness; for the Romans *candidus* signifies purity and delight. In the Eastern cultures too, white corresponds to spirituality and signifies purity, divine knowledge. Generally, in Western civilisations, white represents the positive and darkness connotes evil. In the Greek tradition the black crow is seen as a harbinger of mourning; for the pagan Romans the black Venus is the symbol of sensual-carnal pleasure and so she represents sin; for the Jews and Christians black is associated with suffering, mourning, widowhood and death; only the icon of the black Mary symbolizes a warrior for peace who combats evil. Understandably, RastafarI distances itself from such notions. It is notable that for the Eastern cultures, especially for Egyptians, black has a positive meaning and it is perceived as the supreme beauty of the goddess, while for the Arabs black is wisdom, carefulness, and determination to overcome adversity. Therefore, on the whole, RastafarI has a positive attitude towards blackness. It represents the Godhead and synthesis and a fusion of absence and presence, everything and nothing, being strong and showing forbearance.

Festivals in RastafarI

One of the most important events celebrated by Rastas is Groundation day or *Niah Binghi* Groundation. This public festivity takes place over several days. The head (Godman) of the various RastafarI Mansions receives all Rastas and any non-Rasta visitors who are interested in attending these particular occasions. The RastafarI cultural calendar reflects its African sentiment, and during these celebrations people seek to

connect and identify with African people. They enjoy a number of RastafarI practices which contain elements of African animist and Ethiopian Christian ceremonies (prayers, chanting, drumming and music, reasoning, invocation of formulae, libations and so on).

The ritual Rasta salutation 'Irie' is an African traditional greeting. The 'Irie' is a sign of respect for each other which means 'all right, in good vibes, in harmony with the nature and the Most High'.[113] But more importantly the Irie salutation expresses the RastafarI cultural and spiritual attachment to the African Ancestors through African codes. When people meet each other in the course of a ceremony or Groundation, they raise alternatively their hands to their heart, then with bent arms bring their left elbow, and then their right elbow. They hook the little fingers of each hand together and end with a sort of tribute, shoulder against shoulder.

The *Niah Binghi* festivities (the most sacred days) are as follows:

Month and Date	Event	Nature of Celebration
January 7	Ethiopian Christmas	*Niah Binghi* Groundation; acknowledgment of Christ's life and work in harmony with Ethiopia
February (entire month)	Black History Month	*Niah Binghi* Groundation
February 6	Bob Marley's Birthday	*Niah Binghi* Groundation
March 1	Battle of Adwa	*Niah Binghi* Groundation,
March 25	Coral Gardens Incident	*Niah Binghi* Groundation, historical commemoration of Ethiopian victory over Italy (1896)
April 11-12	Empress Mennen's Birthday -	*Niah Binghi*

[113] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 119.

	Earthday (Haile Selassie I's wife)	Groundation and banquets
April 21	H.I.M. Emperor Haile Selassie I's visit to Jamaica	*Niah Binghi* Groundation
May 5	Ethiopia Victory Day (Victory over Italy – Babylon)	*Niah Binghi* Groundation
May 25	African Liberation Day	*Niah Binghi* Groundation
July 23	Rasmus (H.I.M., The Emperor's Birthday – or Earthday)	*Niah Binghi* Groundation, Celebration of Haile Selassie I's birthday (July 23, 1892)
August 1	Emancipation Day	*Niah Binghi* Groundation, celebrating emancipation, (August 1, 1834)
August 17	Marcus Garvey's Birthday (Earthday)	*Niah Binghi* Groundation, celebrating the birth of Garvey, (August 17, 1887)
October 2 – 3rd week	Heritage Week (Jamaica)	Various feasts in Jamaica
November 2	H.I.M Coronation Day	*Niah Binghi* Groundation, Coronation of Haile Selassie I as *Negusa Nagats,* King of the Kings (November 2, 1930)
December 10	International Human Rights Day	No established event as yet

Table 3. The Niah Binghi Festivities[114]

Of all the above, the most solemn days for the RastafarI movement are three: July 23, the birth of Haile Selassie I; November 2, the Coronation of Haile Selassie I; and April 21, the visit of H.I.M. (His Imperial Majesty) to Jamaica.

[114] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 119. Afari says that there is not any scheduled RastafarI event during the month of June.

Conclusion

This discussion has offered a re-reading of RastafarI in terms of comparative religion, drawing on the doctrinal interaction between two religious movements, RastafarI and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. This supports the claim that RastafarI profoundly parallels Ethiopian Christianity which is based on Monophysite doctrine. Behind this important connection with the Ethiopian Church, RastafarI is the result of a syncretistic religion and culture which blend different religious beliefs and practices which come mainly from Africa. The relationships with Ethiopia introduce the concept of returning 'home' and they reveal to RastafarI its African cultural and religious legitimacy (Afrocentricity).

Chapter Four

Rasta Talk

A Linguistic and Metaphysical Resistance

'Historiae, quicquid usquam gentium' [1](Histories of the people, whoever and wherever).

'Many religious, magical or social factors, then, combined to preserve the faithfulness of oral traditions'.[2]

Introduction

Words are signs which connect concepts to images, symbols, beliefs, worship and rituals. They are linguistic signs which 'tell' or define one's identity and thought. This chapter discusses the RastafarI language, which represents a means of liberation for the oppressed. Language is used as a technique, a way in which marginalised and subordinated people react to the ideas and values of the dominant classes. Language is thus an important tool to enter into contact with others, that is, a way to communicate with and understand people.

In the development of the RastafarI movement and the notion of Afrocentricity (to be discussed in this chapter), language plays an important role. In the history of slavery, the principal dream for Africans was freedom. Language was therefore for Rastas a means of gathering in all the Africans of the diaspora, and of reclaiming or positioning freedom as central to African experience. A key issue for scholars studying minority religious and cultural movements is the investigation of the voice of the marginalised

[1] Tacitus*, Historiae*: *Books IV- V*, *Annals: Books I-III,* transled by Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson, (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1931), V, 2-3.
[2] A. Ba Hampaté, 'The living tradition' in Zerbo, J.K., ed. *General History of Africa I: Methodology and African Prehistory,* (Heinemann: UNESCO, 1981), 167.

people. Without an open-minded view of the language of the oppressed, we might overlook a particular world: the discourse of the subordinated. Therefore this chapter seeks to define the philosophical problem of the ability to communicate between the dominant and the subalterns.

The first part of the following section is based on a socio-theoretical study of the problematic use of the suffix '–ism', specifically in 'Rastafarianism' in a negative sense, which is dissociated from its social and theological context. The second part is related to the metaphysical change of the word 'RastafarI' which is essentially expressed by a theological analysis. It thus focuses on two themes: the complex significance of '–I' in 'RastafarI, rooted in Ethiopian Christian creed (Monophysite doctrine) where Haile Selassie I is considered the One God, the Father, who was begotten before the creation of the world and is the creator of all the hosts. Finally, in the last part of the chapter the Rasta lexicon will be examined, which reflects essentially the status of a minority language within a global context. RastafarI, like other minority social and religious movements in the continuing process of social and religious integration, may contribute in theoretical terms to a better understanding of a new linguistic, cultural and spiritual diversity.

Concerning Word Change: the Suffix '-ism'

There is a certain tendency for words to acquire a negative connotation. Thus, the suffix '-ism' originally was not value-laden, but the positive or negative connotation depended on the context. The noun suffix '-ism' comes from the Greek suffix '-ismos' and from the Latin '-smus' which mean 'the act, practice or theory of', and correspond to verbs in '-ise' (alternative spelling '-ize') (e.g. 'criticize', 'monopolize', 'neutralize') and nouns and

adjectives that end in –ist/istic (activist, imperialist and militarist). From the late Middle Ages to the modern era, several artistic, literary and philosophical movements have been given the suffix '–ism' (for example Humanism, Impressionism and Romanticism). The suffix '-ism' added to nouns or word roots has become very common, and indeed the majority of European languages have adopted it. It is generally used to form nouns which describe social, political and religious beliefs, cults or doctrines, such as 'Buddh-ism', 'Catholic-ism', 'Commun-ism', 'feudal-ism', 'imperial-ism', 'liberal-ism' and 'Marx-ism'. Furthermore, the suffix '–ism' can refer to the behaviour of a person or a group of people who adhere to an ideological system, as in 'Afrocentr-ism', 'Eurocentr-ism', 'femin-ism', 'Negro-ism',[3] 'post-colonial-ism' and 'Rastafarian-ism'.

The novelist, poet and politician Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), known as the Italian *Vate* (prophet) in the Mussolini era, pointed out in one of his letters of 11 March 1881 that the suffix '-ism' was a linguistic trend in European languages.[4] A very large number of scholars (philosophers, theologians, sociologists, anthropologists and political theorists) have overused '–ism', applying it to anything,

RastafarI versus Rastafarian-ism: an Ethical Outlook

The expression 'Rastafarian-ism' might be highly problematic. Indeed, this term conjures up inevitable misrepresentations and misinterpretations for those who tend to

[3] Fanon Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by C. Farrington, (London: Penguin, 1990), 171.
[4] M. Cortellazzo and P. Zolli *Il Nuovo Etimologico: Deli, Dizionario Etimologico Della Lingua Italiana*, 2nd ed., M. Cortellazzo and M.A. Cortellazzo, eds., (Bologna, Zanichelli, 2008), 825. See also D'Annunzio, who in his letters says about Language and Philosophy: 'Discorso di filosofia. Ohibò! C'est trop simple...Ella doveva mettere un titolo più sfolgorante sonante e schiacciante: una dozzina di *ismi* perlomeno'. See also some of the letters of D'Annunzio which are collected and edited by A. Sommaruga, *Giudicatemi!,* (Firenze: Arte della Stampa, 1885) and A. Sommaruga, *Cronaca bizantina (1881-1885. Note e ricordi*), (Milano: Mondadori, 1941).

regard it as 'other'. 'Rastafarian-ism' is a discriminatory way of labelling the RastafarI world as a minority sub-group which is excluded by the dominant, colonial attitude of Babylon.[5] The term 'Rastafarian-ism' is not accepted by the Rasta community because it is considered an expression of the West and thus is used as cultural vehicle for colonial languages. According to Rasta poets and writers, the term 'Rastafarian-ism' connotes an immense distance between author (the insider) and reader (the outsider) and has been widely used by the western languages since it is relatively common and part of the 'imperial world view' (the view of Babylon). Rastas as interpreters of their phenomenon must be immersed in and live all aspects of African culture. Richard C. Salter and Ikael Tafari, in their essay 'Rastafarianism' in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Linsday edition),[6] argue that the Rastafar-*I* [writer's emphasis] literature often comes from 'outside' speakers and interpreters rather than the Rasta communities themselves (Rasta voices from an 'inside' position), although nowadays there are key figures (poets, writers and scholars) of Rastafarian literature, such as Benjamin Zephaniah and Yasus Afari, and women such as Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah, Imani Nyah, Lake Obiagele, Laloo Sister and Maureen Rowe. Although there have been several misunderstandings and controversies regarding the Rasta phenomenon, now both the 'inside' and 'outside' positions have led to a reasonably empathetic approach to the 'phenomenon'. The Rasta talk model could be considered the archetype of alternative and ecstatic language for new minority groups which manifest their emotions and generate collective behaviour and belief. This may be a more phenomenological understanding, which encompasses the integral meaning of 'RastafarI', proposing it as a metaphysical and symbolic word which is present in the Monophysite doctrine as discussed in Chapter Two. Indeed, for

[5]Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), x.
[6] Richard C. Salter and Tafari Ikael, 'Rastafarianism', in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 7622-7629.

Rasta people, the term 'Rastafarian-ism' is negative and ignores the metaphysical and cultural change of 'RastafarI'.

Changing the Meaning of Words into the Divinity: Who is Ras Tafari?

In Chapter Three we have described the link between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the RastafarI through the Ethiopian Monophysite doctrine. Continuing this doctrinal relation, here the native idiomatic expression of the word 'RastafarI' will be interpreted. The matter of RastafarI identity is associated with the word itself. 'RastafarI' is the favoured name used by the Rasta people and has a symbolic meaning. The word is made up of the title 'Ras' which literally means in Amharic 'duke', 'prince' and 'head', and the baptismal name 'Tafari' which signifies 'he who inspires awe'. Ras Tafari was born in 1892 near the city of Harrar in Ethiopia, and was crowned Haile Selassie I in 1930. He was the founder of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Patriarchate in Addis Ababay (in the middle of the twentieth century), and the last Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Emperor.[7] In the ancient Semitic language, also referred to as Ethiopic or Ge'ez,[8] the name 'Haile Selassie' signifies the power of the Trinity. For the Ethiopians he is H.I.M. (His Imperial Majesty), and for Rastas H.I.M. is considered to be Jah of Ethiopia.

Attention will be focussed on the ending and changeable letter 'I', which, on the one hand, symbolizes the high status of the king as the first (I°- I); and on the other hand,

[7] Haile Selassie I was deposed on 12th September 1974 and his eldest son Amha Selassie (1916-1997) was appointed King of Ethiopia (he became 'Crown Prince Asfaw Wossen Taffari of Ethiopia' in 1930) until the abolition of the Monarchy in 1975. Amha was proclaimed Emperor of Ethiopia in 1989, during his exile in London. The Selassie royal family never returned to Ethiopia.

[8] The origin of the Ge'ez language goes back to around the 10th century BCE, the time of the Queen of Sheba. Ge'ez is the language of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia and Eritrea, which formed the kingdom of Aksum. This language is still spoken in the liturgies of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church.

can be associated with Rasta belief in the ineffable name of Haile Selassie I, whom they consider to be a God (YHWH). In two rare Syriac manuscripts with 27 illustrations, the *Book of Protection: Being a Collection of Charms*[9], the Ring (or Seal) of King Solomon (§ 41) contains a list of 29 names of divinities along with a list of kings, governors, supporters, protectors and deliverers. The texts were written in Eṣṭ rangelā (a Syriac script), dated 1802-3, and translated into English at the beginning of the twentieth century by Professor Sir Hermann Gollancz (1852 – 1930). They describe the history of Syriac magic, its origin and its development (the pronunciation of charms, incantations, amulets and exorcism). This anthology contains a series of prayers for protection. Its contents are very similar to the Ethiopian *Book of Life;* in fact, each chapter contains the phrase 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost'. It is interesting to note that the term Jah, 'the Eternal', is found written on the Seal of Solomon. Inside the ring are inscribed the letters YHWH, the great name of God, the Lord, and the Almighty. This links to the Rastafarian use of Jah as the name of Haile Selassie I, the living God. For Rastas, the name of God is Jah or Yah which is the diminutive of the word JHWH or YHWH, formed of the four Hebrew letters Yod, He, Waw and He 'I AM THAT I AM' (Exodus 3:14). The name 'YHWH' was also used by Solomon as a means of protection against demons.[10] Jews, Syrians, Arabs and Ethiopians believe that the Ring of Solomon had magical and medicinal powers. According to the Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast* (the Glory of Kings), in which the love story between the Queen of Sheba (known as Makeda by Ethiopians) and Solomon appears, it is said that Solomon gave his ring to Makeda as a sign of their love and commitment:

[9] Hermann Gollancz, *The Book of Protection: Being a Collection of Charms,* (London: Henry Frowde & Oxford University Press, 1912).
[10] Wallis E. A. Budge, T*he Bandlet of Righteousness*, xi.

> And Solomon took her aside so that they might be alone together, and he took off the ring that was upon his little finger and gave it to the Queen, and said unto her: 'Take this ring so that thou mayest not forget me; and if it happens that I obtain seed from thee, this ring shall be unto it as a sign; and if it shall be a man-child he shall come to me, and the peace of God be with thee! Whilst I was sleeping with thee I saw many visions in a dream, and it seemed as if a sun had risen upon Israel, but it snatched itself away and flew off and lighted up the country of Ethiopia; maybe the country shall be blessed through thee; God knoweth...[11]

In an interpretation offered by Rastas, it is suggested that Haile Selassie I was not just a King but was descended from the Solomonic lineage, the 225th direct descendant of King Solomon who sat on the Throne of David. On November 2nd 1930 in St. George's Cathedral, Addis Ababa, Ras Tafari Makkonen was proclaimed as Haile Selassie I ('Might of the Holy Trinity'), King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God. Haile Selassie I was for Rastas beyond doubt a king of the dynasty of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba,[12] who ruled in Ethiopia, and is the symbol 'I', the last Rastafarian letter, which represents 'I and I', the third entity. As Ras Michael claims, in an interview with William Spencer published in *Dread Jesus*, 'You see, no God is ever one. Three in one'.[13] Such a theological identification between Jah and Jesus Christ ('*Iyesus* in Amharic) can be linked to the metaphysical foundations of the Monophysite doctrine which understands Christ the Messiah as having one divine nature. Christ is both perfect divinity and human being. The divine and human nature are in an indivisible state of union without separation, confusion and change. The Jungian psychologist Barbara Black Koltuv observes in her book *Solomon & Sheba: Inner Marriage and Individuation* that the Solomonic kings 'were also Gods, since

[11] Manuel E. Brooks, *The Kebra Nagast (The Glory of Kings)*, trans. and ed., (Kingston, Jamaica: LMH, 2001), 33.
[12] Furthermore see: 'King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country' (1 Kings 10:13).
[13] William David Spencer, *Jesus Dread,* 37.

Christ was descended from Solomon, and he was the Son of God'.[14] This statement implies the divine mystery of a God-King. Hence, Haile Sellassie I is a 'kinsman of God', Son and God of Ethiopia, in which his physical nature is consubstantial with the Father and the Son.

Furthermore, 'I' in the Rastafarian discourse is 'I and I' and is the coexistence of and the relation between God and the world, God and human beings, and God and his Son (Jesus Christ). In *Rastaman,* Ernest E. Cashmore points out that

> I and I is an expression to totalize the concept of oneness, the oneness of two persons. So God is within all of us and we're one people in fact. The bond of Ras Tafari is the bond of God, of man. But man itself needs a head and the head of man is His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia.[15]

This is expressed by the colloquial use of the letter ′n' which signifies 'and'. According to the Monophysite doctrine, Ras Tafari can be considered a 'second' Jesus Christ, 'the One Incarnate Nature of God the Word' born from the womb of the Virgin Mary. Christ and thus Ras Tafari, according to the Monophisite theory of the hypostatic union, were no longer of two natures. The divine and human natures were made one (Tewahedo). In fact, after the incarnation, the two natures became one and Ras TafarI is hence one person with one nature.

[14] Barbara B. Koltuv, *Solomon & Sheba: Inner Marriage and Individuation*, (York Beach, ME: Nicholas-Hays, 1993), 36.
[15] Ernest Cashmore, *Rastaman*, 67.

The Ethiopian manuscript which came into the possession of the British Library, the *Lefâfa Sedek,*[16] the *Book of Life* (*the Bandlet of Righteousness: An Ethiopian Book of the Dead),* edited in English by Edward Budge, was written in the sixteenth century in Ethiopic (Ge'ez) by an Ethiopian Orthodox monk. This manuscript contains both Christian and pagan traditions. It is considered by the Ethiopians to be a talisman which includes the secret and magical names of God(s) – similar to those quoted in the *Book of Protection* - and the Persons of the Trinity. It relates that Jesus Christ appeared on the sixteenth day of the month *Yakâtît* (February) to Mary when she was in the 'Garden' (Paradise). [17] At this time, the Lord gave the *Book of Life* and revealed the secret names of the Lord, who is God. The Scriptures say, 'I will write upon him my new name' (Revelation 3:12), and, 'Another book was opened, which is the book of life' (Revelation 20:12). Indeed, such names were apparently uttered by Christ to the Virgin Mary (Dengal Maryam, the Covenant of Mercy). All sections of the *Lefâfa Sedek* begin with the words 'In the name of the Father, of the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God', which is said to have been written by God before the divine mystery of the incarnation. The *Lefâfa Sedek* and the *Book of Protection* include a large number of biblical references; indeed, there is a wide use of scriptural words, phrases and metaphors. The Book of Revelation and the *Book of Life* together with the *Kebra Negas,* play a formative role in Rastafarian thinking. Rasta people, especially the EWF, find these books the legal sources for their spirituality.

So we may ask who Ras Tafari (Haile Selassie I) is. He is the person - in three co-eternal persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - made of the same substance as

[16] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Bandlet of Righteousness,* 21. 'Lefâfa' comes from the word 'lifâfah', a noun derived from the root 'laffa' which signifies 'to wrap up', 'to twine', and 'to bandage'. This became 'lefâfa' meaning 'bandage', 'bandlet' or 'wrapping' in Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Bandlet of Righteousness,* 21.
[17] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Bandlet of Righteousness*, 21.

God (three in one and one in three –the formula of the Trinity). He is a mediator between God and *'man'*[18] where his hypostasis (human-divine) is combined in one nature. He is the *logos* (λόγος) – the reason, the mind, the Word of God who through his own intrinsic *phronesis* (wisdom) has taken over human nature, which is not inseparable from his reason (human nature conjoined with divine nature). In fact, in the Rasta Monophysite sense, the being of Ras Tafari is identified as 'I and I', human and divine. Therefore, the divinity of Ras Tafari can be expressed as follows: firstly, he is the Lord (Christ) who is a god; secondly, there is only one god that is God; and thirdly, H.I.M. Haile Selassie I is this one God. He is God and eternal because he is Logos. His Logos has existed with God from eternity.

The Magic Ring or Circle of Solomon and the Divine Mystery of the Word *Abracadabra*

There are also pagan features inRasta thought which stem from Ethiopian religious traditions. Ethiopian Christianity, like Egyptians Christianity, has magical names (secret names) of God. These names are contained in the Ethiopian manuscript the *Lefafa Sedek* which will be described in Chapter Eight. In this manuscript, the Ethiopians borrowed the Gnostic names and amulets from Greek magical papyri of the third and fourth century.

[18] When the writer refers to the word 'man' she would like to criticize the masculine and discriminative (andro-centred) aspect of western and non-western literature. For example, Italian culture is often andro-white-age-centred; a large number of words encompass the male traits of the socio-political-economic and religious context that is Italy (a patriarchal, hegemonic and divisive system). Given this consideration, the writer would like to employ a feminist category based on the word *autocoscienza* which in her view re-locates the position of the woman and sees each woman as a human being. In doing so, she invokes the theory of androgyny (Greek *andro* or male and *gyn* or female), according to which all are neither female nor male, neither white nor black, but persons.

As with Gnostic amulets, so also upon Ethiopian amulets (such as the Ring of Solomon) it seems that there was written the word *abracadabra* which had magical, medicinal and secret powers. It is said that twenty-nine magical names were written on the Ring of Solomon including the title of Pantheus, Yah (Jah) or Horus. The word *abracadabra* first appears in one of the poems of the Roman physician Quintus Serenus Sammonicus (third century C.E.), *De Medicina Praecepta Saluberrima*. This formula was applied to all the diseases of that time and was uttered by him as a healing remedy, both preventative and medicinal, for the Roman Emperor Caracalla (198-217 C.E.). Subsequently, *abracadabra* became a word of mystic meaning found in Gnostic texts and in Greek magical papyri written in the archaic, biblical Greek language known as *Koiné*,[19] a spoken language or dialect, and in Coptic. In oral religious traditions, the word *abracadabra* was applied to invoke benign spirits against evil and also prevent disease. The word had magical value and was spoken to address deities and spirits. This powerful spell was written as follows:

A - B - R - A - C - A - D - A - B - R - A
A - B - R - A - C - A - D - A - B - R
A - B - R - A - C - A - D - A - B
A - B - R - A - C - A - D - A
A - B - R - A - C - A - D
A - B - R - A - C - A
A - B - R - A - C
A - B - R - A
A - B - R
A - B
A [20]

[19]The *Koiné* was the spoken Alexandrian, Hellenic, and Macedonian language (in first three centuries C.E.), used and spread by the armies of Alexander the Great. This was also the first language of the New Testament, of the Bible and of the Judaic Scriptures. For further details see Francis Thomas Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, vol. I: *Phonology,* (Milano: 1976), 68-70. See also Geoffrey Horrocks, *Greek, A History of the Language and its Speaker,* (Longman, 1997), 87, 105-109.

[20] Serenus Quintus Sammonicus, *De Medicina Praecepta Saluberrima,* (Amstelodami: Apud Petrum van den Berge, 1662), 275-276.

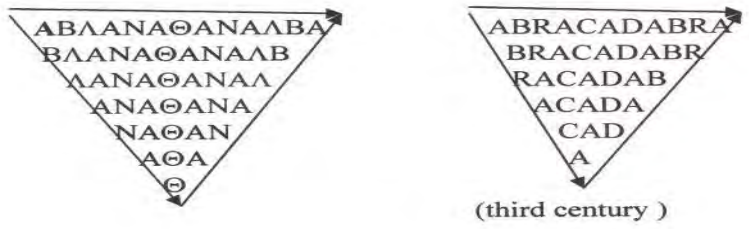


Fig. 8. *Abracadabra*[21]

As can be seen, the word *abracadabra* is written in the form of an equilateral triangle, which represents the number three. Interestingly, in the top diagram each letter follows a diagonal path so that the top line forms the word *abracadabra*, with all other lines showing decreasing parts of the word. Moreover, the word *abracadabra* might be associated with the Rastafarian/Ethiopian symbols of the pentacle and hexagon star, in which is written the name of God (YHWH or JHWH –Yah or Jah).

Beatriz Barba De Pina Chán states in her essay 'Spells' that the Gnostics of North Africa, for instance, made abundant use of talismans and incantations. Two words in particular have survived to this day: *abraxas* and *abracadabra.* The word *abraxas* represents the supreme deity and his supreme power. Numerically (if $a = 1$, $b = 2$, $r = 100$, $a = 1$, $x = 60$, $a = 1$, $s = 200$) it adds up to 365, or the number of days in the solar year, the cycle of divine action. This word derives from the Aramaic 'Avreiq ad havra' ('Hurl thunderbolts to darkness') which was used to invoke the aid of the supreme spirits[22]. The word was carved into stone as a talisman and thought to be a protective

[21] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Bandlet of Righteousness*, x.
[22] Beatriz Barba De Pina Chan, 'Spells' in *Encyclopedia of Religion,* Lindsay Jones, ed., vol. 13, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan, 2005), 8678.

device. Written as an inverted triangle, with one fewer letter in each successive line, it was considered a powerful talisman.

By associating each letter with a number, Beatriz Barba De Pina Chán makes reference to the ancient alphabet of the *Koine* of the Hellenic period. It has twenty-four main letters plus other archaic letters stemming from Egyptian hieroglyphics (stigma □, coppa ϙ, sampi ϡ) as follows:

α	alpha	1	ι	iota	10	ρ	rho	100
β	beta	2	κ	kappa	20	σ	sigma	200
γ	gamma	3	λ	lambda	30	τ	tau	300
δ	delta	4	μ	mu	40	υ	upsilon	400
ε	epsilon	5	ν	nu	50	φ	phi	500
ϛ	stigma	6	ξ	xi	60	χ	chi	600
ζ	zeta	7	ο	omicron	70	ψ	psi	700
η	eta	8	π	pi	80	ω	omega	800
θ	theta	9	ϙ	coppa	90	ϡ	sampi	900

Table 4 [23] - The Greek alphabet with Numerical Equivalents

Using the above Greek alphabet with the numeric equivalents, it can be deduced that:

1. *Abraxas* corresponds to

   α (1) + β (2) + ρ (100) + α (1) + ξ(60) + α (1) + σ (200) = 365.

   3+6+5 = 14 and 1+4 = 5 (the natural number five of the Solomonic pentacle);

2. *Abracadabra* corresponds to

α (1) + β (2) + ρ (100) + α (1) + χ (600) + α (1) + δ (4) + α (1) + β (2) + ρ (100) + α (1) = 813, and 8+1+3 = 12, and 1+2 = 3 (the natural number three of an equilateral

[23] For further information see the thesis of A. Montanari on Greece, which is in part published online by the University of Ferrara, Italy at the following website: http://web.unife.it/altro/tesi/A.Montanari/grecia.htm.

triangle made up of the word *abracadabra* and which represents the Trinity). Given the arithmetical relationships between words and numbers, each written word has its respective natural number. Hence the word *abracadabra* has a mathematical equivalent of 813, which gives the natural number three, the number of perfection.

In religion, people have always used words and phrases with many occult meanings; these may be spells used to invoke or stave off evil, or may be applied to treat illness. The expression 'abracadabra' has several esoteric significances: first, it may relate to the persons of the Trinity; second, it can be linked to the word 'abraxas' or 'abrax'[24], which represents the Supreme Divine Being who created the world; third, it may be associated with Solomon's gold ring which had a bezel made of a magical stone, which bore the name of God, YHWH (in square Hebrew letters) as appearing in the Pentacle Star and the Star of David, which may be associated with the RastafarI Jah, Haile Selassie I. It is also significant that, for the Gnostic tradition, Jesus Christ was regarded as a sort of living 'phantom' (one nature), the emanation of *Abrax* (the Great God). God has created his secret names and attributes. Such a vision is also present both in Monophysite doctrine and in the Rasta religious sensibility, which respectively see Christ's and Ras Tafari's bodies as a creation of senses (the monist assumption), having no substantive essence or reality. For Monophysitism and RastafarI both Christ and Ras Tafari were considered to be one person, who before the union were of two natures but who after the union of divinity and humanity in the Incarnation became of one nature[25]. But H.I.M. (Haile Selassie I) is also considered by Rastas as the Power of the Trinity. 'You see, no

[24] The term 'abrax' was conceived by a Gnostic movement of Alexandria, the Basilidean, founded by Basilides in the second century C.E. Abrax is the Supreme God along with 365 divinities which correspond to each day of year. See Beatriz Barba De Pina Chan, 'Spells', 8678.
[25] John Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies,* 335. See also Council of Constantinople, *Sessio* VII, (Mansi, *Concilia*, VI, 744).

God is ever one. Three in one',[26] as the Rasta Ras Michael claims, in an interview reported by William Spencer in *Dread Jesus.* Such an identification of *abracadabra* with Haile Selassie I is a key reading of the metaphysical foundations of Rasta doctrine which sees Christ the Messiah as being one nature (one God) and three persons ('In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God'). Rastas hold that the esoteric power of the word Jah produces these symbols: the seal of the Trinity, the equilateral triangle (with the base at the top), and the five-pointed star.

Defining Rasta Language (Rasta Talk)

Rasta Talk, is known as the 'I and I' or 'InI'/'I&I' (or 'Iyaric'). [27] This is a concept which philosophically, theologically and culturally may refer to the Ethiopian notion of Tewahedo (one in all and all in one). The mix of Patwa with Amharic produces its own language ('I and I'), a hybrid language. Although 'I' is in English a singular pronoun, it may be used by Rastas, according to the context, in a plural form. The use of 'I and I' has become a predominant echo in the Rasta language. Moreover, Rastas take a radical position: they assume that the languages of the colonialists, of Babylon, cannot be neutral and transparent means of representation of the realities of social, cultural, ethnic and religious minorities, but are on the contrary in the service of the interests of the dominant groups, not the 'others'. RastafarI deconstructs the language of Babylon and therefore offers its distinctive style and mode of communication in which African thought is central.

[26] William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus,* 37.
[27] 'Iyaric' is a word that indicates the Rastafari language and which challenges the colonial language imposed by Babylon. It is formed by a combination of 'Iya' (higher) and the Ethiopian Amharic spoken by Haile Selassie I (HIM).

RastafarI began to examine the impact of the Jamaican-English local language on its own language to seek to accommodate their belief systems. Language is intrinsically and directly connected to the nature and spirituality (*livity*) of people. It is the psychological picture of their reality. Words are not abstract or fixed notions of things but reside in and change with the subject in action. According to Rastas, language is not separated from their way of living and expresses their relationship to God. Rastas' language reflects their emotions, attitudes, thoughts and beliefs. Through language, RastafarI emancipates itself and perceives the self, life and the world.[28] It is the manifestation of their common ideas and is a form of provocation to the dominant ideology. By using language, one identifies and watches oneself in action in daily life. In fact language does not exist simply as something artificial or abstract, apart from the continually active individual, but language is the way in which the individual understands that he or she exists through the fact he or she thinks, feels and performs, or 'speaks out'.

Over the years the RastafarI community has created its own vocabulary or lexicon which is distinct from the conventional languages existing within the Rastas' context as a form of capital for the 'downpressor' (the oppressor, the dominant class or Babylon). For Rastas, the culture and ideology of colonialism has eliminated the ordinary or vernacular language. RastafarI has therefore created its own language as a revolutionary tool to confront the hegemonic ideology within which the cultural and social control mechanisms of Babylon operate. The dominant groups use a language which determines the way they perceive the world. Rastas therefore need to respond by developing an

[28] Rex Nettleford, 'Discourse on Rastafari Reality' in *The Rastafari Reader: Chanting Down Babylon*, by Nathaniel S. Murrell, William D. Spencer and Adrian A. McFarlane, eds., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 313.

original, new spiritual language, adding new words and giving different meanings to the existing vocabulary.

For Rastas, language is considered a means to communicate with the natural and supernatural worlds, and as a form to shape and determine their thinking. The Rasta language is based on Jamaican Creole or *Patwa/Patwah* (French 'patois') which is the vernacular language of Jamaica. Jamaican Creole (JC) is traditionally considered the tongue of the poor 'black people'. The education system uses the Standard English of the middle class, in whose homes the use of Jamaican Creole is punishable.[29] For Rastas, Patwa is the ideological source of inspiration which reflects RastafarI thinking and religious views, and is thus a manifestation of their common culture. The Rasta lexicon includes some words from Amharic, the language of Ethiopia. Rasta Talk has now replaced English as the language of the younger generation in Jamaica.

The Speech of RastafarI

For Rastas language should be a neutral means of representation, and should not serve the interests of Babylon. Generally to integrate into a community, people must follow the common, dominant conventions, and their minority culture may cease to be relevant. In this process of adaptation and/or acculturation, people are not respected and appreciated on the basis of what they know and think or how they act and express themselves, but are classified on their mastery of the dominant language. Therefore, the minority speakers are homogenized and domesticated and thus forced thus to speak as the hegemonic structures, organizations and societies demand.

[29] Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk*, 4.

In the light of this, RastafarI develops a revolutionary language of liberation-redemption. Regarding the principle of self-determination in language, RastafarI has formulated a number of important controversial questions. What constitutes a majority? Who are the dominant and the dominated? First of all, much of RastafarI's observation is closely connected to their social and political ideas, which seek to build their dissident creative culture. Secondly, the Rastafarian theoretical critique has been influential in anti-western ideas. Their beliefs are the basis of the non-western philosophies of socio-political revolution which look critically at world economics, politics and religions. For RastafarI, the global world generates legislative systems which fix the mainstream languages (European), political thought, and beliefs[30], rather than meet and interact with other 'sub-groups' or 'subalterns', minority ethnic groups and the marginalized. Finally, RastafarI analysis examines the complex matter of languages and how they change. This has led the author to formulate basic questions such as: what is language of Rasta Talk and where are its origins? Using linguistic analysis, the following have been considered: first, the history and the usage of alternative languages, for example Rasta Talk; second, how Rasta people speak; third, how these unconventional languages are systematically classified by syntax and pronunciation; and finally how the dialects and other symbolic linguistic forms have grown up beside the dominant languages (those of Babylon).

For Rastas, language is the most essential and concrete value which gives them dignity. This is the archetype of their imaginative liberation from colonial servitude, positioning

[30] RastafarI argues that historically the six dominant religions (Buddh-ism, Christianity, Hindu-ism, Juda-ism, Sikh-ism, and Islam) are like the G6, the six major countries which have dominated global politics and economics. In RastafarI talk, such an idea corresponds also to the six systems in Babylon - the Vatican, the neo-colonial oppressive powers of Europe and America, the western world, the police and white society.

it as a process of recovery, decolonization and profound dialogue with their African ancestors. Rasta Talk reflects its recuperative role, which highlights the Rastas' cultural and spiritual imagination. Rastas have argued that that their language is closely connected to the languages spoken by native Ethiopian and Caribbean people and is the most effective form of resistance for Africans. In this dispute Rastas develop and produce a new form of discursive confrontation and dialogue with the official language, English. RastafarI attempts to invent a people's language which is a pivotal defensive tool for those who live at the margins. The degree to which Rasta talk will be a language of the community depends on how it is used naturally and by whom. The new language will not appear as a functional development or experience of colonialism, but will be used as a vehicle of local experience, the cultural capital through which learners and speakers inevitably absorb what the culture teaches. This defies the normal situation, in which speakers tend to assimilate the language of the dominant class.

Rethinking the Phrase 'Blackheart Men versus White Men'

To discover the meaning of a word, it is usual to consult a common source, the dictionary. It is assumed that the definition given by the dictionary is valid since it is always expected to be neutral and objective. But the meanings of word are multiple, depending on location and user. Words may also mask the prejudices of a society. For example, if we take the words 'black and white', and look them up in a dictionary, we see that these terms have different meanings. The concepts of black and white generally refer to colour. Furthermore black and white are irreducibly two principles in opposition. However, these terms are not neutral, and may indicate a judgement. 'Black' and its opposite 'white' are used in a political sense and may be used to express the

status of the speaker's own group. It is crucial to recognize that such labels still operate in our societies and it is difficult to assess how these words serve or do not serve the interests of a particular perspective; the judgement of what is black and what is white is always relative and in the eyes of the beholder.

The Cuban-American post-colonialist theologian and specialist in social ethics, Miguel A. De La Torre, discusses critically the theme of blackness and whiteness in his book *Reading the Bible from the Margins*. Through a re-reading of various academic dictionaries (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Webster's New World College Dictionary* and *Roget's Super Thesaurus*), he argues that the words 'black' and 'white' are often used to contrast two cultures with each other. The word 'black' brings up a long list of negative definitions and synonyms. 'Black' is defined as 'soiled', 'dirty', 'evil', 'cheerless', 'depressing', 'sad', 'miserable', 'disastrous' and 'harmful'. Furthermore 'black' can imply 'diabolic', 'satanic' and 'nefarious' (evil and black magic). For 'white' the meanings are quite the opposite: 'morally and spiritually pure', 'honest', 'honourable' and 'wise'. Other positive connotations are 'sunny', 'bright', 'illuminated' and 'angelic' (the saints, the Holy Spirit). According to post-colonialist thinking, these contrasting definitions and connotations reveal political, cultural and religious prejudices. De La Torre seeks to illustrate this with examples from different cultural contexts. He argues that the culture of the dominant has controlled the lives of non-western indigenous populations (the poor and the oppressed), which have been and still are living on the margins of our societies. According to De La Torre

> the plight of the poor, trapped in the ghettos and *barrios* of this wealthy nation, is due to the inferiority associated with their darker skin

> pigmentation…Blackness becomes the colour of all that is wrong: laziness, poverty, the welfare state, and sin.[31]

Similarly, the Martinican Frantz Fanon claims in *Black Skin*, *White Mask* that

> to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that is the language.[32]

Language poses different problems: the problem of communication and meaning amongst participants from different cultures and thus between the sender, the writer, the native and the receiver, the reader, the non-native. Recognising this anti-colonial tendency, is it possible for the subaltern Rastas to resist Babylon? Rastas have developed and applied their 'black' literary resistance and protest against 'white people'. RastafarI language is the language of the poor. The central feature of such a resistant literature in the RastafarI movement emerges mainly from their lexico-grammatical possibilities (Rasta cultural transformation), which are at the heart of Rasta lyrics, music, poetry, prayers and symbols. Rasta talk has been spread around the world through the reggae music of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Jimmy Cliff, which expresses social and cultural protest.

RastafarI has created its own lexical or semantic changes and thus an alternative dictionary. The Caribbean scholar Velma Pollard in *Dread Talk* has divided the language of RastafarI into three groups in relation to the English language, as follows:

Category I In which the items bear new meanings
e.g., 'chalice' = pipe for smoking ganja

Category II In which the words bear the weight of their phonological implications.

[31] Miguel A. De La Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 15.
[32] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*, translated by Charles Lam Markham, (New York: Grove, 1952), 38.

e.g., 'downpress' = oppress

Category III /ai/ 'I' words
i. Pronominal function, e.g., 'I', 'I-man' = I; me
ii. Initial syllables as replacement, e.g., 'I-lalu' = callaloo[33]

For example the word 'chalice' in Rasta Talk signifies pipe for smoking 'ganja' or 'colly weed' (marijuana) during worship. 'Dread' is central in the Rasta lexicon. It refers to Rasta hair ('dreadlocks') but more than this, it is very close to the feelings of Rastas. 'Dread', in fact, is the emotion of one who suffers and is in tribulation. But 'dread' can also be a positive term which is a vehicle of energy and spirituality. Pollard demonstrates that the language of RastafarI should be understood in terms of Jamaican social and religious history.

The expression 'Babylon' refers to the Western-dominated colonial system ('the alligators ruling', the white colonialists and imperialists). A similar term which also indicates Babylon is the 'Pharaoh world' (the neo-colonial international world ruled by the Europeans, Lucifer, the Pope, the Mafia, the 'vampire system', the 'white lie') of the white, evil, colonialists.

In addition we have a further list of Rasta terms. The noun 'downpressor' serves to indicate 'oppressor'. The word 'Woeman or Woo-man' and means woman ('woe to man'). 'Patwa' corresponds to 'patois'. 'Ya' or 'Yah' is here and means God. 'Merry-macka' is the place of injustice, and is also regarded as a racist term in America. 'Batican' is the residence of the Pope in Rome. 'Brethren' indicates brothers or members of the movement. 'Politricks' is the system of trickery within political organisations.

[33] Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk*, 72.

'Queen-dom' is the state of colonialism ruled by queen or king. 'Je-sus' or 'Yesus' is Christ (the Messsiah). 'Jahovah or Jah' is God, the Supreme divinity, the Almighty. 'X' is the symbol for wrongness and incorrectness. In the third category indicated above Rastas use the pronoun 'I' to mean oneself, but it is used together with another 'I', becoming 'I n I' or I & I'. It refers to human existence in harmony with the other people and the environment. This 'I' prefixes words such as 'I-lalu' (the callaloo which is a variety of Jamaican spinach); 'I-tal' (natural food, vegan and not salty); 'I-tes hail' (a greeting or salute); 'I-real' (the elect of Jah).[34]

The Rasta Lexicon or Rasta Talk

Yasus Afari[35] in his book gives the following instances of Rasta Talk:

- Appreci-love: regard with genuine love and affection; appreciate and estimate worth
- Ascendant(s): offspring, rising towards zenith
  Descendant(s): person or thing that comes from another
- Bati-can: papal state in Rome
  Vatican: Pope's palace
- Boo-York or New York: city in US
- Blind-garette : cigarette or cancer-stick or pope stick
- Bobby-wrong or Babylon: global system of colonisation and its neo-colonial organisations
- Chalwah or chalice: Rasta pipe for offering incense but also the Eucharistic wine cup
- Crownation or Coronatio: ceremony of historic Crowning of His Imperial Majesty (H.I.M.) – November 2, 1930

[34] For all the Rasta words quoted above please see Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 115-125. See also Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk,* 72.
[35] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari,* 115-124.

- Curry-dun(g)tion or corruption: any form of pollution; physical and moral deterioration
- Dawta or daughter: female member of family; woman who is the spiritual and intellectual product of another person
- Deadas or meat: dead animal flesh used as food (excluding fish and poultry)
- Down-pression or down-press (oppression): use of political, economic and social forces to control and subjugate people
- Dread-nut or coconut: tropical palm tree; the liquid is used by Rastas to prepare their food
- Free-realm or freedom: non-slavery, liberty and self-determination
- Frienemy or hypocrite: hypocritical friend; pretender
- Full-joy and enjoy: take pleasure; felicity and giving joy
- Full-ticipate or partecipate: wholehearted involvement; have share in and take part in
- Goody or body: human being or form as temple of H.I.M.
- Gova-ment: government system
- Hail-up or greeting: majestic greeting of salutation from the heart and soul
- I and I (We): the source of the Rasta existence and the harmony of the movement as a group of people; the royal We; I and you; the other persons
- Ibbage: cabbage
- I-come: mango
- Idren or brethren: brother; close male member of the RastafarI movement in religious terms
- Ilabash : calabash
- Illaoo : callaoo; green leafy vegetable similar to spinach
- Imato: tomato
- Incient: ancient; before fall of Roman Empire
- Initate : meditate; contemplate to gain access to knowledge and overstanding

- Initrate: penetrate; pass through; imbue
- Iniversity: university, institution of learning and teaching; the universe (Iniverse)
- Ipa: pepper
- Irie: all right; in good vibes; in harmony with nature and the H.I.M.
- Iserve: observe; take notice of
- ISES: praises; glorification; to commend H.I.M.
- I-shents: incense; herbal incense (ganja) offered to H.I.M. in ISES
- Ism: folly in doctrine, practice or ideology; unwise conduct or idea ('ism' is defined as a negative expression and is represented by the Western languages)
- Is-real : the Elect of Jah, the Jews; the inhabitants of State of Israel
- I-story: history; the study of African people (the 'black' people)
- I-tal: food (natural); vegetarian with lack of salty taste; vital state of being
- Ites: greeting; salutation of the highest order
- JAH (RASTAFARI): God (Jahovah or Jah); the Supreme Divine Source; the Almighty; the Most High; the Deity
- Jah-mek-ya: Jamaica; Jah-made-here, so the positive side of Jamaica
- Jam-down: Jamaica, but the negative aspect
- JES-US or YES-US (Christ or Kristos): the Messiah (the Black Christ)
- King-man: husband
- King-realm: spiritual reign of Jah
- Livet: natural food to preserve the body as a temple; ital (vital)
- Livicate: dedicate; devote; loyalty and integrity
- Livity: the natural and divine way to preserve life and culture
- Merry-macka: racism; the thorn of injustice
- Mussessity: necessity; of vital importance; indispensable

- Overstand: understand; perceive the meaning; have good insight
- Po-lice: police; violent force of downpression or injustice; the perverted force of control
- Poli-tricks: politics; system of trickery
- Pople: people composing Babylon
- Queen-dom: the system of Babylon and colonialist state which is governed by queen and/or king
- Raspect: respect; regard with esteem and courtesy
- Satta: relax; be calm
- Sip: soup; liquid made from vegetables (ital liquid)
- Spliff: small cylinder of finely cut narcotic herbs (ganja) rolled in paper for smoking
- Systren or sistren: close female family member; sister
- Wisman: prudence; being wise; wisdom
- Woo-man: adult female in harmony with the male
- X(ex): wrong; mistake; symbol of Babylon
- Yood or yude: substance taken into the body to maintain life and growth
- Yook: cook; prepare natural food
- Zum: move quickly.

Rasta Talk is one of the creative and revolutionary minority languages of the African-Caribbean context. Despite its marginal situation, Rasta Talk has become influential in the wider Rasta world and some words have had a great impact on reggae music, the music of the soul.

Conclusion

Language is the expression of religious sense of RastafarI. It is on the one hand connected with Ethiopian ceremonies, practices and traditions, and on other hand, for Rastas, it is related to a vehicle of social, cultural and religious liberation from the West (Babylon), and to its bond with 'home' (Africa). As a form of social protest, language can operate in subtle semantic ways; its ability and power is in the nature of its vocabulary, which is created by a group who live in specific social and cultural situations. This has been shown here in the way in which the marginalised Rastas have managed to develop and express themselves via a new linguistic and social code where they find their knowledge, power and control. Rasta Talk has here been seen as a historical, social and cultural resource for Rasta identity, as the expression of the Rastas' rites and traditions. This language offers to RastafarI a perception of the world and a sense of self. It represents a realistic journey into the social, cultural and spiritual space of the movement. For Rastas, language is a complex issue, but it is regarded as expressing a collective identity whereby it is possible to find and explore the African experience and essence (the *livity*) of the movement. It thus reinforces the sense of activeness and *autocoscienza* in the history of the Rasta bond with Africa.

Chapter Five

Afrocentricity in RastafarI

The Origins of the RastafarI Movement

'If you know your history, then you will know where you're coming from'
(*Buffalo Soldier* by Bob Marley and the Wailers)

Introduction

Chapter Four has described the development and use of the Rasta language within the social and religious contexts of underprivileged and anti-colonial communities. The use of 'Rasta Talk' gives at least in part the freedom to repair the 'damage' caused by colonialism and helps to create a new sense of Afrocentricity allowing marginalised peoples to work towards building their collective identity and thus consolidating their human rights.

This chapter views, through a Rasta lens (the insider's position), how, as Marley notes (see the above quotation), the history of RastafarI moved from a position of subalternity to become an active Afrocentric liberative movement for the marginalised. This section revisits the African perspective in RastafarI. The cultural and religious diversity in RastafarI is exclusively African and represents an African renaissance. Africa is the source of inspiration for Rasta art, Rasta Talk (language), religion and philosophy. Rasta communities seek to re-humanise themselves through Africa. Their African discourse (Africanity) has been an important aspect for cultural and racial independence

('the national renaissance'[1]) of the 'Black Skins', as the Martinican philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon called them, against the hegemonic schemes of the 'White oppressors'. RastafarI is a contest for space, a moment of inspiration for oppressed people who advocate political, cultural and religious equality, parity and inclusion in public places – the reintroduction of the African people in the African world. As an independent cultural and religious agency, RastafarI views the African world both as the origin of a political thrust against a long history of colonial humiliation and racism and also as a locus for cultural, ethnic, social and religious identification, often known as 'Afrocentricity'.

Changing the Context in Rasta *Livity*[2]

The British Catholic John Henry Newman (1801-1890) believed that 'the religious history of each individual is as solitary and complete as the history of the world'[3] and any solitary soul on this journey is in search of its truths and beliefs. RastafarI spirituality is a way of self-constructing and self-structuring the sense of the divine and the being itself which expresses African identity. The RastafarI movement recognises the importance of religion as the essential ontological aspect of its existence. For RastafarI, to revisit spirituality, to appreciate its contribution and to learn its language, is a way of combining the logic of the scientific mind with the logic of imagination and emotion. In doing so, the Rastafarian movement seeks to affirm the whole history of Africa, which in its essence is physically, psychologically and spiritually pluralistic,

[1]Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 27.
[2] The term *livity* is the official name of the RastafarI philosophy, religion and spirituality which has been discussed in the Chapter on Language (Rasta Talk). This term indicates Rasta beliefs, practices and ideas with reference to African spirituality and cultural identity. African culture and heritage survive in the African diaspora outside Africa and are made manifest in the RastafarI movement.
[3] John Cornwell, *Newman's Unquiet Grave: The Reluctant Saint*, (London and New York: continuum, 2010), 231.

being a patchwork of multiple traditions, values and *beliefs*. Although many Africans have accepted monotheistic teachings rooted in Judaic, Christian and Islamic creeds which admit the existence of the one and only God at the apex of religious evolution, they still preserve their own rich and varied languages, rituals and divinities or spirits.

Speaking about Africa does not mean, as the RastafarI communities see it, merely the conventional study of 'black' people employing a Eurocentric attitude which concentrates on and scrutinizes the object of its investigation as a phenomenon which is extraneous and peripheral. On the contrary, as maintained by the African-American Molefi Kete Asante, a contemporary student of twentieth century Pan-African movements in the African-American diaspora, Africology should help to open a new door to the African heritage, and facilitate a rediscovery of African culture. Africology does not work as Afrology[4] used to, with a broad spectrum of fixed and fragmentary notions and methods. Africology moves away from the static and stable notions of many western disciplines; it is in continual expansion and has a pluralistic, comparative, dynamic and creative approach to, and perspective on, the study of Africa. Asante claims:

> In this sense africology opens the doors to our selves; whatever there is that is negative in our persons is measured by a new formula; and whatever is positive is also by the same Afrocentric formula.[5]

Africology employs a radical and progressive African perspective or Afrocentric interpretation which guides African and non-African people to establish a new vision of

[4] *Afrology* is the study of African people. This branch of study, according to Molefi Kete Asante, 'is the crystallization of the notions and methods of black oriented social scientists and humanists'. See Molefi Kete Asante in *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change,* (Chicago: African American Images, 2003), 77. Asante's observation concerns the crystallized fixed methods used in the study of Africa and black people, which do not see the true significance of an Afrocentric outlook which reflects the roots of African people.

[5] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity,* 79. [Text as original]

Africa that will transform the way we think of science, history, religion, fashion, architecture, music, and ethics. It will be a renaissance more powerful – as Asante stresses – than anything a neo-Greek revival could imagine.[6] This will guide Africans and therefore the Rasta people to change, liberation and *autocoscienza*.

The work of the Rasta brings to light Africa, specifically Ethiopia, as the sign of a new *Rinascimento* (renaissance), which is at its core. For Rastas, the centralitiny of African symbols, values, and ethics prevails, and such an African heritage reflects the new dynamic of resistance, revolution and liberation from the hegemonic attitude of empire.

Afrocentric Theory in Rasta Attitudes and Behaviour

In the face of colonization, RastafarI manifests its roots in cultural resistance to subordination through original biblical interpretation and identification with Ethiopia and the person of Haile Selassie I as a profound response to all forms of oppression – class, race, ethnicity and age, but not sexual orientation - and to the imperial institutions of Babylon, the West. In doing so, it attempts to change the crude state of the colonized by centralizing the role of spirituality which sees the Rasta as the followers of Haile Selassie I, the first African King, the Lion of Judah (the lion being the symbol of power against the colonial dominance of the West): 'The Lion of Judah shall break every chain and bring us victory again and again'[7]. Haile Selassie I is the paradigm of liberating transformation in the emancipation of Ethiopia, having taken a clear position against the imperialist invasion by Mussolini's forces in 1935. This emerges for Rastas as a decolonizing act in the lives of the subjugated 'transformed and disturbed by the

[6] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 83.
[7] This quotation is from a Rasta song found in Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance,* 3.

colonial presence'.[8] RastafarI can be defined as a postcolonial movement which struggles for the emancipation of the African people throughout the world. The Rasta communities articulated their faith and political resistance as the vehicle of liberation and African-'black' consciousness (ethnic and racial identity or *autocoscienza*). RastafarI resistance develops and defends what Fanon argued for in The *Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skins, White Masks,* namely negritude, which considered the natives not genetically inferior to the 'white people', and was a way of understanding their 'black identity' which had been distorted by the West. Indeed, Rastas seek to configure and define the concept of Afrocentricity, which can be said to aim to identify the rich diversity of African culture and religion as expressed in their oral history, rituals and ceremonies. *Afrocentricity* is a term which finds its inspirational source in the thought of Asante. Asante's radical thinking re-examines from an anti-Eurocentric perspective Africa's own history and culture before any European invasion. The Afrocentric paradigm and dynamic rediscovers and repositions the centrality of African people and is rooted in the cultural interests of the Africans. In other words, to be Afrocentric does not mean wearing African clothes or having an African name. Indeed, one can be born in Africa, can have African descendants or can follow an African style of living but not be African in oneself. Afrocentricity is a social, cultural and spiritual practice for people who want to determine and re-build the self of the person and of the community, giving dignity with new African-'black' criteria and perceptions. Thus, the RastafarI movement is built around the thesis of Afrocentricity and it can be evoked among the Rastas as a process of self-determination and direction in reaction to any 'white' cultural, economic and religious hegemony, and thus as an antidote to Babylon.

[8] Rajah S. Sugirtharajah, 'Charting the Aftermath: A Review of Postcolonial Criticism', in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader,* ed. by Rajah S. Sugirhatarjah, (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell, 2006), 7.

This can be summarised in the assertion that RastafarI is a pan-African (or negritude) movement of the twentieth century which has adopted past and present African consciousness as the heart of its philosophy.

Rastas advocate the repossession of the past culture as a cornerstone of their African identity. In doing so, the RastafarI movement manifests on the one hand its critical attitude to 'every form of tyranny, domination and abuse'[9] and, on the other, various ways of re-reading, rewriting and recreating the African past, in its spirituality, language and music. Therefore RastafarI finds, idealizes and prefers Africa (Ethiopia) and allegiance to Haile Selassie I as the impetus of its political, cultural and spiritual justice. RastafarI insists on the recovery of African history, and reaffirms the significance of the *negro* (in Fanon's writings) consciousness and culture. For Fanon, people can emerge as new 'individuals' who are conscious of their cultural and social identities. All the Rastas' struggles constitute the core of RastafarI ideology. Indeed, the Rastas' resistance to oppression is significant and transformative for two reasons: first, they move to re-generate the cultural independence of the subjugated; second, in their cultural and political activities they want to occupy an important place in the emancipation of all subalterns. In doing so, they criticize and struggle against the politics of Babylon. Thanks to the arts of resistance – language, music, painting and spirituality – RastafarI thus elaborates 'the creation of new independent people', a philosophy of decolonisation.[10]

[9] Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic,* (London: Vintage, 1991), 29.
[10] See the glossary in Nathalie S. Murrell, William David Spencer et al., in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader* (Philadelphia, USA: Temple University Press, 1998), 448. Decolonisation philosophy is defined as one common in the African diaspora that advocates the end of colonialism and thus has a post-colonial nature. It has become part of anthropological, cultural, economic, political, sociological and theological studies in America and it has been influential for social movements such as RastafarI and pan-Africanism.

Why Africa? Rastafarian Roots and *Livity*

RastafarI emphasises the centrality of Africa for several reasons. First, RastafarI depicts Africa as that civilization which flourished before and beyond the power of the dominators. Second, Africa, in particular the region of Abyssinia or Ethiopia, is identified as the homeland for Rasta people. Ethiopia is the 'Promised Land' and is regarded as the cradle of humanity 'where the history of the African people and human race begin'.[11] Ethiopia is the mystical place of Yahweh's reign. Third, Africa represents the ideal place to return to, and provides a space for people who want to affirm their negritude and where there are no divisions of class, race and gender. Generally, the subaltern groups in suburban societies do not see themselves discriminated against and excluded from any economic, cultural and religious activities. However, the RastafarI movement is aware of the social and economic inequalities that reduced the indigenous peoples through slavery to subjugation and marginalization by the western imperial powers. In the early years of the twentieth century, when Jamaica was experiencing economic and political stagnation, the indigenous populations such as the African-Caribbean groups, the descendants of the African Maroons, mounted intense protests and resistance movements with the aim of leaving the West and liberating themselves from internalized oppression by returning to the Promised Land. Central were the idealization of Ethiopia and the story of their liberating God (Jah RastafarI) which had already been pronounced by Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the prophet and the father of African Repatriation – 'Africa for the Africans'[12] – who with his 'ideology of

[11] Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaican People*, (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1998), 20.
[12] This is quoted by Campbell as the song of freedom for the African Diaspora in 'the New World'. Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*, 47.

liberation'[13] predicted the second coming of Christ, embodied in the African god-king of Ethiopia. RastafarI spirituality resides in 'all the departments of life'[14] and each person is responsible for his/her own living creed. John Samuel Mbiti claims in *African Religions and Philosophy*: 'People do not know how to exist without religion',[15] and: 'Wherever an African is, there is his religion'.[16] Rastas, in order to express the decolonisation, liberation and resistance usurped by imperialist domination, find new expressions and ideas taken from the ordinary life of Africans. As Walter Rodney, the pan-African Caribbean historian of the twentieth century, noted, the RastafarI movement is therefore a cultural, social and racial force of African indigenous culture and black consciousness. African traditional spirituality and philosophy are within RastafarI *livity*. RastafarI has created the term 'livity' to represent the culture of spirituality of all the adherents of the RastafarI movement.[17] Rastafarian *livity ought* not to be interpreted just as a philosophy but *ought* to be seen as the collective experience of African peoples[18] who have confronted the numerous effects of colonial power in the 'Third World'[19] and its forms of oppression, racial and social

[13] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 16.
[14] John Samuel Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy,* 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1990), 2.
[15] John Samuel Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy,* 2.
[16] John Samuel Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy,* 2.
[17] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 327.
[18] In a traditional African perspective the person is always considered part of the whole community ('We are' for African people means a united community which shares similar interests, beliefs and ideals. For Rastas the expression 'We are' has been substituted by the term 'InI' which has semantically taken the place of the individualistic expression 'I am').
[19] What does 'Third World' truly mean? As Bauman observes: 'Looking backward in the history, one can ask what and why there have been determined and generated geographical, social and cultural borders, the separate identities of people.' The 'Third World' can be associated with the metaphor of marginal situations known as the 'periphery of Empire' in Umberto Eco, *Dalla Periferia all'Impero,* (Milano: Bompiani, 1976), in which a 'particular world' of lobbies or hegemonic systems tends to see the 'Other' as something which is 'far away' (outside), a space which we generally acknowledge to some extent but could find hard (unnerving and problematic) to understand and meet. Thus, it seems clear that the elites in such a 'reality of borders' satisfy their personal interests over the habitual routine of ordinary people (causing a certain amount of disadvantage). Sociologists like Bauman generally identify such a 'reality of borders' through the following conceptual oppositions: the 'ego' versus the 'other', the 'inside' versus the 'outside', the 'domestic' versus the 'foreign', the 'normal' versus the 'abnormal', and so on). See Zygmunt Bauman in *Globalization: The Human Consequences,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 12-13.

discrimination, with a sense of their destiny and dignity which is rooted in African history. Thus, to be Rasta signifies to be African in praxis, to have African consciousness, but it does not mean 'Afro natural hairstyle,'[20] which is seen as a contradictory and derogatory label, and it is argued nowadays that it is becoming an example of stereotyping. Asante, for example, in *Afrocentricity,* points out: 'Some say that the prefix 'Afro' is referred to a hairstyle. I ask, what type of hairstyle does it refer? If it is an African hairstyle, then it is clear that the terminology is fully understood'.[21] In the Rastafarian movement the natural African hairstyle adopted is characterized by the popular 'radical trend'[22] of dreadlocks which express their attachment to African identity and are a symbolic rejection of the hair-straightening and shaving obsession of the westernised attitudes of African people in the diaspora. Obiagele Lake says: 'Europeans vilified African skin color, physiognomy, and hair'.[23] The colonial authorities inculcated into many of African descent the idea that someone who has twisted (plaited) hair is bad, and for this reason they have absorbed the unnatural idea of valuing 'blond straight hair'. Still today, for example, to be considered part of the community, African men are encouraged to shave and women are driven to straighten their hair to look like westerners. We might wonder why. Anti-colonial political and cultural militants such as Marcus Garvey, Anténor Firmin, Frantz Fanon, and later the father of postcolonial doctrines, Edward Said, aimed to induce the colonized to re-think a collective freedom for the subjugated. Their writings have been influential for liberation theologies and have contributed to the philosophy of 'black' identity. Many

[20] The term 'Afro' was invented by African-Americans during the Black Power movement led by the Black Panthers, which considered natural African hair as an alternative form of political, social and cultural expression in order to encourage and locate all Africans in the World and instil pride in being 'black' people.
[21] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity,* 2. [as original]
[22] Barry Chevannes, 'Rastafari and the Exorcism of the Ideology of Racism and Classism in Jamaica' in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 60.
[23] Obiagele Lake, *Rastafari Woman,* 106.

of their ideas have also become the spirit of revolutionary Rasta thought. The impact of 'black' and African awareness was great from the beginning. It has expressed anti-western *beliefs* because western history and culture have used Eurocentric criteria, ideas and teachings which classified the human races[24]. The various systems, according to anti-colonialists, which classify 'humanity' into distinct races, classes and sexes have appeared particularly fastidious (in the derogatory sense) to the eyes of minority cultural, ethnic and religious groups who have aspired to a better human condition. Indeed, an ethnocentric attitude does not promote a multicultural and pluralistic society, but is still a 'negative sentiment' which places, judges, labels and discriminates against people (the 'others', the 'strangers') on the principle of exclusion or preclusion. Anténor Firmin and other anti-colonial thinkers, including the Rastas, were of the view that Africans were the enslaved tools of Europeans in the cultural, psychological and religious domains.[25]

RastafarI has led a process of anti-racial identity expressing a different sense of the self (African aesthetic, cultural and religious identity) which encapsulates the essence of cultural resistance to the West. For Rastas, 'white westerners' have used their culture to civilize, as Barry Chevannes says, the 'Blacks'.[26] RastafarI supports a new and different

[24] For a further discussion see Charles Darwin and A. R. Wallace, *Evolution by Natural Selection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 96-97. Darwin says that 'race or breed' is something which should be separated out by 'the principle of selection'. Moreover, Darwin, to justify his statement, although he was an agnostic, refers to the Biblical metaphor of race: 'In the earliest chapters of the Bible there are rules given for influencing the colours of breeds and *black* and *white* sheep are spoken of as separated' [writer's emphasis]. See *Evolution by Natural Selection,* 99.

[25] See one of the most important anthropological works written by a Haitian, Anténor Firmin's *De L'Egalité des Races Humaines* (1885), translated into English as *The Equality of the Human Races* (2002). Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races,* translated by Asselin Charles and introduced by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002). Firmin (1850-1911), a lawyer, diplomat and anthropologist, may be considered through his work to be the forerunner of Afro-Caribbean and post-colonial anthropology.

[26] Barry Chevannes, 'Rastafari and the Exorcism of the Ideology of Racism and Classism in Jamaica', in *Chanting Down Babylon,* 59.

ideology of African and black *autocoscienza* which has been regarded, as Chevannes observes, as a form of propagation of 'reverse racism' to 'white racist ideology'. [27]

The RastafarI movement has also been compared with the Black Power Movement[28] as the legacy of Marcus Garvey and Walter Rodney, the first African-Caribbean nationalists in the history of Jamaica, who preached in the homes of 'black' people not only for the reconstruction of African civilization and social life in the Americas, but also for the revolution and liberation of all the African people. An African-Caribbean and Rasta symbol of Afrocentric pride appears in the song 'Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers'.[29] This idea and way of acting served as a cultural and prophetic vision to encourage African-'black' communities in the Americas to fight for 'foreign liberation'.[30] Rastas have declared that African people must have the right to return to Africa, which was usurped by imperialist domination. Their programme of African identity, self-determination and solidarity with the battles for the liberation of Africa came from the black nationalism of Garvey, which gave the Jamaican people a sense of

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[27] Barry Chevannes, 'Rastafari and the Exorcism of the Ideology of Racism and Classism in Jamaica', in *Chanting Down Babylon,* 62.

[28] The Black Power Movement was spread in Jamaica in 1968 by Walter Rodney (1942-1980), a pan-Africanist Guyanese 'activist-scholar' and historian. Although he had a short life - he was assassinated in 1980 – he was a prolific author. Rodney is known mainly for his book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, published in 1972. He was a great educator in schools and he was active in students' activities, forums and depressed communities. He gave several lectures on African history and black consciousness. He believed in change for the oppressed population and disadvantaged people. His revolutionary ideas were influential amongst young students and became prominent in Jamaica. It was the time of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted worldwide; it was also the time of African liberation and Caribbean independence, civil rights, and anti-apartheid protests. Rodney was a firmly attached to his working-class roots. He was a socialist activist and he applied Marx's theory within the African-Caribbean context. Rodney's studies were driven by humanitarian issues such as race, class, slavery, colonialism and capitalism. His impact was on working-class and poor people struggling for cultural and economic justice. Rodney also established good relationships with Rasta people in Kingston, Jamaica. For further information see the biography of Walter Rodney at the following links in the forums of the Guyana and Caribbean Political and Cultural Center for Popular Education: http://www.guyanacaribbeanpolitics.com/wpa/rodney_bio.html and http://www.auctr.edu/rwwl/FindingAids/WalterRodneyPapers.pdf. See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1972). For a critical analysis see also Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*, 128-133.

[29] Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*, 64.

[30] Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*, 7.

identification with Africa as an extension of themselves. The impact of pan-African ideologies and 'black' political movements – such as the Ethiopian Movement, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the People's Political Party (PPP) [31] and the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) – on Rasta people has developed and stressed the importance of African and Ethiopian identity in world history. Moreover, the culture of Afrocentricity is also an essential ingredient of African theology, as an alternative way to conceive God in traditional African religions. In the case of the RastafarI movement, Ethiopian Christianity has been indispensable to its identity. For Rastas Ethiopian Christianity is a means to describe a different type of God who has appeared in Ethiopia as a king-god, Haile Selassie I (Ras Tafari). RastafarI has introduced into Jamaica the Ethiopian Orthodox form of Christianity – the Monophysite theory – in which God has one nature (the hypostatic union).[32]

Garvey's Legacy in the RastafarI Movement

The aspirations of African liberation and of speaking out in order to change the context of all the subjugated were also found in the teachings of the Jamaican Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940), born in St. Ann, Jamaica. He was a civil rights activist who deeply inspired and encouraged anti-colonial liberation movements. Garvey founded the UNIA in 1914 in the USA. Before moving towards the revolutionary project of UNIA Garvey travelled in Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, and Venezuela, and saw and experienced at first hand the deprived socio-economic status of the indigenous

[31] The People's Political Party (PPP) was formed by Marcus Garvey in Jamaica in 1929 for national black Renaissance. The PPP's aim, like the UNIA's, was to struggle for poor black people's freedom and initiative, and to claim and promote their rights and humanity. It has also worked to establish the spirit of unity and support the cultural, economic, and religious development of the black communities in Jamaica.
[32] For further analysis see the footnote of Horace Campbell in *Rasta and Resistance*, 77.

populations and those of the African diaspora. In 1912 he also visited his sister in London and there encountered the Egyptian, Duse Mohammed Ali, who was active in the pan-African movement and had a great influence on Garvey's philosophy. The socio-cultural programme of UNIA is expressed in the guidelines below, a prototype for African redemption through mass movements which aimed to make improvements in the lives of many people – in particular those of black people who helped the 'masters' in their careers, who were attacked for integrity, who lived in silence, and who waited for identity:

1. To establish a Universal Confraternity among races.
2. To promote the spirit of race pride and love.
3. To reclaim the fallen of the race.
4. To administer to and assist the needy.
5. To assist in civilizing the backward tribes of Africa.
6. To strengthen the Imperial*ism* of independent African States.
7. To establish Commissionaires or Agencies in the principal countries of the world for the protection of all Negroes, irrespective of nationality.
8. To promote a conscientious Christian worship among the native tribes of Africa.
9. To establish Universities, Colleges and Secondary Schools for the further education and culture of the boys and girls of the race.
10. To conduct a worldwide commercial and industrial intercourse. [33]

Garvey's legacy was as the first Jamaican theorist to create a new sense of Christianity, developing theories of racial consciousness for African marginalized groups ('Africa for Africans') and calling for a strong emotional concern for the African continent. The Garveyite idea was supported by a *nigrescence* theory[34] or *negriscence* (Cross, 1971)

[33] John H. Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa,* (New York: Random House, 1974), 60.
[34] William E. Cross, Jr., 'The Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience' in *Black World*, no.20 (1971):13-27. Furthermore, see William E. Cross, *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American Identity*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). See also Frank C. Worrell et al. 'Nigrescence Theory: Current Status and Challenges for the Future', in *Journal of Multicultural Counselling and Development,* no.29 (July 2001), 201-210. William E. Cross is a professor in the Department of Psychology at City University of New York. He is one of the leading researchers on nigrescence (the process of becoming black) identity. His classic work, *Shades of Black*, studies black racial identity. His interests range from biculturalism, multiculturalism to nationalism and the history of slavery up to the present. He has

and expressed the psychology of black identity which is rooted in African-American freedom. Garvey gave a new sense to African people and wanted to re-create a nation for Africans – the Exodus of the people of the African diaspora 'back to Africa' (which is central to RastafarI thinking). According to Garvey, the majority of cultures perceive the seed of 'racial identity' which they carry within themselves. He writes:

> If Europe is for the white man, if Asia is for brown and yellow men, then surely Africa is for the black man. The great white man has fought for the preservation of Europe, the great yellow and brown races are fighting for the preservation of Asia, and four hundred million Negroes shall shed, if needs be, the last drop their blood for the redemption of Africa and the emancipation of the race everywhere.[35]

'The glib convictions of the natural superiority'[36] of Africans (the negroes) was essential to the Garveyite black Christian ideology to save the black integrity of the Africans. For Garvey it was necessary to divide by race, and such a division was not because one is inferior to the 'others', but because each culture should preserve its roots. He states:

> God Almighty created all men equal, whether they be white, yellow or black, and for any race to admit that it cannot do what the others have done, is to hurl an insult at the Almighty who created all races equal, in the beginning.[37]

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developed his theory of nigrescence in five distinct stages and with six identities through the method of the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). Cross's nigrescence model runs as follows: 1. Pre-Encounter; 2. Encounter; 3. Immersion; 4. Emersion; 5. Internalisation. The black racial identities are the following: 1. Pro-White or Anti-Black; 2. Anti-White or Pro-Black Humanist; 3. Assimilation Anti-Black; 4. Anti-White Intense Involvement, Black Nationalist, Biculturalist, and Multiculturalist; 5. Assimilation, Miseducation and Self-Hatred; 6. Anti-White, Intense Black Involvement, Black Nationalist, Biculturalist, Muliticulturalist Racial, Multiculturalist Inclusive. For further information on Cross's biography see the Center for Multicultural Equity and Access (CMEA) at the following link: http://cmea.georgetown.edu/programs/conference2007/17166.html.

[35] Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus M. Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for Africans,* vol.1, (Massachusetts, USA: First Majority Press, 1986), 32.

[36] Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaican People,* 24.

[37] Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus M. Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for Africans,* vol.1, 32.

Garvey was merely making charismatic appeals to the vast majority of African people to fight for social change,[38] to defend the black race ('Africa for the Africans')[39] and to humanize the world. He saw the racial expression of Africans as a chance to reorganize the spirit of social revolution and also to rescue the feeling of unity amongst oppressed people from the monopoly which 'places power in the hands of the selected few'.[40] Garvey's mission is found in the slogan 'Wake up Ethiopia! Wake up Africa!',[41] to design a nation where Africans and others could protest against the injustice of dominant powers and struggle for their political freedom and economic prosperity. As Fanon states,

> colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content.[42]

For Garvey and Fanon, the regeneration of the oppressed, in particular Africans, had to come. Therefore liberation and 'radical' movements such as RastafarI, following in the footsteps of Garvey and Fanon, contravene the dominant values of colonialism and advocate a resistance to and revolution against subordination and servitude. RastafarI attempts to recuperate, re-construct, and re-discover the beauty of its African past, which is grounded in and impregnated with African spirit, savour and belief. The nationalism of Garvey also recognized the nature of Afrocentricity in the ideals and

[38] African and Rasta people seek their African world readjustment, where the 'African-black race' is able to find its home and identity.
[39] Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus M. Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for Africans,* vol.1, 34.
[40] Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus M. Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for Africans,* vol.1, 35.
[41] Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus M. Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for Africans,* vol.1, 5.
[42] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 69.

doctrines of people who were born outside Africa, and whose nationality was not African. Garvey states:

> All intelligent people know that one's nationality has nothing to do with great ideals and great principles. If because I am a Jamaican the Negro should not accept the principle of race rights and liberty or the ideal of a free and independent race, then you may well say that because Jesus was a Nazarene the outside world should not accept His Doctrine of Christianity, because He was an 'alien'.[43]

Thus, although Rasta people are not descendants of Ethiopian Christians, this does not mean that they cannot accept the African doctrine of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity (the Monophysite doctrine). 'The great principles do not know nationality',[44] as Garvey noted.

RastafarI Consciousness (*Autocoscienza*): Negritude

Africa becomes a liberative and transforming agent for those, in this case the Rasta people, who 'want to change the course of history, to hold a memory, to affirm their existence' [45]through ideological resistance. Haile Selassie I (the African liberating God) and Ethiopia are recognised and glorified by Rastas as the symbols of the exodus story. Ethiopia is situated in the Horn of Africa and represents the uncontaminated site of 'redemption' for all the oppressed. Thus, Rastas claim to be the 'elect' of God and the 'heirs' to the kingdom of Ethiopia. For them, Ethiopia is a way to reconfigure and understand the historical origins of what we now call *negritude*, which is the resulting essential discourse of African spirituality, culture and politics. 'Negritude' is a word coined by a group of black intellectuals and politicians, including the Martinican poet,

[43] Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus M. Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for Africans,* vol.1, 36.
[44]Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus M. Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for Africans,* vol.1, 36.
[45] Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp, *Italian Feminist Thought*, 337.

author and politician Aimé Césaire and the Guyanese activist and writer Léon Damas, in the 1930s to indicate the philosophical basis of black renewal and resistance movements. Their ideas are thought to be inspired by the early Haitian writer and anthropologist Anténor Firmin (1850-1911) of the pan-Caribbean and postcolonial movement. Firmin's work is rooted in the thesis of African civilization and the Antilles' pride versus the European ideas of 'black inferiority'. He became known for the 'Firminist insurgency' which looked for the reformation of the Haitian government in the struggle against foreign domination by the U.S. and Europe. Firmin's thought and personal charisma attracted several intellectuals both from Haiti and overseas. His ideas were and remain the symbol of the Afro-Caribbean reformation, in which Haitians played the key role of cultural and social regeneration,[46] and which stressed local political interests and the stability of the Caribbean and Latin America, including the unification or federation of the West Indies. Firmin was committed, on the one hand, to the importance of the study of peoples, civilizations and cultures without any sort of racial classification, and, on the other hand, to building the theory of 'race' as an antidote to the universal propagation of racism and ethnocentrism. According to Firmin, the notion of racism and racial superiority may be intrinsic to human beings and has existed throughout the history of all civilizations.[47] As he points out, the doctrine of inequality has been present in the ideology of all 'civilized societies':

> Throughout history, civilized peoples, self-centred and proud, have always thought themselves superior to their neighbours. But there has never been the least connection between this sense of superiority, which results from a narrow but highly respectable patriotism, and the notion of some systematic hierarchy among the human races. [48]

[46] The Haitian Revolution took place between 1791 and 1801 against French colonial rule in order to eliminate slavery and establish the first independent government, the Haitian Republic.
[47] Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races,* translated by Asselin Charles and introduced by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 139.
[48] Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races*, 139.

And also from the remotest antiquity:

> The Greeks considered the Persians barbaric, and they had much disdain for Macedonians. When the Romans waged war against foreign people, they made no distinction between the dark Numidians and the blond Gauls.[49]

Behind the Firminist rejection of any innate, permanent form of racial division, cultural distinction and hierarchy, Firmin advocated and defended racial equality amongst a plurality of persons and cultures.[50] His work, *The Equality of Human Races,* translated recently into English and recognized by many post-colonial and progressive thinkers, introduced the concept of 'negritude'. 'Negritude' was the key-word used by anti-colonial writers as an intellectual discourse which seeks to understand and preserve African history, culture and spirituality. Black African identity was defined, portrayed and stigmatized by colonialism, under which black people, in particular slaves and women, lived 'under tyranny, injustice, ignorance and poverty'[51] as well as being excluded from 'the polis'[52] for the reason that the criteria of classification divided the 'human races' into two categories: inferior and savage, superior and civilized, and dominant and subjugated. With the development of the science of anthropology and ethnography, Firmin demonstrated how 'racial theory' and the related racism and discrimination, one

[49] Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races*, 140.
[50] Equality is an existential and juridical principle which is innate and original to human beings. Each person has his/her own experiences, values, aims and possibilities. This creates a sense of existence and a basic distinctiveness for oneself as a human being. Equality ought not to imply social, cultural, ethnic and sexual differences or distinctions which see the 'other' as an inferior, unwilling and unacceptable being.
[51] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), xli.
[52] The *polis* (Greek for 'city state') was considered in ancient Greece not a city-state in the geographical sense but an organization of people who act, discuss, and participate actively, creating their own space, 'the space where I appear to the others as others appear to me', as Arendt says, where people are not 'living like inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly'. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 198. On the other hand, some people are not allowed to speak, such as barbarians, strangers and slaves in ancient times (and in some cases women in modern times), who could not attend any public forum.

of the most malign cancers of our societies, arose. Human beings are divided into races to justify how some are regarded as culturally, intellectually and physically superior to others. This 'superiority' is due to biological-genetic difference. These are then subdivided into four 'varieties':

> (1). The white-skinned man with blue eyes and blond hair, who is found in Europe; (2). The yellow-skinned man with brown eyes and black hair, who is found in Asia; (3). The black-skinned African man with woolly hair; (4).The swarthy American man with straight black hair.[53]

These assumptions remained prominent after the abolition of slavery; the theory of a superior race justifies their higher position in society, giving that race the right to lead, control and segregate or exclude the inferior races. A common assumption of racial difference was that negroes were of low intelligence. This rapidly gave rise to a sense of indignation amongst excluded people and in the long term this resentment caused strong social antagonisms and divisions. Moreover, the more general implications of this separatism have led to intolerance, hypocrisy and nationalism.

There are various manifestations of belief in racial superiority which operate as a defence against racial disrespect or discrimination. For example the belief in negritude is essential to RastafarI thinking. So, is RastafarI able to realize its intellectual and moral capacity (*autocoscienza*) which might justify all the oppressed, victimised in the face of oppression and deprivation, in their striving toward liberation? In a 'non-violent radical'[54] sense, RastafarI as a new liberative religious group has its own perspective,

[53] Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races,* 16. See also the taxonomy of Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), the father of botany and modern ecology. See Caroli Linneai, *Systema Naturae: Sive Regna Tria Nature Syestematice Proposita Per Classes, Genera and Species*, (Leiden: Haak, 1735).

[54] The author here employs the term of 'non-radical' as a symbolic word which is stemmed from Italian political background. This idea has been used to describe the new religious movement that is RastafarI. This word non-radical along with liberative has been used in Italian politics by Marco Pannella, leader of

which considers both literally and metaphorically the social-cultural and economic reality of the native indigenous populations to have been enslaved by dominant groups (elites, lobbies and hegemonic systems). One might compare the idea of Rasta criticism and liberation with, for example, the thinking of the political activist and scholar Edward W. Said's *Culture and Imperialism,* which examined Western culture and helped us to understand critically who we are, our cultural identity, being rooted in the dynamics of Western imperial culture. In particular, we realise that domination is not only physical power but rather an intellectual one which acts 'over a long time by *persuasive means*'[55] and has the capacity very often to produce 'creative, inventive and interesting'[56] images, paintings, musical and visual spectacles of many types which are haunting, engaging and eye-catching both for western and non-western metropolitan cultures.

Assuming human fragility, RastafarI builds its programme rooted in a love for the people, and attempts to find a new political, spiritual and cultural dimension or space through the following stages. First, there must be development and unification of an African confraternity which is a vehicle (ideology and theology of liberation) for Rasta people who struggle *'for faith'*.[57] (In fact, RastafarI counts as a small community, with one million[58] members worldwide.) Second, it requires changing the context and taking a different trajectory amongst Africans and non-Africans towards a constructive identity

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the Italian Radical Party, which became under a new name the 'Transnational Radical Party' to indicate a worldwide non-profit organization which works to create a new form of democracy and freedom with the new method paradigm of non-violence influenced by Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

[55] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* (London: Vintage, 1993) 131.

[56] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 131.

[57] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity,* 18.

[58] For further information see http://www.adherents.com/Na/i_r.html which estimates how many Rasta adherents or sympathizers are active worldwide, even if there does not exist an exact statistic of the members of the NRMs. There are approximately one million worldwide adherents of RastafarI. Recently, the 2001 census has estimated 5,000 Rasta people living in the United Kingdom.

and democracy (education, housing and jobs). Third, there should be the proclamation of belonging to Africa through symbols, rituals and spirituality as new forms of liberation. Rastas see themselves as the chosen people of God, or Jah, who as a king from Ethiopia came again to liberate all the oppressed. The conviction of being a 'special' people is based on a re-interpretation of the Biblical scriptures which led the Rastas to see themselves as one of the ten lost tribes of Israel, who will return to Ethiopia. [59] The idea of RastafarI has become synonymous with the preservation and re-construction of African traditions. The RastafarI movement is a *new* social movement in a specific historical context, emerging in Jamaica in the 1930s, but it is also a new religious phenomenon which evokes its own historical, social and cultural heritage with the Ethiopian Christian context.

RastafarI has impacted on African and 'black' theologies in a significant way by mapping out the ideas and interpretations of liberation and 'black' consciousness through the life of African people. Therefore, the socio-political conduct of Rastas acts as an ideology of resistance which works not only '*for facts*'[60] (political and economic readjustments) but also in the RastafarI battles which are '*struggles for an African faith*'[61] (One God! One Aim! One Destiny!). RastafarI is the voice of oppressed people who advocate the reinvention and reaffirmation of the concept of negritude through using a new human approach and returning to the study of Africa's own environment, its own values (philosophy and psychology), its own arts (language, symbols and music), social relations, and ontology. The ideology of RastafarI serves to define and design a

[59] George D. Chryssides, *The A to Z of New Religious Movements* (USA: The Scarecrow Press, 2006), 144.
[60] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity,* 18.
[61] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity,* 18. [The italics are in the original]

new vision of minority African groups in the world. RastafarI speaks about subjugated people's silence, the absence of their words in history.

Afrocentricity in Dreadlocks

Not only did dreadlocks become the catalyst for ideological resistance and reformation for Africans, but this paradigm also acts as a spiritual re-birth with Africa. Simply observing Rastas, the question arises how dreadlocks leave a mark and ratify the existence of people who live in marginal contexts in urban and globalised societies.

The first dreadlock wearers (called 'beards'[62] by Rastas) were a subjugated group, a particular movement of dissident young people known as the 'Youth Black Faith' who left the countryside in Jamaica for the urban poverty of the capital, Kingston. In the late 1930s these young people joined with the RastafarI community to embrace new liberation spirituality. According to Chevannes, those who wore dreads were viewed by the public as a lunatic fringe, deviant, antisocial and sinister.[63] Indeed, he quotes one of Garvey's letters which appeared in the *Daily Gleaner on* 6 January 1937: 'I refer to a new cult that has taken hold of the unfortunate and inarticulate masses known as the '*Ras Tafarian Cult*' with its headquarters in the parish of Saint Thomas.'[64]

Although Garvey was the founder of the UNIA in the Caribbean in the 1920s for all the Africans who stood up for freedom and 'emancipation of labor'[65] and who had to organize and rebuild themselves socially, economically and culturally, he was not a

[62]Barry Chevannes, 'The Origin of the Dreadlocks', in *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews,* 81.
[63]Barry Chevannes, 'The Origin of the Dreadlocks', in *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews,* 81-82.
[64] *Daily Gleaner,* 6 January 1937.
[65] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 129.

supporter of the RastafarI movement due to its negative reputation. Many young black dissidents from suburban Kingston took part in the RastafarI movement and manifested their deviant anti-social behaviour in protests, riots, drug trafficking and theft.

However, dreadlocks had other meanings and origins: first, among the Rastas there was the concept of being free, a warrior and dreadful;[66] second, dreadlocks are associated with images of Masai warriors; third, it is likely that two of the first Rasta leaders, Hibbert and Howell, during their stay in Pinnacle, Jamaica at the first RastafarI settlement, were influenced by Hindu habits and traditions. As reported in 1980 by Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh of the University of the West Indies in their work *Home Away from Home,* 'the coolies' and the African-Jamaicans were in contact with each other: 'Two cultures began to join in each other's rituals...Drinking of bhang (marijuana), smoking of ganja, hailing the goddess, and dancing and singing preceded the dinner of curried goat'. [67]

Finally, we may see close links between Rasta dreadlocks and some monks of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church, since Rastas consider themselves the heirs of Ethiopian Christianity. The Ethiopian monks lead a prophetic, ascetic life, and indeed the monastic life is regarded as the fullest manifestation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. They live in isolation as groups of hermits (known as *bahtawi* in Amharic) existing in a state of uniquely intense spirituality: they have no contact with other people, and live close to nature (they can be considered highly environmentally

[66] Barry Chevannes, 'The Origin of the Dreadlocks', 83 - 84.
[67] Laxmi Mansingh and Ajai Mansingh, *Home Away from Home* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2000), 53. See also Ajai Mansingh, 'Rastafarianism: The Indian Connection', in *Sunday Gleaner* (July 18, 1982).

aware, living among trees, in caves or labyrinths).[68] The monastic life is central in Ethiopian culture, and the god-kings consider themselves monks, being holy people who live in contact with God. The king is like a vice-God and so he has to imitate the high morality and supernatural austerity of the Holy Saints, the monks. Dreadlocks are a symbolic adornment for the monks, and Rasta people who belong to the EWF follow this singular custom. For Rastas, it is a way of initiation, and a sign of spiritual re-birth. Dreadlocks are considered a receptor of energy (ethereal) and transmitter of power (charisma) from God (Jah). Moreover, dreadlocks are the means of making a special vow, 'a vow of separation to the Lord as a Nazirite' (Numbers 6:2). There are several metaphorical references and rules in the scriptures which support the Rastafarian perspective and the hypothesis of the dreadlock culture:

> During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used in his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the LORD is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long (Numbers 6:5).

See also:

> Priests must not shave their hair or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies (Leviticus 21:5)

After the conversion to Christianity, the Ethiopians created a vast number of icons which portray the scenes of the Old and New Testaments. Ethiopian artefacts and

[68] The monastic tradition existed in Ethiopia from the fifth century with the Nine Saints and had a particular surge in the twelve century with the monks establishing their monastic life in the churches at Lālibalā, uniquely carved out of the rock. This wonderful architecture was developed between the ninth and twelfth centuries by the Zagwe dynasty, which was replaced by the Solomonic dynasty in 1270. In the fourteen century the monastic life had another revival in the monasteries known as the *Debre Libanos*. These were hermits who lived in complete austerity, isolation and fasting. Most of them were recluses in natural labyrinths, galleries, secret passages and chambers. Some lived in trees (dendrites) or in caves. For further analysis see the paper written by Dom Collin Battell, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its Monastic Tradition,* which is available online at: http://www.benedictines.org.uk/theology/2005/battell.pdf.

paintings allude to the transcendental world of the believer and reproduce the ancient spirituality appearing in southern Arabian and oriental manuscripts. Most Ethiopian paintings exhibit a richness of geometric and figurative representations which are still indecipherable today. The subjects of the paintings are various, and integrate pagan, Judaic, Christian and Islamic elements, and may be derived from oriental, pagan influences (for example, in the time of the Queen of Sheba, from the worship of the serpent and the Sun). Ethiopia, thanks to its geographical position and contacts with eastern and western civilizations, adopted a significant number of styles and techniques from Arabian, Indian and Coptic (Egyptian) cultures, as well as some Roman elements fused into pre-Christian Ethiopian art. Western influence is present from the fifteenth century onwards and still remains. Thus, we may see that Ethiopia has embraced western and non-western as well as Christian and non-Christian influences, and thus could be an example of, and stimulus towards, a dialogue between the two worlds. A prestigious Ethiopian painting held at the British Museum represents the scourging prior to Christ's crucifixion (the traditional *Kwer'ata re'esu,* literally 'the striking of His head', a scene with Christ wearing the crown of thorns).[69] This Ethiopian icon played a political and military role during the Ethiopian campaigns in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and was used by Emperors as an amulet, 'the sacred ikon of the Abyssinian nation', according to a British report.[70] This icon disappeared from Ethiopia during the looting of Magdala, causing a profound sense of loss in Ethiopian

[69] The term 'Kwer'ata re'esu', indicates one of the most important themes in Ethiopian iconography as explained by Richard Pankhurst in his article 'The History of the Kwer'ata Re'esu: An Ethiopian Icon' in *African Affair,* vol. 81, no. 322, (January, 1982), 117-125. The Ethiopian Christian illustration of the crucifixion, which is in the collection of the British Museum, is also available in pdf form on the following website:
http://www.anglo-ethiopian.org/publications/articles.php?type=A&reference=publications/articles/2008summer/ethiopiancrucifixion.php.

[70] Richard Pankhurst, 'The History of the Kwer'ata Re'esu', 121.

Christianity. In 1872, the Church of Ethiopia appealed to Queen Victoria and the Foreign Secretary to return its treasures (both the manuscripts of the *Kebra Nagast* and the missing painting of 'Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ...').[71] Ethiopia was given back just one of the two copies of the *Kebra Nagast*, but it never saw the painting of which, according to the Queen in one of her letters, there was no trace in England. However, after a lecture given by a Belgian scholar who had visited Windsor Castle, the missing painting, an icon of the Ethiopian Christ, was found. Apparently, the icon had been stolen from Abyssinia by Portuguese missionaries. Moreover, some examinations led to the hypothesis that this icon had been retouched; as Pankhurst reports:

> The outlines of a former painting, in which the head was apparently more elongated in type, can still be traced under the hair; the former position of the eyes can still be dimly seen, while the forehead [there it shows] above the Crown of Thorns corresponds far more closely in colour and pigment with the warmer reds and fuller modelling of the face. Mr. Roger Fry, however, after careful examination, was of the opinion that the whole is the work of one hand, but was executed over a previous design which had not been completely effaced, and that the pattern of the dress and the treatment of the hands point alike to Adriaen Ysenbrant, or to some Bruges painter intimately connected with him.[72]

According to a RastafarI interpretation, Christ is portrayed with dreadlocks. Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah, a Jamaican Rasta woman, points out that Christ is a 'brown-skinned Nazarene wearing thick long brown *dreadlocks*'.[73] Thus the Rastas have their own distinctive conception through Ethiopian Christianity and the doctrines of its personal God. Rastas and Ethiopians see Yahweh in their own image as an African inclusive God, 'Our Lord and Saviour...'.

[71] Richard Pankhurst, 'The History of the Kwer'ata Re'esu', 121.
[72] Richard Pankhusrt,' The History of the Kwer'ata Re'esu', 122 (text as original).
[73] Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah, *Rastafari,* 93.

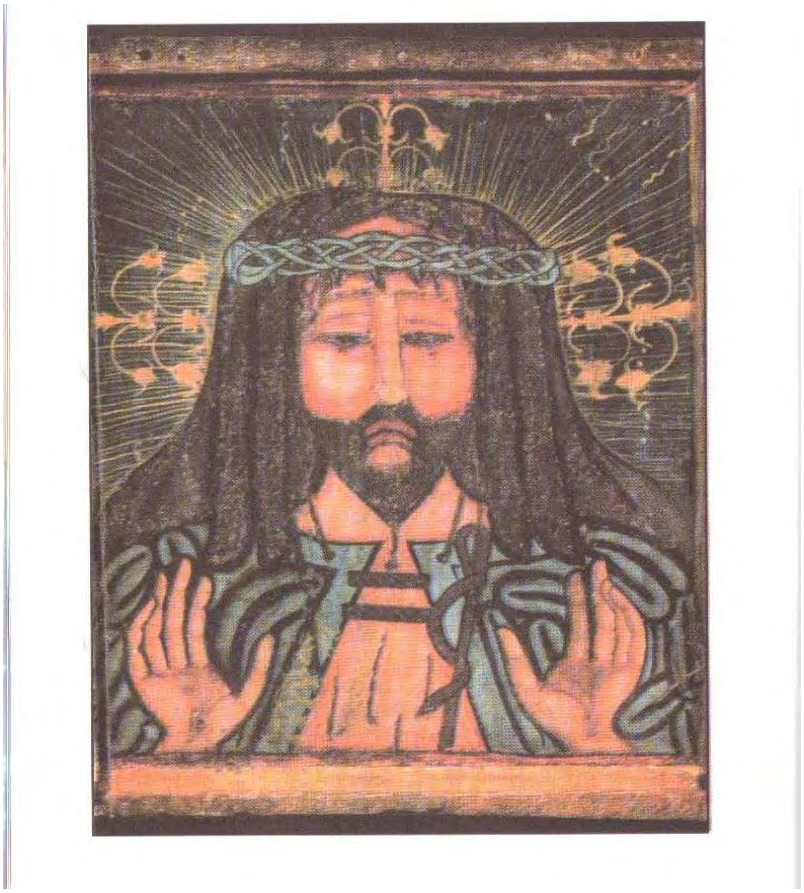


Fig. 9. The *Kwer'ata Re'esu*. From Barbara Makeda B. Hannah, *Rastafari,* p. 93.

The historian and archivist Dorothea McEwan, who works in the archives of the British Museum and has a particular interest in Ethiopian manuscripts, states in one her papers, 'An Ethiopian Crucifixion':

> What is absolutely unique is the subject matter, a sacred story embellished or surrounded by a secular story. The latest event is the coronation of Tewodros II. We know that it took place in 1855 and that it took place in Därasge Maryam, so would this be a pointer that the painting was painted in Darasge Maryam?[74]

[74] See the article of Dorothera McEwan, 'An Ethiopian Crucifixion', which is published online by the Anglo-Ethiopian Society. It is available at:
http://anglo-ethiopian.org/publications/articles.php?type=A&reference=publications/articles/2008summer/ethiopiancrucifixion.php.

Charismatic Leaders in RastafarI

The term 'charisma' is from the Latin *charisma* from the Greek *charis* and means the special virtue of leadership. Charisma is also 'gift of grace'[75] or favour which is conferred on a person by the Holy Spirit. It is also referred to as extraordinary powers. Max Weber classifies charisma into two types: charisma which is seen as a 'gift that inheres in an object or a person simply by virtue of natural endowment',[76] and another type which derives from extraordinary means.

Weber's theory of society also contributed a new sociological vision to the study of religious authority in the field of religion and also in new religious movements. He recognised the impact of religion and belief on society. Religious communities are social groups where people can express, form and develop their own initiatives and values. Many religious movements are characterised by charismatic leaders, but according to Eileen Barker, there are some exceptions, the new religious movements that have no charismatic leader(s).[77] However in a sense the phenomenon of charismatic religious authority in the RastafarI movement is intrinsically close to Weber's 'sociological imagination'. The prophets, for example, in RastafarI are regarded as initiators of the movement and have an extraordinary and 'magnetic' personality which is essentially Afrocentric. Such a form of authority 'is not necessarily unpleasant or

[75] George D. Chryssides, 'Unrecognized Charisma? A Study and Comparison of Four Charismatic Leaders: Charles Taze Russell, Joseph Smith, L Ron Hubbard, Swami Prabhupada', paper presented at the 2001 International Conference *The Spiritual Supermarket: Religious Pluralism in the 21st Century*, organised by INFORM and CESNUR (London, 19–22 April, 2001). The paper is available online at: http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/chryssides.htm

[76] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*: *An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 1, (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1978), 400.

[77] Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements*, 13.

dictatorial, but draws on an intimate relationship between the leader and follower'.[78] The charismatic leader reflects the status of semi-divinity, expressing the will of God. But the charismatic person also chooses the criteria of selection for the members of the organisation, since charisma is considered a form of authority.[79]

RastafarI thus develops its own Afrocentric pantheon of prophets or charismatic religious leaders in the way that Weber has described. Originally, the notion of a prophet comes from one source, Greek. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the term refers to the category of religious people who receive divine messages and interpret signs and symbols from the supernatural world sometimes using divination (as in ancient Judaism).[80] In Greek, the word prophet comes from 'pro '('before' or 'forward') and 'phēmi' ('say')',[81] and it usually indicates a member of a cult who speaks on behalf of God. Similarly, in ancient Israelite tradition, the word prophet appears within Hebrew texts with the term *navi'* and it means someone (an ecstatic person) who can communicate with the Supreme Being. Rasta prophets have supernatural power given by God and they are the only ones who act in name of their African God. These religious leaders exhort their followers to recognise who they are and where they are from Africa. In African traditions, the prophet is the manifestation of African identity and black nationalism also becomes a key point for Rasta thought.

Marcus Garvey was a prophet and visionary along with other Rastafari spiritual leaders such as Leonard Percival Howell (1898-1981, Jamaica), called by the Rastas 'Perci',

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[78] George D. Chryssides, 'Religious Authority', in *The World's Religions: Continuities and Transformations*, ed. Peter B. Clarke and Peter Beyer, (London: Routledge, 2009), 566-581.
[79] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 27.
[80] G.T. Sheppard and W. E. Herbrechtsmeier, 'Prophecy: An Overview', in *Encyclopedia of Religion.* Vol. 11, 2nd ed., ed. J. Lindsay (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 7424.
[81] George D. Chryssides, 'How Prophecy Succeeds' in *International Journal for the Study of the New Religions*, eds. C.M Cusack and L. Frisk, vol. 1, no. 1 (2010), 30.

Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert (1894 - date of death unknown), Henry Archibald Dunkley (dates unknown) and Mortimer Planno (1929, Cuba – 2006, Kingston, Jamaica) known as Mortimo 'Kumi' Planno, (the founder of the RastafarI movement and teacher of Bob Marley). In ancient African traditions (cf. the Meban tribe of Ethiopia) the term 'prophet' means a religious leader, a charismatic person (a visionary, a shaman), as well as healer who has direct contact (through a meditative or an ecstatic state) with a wide pantheon of spirits and divinities. Generally, the prophet represents the spring of the spiritual growth of Africans. When the prophets reveal the word of God(s), they open the doors towards the supernatural world. The African prophets are more associated with the social and spiritual contexts of the African indigenous populations, so that the prophet constitutes the spirit of the African community and the interface between the supernatural and the human.

In the African diaspora, in the African-American tradition, Africa plays a central role in people's lives, interests and beliefs. It is everywhere present and everywhere sensed.[82] The idea of prophecy has been essential in African-American thought since Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, William E.B. Du Bois and Malcolm X.[83] The philosophy

[82] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity,* 3.

[83] Malcolm X (1925-1965) baptized under the Christian name Malcolm Little, became a member of the Nation of Islam, a Muslim, during his time in prison and his numerous contacts with Elijah Muhammad, the head of the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad was a close friend of Malcolm X and was very influential in his conversion to Islam. Malcolm X, was both Muslim and involved in pan-African secular organizations (the Organization of African Unity, the OAU, established in 1963 and replaced by the African Union, the AU, which is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). He struggled for the Nation for Africans (with the aim to bring Africans together) against white supremacy. Like Garvey, Malcolm X advocated the development of Africa, African human rights and encouraged the participation of Africans in eradicating colonialism. On the other hand, Malcolm X was not for non-violent programmes, which in his view were a farce. He also aimed at 'racial separation' between African and European people. Interestingly, one of the founders of the OAU was Haile Selassie I. The charter of the AU has embarked on transforming African unity. Its aims promote: firstly, the mutual integration of Africans; secondly, human dignity; thirdly, making effective the union of the African continent through sustainable social democracy, economy and culture supporting and defending programmes for peace, security and stability, in particular, the rights of women, youth and children. Moreover, another goal of the AU is to implement popular participation in African society.

of such intellectual and religious people comes from the same black religious force (most of these charismatic leaders came from the Christian Baptist community) which preached proud 'black' superiority.

Garvey as a prophet spoke of the black image of God:

> We, as Negroes have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has not colour, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, since the white people have seen their God through the white spectacles. The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob let him exist for the race that believes in the God of the Isaac and the God of Jacob. We Negroes believe in the God of *Ethiopia*, the everlasting God - God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the One God of all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship him through the spectacles of *Ethiopia.* [84] (writer's emphasis)

Garvey's discovery and identification of the 'black' and African identity of persons and nations in the Holy Scripture also gave significant information and a hermeneutic orientation to the study of ancient African traditions, which was essential to the liberation of African people. Garvey's aim was to defend and give dignity to Africa's history. He believed that African people were destined to become rulers of the world - the concept of African supremacy which was echoed in RastafarI and African ideology. The style and the words of Garvey, as observed by Leonard E. Barrett, were like those of a prophet of Israel, although he never went to Africa. Garvey's message was biblically oriented and RastafarI reflects Garvey's messianic idea through the royal African figure of Haile Selassie I, who is in Rasta talk the God-King, the living God. In addition, Rastas view themselves as the reincarnation of the elect of ancient Israel exiled in Jamaica and waiting to return to 'the land of Ham' (Ps. 105:23).

[84] Amy Jacques Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions,* 2nd ed., (London: Frank Cass and Co, 1967), 34. This is also quoted in Leonard Barrett's *The Rastafarians,* 79.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the Afrocentric perspective as an original contribution to philosophy by African people and charismatic leaders, including Garvey, who influenced the cultural and religious heart of 'black' consciousness in the struggle for African liberation. Consideration of Afrocentricity has highlighted an important issue in Rasta thought: how Rastas pose the Monophysite notion of the human-divine and African God in Haile Selassie I. Haile Selassie I is not just God-King but a persona, a traditional leader and a charismatic person, in Weber's terms, who symbolises the RastafarI identity, the Afrocentric consciousness rooted in Ethiopia. As a charismatic leader Haile Selassie I comes true through succession (the Solomonic dynasty) and revelation.

Chapter 6

Relocating Xaymaca [1]

Cultural Stereotypes in Confrontation

From a 'World-Accommodating' Indigenous Culture to a 'World-Resistant' African-Caribbean Community

> National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.[2]

Introduction

The previous chapter has dealt with the core argument of Afrocentricity in Rasta thought. RastafarI is a minority political group of the African diaspora, which has developed its religious ideology of liberation. Rastafari emerges as an African-Caribbean ideology rooted in the concepts of negritude and Afrocentricity with a 'theological nucleus',[3] as the Jamaican Rasta poet Mutabaruka (formerly Allan Hope) points out. This chapter is the continuation of the Chapter Five but it mainly focuses on the theme of postocolonialism which is influential in the RastafarI psychology. Along with Afrocentrycity there is another

[1] The name *Xaymaca* was given to the island of Jamaica by her first inhabitants, the Taíno populations. As the Jamaican archaeologist, Lesley-Gail Atkinson, suggest, the word 'Xaymaca' was used to indicate a land abounding with springs which is discussed in Lesley-Gail Atkinson, ed., *The Earliest Inhabitants: The Dynamics of the Jamaican Taínos,* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2006), 1

[2] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 27

[3] Mutabaruka, 'Rasta from Experience,' in *Rastafari: A Universal Philosophy in the Third Millennium,* ed. Werner Zips, (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2006), 21-41, quoted in Charles Price, *Becoming Rasta: Origins of Rastafari Identity in Jamaica,* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

aspect of African new religious movements (including the RastafarI movement), which is based on a postcolonialism.

Three aims are developed in the following section. First, RastafarI creates a revolutionary culture that reflects the attachment with Africa (Ethiopia). Second, the RastafarI movement emphasizes, celebrates, and defends African heritage and 'black culture'. Third, RastafarI provides African-Caribbean religious leaders and prophets (Marcus Garvey, Leonard Howell, Mortimo Planno and Bob Marley), who have inspired their followers with their visions of an African God and culture associated with the idea of 'Return to Africa', and with the reason for many Rastas to join the Ethiopian Orthodox Church because of its history and the leadership of HIM Haile Selassie I. A member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Kingston, Jamaica, Sister Ecila, interviewed by the scholar Charles Price, claims:

> Once we recognize our Black culture and history, we are no longer content with what we had been taught...It was not England first [anymore]. It was Africa and Black first...when Garvey done [left for England] I don't give up on the Black race...this is why I member of this [Ethiopian Orthodox] Church.[4]

In a general way, RastafarI incorporates a new ideological resistance which criticises the West (Babylon) that, in a postcolonial sense, represents a dominant culture with its values and beliefs, and has historically exercised control over the subalterns. RastafarI is rooted in the tumultuous political, social, and economic climate of the 1930s, the Great Depression. In such a global depression RastafarI has chosen to take the route towards a social, cultural and religious revolution for African-Caribbean communities.

[4] Charles Price, *Becoming Rasta*, 8-9.

Amongst the other things, this chapter also explores in detail the impact of colonization on the native aboriginal populations and those of African origin in Jamaica. Since of the discovery of the 'West Indies', the Caribbean Islands have been for Europe an extraordinary prism which reflects archetypes and myths which have assumed different meanings and values. These exotic places, seen as paradises and inhabited by 'cannibals and savages' who were completely exterminated and substituted with 'African slaves', were transformed through colonization from Eden to Inferno. But oppression has not prevented influence on the dominant culture and this has determined the autochthonous cultural and social phenomena of the 'West Indies'. Geographical, linguistic, racial and religious fragmentation has been overcome by a postcolonial unitary literature that suggests to the 'Old World' its own pattern of coexistence amongst racial and cultural differences. Confronting colonial dominance, for Caribbean movements and thinkers, is an unavoidable step because it is a means to claim and affirm a strong identity (*autocoscienza*) which is able to look back to the past. This historical and cultural framework is useful to understand how, from a Caribbean movement, RastafarI has developed its campaign against the colonialist Babylon and has reclaimed its sense of Afrocentricity as a sign of renewed liberation for all Africans who have lived for long in exile. In a postcolonial sense, RastafarI revisits the native attempts and also criticises the effects of hegemony within marginalized contexts. RastafarI, like political theorists, intellectuals, poets and writers such as Jean-Claude Charles, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Maryse Condé, has contributed discourses on negritude towards a racial polemic and also a cultural humanization of African-Caribbean identification.

RastafarI is an anti-colonial movement which reflects what the postcolonial writer Albert Memmi says in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*: 'The colonialist likes neither theory nor theorists'.[5] With this unusual rhetorical expression he draws a parallel between past colonization and the continuing state of racial, cultural and religious discrimination over the minorities (the subalterns). RastafarI is a particularly fitting example of negritude and marginalization. As a specific movement of the West Indies, RastafarI is considered a hybrid ethnicity, a rootless identity, and an acephalous organization.

The First Forms of Domination in Jamaica

Post-colonial writers such as Pablo Neruda, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and the Italian Emilia Rensi[6] have discussed, re-examined, revised and denounced what the Europeans, the 'Old World', did in the 'New World'. Such writings have changed their own cultural patterns through the use of a creative and hidden literature that changes any stereotypy into a less westernized text. These new forms of writing, which are essentially polemical and 'genderizzate', despite advocating with artistic irony human rights for the colonized and the subjugated, have never obtained their freedom. But women like Rensi and Condé have demonstrated in their inter-texts the value of a memory which is alive, and

[5] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* (London: Earthscan Pubblications, 1990), 136.

[6] Emilia Rensi was not only a philosopher, but a valuable educator, devoted to studying through a life of sacrifice and purposeful living. She was a speaker on politics and philosophy. She was an author who wrote numerous essays revealing artistic, intellectual and spiritual talents like her father's (the philosopher Giuseppe Rensi). The Veronese Giuseppe Rensi (1871-1941) was a philosopher of mysticism, Professor of Ferrara, Florence, Messina and Genoa until dismissed from his post in 1927 for his opposition to the Fascist regime. The philosophy of Rensi was defined Hegelian mysticism, extracted from idealism and mystical transcendence of existence. He wrote several books in scepticism. Although Emilia was a non-believer, she defended the *indifesi* (the subalterns, the others, and children) and she refused to conform.

their historical revivals act against the western stereotypes by speaking truth to power and talking about how the dominant white races interacted with the black subject races.

To understand the roots of RastafarI, it is necessary to analyse the phenomenon of colonization and slavery, and the process of emancipation in Jamaica. RastafarI established its own settlement in Jamaica in 1930. Jamaica and the rest of the West Indies were the lands of conquest of the Europeans, and Europe dominated and controlled the New World. Jamaica was 'discovered' on 5th May 1494 by the Genoan navigator and explorer Cristoforo Colombo (Christopher Columbus) (1451-1506). He was the first Italian at the time of the Maritime Republics of Amalfi, Genoa, Pisa and Venice to attempt to reach Asia by a voyage to the Indies. Despite his intentions, Cristoforo Colombo never reached the East. His plan to reach Asia was driven by three main motivations: first of all, the European need to increase profits and wealth and develop trade routes through the Levant and Arabia to distant lands in the East such as China; second, the desire to spread Christianity throughout the world[7]; third, the thirst for gold and geographical knowledge.

For several years Colombo tried to persuade European governments, including the English and Portuguese, to grant him a mandate and funds to support his voyage of discovery. Eventually, in 1492 the Spanish Catholic Monarchs (Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon) were convinced by his extravagant ideas and provided financial support for his expeditions towards the 'exotic place', that is the Orient. Though Colombo

[7] Colombo, although not a scholar, was interested in the Bible and its prophecies. He was influenced by biblical eschatology which drove him in his career of explorer. His interest in the Bible spurred him to write an apocalyptical text about the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus Christ. This book, entitled the *Book of Prophecie,* was written around 1502 with the support of a monk friend.

was a brilliant navigator, he never landed in the East, fulfilled his dreams or visited the distant lands of the Indies. Colombo was convinced until his death that he had found the islands of Asia and for this reason called them the 'West Indies', which is the expression we still use, both Europeans and non-Europeans. From his successor, the navigator Amerigo Vespucci of Florence (1454-1512), the New World took the name of 'America'. What is certain is that Colombos, along with other explorers, navigators and missionaries, arrived in the New World in 1492 under the aegis of the Spanish throne, which aimed to colonize the territories of the native populations in order to realize the hegemony of Europe in all its aspects through one culture, spirituality and politics. The European colonization of the New World was celebrated on its 500th anniversary. As discussed by Emilia Rensi in her essay *Cristo-Colombo, e...l'inizio della tratta degli schiavi,* the Colombo commemoration in Europe and America became merely a capitalist market where everyone, 'I Grandi Pennivendoli'[8] (who are expert in everything) with their standardized codes, papers, discourses and conferences, has preached and glorified the courageous enterprise of the Great Navigator *Cristo-Colombo*.

The Italian Milo Manara,[9] a creator of comic books, known as *fumetti* in Italian, has produced a narrative artwork of scenes and dialogues. Manara is the first *fumettista* (graphic writer) who, with his seductive genre and erotic series, has dominated the Italian market. He became famous in Italy and internationally for portraying the strong presence of

[8] Emilia Rensi, *Cristo Colombo, e...l'inizio della tratta degli schiavi* ('Christ-Columbus: And...The Beginning of the Slave Trade', writer's trans.), (Ragusa, Italy: Nuova Ipazia, 1992), 5.

[9] Milo Manara (1945-) whose actual name is Maurilio Manara, is an Italian *fumettista* (a comic book artist) from Verona, who is popular in Italy because he blends fantasy and erotic images in his works (*fumetti*, a series of comic writings). In particular, sensual women play a crucial role in his work. Manara worked with one of the most important film makers of the twentieth century, Federico Fellini, who had a great influence on his thinking. For further information see Manara's website http://www.milomanara.com.

attractive and sensual female bodies. In one of his *fumetti*, he illustrated the story of the discovery of the new Indies on so-called Colombo Day and represented wild women, '*le selvagge indigene – sempre le donne!*, always the women!'[10] Figure 11 shows this cartoon.

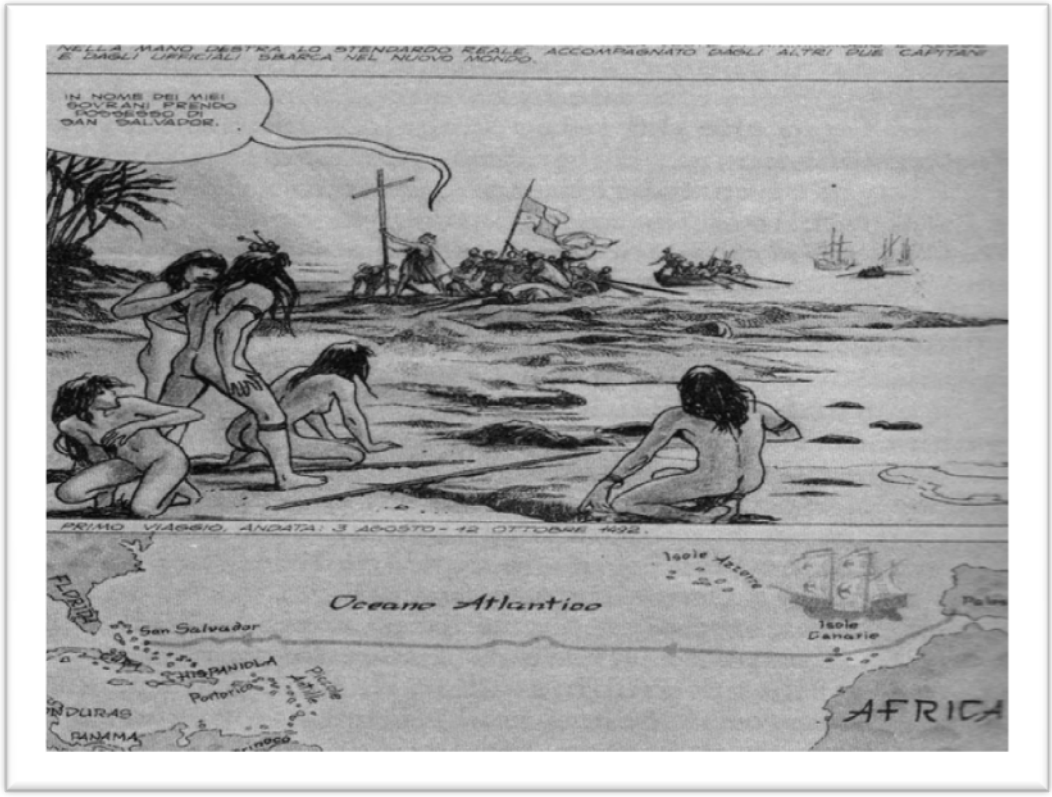


Fig. 10. Colombo Day (the first voyage, 3rd August-12th October, 1494): the Christian world facing a pagan world of women by Milo Manara (in Emilia Rensi, *Cristo Colombo,* 32).

[10] Emilia Rensi, *Cristo-Colombo,* 6.

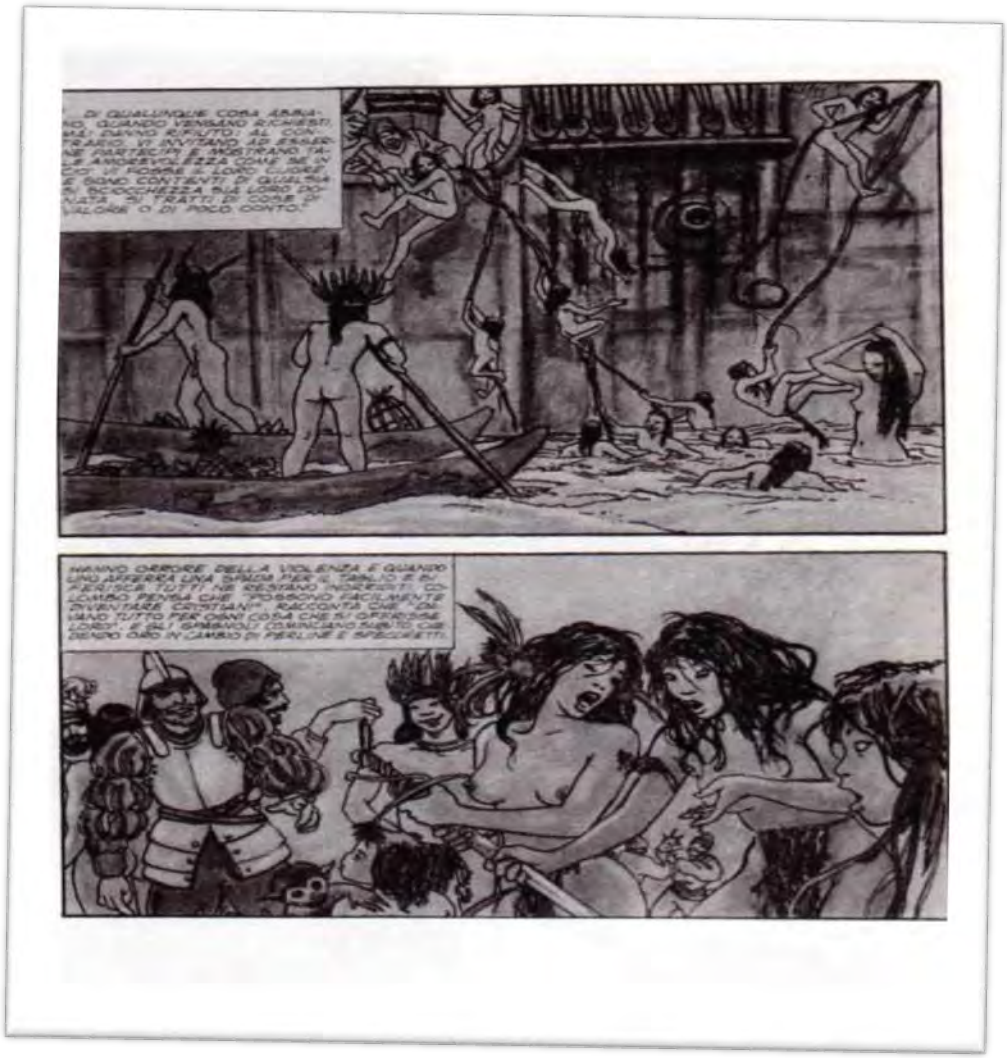


Fig 11. The Encounter between the Old World and the New World: A Portrait of the Indigenous Women (*le donne 'selvagge'*) by Milo Manara (in Emilia Rensi, *Cristo Colombo,* 10).[11]

As Emilia Rensi remarks:

> *Ma è pur giusto, una buona volta, abbandonare la via trita e ritrita, e considerare le cose da un altro punto di vista, da quel punto di vista con il quale è doveroso giudicare esseri umani ed azioni, cioè sotto l'aspetto etico.*

[11] See also Enzo Biagi, *Cristoforo Colombo,*(Milano: Mondadori, 1991). Manara's cartoons (Figs. 10&11) were published in commemoration of the 500 years of the discovery of America and portrays the native populations as backward and primitive.

> But it is right, for once, leaving the path trodden and re-trodden, to consider things from another point of view, from that perspective with which human beings and actions ought to judge, based on an ethical approach.[12] [Writer's translation]

These theoretical and intellectual discourses spearheaded by Rensi in the 1960s have occupied a position of crucial importance in anti-colonial western writings, despite her ideas never having come to be known abroad, even during the rise of postcolonial theories in the 1980s. Figures like Rensi have denounced the dominant politics of Europe and the United States, which, according to her words, have distorted the historical reality (*la verità storica*). The reasons for colonialism were various, but the most important is that at the time of Colombo, foreigners were greedy for the gold. This is one of the reasons why the Old World was not able to resist the attraction of *il Re dei Metalli* (the king of metals). As Rensi comments:

> *L'oro è l'altra cosa (oltre alle spezie) che lo affascina. Non può resistere all'attrattiva del rei dei metalli...Gli stranieri [cioè gli Spagnoli] sono affamati d'oro.*
>
> Gold is the other thing (besides the spices) that fascinates him. There can be no resisting the attractiveness of the king of metals ... The foreigners (the Spaniards) are hungry for gold.[13] [Writer's translation]

The indigenous populations of the new Indies, the Taínos or *Arawaks* were tortured, executed and exterminated. The word 'Arawaks' was used to denote the people of the Guianas, but for centuries the terms 'Taínos' and 'Arawaks' have been used interchangeably, although recently it has been discovered by local Jamaican archaeologists such as Lesley-Gail Atkinson. in *The Earliest Inhabitants: The Dynamics of the Jamaican Taíno,* that

[12] Emilia Rensi, *Cristo Colombo*, 11.
[13] Emilia Rensi, *Cristo Colombo*, 13-14.

Taínos and *Arawaks* were two 'distinct ethnic groups'[14] in the Caribbean. However, neither Colombo nor anyone else knew the word 'Arawak'. The anthropologist, Irving Rouse, after three decades of research on the Taínos, has found that the native populations of Caribbean came into existence around 4000 B.C.E. and were from the Orinoco Valley in Amazonia and the region of the Andes. According to Rouse, the word 'Arawak' appeared in the colonial literature in the late 1500s.[15] But many archaeologists and anthropologists have accepted 'Taínos' as a term which designates the aboriginal people of the West Indies before any European contact. Rouse relates in his book *The Taínos: The Rise and Decline of the People who Greeted Columbus* that with the advent of Colonial Spain the Taínos went rapidly into decline. These populations were completely decimated by forced labour, malnutrition and diseases introduced and transmitted by Europeans. They were the victims of the Spanish Conquest; 'the Indians' died and a large number of them were tortured to death. Others committed suicide and mothers often killed their children rather than let them become slaves. Postcolonial literature has vividly shown the 'non-positive shadow' of the colonization and tells us the hidden truths about the extinction and dispersion of many natives.

Moreover, despite the brutal extermination of the pre-Columbian society, 'good and noble people', so-called by the Spanish explorers, the Taínos were a different community from the cannibal *Caribs* (resistant indigenous Caribbeans); they contributed to Western civilization.

[14] Lesley-Gail Atkinson, *The Earliest Inhabitants*, 1.
[15] Irving Rouse, *Introduction to Prehistory: A Systematic Approach,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 236-237, quoted in Lesley-Gail Atkinson, *The Earliest Inhabitants*, 2.

Many cultural characteristics and traditions of the Taínos did not vanish; on the contrary, the Taíno customs survived and were assimilated by the Europeans.

The Taínos' contribution and influence were of great value to western culture for language, customs and commodities. For example, they contributed such words as 'huracán', 'canoa', 'hamaca', and 'barbacoa', which became 'hurricane', 'canoe', 'hammock' and 'barbecue'. And some traditional art and artefacts (the wooden 'idols,' so-called *zemi*s) are still used. More importantly, religious ceremonials and the cultivation of tobacco, corn, cassava and yucca or tapioca come from the indigenous populations of the Caribbean. The cassava was essential for Taíno communities not only as food but also for spiritual matters. For example, a wooden *zemi* called *Baibrama* symbolised the god of cassava (cultivation and consumption), who helped to grow the natural food of the Caribbean (not to be confused with *Yucahu*, the spirit of cassava (yucca) and also the supreme deity of the sea whose mother was *Atabey,* the goddess of human fertility).[16] The Taínos were polytheist and had a wide pantheon of female and male supreme divinities or spirits represented by a large number of *zemis*. These carved sacred *zemis* were used also for sniffing *cohoba* (a botanical hallucinogen or psychedelic drug) powder and for inhaling its smoked dried leaves in a ceremony. During this ritual practice, the shaman enters in a hypnotic state and psychedelic experience, an ecstatic trance where the soul is projected into the supernatural. Similar use of psychedelic drugs has been common in the past among several communities, from the southern Native American people like the *Arawaks*, the Africans like the Maroons, up to

[16] Nicholas Saunders and Dorrick Gray, '*Zemís,* Trees and Symbolic Landscapes: Three Taíno Carvings from Jamaica,' in *The Earliest Inhabitants,* 188-192.

the recent Rastafarian communities. Another powerful plant hallucinogen that remains in use today and is smoked by Rastas for deification, is marijuana (*ganja*), known by them as the holy herb. This plant is considered by Rasta communities of primary importance in their ritual, which transports the smoker into an experience of total ecstasy. The importance of these plants derives from the shamanic rituals of the Taínos when Colombo first invaded the Antilles.

The Earliest Phenomena of Resistance in Jamaica

The African-Jamaicans, and hence Rastas, are proud of their own traditions and were inspired by the Maroon groups such as the Windward Maroons, the first nucleus of the Spanish Maroon movement ruled over by Queen Nanny, who settled in the north-east of Jamaica between the city of Kingston and the Blue Mountains, around Nanny Town. The second settlement, the Trelawny Maroons, was located in the western area, in the central mountains close to Trelawney Town, more precisely behind Montego Bay, concentrated in the north west of the impenetrable Cockpit Country. The term 'Maroon', according to the European literature, was used to indicate those 'rebellious' African people of the Caribbean. Originally, these communities were runway slaves from the Gold Coast in West Africa. Some Maroons still exist in Jamaica, and their spoken language is *Kromanti,* which is associated with the Akan dialects known as *Twi* and *Fante* still present in Ghana. Along with the *Kromanti* language, the Maroons also use Patwa, the modern language spoken in Jamaica, and both are also used to address their African and Jamaican ancestors and as a tool to protect their cultural heritage.

The Maroons are considered the earliest dissident groups of the Caribbean to face up to the colonial power. The Maroons were a radical movement who courageously started their military campaign against the West, developing a particular form of warfare. Talented in woodcraft, they never had an open fight, but tended to attack from bushes or forests. Keen-eyed observers kept watch for hours and spread the alarm by means of the *abeng*, a sort of bugle. British troops were defeated in Jamaica by Maroons under two main leaders: Queen Nanny of the Windward Maroons and Kojo, so-called Cudjoe of the Trelawny Maroons (18th Century). The word 'Maroon' derives from the Spanish cimarròn', which means a mountain dweller, and thus indicates a wild, fugitive person. Some of the Maroon settlements were destroyed by the colonizers and never resettled. However, the phenomenon of marronage increased as did their population: thus, Maroon revolts would have encouraged the colonized to act against the dominant whites.

The Maroons of Moore Town in Portland are descendants of the former runaways from the Ashanti and Akan tribes. In West Africa, according to Auguste Comte's animist theory of primitive religion,[17] the objects (fetishes) are animated by a soul (anima). This animistic aspect also survives among the natives of other parts of Africa, of the Americas, of the Antilles (for example amongst the Taínos) and still plays a pivotal role within the new religious movements of the African diaspora in the Caribbean (such as the Maroons, the Voodoo people, and the RastafarI movement), where their ancestral spirits are believed to leave the former body, and transmigrate to inhabit a new one. Thus, this conception enables

[17] Edward B. Taylor, *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom,* vol.2, (London: John Murray, 1871), 144-145.

the soul or spirit to associate, roaming freely, finding new bodies and entering into objects. Theoretically this reveals and confirms how many people of the African diaspora keep up a connexion with the past. Of course, the descendants of African indigenous populations over the centuries have kept tribal cultic objects such as amulets, relics, shells, roots and other image of worship, integrating them with other symbolic practices such as magic, music and charms. These traditions have been a vehicle for their liberation from European domination.

The First Charismatic Woman of the Caribbean: Nanny and the Liberation Movement: the 'Other' World.[18]

It is difficult to understand the history of the world, but history can help us mature in our thoughts about and relations with people who are different from us. Jamaica inaugurated its renaissance and struggle for freedom thanks to the strength of the first African revolutionary priestess-leader and forerunner of the Jamaican Maroon community, Nanny. She played a vital role in the liberation of the African diaspora movements. Nanny is regarded by Jamaicans as a popular persona, a heroine, who struggled against western domination and resisted the colonial power of Europe. Her battles against Britain lasted for more than a decade, from 1725 to 1739, ending in a peace treaty with the British. She was the first 'black woman' who acted as a charismatic military leader against the domination of the West. RastafarI remembers and celebrates annually the anniversary of this African 'Voice Queen' of the 'New World'.

In her work *A History of Queen Nanny: the Mother of Us All*,[19] the ethnographer and expert in gender studies Karla Gottlieb rehabilitates the role of woman; she also criticizes the western process of inferiosization, which has labelled and classified - as Firmin showed - the 'human races' throughout history, ranking them on the basis of their class, race and beliefs. Gottlieb offers a redefinition of the word 'emancipation' through the key figure of Queen Nanny. Her book provides an important analysis of African resistance and liberation in the Diaspora. The author discusses the way in which Africans challenged oppression in the New World and thus how they survived the inhuman and humiliating conditions of European conquest, colonization and racism. Also Gottlieb traces the development of African identity through a woman who was less discussed than African men. Her book focuses on history, providing the reader with new ways of thinking, not just about the African Maroons as the 'others', but about the role of women.

As is well known, the transatlantic slave trade started in the 15th century (1492) and then expanded with the increasing colonial power of Europe. Queen Nanny was originally from Africa, being born in Ghana in 1650 and a descendant of the tribe of Akan. She was the first activist of the African revolutionary movements in the New World. Nanny's ideas were innovative; her multi-faceted philosophy inspired many African movements. She symbolized the new insight of African liberation and unity.

Nanny's task was multi-dimensional: she established a new way for African philosophy and spirituality. She was a priestess and ecstatic prophetess of the Akan descents; she was

[19] Karla Lewis Gottlieb, *The Mother of Us All: A History of Queen Nanny Leader of the Windward Jamaican Maroons,* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998).

also a magician who performed the black or white magic known as *obeah* (a primitive religious practice) to preserve African heritage. Nanny was also deeply influenced by African cosmology. Cosmology is a branch of philosophy which studies the development of the universe in all its parts and laws. The structure of the cosmos is seen as regulated by a supreme entity - energy, the supreme beings with their pantheon of helpers, deities and supreme entities. Nanny's view is similar to the image of deity described by the theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether in her work *Woman Guides: Readings towards a Feminist Theology*. Ruether writes:

> The Goddess addressed is imagined as a person of sovereign power, like a queen or a great priestess…The servant of this Lady exalts Her, flatters Her by declaring that She has *all* power, that She is exalted over all others of Her class. She is also a war-lord, not in some modern Freudian sense of 'devouring mother'…Battle is the way She defends Her realm, defeats Her foes and protects Her servants. To Her, Her servants turn in appeal to vindicate them in their cause against their foes.[20]

According to African cosmology, there is no 'compartmentalizing religion separately from philosophy, separately from poetry, separately from medicine etc'.[21] So Nanny maintained African spirituality, magic and medicine. She was a military strategist, spiritual advisor, healer and clairvoyant. She was an *obeah* practitioner who performed magic rituals. The Jamaican *obeah* has features similar to Haitian Voodoo. The aim of *obeah* was to help people to free themselves from their misfortunes and troubles, and Nanny indulged in such *obeah* practices in order to liberate the oppressed from their status of 'slaves'. Gottlieb writes:

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[20] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Woman Guides: Readings Towards a Feminist Theology,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 4-5.
[21] Karla Lewis Gottlieb, *The Mother of Us All*, 55.

> She was an African queen who put herself in captivity to come to the West in order to be with her people so that she could free them. She didn't come as a slave; she volunteered, it was her own plan.[22]

Nanny emerges as an Afrocentric figure who introduced a new theory of ethnicity and liberation. She launched a new route for female and ethnic emancipation. She represents the prototype of new liberative movements which sought to create, develop and drive the new woman. Nanny struggled against any form of western cultural hegemony and patriarchy. The figure of Nanny was a symbol of *autocoscienza* and of the African liberation movement; she was a sort of catalyst for the black African generations – the radical explosion of civil protest amongst African-Americans. Gottlieb observes that the Nanny role enforces ethnic and gender identity:

> Queen Nanny was one of the greatest freedom fighters of the New World, well placed in the solid history of strong African queens; the study of her life might well change the lives of people living under the paternalistic, racist, classist and gender-based oppression.[23]

Nanny can be considered a social, cultural, and spiritual model for liberation movements which sought radical alternatives to hegemonic systems, social, cultural and economic, and which enabled native populations both to understand better how the colonial power had impacted on them, and to assert new perspectives for change. The journey of Nanny begins with the challenge and resistance of African liberalization and 'survivance'[24] to the process of colonialism. Historically, Nanny led Jamaica towards the abolition of slavery. Her ideas

[22] Karla Lewis Gottlieb, *The Mother of Us All*, 70.
[23] Karla Lewis Gottlieb, *The Mother of Us All,* 84.
[24] The term 'survivance' is employed by Gerald Vizenor to describe the gestures of the native people who seek to survive in American western culture. For further information see the note of Laura E. Donaldson in 'The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth through Native', in *Vernacular Hermeneutics,* R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed., (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 22.

constituted a pivotal example of, and stimulus for, social justice within marginalized contexts. She was, for the oppressed, an unconventional redefinition of the human condition.

Nanny remains a model for the most contemporary 'dissident groups' such as the contemporary Maroon communities and the black African and liberation movements like RastafarI. The African-Caribbeans have inherited from her black pride (African consciousness and identity) and negritude. She is also the expression of the motto 'We are a group' as a part of the African community, which in the RastafarI language corresponds to the saying 'InI', which identifies African unity, brotherhood and living together. In Rastafari thinking, these ideas constitute a symbol of 'redemption' and resistance in the face of any cultural, ethnic and religious discrimination. Nanny remains thus the image of African heritage.

RastafarI and Marronage

The Maroons can be considered the first liberative movement in the history of Jamaica with a strong influence on the RastafarI movement. RastafarI, being an African-Caribbean liberative movement, is linked to the Maroons, and the Maroon doctrine has religious significance in RastafarI thinking as well as playing a role against racial discrimination and the hegemonic systems of European imperialism. What emerges from the Maroons is a collective anti-colonial movement which resisted the Europeans. On the other hand, in order to survive the dominant power, the Maroons made peace, the Treaty of Peace of 1739, which was agreed between Cujoe, also called Captain Cujoe, the Maroon leader and

Guthrie, the British leader. The Maroons were guaranteed their freedom, and were granted 600 hectares of land in the Cockpits area and the right to hunt wild pigs.

On the one hand RastafarI redeems people from their status as slaves, and on the other hand overcomes the corruption and injustice of western policies. One of the Rastafarian leaders, the spiritual and visionary prophet figure and father of the RastafarI movement, Leonard Howell (1898 – 1981), known as the 'First Rasta', was rebellious 'like his Maroon ancestors'[25] and escaped from the harassment of the police at the beginning of the twentieth century. He left Jamaica and visited Panama, the United States and Harlem in New York City before returning to Jamaica, where he bought his Promised Land, in a mountainous region near Kingston, which he called 'Pinnacle'. It consists of 500 acres of virgin land and in 2009 this site was proclaimed a National Monument 'Heritage Settlement' of Jamaica. At Pinnacle Groundation Site, St Catherine, Howell established the Rastafarian roots and practices and this, as Leonard Barrett observes, could be linked to the early African ancestors, the Maroons. His dreams were to free his people (the Rastas) from the western power, Babylon, and move towards a new rebirth and redemption. He defended his people from racial discrimination and oppression in the form of the brutality, violence and genocide of which black people had been the victims in the 1920s. Like Marcus Garvey, Howell was a revolutionary activist against white dominance and western Christianity. He was a charismatic leader of 'black consciousness' who spoke on behalf of God (the 'Black Almighty') to encourage and teach people to resist the colonial authority of 'white people'. Howell travelled in the United States and throughout Jamaica in order to spread his

[25] Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, 86.

teaching based on the dogma of the King-God Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, the redeemer from oppression, and he was the first to embrace the eastern Christian orthodox concept of the hypostatic fusion or the Rasta interpretation of modern re-incarnation of Man-God based on the Monophysite doctrine.

RastafarI claims its status as the descendant of the African Maroons who struggled for their rights, so that RastafarI is a kind of sequel to the Maroon movement. Indeed, Rasta people can be viewed as an African minority group of fugitives, like the Cimarron movements, that claimed their return to the Promised Land, Ethiopia. The revolutionary Rastafarian project aims to achieve the social, cultural and moral salvation of all oppressed peoples. Finally, the RastafarI movement disapproves of the cultural hegemony and imperialism of Europe.

Emancipation and Oppression: a Redefinition of the Human Condition

Although the UK's Emancipation Act (1833-4) represented a radical transformation for the Caribbean people, the colonial powers continued to assume a leadership role over them. The Act was instituted by the European colonialists, and the idea of emancipation was basically a western strategy to maintain colonial power and more specifically to have control over the native people. The Emancipation Act was financial reparation 'with a compensation amounting to £6,616,927 for the inconvenience'.[26] Although the Emancipation Act was seen as ensuring the interests of ethnic minorities, for those people who were made defenceless and disabled socially, economically and culturally, the

[26]Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaican People*, 230

intentions of this edict were different. The anti-slavery movements were very active and protested against any trafficking and smuggling of slaves.

Here it is important to examine the whole idea of the Emancipation Act using James Scott's concept of public transcript as a key reading of the RastafarI movement and other minorities. In his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, James Scott opines that the expression 'speak truth to power'[27] has a utopian ring. Scott coined the phrase 'public transcript'[28] as a way of describing any conventional public interaction between the subordinate and those who dominate.[29] In his view, the true story of the power relations is not expressed in the public transcript. The public transcript tends to mask the truth of the power relationship in politics and economics between the dominant and the subjugated 'others' (the minority groups). The public transcript is for the dominant, like a magistrate who has power and who controls the weaker. The expression 'public transcript', according to its own juridical definition, relates to the 'procès verbal'[30] which includes both verbal and non-verbal acts such as gestures and expressions. It is clear that the public transcript has been conceived for the dominant class, and those with power. The logic of power is expressed in the Emancipation Act, which is 'the open exercise of power'.[31] According to this analysis, the Emancipation Act was essentially a western idea and grew out of western self-interest. Hence, this edict represents the dominance of the colonial

[27]James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 1.
[28]James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2.
[29]James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2.
[30]James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2.
[31]James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 10.

power, although this is 'most sedulously hidden'.[32] Although on the surface the Act gives the impression that freedom was brought to the slaves, a closer look will reveal that it was manipulated to suit European interests.

All the promises, efforts and assertions of the Emancipation Act veiled the class struggle between oppressors and oppressed. From a Rastafarian anti-colonial perspective, the abolition of slavery was thus a type of disguised conspiracy of the powerful to maintain their overall hegemony. The West and the rest of the world, following in the footsteps of the dominant, imposed their own hegemonic ideals on these emergent countries.[33]

On 27 June 2008, Sir Hilary Beckles of the University of the West Indies presented his paper 'Reparations for Slavery: Presenting the Caribbean's Case to Britain' at an anti-slavery conference with the aim of promoting black history and gaining accreditation for the RastafarI movement as an important aspect and part of the African heritage. The symposium was held at the University of Birmingham, attended by the RastafarI ambassador and philosopher Yasus Afari from Jamaica, and other representatives of the RastafarI Community of the West Midlands, such as the RastafarI Study Centre (RSC) the Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE), and RastafarI Roots and Development in the West Midlands (RRDWM). The theme of the conference focused on European colonization and its impact on the colonized. There was discussion of how the Europeans (Spanish, British, French and Portuguese) were involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the greatest ever commercial undertaking and crime against humanity.

[32] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 12.
[33] A current phenomenon of delocalization which accelerates the whole market worldwide and still exploits mainly minority groups such as women, children and indigenous populations.

European colonization reduced people to an inhuman condition and status, with the following results: first, there was the genocide of over twenty million indigenous people; second, the racial exploitation and annihilation of more than fifteen million Africans stolen from their 'homeland' and shipped to the New World (they were kept in captivity and in chains [34], and on the slave route over five million innocents were found dead); third, the introduction of a chattel system of forced labour which resulted in the recruitment of millions of individuals. Therefore, as reported by Beckles in his paper, the indigenous people did not receive any reparations but they were just paid, as in the case of Haiti. Indeed, between 1825 and 1922 Haiti received from France around 150 million gold francs.[35]

In those circumstances, black people (trainers, educators and also the RastafarI community of the West Midlands) were particularly concerned to understand how the case for reparations for slavery worked and how the imperial governments were involved. As the descendants of the victims of slavery, they stated in the debate that they deserved some moral consideration. According to Rastas, so-called emancipation was non-emancipation and there was no reference to reparation.[36] Therefore, Emancipation Act was a stratagem of the colonial empires to introduce new forms of slavery and to protect their states, elite

[34] For a further discussion see the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano (c.1745 - 1797), who campaigned for the abolition of slavery. He was the first African to become involved in anti-colonial movements and published his famous autobiography in 1789 entitled: *'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African'*.

[35] This is the writer's report of Hilary Beckles's words during his contribution at the Conference in Birmingham in June 2008.

[36] Hilary Beckles said that only the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) with its internal commission, an Inter-Governmental Task Force (IGTF), worked in the Caribbean to sustain a common and free market and to take a position on reparation.
http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community/community_index.jsp?menu=community.

families and institutions, and to facilitate economic development in Europe, slavery being at the core of economic growth between the fourteenth and ninetieth centuries. Beckles and Rastas, as the voices of the oppressed, are firmly convinced that the colonialists adopted the concept of 'apology' (a hegemonic response, as observed at the conference in Birmingham)[37] as a political and economic expedient which brought enormous benefits and helped them to gain the high moral ground. It was not a moral response or sentiment of regret.

Towards a Postcolonial Discourse and a Redefinition of the Oppressed Subjects

In his critical analysis of the economic history of the 'social world'[38] the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein affirms that each liberal ideology of the Enlightenment, such as in the capitalist and socialist systems, is deeply embedded in 'conservative ideas'.[39] His historical critique focuses on how imperialism and colonialism co-opted the liberal values of the Enlightenment in the nineteenth century. What the western 'capitalist world-system'[40] did, according to Marx, was to maximise profit through the 'withdrawal of surplus from immediate consumption of the majority'.[41] The way to expand the economy was to get into the undeveloped countries. By contrast, emancipation proved to be profitable for the European economic systems with the absorption of a massive amount of

[38] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), x.
[39] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy,* 50.
[40] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 35.
[41] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 35.

manpower, thus protecting 'their economic interests in the political arena'.[42] In one sense emancipation gave contradictory signals. On the one hand, it provided release from serfdom and re-compensation. On the other hand, the colonial power used the strategy to continue to dominate and subordinate non-western societies.

The above socio-economic analysis shows how RastafarI thought protests and acts against the West. The resistance and revolution of RastafarI are particularly useful to understand the emergence of postcolonial literature. What this 'Third World' theology, such as RastafarI, observes is that the damage done by the colonial powers has not yet ended. RastafarI therefore emerges as an anti-colonial movement which advocates the national liberation and renaissance of Africa.

The anti-colonial attitude of RastafarI is reflected in its philosophy, which consists of a reaction against the global imperialist policies of the West. What Rasta people do, however, is to 'recontextualize' the history of humanity where the subordinate assumes the control of national emancipation, develops new ideas, and becomes the creator of a personal doctrine promoting forms of policy and spirituality valuing renewal and resistance.

RastafarI versus Western Hegemony

Looking back at history through the thought of Antonio Gramsci and postcolonial movements, including RastafarI, it is clear that western hegemony traces its origins back to the Roman Empire. In fact, it can be argued that the so-called 'Age of Imperialism' began

[42] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 38.

with Roman politics in the wake of Scipio Africanus the Younger, Caius Julius Caesar and Octavianus Augustus, known as the Victorious or the Clement ('the Indulgent'), as well as the spiritual leaders *Reges sacrorum,* who were motivated to establish their authority over the 'unknown lands'. For instance, it is strongly argued in non-western literature, especially in postcolonial writings, that in the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church abolished any use of vernacular languages and dialects in its rituals to safeguard Latin as the 'Universal Language'.[43] According to the postcolonialists, Rome and Europe hid behind their charitable evangelization to ensure the export of their own western hegemony abroad. It is certain that despite the efforts of 'mythical philanthropy', the Enlightenment and the modern age with all their ideals were not able to eliminate social and cultural discrimination. Despite liberative movements like decolonization, which aimed to prevent racism, xenophobia and intolerance, the challenges of 'diversity' have been a continuing characteristic of all cultures. 'Racism' or intolerance of 'others', a belief which affirms one's own superiority, is a Eurocentric attitude which started in the late Middle Ages (from the era of Colombo) and still persists in the modern age. Specifically, according to Fanon 'a certain species of men',[44] wield power.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt in her work *Lying in Politics: Reflections on the Pentagon Papers* investigates how the lobby[45] and hegemony have worked closely together. She says

[43] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 131.
[44] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 26.
[45]The word 'lobby' expresses power relations. Literally, 'lobby' derives from the Latin *lobia, laubia*, which means 'hall', 'vestibule' and 'the monastic cloister'. The monastic cloister in medieval times was the inner, protected space of a convent, reserved for the pastime of the monks. Over the years, the word 'lobby' came to mean ad hoc (in a political sense) a group of people (elites) well-endowed with the art of persuasion. This ruling class, through the art of *captatio benevolentia,* a gentle and charitable way of persuading the audience,

that the higher echelons of the lobby,[46] such as politicians, officials, educators and religious leaders, the so-called 'problem solvers', [47] are in the habit of using lies, falsehoods and plots as means to influence and manoeuvre people. Arendt writes:

> Lies are often much more plausible, more appealing to reason, than reality, since the liar has the great advantage of knowing beforehand what the audience wishes or expects to hear.[48]

Nowadays, hegemony has assumed a different form. Hegemony is tied up with 'the currently fashionable concept of *globalization*'[49] of the economic markets. Zygmunt Bauman points out in his work *Globalization: The Human Consequences* that globalization is the manoeuvre to dominate[50] and leads to 'global legislative and policing powers'[51] by the lobbyists who intend to homogenize and fragment the 'others' in the bogus name of integration. In short, Bauman says: 'Integration and parcelling out, globalization and territorialization are *mutually complementary processes'*.[52]

At this point, there are some reflections which are so close to Rastas as well. RastafarI seems to be viewed in the opinion of many intellectuals as a 'conflagration' of people who live out of order (in Bauman's sense). RastafarI is hostile and revolutionary to all the moral canons expressed in ecclesial and civil legislation. In particular, RastafarI fights against the

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were able to mislead people and consolidate their power relations. This might be seen as a key reading of hegemony by the dominant, in the sense of their distance from and superiority to the rest of the people (the subalterns). [I have removed 'in my view' from this comment, since it is customary to be impersonal in a thesis text.]

[46] Hannah Arendt, *La menzogna in politica: Riflessioni sui 'Pentagon Papers,' Lying in Politics: Reflections on the Pentagon Papers*, trans.by Veronica Santini, (Marietti: Genova-Milano, 2006), 18.

[47] Hannah Arendt, *La menzogna in politica*, 18.

[48] Hannah Arendt, *La menzogna in politica*, 12.

[49] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization*, 59.

[50] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization*, 69.

[51] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization*, 69.

[52] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization*, 69.

hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church which is regarded as the worst worldwide institution. Simultaneously, RastafarI is of the view that western politics and economics are apparatuses in the service of the Vatican.

RastafarI sees the world economics as the basis of war, famine, poverty and oppression. People are still the objects of exploitation within the process of globalization. Babylon manipulates people as subjects of their interests and as outcomes/goods 'of the world markets'.[53] This is the mechanism of western commercialization which uses and dominates people through granting elusive and synthetic freedoms and liberties. Ennis Barrington Edmonds in 'Dread 'I' In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization' claims:

> According to the Rastas, slavery did not end in Jamaica in 1834; it continues in many forms. The educational and religious institutions of Babylon, for example, specialise in obscuring the truth and teaching the people 'misphilosophy'. The firm conviction of the Rastafarians is that Babylon's Eurocentric system of education contrives to brainwash black people; it degrades what is African and glorifies what is European. In the words of one Rasta, 'what is thought is untrue, immoral and indoctrination'. The end result of Babylon education is the 'whitewashing' of the African mind, by stripping it of its African vibrations and inculcating in it European values, perspectives and tastes.[54]

Of course, RastafarI seeks to unmask the imperialism (lobbyism and hegemony) in culture, the lies in politics, economics and religions which have indoctrinated the minds of poor people:

> *Politricks* refers to what the Rastafarians regard as the deceptive nature of Babylon's political activity. It is not the art of statecraft but the art of deception, machination, and manipulation. In Babylon, politicians pretend to be governed

[53] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization*, 69.
[54]Ennis B. Edmonds, 'Dread "I" In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization', in *The RastafarI Reader,* 27.

> representatives of privilege and keep the populace downpressed. The Rastafarian poet Mikey Smith portrays politicians as using trickery, lies, and secrecy to subdue the poor and make them vulnerable to exploitation.[55]

Rasta people aim to create a diverse and separate community which on the one hand rejects the conventional values and beliefs of the West, a society essentially corrupt, Babylon. On the other hand, RastafarI acts as response to western domination and hegemony. RastafarI can be defined as a theology of struggle or a postcolonial new religious movement. The movement plans, develops, operates and supports liberative-resistant programmes, revolutionary systems of communication and information that serve the needs of their own charismatic leaders.

Conclusion

The section has delineated some of the postcolonial challenges and discourses in RastafarI thought. As a subaltern group, Rasta people have shaped their ideological resistance, liberation and redemption, changing their position from a marginalized movement to a new religious movement.

In conclusion, RastafarI is an African liberative spirituality which combines the insights of the Afrocentricity which we can see in Nanny and Haile Selassie I with a postcolonial discourse. RastafarI shows itself to be an anti-colonial movement in the diaspora reacting against the colonial and dominant dynamics of the West. RastafarI's contribution consists in liberating the African soul in the diaspora from the legacy of imperialism and

[55]Ennis B. Edmonds, 'Dead "I" In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization', in *The RastafarI Reader,* 28.

colonialism. RastafarI is, therefore, a new postcolonial phenomenon of the twentieth century which has resisted Babylon.

Chapter Seven

A Woman in RastafarI

Liberation and Ethnic-Religious Creativity

Introduction

As a new religious movement, RastafarI has shown its cultural and religious links with the Ethiopian kingdom through the patriarchal Solomonic dynasty and the Afrocentric concept of God. RastafarI tends to eschew the categories of western Christianity because western Christianity is assumed to be dogmatic, imperialistic and hegemonic, and its ideology, as has been demonstrated in the first and second chapters, incorporates the non-western doctrines (Monophysitism) and rituals of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. As shown earlier, despite the RastafarI philosophy being somewhat complex and problematic, the movement takes an African form; indeed, RastafarI is a socio-political and religious phenomenon with a strong African influence (an 'African-black' consciousness) which evolved in Jamaica. Its theorization derives from an anti-capitalist and postcolonial position which emerges from exaltation of the theory of negritude or Afrocentricity (see Chapter Five). The Rasta concepts of repatriation to Africa and Haile Selassie I as an African divinity have reinforced the cultural identity of the Africans of the diaspora. Such an Afrocentric position has given rise to a theoretical unity in RastafarI defining itself as a new religious movement of liberation or a postcolonial movement which came to adopt a revolutionary response to the domination of the West (Babylon). The rebellious and radical nature in RastafarI is very significant

for its evolution. But this 'creative' resistance and impulse to act against the differences of class, race and economic status conceals its patriarchal stereotypes of the figure of woman.

This section explores the theme of woman as a union between Ethiopia (the Old) and RastafarI (the New). The name and the myth Queen of Sheba and King Solomon are sacred to RastafarI because they are viewed as the archetypical figures of the Ethiopian dynasty (Solomonic dynasty) and are described in the *Kebra Nagast*. The character of the Queen of Sheba surmounts the stereotyped racial and female roles, rehabilitating the role of all women, with particular emphasis on African and Rasta women, in the socio-cultural and religious spheres. Her leadership role gives a new input and voice to women and subalterns. The Queen of Sheba has been absorbed within the Rasta movement; she is a part (the first woman) of the Solomonic lineage from which would emerge Ras TafarI. Indeed, both the RastafarI community and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church claim to be descended from the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. Such genealogical convictions are believed to have a parallel for RastafarI identity.

Behind the influence of the Queen of Sheba in Ethiopia and Rastafari the myth of this queen has played a crucial role in the early history of the world religions and for women in their social and cultural revolution. The Queen of Sheba featured in Islamic, Judaic and Christian folklore. The story of 'the Queen of the South' symbolizes a unification of opposites in the world religions: 'male and female', 'old and new' and 'one and many'. The various aspects of the Queen of Sheba in Judaism, Islam, Christianity and RastafarI are also very representative of religious pluralism, inter-faith and multiculturalism.

The Origins of the Name of Sheba and its Queen

The name 'Sheba' refers to a land, an ethnic group and a state, but as Nicholas Clapp observes in his book *Sheba: Through the Desert in search of the Legendary Queen,* it is *'not* a queen's proper name.'[1] The historian Michael Wood did his research on the existence of Queen of Sheba. His journey attempted to investigate who the Queen of Sheba was and where she was from, being one of the most fascinating women in western and non-western traditions. There is still a sense of mystery around the figure of this Queen and her kingdom although she has been mentioned in the Bible (Psalm 72), Qur'an and the Holy Book of the Christian Orthodox Ethiopians (the *Kebra Nagast*). International archaeological research has been conducted in Yemen. Many archaeologists suppose that she lived in the region (the ancient Orient) adjacent to the Red Sea, from Egypt to Ethiopia and Eritrea to Southern Arabia (modern Saudi Arabia and Yemen), an area known as the Sabean culture (Saba or Sheba). The story of the Queen of Sheba and her long journey to the Israelites appears in Muslim, Judaic, and Christian folklore. Despite this extensive cultural influence the history of Sheba and her queen is still largely unexplained and unexplored. Indeed, there is still only limited evidence, the recent discoveries, which attest to the existence of the kingdom of Saba.

Holy Books, manuscripts and artworks portray the Sabean culture as a magnificent civilization. According to the Bible, it consisted of a strong economy and a political organization centred principally on international relations. The title held by the supreme ruler of Sheba is most significant, not only showing the origin of the woman who constructed a state but also pointing to the female ability to cope with a patriarchal

[1] Nicholas Clapp, *Sheba: Through the Desert in search of the Legendary Queen,* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 297.

world. She was a diplomatic ruler and a charismatic monarch from the East who dealt with the western world, the kingdom of Israel and its head of state, King Solomon. The Sabean civilization, apart from enjoying political and economic prestige, possessed a strong religious tradition with a fertile pantheon of divinities. Indeed, the Queen of Sheba is also described as a high priestess, Ma'adkarib of the God Almaqah.[2] The term 'Ma'adkarib' in proto-Semitic means 'bringer of unity' and kin of the moon, which is close to the moon divinity.[3]

The land was described as green and fertile and it is also known as 'Arabia Felix' (the Happy Arabia). A qur'anic Sura, Surat Saba' 34: 15, states:

> There was for [the tribe] of Saba', aforetimes, a Sign in their Home-land – two [fields of] gardens – one to the right and one to the left. [They were told], 'Eat of the provision provided by your Lord, and be grateful to Him. A good [fair and happy] land [have you], and a Lord Oft-Forgiving.'

The economy of the land of Sheba was based on a caravan trade in spices and precious stones as well as on agriculture with cereals such as millet, barley, oats and seeds such as cumin and sesame, and commerce. Gus W. van Beek in his work *The Land of Sheba* tells of the wealth of Sheba, which included frankincense and myrrh. [4] The Qur'an and the Bible describe Sheba as a place of immense wealth abounding with gold and silver as well as precious stones and ivory. Classical writers such as Diodorus Siculus and

[2] The statue of the God Almaqah was found by the expedition of the American Foundation for the Study of Mana (the AFSM) in 1952 and it can be seen at: http://www.afsm.org/present/photo_archive/photo12a_lrg.htm.
[3] Barbara Black Koltuv, *Sheba & Solomon,* 29.
[4] Gus W. van Beek, 'The Land of Sheba', in *Solomon and Sheba,* ed. James B. Pritchard, (London: Phaidon Press, 1974), 44.

Pliny the Elder, and historians like the Roman Josephus describe the beauty and riches of the realm of Saba and her Queen.[5]

Archaeological expeditions, in 1952 and in 2001, conducted by the American Foundation for the Study of Man (AFSM), have described the Yemen region as a very wealthy place and conclude that it was part of southern Arabia (Arabia Felix), with the capital city of Marib, known also as the Kitor of the East.[6] Some excavations concluded that the Sabean culture comes from the land of Yemen and that the Queen of Sheba governed in southern Arabia. In 2007 the AFSM's project, headed by Bill Glanzman of the University of Calgary, has been working in Yemen and has discovered a 3,000 year old temple which is likely to be the sanctuary of Bilqis (the Queen of Sheba).

Judaic, Islamic and Christian scriptures and works of art have provided several portraits and appellations of the Queen of Sheba. Islam, Judaism and Christianity name the Queen of Sheba respectively: Queen Bilquis (in Arabic); Lilith (in Judaism, this corresponds to a demigoddess and is mentioned in Isaiah 34:14 as a devil); and Makeda (the Queen of Ethiopia which derives from the Ge'ez, *malkat,* which signifies queen), and the prophetic queen from the south, Queen Candaceor Nicaulae.[7] Islam, Judaism

[5] The literary works which talk about Arabia Felix and its tribes (the Sabeans) which surpassed all the people in the world can be found in the Loeb edition. In Pritchard's edition Pliny's *Natural History* is mentioned. See Gus W.van Beek, 'The Land of Sheba', 45; also the Qur'an (S III 47:5-8).

[6] For further analysis see the following website: http://www.afsm.org/frameset.htm. The AFSM is an American foundation established in Washington D.C. in 1949 by Dr Wendell Philips for the scientific and archaeological study of human beings and their habits. The AFSM investigation included the Yemen expedition of 1952 and in Marib at the Moon Temple of the Queen of Sheba. Marib has been considered the home of this legendary Queen. The AFSM's goal, with an international team of historians, is to explore the reign of the Queen of Sheba, the Sabean kingdom. In 2001, the ASFM team, supported by the Governor of Marib, Dr Saleh Somai, removed the sand at the site and discovered the building of Mahram Bilqis. There are also AFSM archived photos of the monumental sanctuary of Bilqis (the Queen of Sheba) which can be found at:
http://www.afsm.org/present/photo_archive/photo17a_lrg.htm;
http://www.afsm.org/present/photo_archive/photo06a_lrg.htm.

[7] Queen Candace is often confused with the Queen of Sheba. Queen Candace is mentioned in the Bible: 'And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians,

and Christianity seem to agree that this mysterious queen dates from the tenth century BCE (circa 950).

A Pluralistic portrait of a Woman: the Daughter of Lilith and Isis

Michael Wood has investigated the historical background of the Queen of Sheba. He says that the figure of the Queen of Sheba was a subject of discussion in many religious works:

> The Queen of Sheba - an exotic and mysterious woman of power - is immortalised in the world's great religious works, among them the Hebrew Bible and the Muslim Koran. She also appears in Turkish and Persian painting, in Kabbalistic treatises, and in medieval Christian mystical works, where she is viewed as the embodiment of Divine Wisdom and a foreteller of the cult of the Holy Cross. In Africa and Arabia her tale is still told to this day and, indeed, her tale has been told and retold in many lands for nearly 3,000 years.[8]

The Queen of Sheba has long been regarded as a legendary and esoteric figure whose origins are rooted in Jewish, Islamic, Christian and Ethiopian lore. The story of the Queen of Sheba is contained in the Bible (I Kings 10:1-13; Job 1:15; 2 Chronicles 9:1-12) and the Qur'anic texts (in Surat Saba' 34:15-44), and in the *Kebra Negast*, which narrate and celebrate her visit to Solomon's court. However, most of the biblical narratives are found in some rabbinical texts – such as the Aramaic Targum Sheni, the Book of Esther,[9] Midrash, Proverbs, and the Midrash ha-Hefez – and other influential

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who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship' (Acts 8: 26-28). This Candace the queen is an appellation which comes from the Nubian word 'kandake' which indicates the African queen mother.

[8] See Michael Wood's 'The Queen of Sheba' article which has been updated in 17 February 2011 and it as available on-line at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/cultures/sheba_01.shtml.

[9] The Targum Sheni is a scriptural text which rewrites the Book of Esther and contains a series of homilies in Amharic and in Greek. It is probably of Palestinian origin dated between the eighth and tenth centuries. This manuscript includes long prayers in a poetic style which recounts the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon's kingdom to test his wisdom and his extraordinary capability as ruler. See R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion,* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 676.

works, mainly paintings and sculptures. Like the scriptures, these literary works show the diplomatic relations and religious links between two heads of state. In addition, the biblical story (the written account) contains the Queen's riddles she used to test 'with hard questions' the wisdom of Solomon and his golden age. The Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of the Israelite king, 'who exceeded all the kings of the heart in riches and wisdom' (2 Chronicles 9: 22-23) and undertook her journey of seven days to visit Solomon's kingdom. According to the exegetical literature (the Jewish, Islamic and Christian versions as well as Assyrian sources), the Queen of Sheba is the combination of different cultures, languages (Hebrew, Amharic, Aramaic and Arabic) and religions. The various tales of the queen's visit became the skeletal structure of political, economic and religious interaction between the East and the West.

The Queen of Sheba is portrayed in Jewish traditions as a ruler from the East. She brought riches – such as a multitude of camels, great quantities of gold, precious stones and spices – and visited Solomon, the King of the West. The encounter proclaimed her purpose to test his wisdom and knowledge 'with three riddles'. If the King of Israel failed, she would dismiss him as 'a man like all the rest'.[10] But Solomon had an answer for all her riddles: the existence of the power and goodness of God - YHWH, the Lord of Israel, the Living and the Eternal God, and the overseer of everything, the creator of the universe. And if it was true that Solomon was considered a prophet or messenger, he would inaugurate God's kingdom (the House of the Lord) of righteousness and peace.

There are also extensive Christian and non-Christian artworks which depict the scene of the Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon and these are important to give a different

[10] Gus W.van Beek, 'The Land of Sheba', in *Sheba and Solomon,* 72.

interpretation to the role of women in the religious world. The following works are unique, magnificent and multicultural: 'Gates of Paradise' (1452) by the Italian artist Lorenzo Ghiberti[11] at the Baptistery in Florence; Raphael's 'King Solomon Receives the Queen of Sheba'(1510), where for the first time the Queen of Sheba was portrayed as a black woman; Paolo Veronese's 'The Queen of Sheba offers gifts to Solomon' (1588); Marc Chagall's 'Solomon Receiving the Queen of Sheba' (1957) in his Bible Series; some contemporary African-American paintings such as Romare Bearden's 'She-ba' (1970) and the 34 religious paintings of Laura James in Ethiopian Christian Orthodox style. Moreover, there is the famous portrait created in 1590 in a Persian miniature of the Queen of Sheba. Her gown is decorated with the heads of several creatures. She is in the company of the hoopoe bird whose task was to find water for a camp in the wilderness. The hoopoe was considered sacred and was a symbol of virtue in Persia. According to the Qur'an, this bird went to inform Solomon, 'the prophet of God', of a kingdom ruled by a wise and beautiful queen. Finally, the legend of the Queen of Saba was portrayed in the modern works of the Ethiopian painter Yohannes Tesemma (1918-1975). Working in Addis Ababa, he specialized in Ethiopian religious iconography, developing his artistic inspiration on Ethiopian traditional themes. He painted 66 parchments ('Le 66 miniature del ciclo della Regina di Saba')[12] which are dedicated to

[11] The sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455) created a set of doors in bronze, known as the *Gates of Paradise,* which are in the Duomo in Florence. These marvellous works were made in 1452 in Gothic and Renaissance style. Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* represent scenes and figures from the Old Testament from the Creation to the meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. For further information see the images available on the websites: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Florenca146.jpg See also the images of the Gates photographed and scanned by Mary Ann Sullivan. These photos on the Giberti's *Gates of Paradise* are available at: http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/italy/florence/ghibertiparadise/ghibertiparadise.html; http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/italy/florence/ghibertiparadise/0118solomon.jpg; http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/italy/florence/ghibertiparadise/0118det.jpg.

[12] Regarding the biography of the artist, see Brita Björnesjö, 'Yohannes Tesemma: un pittore etiopico tradizionale' in *Quaderni di studi etiopici,* Asmara I, (1980), 54-57. Also see A. Silverman ed., *Ethiopia: Traditions and Creativity,* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Museum, 1999). Concerning the .parchments see the miniatures published by Renata Riva in *Kebra Nagast. La Gloria dei Re*

the Queen of Sheba. These paintings illustrate the legend of the serpent (part of the oral tradition of Ethiopia) which, according to Ethiopian legends, ruled before the Queen of Ethiopia. These Ethiopian paintings of the Queen of Sheba have particularly inspired the RastafarI religious devotion, music and art.

The figure of the Queen of Sheba, however, is considered to be an enigma, a riddle within a riddle. She is a melange of interpretations and different names: a monarch, a religious leader, a healer and a goddess who was also a demon. According to Kabbalistic traditions and interpretations, the Queen of Sheba was Lilith, a demon, but she was also the transcendent queen of the sunrise (the Queen of Alchemy, who is, in a Jungian sense, a prototype of the antithesis and synthesis of opposites –feminine on the outside and masculine on the inside). She is also the key (*clavicula*) of power which in general symbolizes the combination of opposites; she is the 'father-mother', 'the white-black', the quintessence of all things. It is said that in the sixteenth-century in the city of Prague the melancholy King Rudolf II was obsessed by the occult. He consulted Kabbalists and alchemists whose books talked about the Queen of Sheba as a divine and transcendent figure. They believed that the queen was the queen of darkness and they invoked her as the queen of the dawn, known also as 'the South Wind' (*Aurora Consurgens,* 'the Rising Dawn'). Nicholas Clapp investigated the alchemical sources of the myth of Solomon and Sheba: 'Solomon was celebrated as the king of alchemy and Sheba the Queen, whereupon she became identified with several key elements and forces.'[13] For example, as is demonstrated in *De Alum et Salubus* ('The Book of Alums and Salts'), there are some elements like alum, salt, quicksilver and silver which are

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Solomone and La Regina di Saba, trans. from Ge'ez by Osvaldo Ranieri, (Roma: Fondazione Editrice Benedetta Riva, 2008), 155-220.

[13] Nicholas Clapp, *Sheba*, 311.

seen to symbolize the Queen of Sheba. In a passage of this book she is described as follows: 'I am the mediatrix of the elements, making one to agree with another.'[14] In other words, she transforms the substances thanks to her esoteric power. However, these remain legends which appear only in alchemical and esoteric studies. *De Alum et Salubus* was translated into many Arabic versions, being based on Alexandrian sources which dealt with chemistry and alchemy[15]. It is supposed that this book was written by al-Razi but according to the scholar Julius Ruska *De Alum et Salubus* was produced by the Muslim chemists Zosimos and Jabir. The correspondence of the Queen of Sheba with various metals calls to mind Jung's work about alchemy, *Mysterium Coniunction*. Here he talks about the *correspondentia* between moon-nature and salt. He says that the 'Luna represents the six planets or spirits'; salt is the attribute of the Luna:

> From Saturn, Mercury, Jupiter, Mars and Venus nothing and no other metal can arise except Luna [i.e. silver]...For Luna consists of the six spiritual metals and their powers.[16]

The Jungian Luna is seen as the essence of the nature of metals; she is a personification of archetypes and from the Luna derives the energy of all the stars. Salt is linked with the lunar, the feminine, which is identified with the *femina alba* or *candida* (white water, the light of illumination). Moreover salt is, according to alchemy, the symbol of an arcane substance which is the receptacle of all things. Jung writes: 'It is a concentrated centre of the elements'.[17] These qualities seem to reflect the features of the Queen of

[14]Nicholas Clapp, *Sheba*, 312
[15] *De Alum et Salubus* came to the knowledge of scholars in medieval Europe. The manuscript was translated into Latin by the Italian Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187) who moved to Toledo (Spain) for the rest of his life. Here he became interested in Arab and Hebrew culture, translating many Arabic scientific works (medicine, chemistry and other sciences) into Latin. However, in medieval alchemy salt was used as a secret element to prepare other minerals.
[16] Carl G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963),176.
[17] It is quoted by Carl G. Jung in *Mysterium Coniunctionis,* 190. Cf. Johann R. Glauber, *Tractatus de Natura Salium*, (Amsterdam: 1658), 44.

Sheba. Metaphorically, she can be compared to the Luna who expresses herself as a mother of all the metals; she gives tincture and light to all things, thus producing unity.

Finally, in considering the Queen of Sheba's links with alchemy, we should note that there is an analogy with the mother, *regina*, Venus, virgin of the earth and Sophia. She might also be identified as the arcane substance, and could be equated with Isis, the Black One, who is the symbol of the synthesis of opposites and the elixir of life.[18]

The Queen of Sheba versus RastafarI Patriarchy

Women's life becomes invisible for Rastas. Rasta women, according to Obiagele Lake, appear isolated and often live in a subaltern position to men. In this chapter we seek to understand if RastafarI still remains a patriarchal phenomenon and if it manifests in its different forms and values the particular interests of its male authorship. It is clear that the pattern of God-King is remarkably patriarchal. RastafarI, although it excludes the presence of women, because it is itself patriarchal, includes the portrait of Makeda, the 'Queen of South' who is exceptional for her comparison with King Solomon and its male dynasty. While subservient to him in wisdom, she is rivals him in authority.

In RastafarI communities women are still relegated and marginalised, a point made clear by Obiagele Lake in her essay 'Religion, Patriarchy, and the Status of the Rastafarian Women', written in 1998. Lake's study anticipates a feminist interpretation which accuses the RastafarI movement of being a chauvinistic group of people who have neglected the historical role of women in Africa. Her analysis emerged in relation to the male-centred RastafarI movement in the Caribbean, and attempts to deal with the

[18] Carl G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis,* 20.

role of women in the RastafarI environment. For the first time, Lake, as a noteworthy Rasta anthropologist, has considered female experience as a critical issue in the RastafarI tradition. She has come to the view that women of the African diaspora (Rasta women) live in a patriarchal situation. The problem of gender boundaries in the RastafarI movement thus is a necessary concern in her discussions. Lake's ideas have provided a broad framework for potential critics where black women suffered sexism and racism. According to Lake, women's status in the cultural and spiritual arena of RastafarI is often subordinated; they do not make similar decisions or have the same responsibilities (at a socio-political and spiritual level) as the *Rastaman*. There is a hieriarchic pattern in RastafarI ideology which proclaims, justifies and validates male superiority, and advocates physical and intellectual female subjugation. Lake points out: 'The Rastafarian men are the spiritual leaders of the movement'. [19] Gender in RastarfarI is an important issue which needs careful consideration and discussion in the RastafarI literature. The role of the Rasta woman within her community needs to be considered not only from an anthropological and sociological perspective, but also in theological terms. Most feminist critics including Lake describe how RastafarI, from a theology of liberation which speaks about democracy, tolerance and human rights for minority groups, evolved into a 'no struggle' theology permeated by patriarchal attitudes. From a feminist viewpoint, there is no justice and equality between woman and man in RastafarI. In this regard, the anthropological analysis of Lake, whose fieldwork took her into the various Rasta communities of Jamaica (including the Bobo Shanti house), shows those women are not allowed to speak and participate publicly in the

[19] Obiagele Lake, 'Religion, Patriarchy, and the Status of Rastafarian Women', in *New Trends and Developments in African Religions*, Peter B. Clarke, ed., (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 141.

congregation.[20] So Lake is of the opinion that the role of women is still evidence of their social, cultural and religious deprivation. She holds that the patriarchal ideas of the RastafarI derive from a literal, orthodox interpretation of the Bible:

> Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; they are to be submissive. If they want to learn something, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is shameful for women to speak in church. (1 Corinthians, 14:34-35)

In the attention they have paid to the RastafarI movement, scholars and writers have without a doubt seen it as a patriarchal social organization where a male attitude (the spiritual leaders descending via the male line) dominates and rules women (the women being traced as subordinates of the 'natural male heads'). For example, one of the high priests (Ras Bongo Time) of the Nyabinghi Order pointed out in one of his conversations in Jamaica (1994) that Haile Selassie was Jesus Christ returned and 'a direct divine descendant' of the Ethiopian lineage which traces its roots to African traditions:

> His Majesty is resurrected personalities of Christ. We can see this from Acts, chapter 2; Timothy, chapter 6; Revelation 5 and 9...According to Revelations 5, he is King David's greater son, not grandson or great-grandson, not is greater son [i.e., far in lineage and time]. Descendant of Menelik, he was Ras Makonnen's son. Menelik is a direct descendent of Solomon and his closest friend and strength was his cousin Ras Makonnen.[21]

This statement by this religious Rasta leader denotes the patriarchal attitude of the movement, valuing the male Solominic genealogical line and omitting the matriarchal lineage rooted in the figure of the Queen of Sheba as the grandmother of Ras TafarI. In

[20] Obiagele Lake, 'Religion, Patriarchy, and the Status of Rastafarian Women', in *New Trends and Developments in African Religions*, 147.
[21] Lewis Rupet, 'Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians: Continuity and Discontinuity,' in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 161. [Text as original]

dealing with a relatively complex topic, the present work seeks to identify and understand the question of gender boundaries in RastafarI.

Thus, Lake argues that Rasta women's discrimination derives mainly from western societies that have considered women's 'power of attraction' or 'sex appeal' for social and economic pleasure. This means, as the sociologist Catherine Hakim concludes in her work *Erotic Capital: The Power of Attraction in the Boardroom and the Bedroom,* that women are always in a discriminative position in relation to men. Indeed, Hakim says: 'Erotic capital has value for men...Men are forever telling what they can and cannot do, should and should not do. Women resist, in their own way'.[22] In all societies (the United States, Latin America, Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Japan and China) the ideal of femininity is depicted as a combination of beauty, sex appeal, charm, dressing well and sexual competency. In modern life we are often conditioned by massive expansion of commercial sexual services (from the media and advertising to the entertainment and hospitality industries). This implies that women tend to sell their erotic capital to the patriarchal world of men, 'by imposing the Madonna/whore dichotomy of women'.[23]

The image of the Queen of Sheba also appears to be confined in a patriarchal world (a society dominated exclusively by male writings) which speaks of males and of a singular God where the woman is subordinated. [24] She is portrayed and relegated simply as property outside of the divine lineage. Indeed, in a gender sense, the Queen of Sheba might be regarded in a male world as a 'foreigner and mother' where her status depends

[22] Catherine Hakim, *Erotic Capital: The Power of Attraction in the Boardroom and the Bedroom,* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 63.
[23] Catherine Hakim, *Erotic Capital*, 162.
[24] Orianna Fallaci, 'Interview of Rulhollah Khomeini' in *Corriere della Sera,* 29 September 1979.

exclusively on a man and one God. In a gender sense, this queen was manipulated by the male literature and became the sexual property ('the erotic capital') of Solomon, both in respect to his pleasure and his position as paterfamilias. Both Christian and non-Christian traditions including RastafarI recount that after experiencing the wisdom of Solomon the Queen of Sheba accepted his God. As is stated in the Bible, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me' (Exodus 20:30). And also the Qur'an relates that the Queen of Sheba became conscious of her 'wrong' attitude in worshipping the sun: 'I have wronged myself; to God, the Lord of the worlds, with Solomon I make submission' (Qur'an 27:44). The biblical and qur'anic verses seem to share the same view. The queen abandoned her worship of the sun and moon to submit herself to a God who is, in a feminist discourse, in a patriarchal religious tradition.

The theologian Rosemary Ruether takes a critical feminist perspective in the field of women's studies in theology; she inspires and leads her readers to rethink the role of women in relationship to religious traditions (mainly monotheistic religions, which include the RastafarI movement) which have imagined God as male. For example, the concepts like the Wisdom of Solomon, the Spirit and the Word have been developed on the basis of masculine theological dogma which sees merely male attributes in divinity. Indeed, Christians and non-Christians alike have inherited the pre-Christian concept of the Trinity, which conceives God as a father-son (the male archetype). Therefore, the role of the queens (including Mary) remains outside the Trinity. However, there is a minor triad (the andocentric theory) based on the gender unity of God; if God, as the

divine ruler, has a dual nature, God is father and mother; God is also indivisible and this quality creates the unity of opposites (*coniunctio),* which are always divisible.[25]

It is noteworthy that in biblical narratives and non-Christian sources there is a tendency to portray the 'Queen of the South'[26] as a woman who had to be educated by a wise man towards the 'true religion', monotheism. She was a pagan priestess who worshipped the 'Sol and Luna'[27]. This view, which is expressed in biblical and non-biblical sources, associates the male-one principle with superiority and the female-many with inferiority.

Conversely, the Queen of Sheba also symbolizes the role of gender (a non-western woman of intellect and will with a strong identity), in the sense of *autocoscienza,* who was independent of any patriarchal and hegemonic societies. She was determined in the exercise of female power to find the truth of the feminine, of what it means 'to be a woman'. Generally speaking, the literature concerning the Queen of Sheba should be a resource for the women's liberation movement, which aims to give voice (*una collocazione simbolica* – 'a symbolic placement') to 'the common world of the women' where their femininity and bodies are not designed intentionally as consumer goods and thus to be subject to commercialization by the world of men. The Queen of Sheba, though appealing to the male senses through the force of her magnetic beauty, *ought* to attract attention amongst women due to her *sophia* and *intelligentia*. She was capable of

[25] The coniunctio is the unity of separated qualities (opposites), as Carl G. Jung says in his work, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 3.
[26] The biblical name of the Queen of the South (see Matthew 12:42 and Luke 11:31) alludes to the East which for the Bible means far away where the sun rises.
[27] In a Jungian interpretation of the archetypical image of Sol (masculine principle, the Father) and Luna (the principle of the feminine psyche, the Mother) we can see a constant duality which is mutual and inter-changeable. Men can be lunatic and women solar; this idea reflects the hermaphrodite concept of the opposite where in each human being there are two sides: man's unconscious femininity and woman's masculinity. In Sheba's times the worship of 'Father-Mother' (the unity of opposites) testifies that the question of female equality and opportunity (autonomy and emancipation) was on the public and religious agenda.

encountering and negotiating with the opposite sex and different cultures and religions *in tempore opportuno* (at the opportune time), reflecting how a woman of the past could be equal to men intellectually and morally. In addition, this legendary eastern woman had a wondrous capacity to adapt herself to the social and cultural milieu of the time. She is described as an active and powerful woman who had the right to express her identity, irrespective of her nationality, culture, language, ethnicity, and belief. This demonstrates how a woman (queen-divinity) could be not subordinate or inferior to a superior man (king-god). The Queen of Sheba did not accept the role of a humble woman who had to take a husband to be good. As a woman this queen changed the norms and prescriptions of the subordination of women as defined by the patriarchal societies. She constructed her ideal society where the woman may possess the same virtues as men and assume leadership tasks. The Queen of Sheba's psychology revolutionised the philosophical, social and religious principle of natural male superiority.

In her book *Sheba & Solomon: Inner Marriage and Individuation,* Barbara Koltuv describes the story of a queen from a constructive viewpoint and thus at a different level (from a neutral stance). She is identified with the archetypical images of Sol - Logos, Gold - and of Luna - Eros, Silver. The Queen of Sheba is a radiant, intelligent and wise woman who negotiated between East and West. This queen symbolizes the dialogue amongst cultures and religions in which the majority of biblical and non-biblical narratives focus on the story of the two heads of state, the two monarchs testing and connecting with each other, building up symbolically a conjunction of opposites.

The Queen of Sheba and the *Kebra Nagast*

The Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast* ('the Glory of Kings') is the classical text of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and RastafarI; it is second only to the Bible as scripture. This source is not merely literary – its authority derives from an accurate interpretation of scripture. Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI are inspired by the *Kebra Nagast* of Ethiopia, which along with the *Fetha Nagast* or the Law of Kings (which will be discussed in Chapter Eight) is one of the most important traditional sources for the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church, and thus for the imperial and religious legislation of Ethiopia. However, RastafarI is a very complex spirituality which combines orthodox Christian-Judaic teachings with esoteric elements (magic is a characteristic of the African continent and is present amongst the Ethiopians). Thus the RastafarI movement has a singular approach to the reading and interpretation of scripture. To describe RastafarI only as a religion of scripture is incomplete and inadequate and this particular subject will be discussed in the chapter on the Bible. Likewise, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church did not remain static as adhering only to the theology of the sacred scriptures; it has mingled tradition with legends from other Ethiopian apocryphal works, including the *Kebra Nagast*, *The Ethiopian Book of Life* and the *Fetha Nagast* which were venerated and applied by Ethiopian nobility and clergy after the advent of Christianity.

The *Kebra Nagast* is an Ethiopian manuscript written in the Semitic language of Ge'ez which was compiled by a Coptic priest around the 14th century. This work is divided into various chapters and was translated into English by Sir E.A. Wallis Budge. The *Kebra Nagast* remains one of the most influential writings for Ethiopians. It reflects the heart of the country and the Judaic-Christian character of Ethiopia. The *Kebra Nagast* is a patchwork of different styles, legends and folklores from the Old Testament to the

rabbinical literature, and from Egyptian (both pagan and Christian) to Arabian traditions. Beyond the story of the Queen of Sheba and her son Menelik (the first king of Ethiopia), the *Kebra Nagast* recounts how some Jewish tribes from Yemen established a settlement and disseminated their religion in Ethiopia. Thanks to the coming of the *tabot* (the tabernacle or the Ark of the Covenant) to Ethiopia in Chapter 87 of the *Kebra Nagast*, its inhabitants embraced the 'Law of the Lord' (the God of Israel) and thus abandoned the Queen of Sheba's paganism based on the worship of the Sun and Moon.

The *Kebra Nagast* is an account which moves between legendary and historical elements. This story becomes a symbol of the Ethiopian and Rastafarian cultural heritage because it celebrates the encounter between the wise Israelite King, Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba. Koltuv points out:

> The Kebra Nagast, the holy book of the Ethiopians, is perhaps best because it seems the only one of the three to truly explain why these two ruling principles – monarchs – each ensconced in his and her land far from each other geographically, and so completely opposite in so many other respects - had to meet – it was God's will. According to the Kebra Nagast, God wished to transfer the kingdom of David from Jerusalem to Ethiopia. In order to accomplish this, Sheba and Solomon had to meet, and eventually, have a son.[28]

Moreover, Ullendorff affirms that the *Kebra Nagast*'s contribution is to provide a new role for the Queen of Sheba. The *Kebra Nagast* narrates the origin of the Solomonic dynasty which ruled Ethiopia from the encounter of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon until the deposition of Haile Selassie I in 1974. In Enrico Cerrulli's *La Letteratura Etiopica* there is an important observation regarding the study of Ethiopian culture. Introducing the book the *Glory of Kings* Cerrulli says that the work consists of various parts:

[28] Barbara Black Koltuv, *Solomon & Sheba,* 35-36.

a. Il racconto dell'incontro della Regina di Saba e del Re Salomone, e della nascita del loro figlio Ibn al-Hakîm (in arabo: *Figlio del Sapiente,* e cioè di Salomone sapiente), detto Menilic.
b. Il racconto del viaggio di Menilic e del trasporto clandestino dell'Arca da Gerusalemme ad Acsum e l'incoronazione di Menilic a Re di Etiopia.
c. Una serie di racconti e spiegazioni, che vogliono provare come principali Sovrani del mondo siano discendenti dalla stirpe di Israele. Comunque, quello che appensantisce il libro per il suo valore letterario, pure è la premessa della esaltazione del Sovrano Etiope, il quale discendendo da Salomone e da Davide, ha maggior nobiltà rispetto agli altri, i quali provengono invece, se pure anche da Israele, da stirpi inferiori.
d. Un gruppo di passi biblici che preannunziano la Redenzione e che sono seguiti, prima, da spiegazioni del linguaggio simbolico usato dai Profeti (spiegazioni che sia, pure con qualche maggior sviluppo, sono nello stile scolastico del *Terguemè*, 'interpretazioni', così frequenti nei codici); e poi da predizioni apocalittiche sulla vittoria finale del Re d'Etiopia.[29]

a. The story of the meeting of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, and the birth of their son Ibn al-Hakîm (in Arabic: the Son of the Wise Man, and thus of wise Solomon), called Menelik.
b. The account of Menelik's journey and his clandestine transportation of the Ark of the Covenant to Aksum and Menelik's coronation as King of Ethiopia.
c. A series of stories and explanations, which attempt to prove that the main rulers of the world are descended from the line of Israel. However, what also gives the book its literary value is the premise of the exaltation or veneration of the King of Ethiopia, who, as descendant of Solomon and David, is nobler than others of inferior rank, even those from Israel.
d. A group of biblical passages which foretell the Redemption as follows: first, through explanations of the symbolic language used by Prophets (clarifications which although they have some development are still in the scholastic style of *Terguemè*, 'interpretations', and are present in the codes); and then, through apocalyptic predictions of the decisive victory of the King of Ethiopia (Haile Selassie I).

[Writer's translation from the Italian original above]

Each of these sections may be written in different styles, which can be divided into three categories. However, these chapters generally describe the Queen of Sheba:

[29] Enrico Cerulli, *La Letteratura Etiopica,* con un saggio sull'Oriente Cristiano, (Milano: Sansoni-Accademia, 1968), 36-39.

1) The story of the Queen of Sheba is, in part or in whole, biographical in character and has many historical connotations for the religious and political history of both the Ethiopians and Rastas.
2) The legend of the Queen of Sheba has important traditions, but it is affected by the literary (legendary) character of the tale about her life and of her male heirs of the Solomonic dynasty.
3) Moreover this story tends to offer a symbolic and apocalyptic interpretation – for example, from Garvey's prophetic Redemption and the tradition of the miracle to the power and kinship of the Ethiopian kings. An additional reading is that which is associated with the divine nature of the kings (divine inspiration of Haile Selassie I – the title 'Majesty' is close to God) who, according to the Rastas, occupy an outstanding place in their spirituality (*livity*). In ancient Egypt, the Pharaoh was regarded as the incarnation of God and the son of God. In the Near East and Ethiopia, the king was superior and dwelt with the divine power, which is very close to the Monophysite doctrine in which father and son are consubstantial. This theological doctrine survived for example with the Roman Emperors where the title of 'King' approximated to God-man. Moreover, this might also relate to the development of the dogma of the Christian Trinity. 'I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', the manifestation of God being present in the Holy Spirit. In other words, with the hypothesis of transference, the Holy Spirit is the same eternal God with the Father and the Son.

From a feminist perspective, the queen is seen as the 'Mother of God' like the Virgin Mary; her job is procreative and her power consists in the creation-development of the

human species ('She' is mother of the Son of God and 'He' is the Father-God). The charter of the Ethiopian Constitution promulgated by Haile Selassie I in 1955 states:

> The imperial dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahle Selassie, whose line descends without interruption from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of the Queen of Ethiopia, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon of Jerusalem.[30]

The Ethiopian people and Rastas use the *Kebra Nagast* for various reasons: it provides practical guidance in religious ceremony and is also a way to meditate on the teachings of the Lord, the Almighty (the Majesty) who illuminates every aspect of human life. Ethiopians may study it as illumination of Ethiopian identity and cultural heritage; indeed it is considered a source for study of the history, literature and anthropology of Ethiopia. However, according to Ethiopians the *Kebra Nagast* is designated as literature to understand the law of their country with its long list of kings who descended via the Solomonic line, which according to the Ethiopians and Rasta is from Christ, the Son of God. Thus the dynastic continuity from Solomon to Haile Selassie I is proved. Haile Selassie is of divine origin, from the King of Zion, from Solomon, the Queen of Sheba (225th) and their son Menelik ('son of the wise man').

The Queen of Sheba's Legacy in RastafarI

The Queen of Sheba has a relevant influence for the history of Ethiopia and plays an important role for Rasta thought. Indeed the story of the Queen of Sheba reinforces the Ethiopian spiritual legacy of RastafarI community: a sense of depth, historical

[30] See the Chart of Constitution, Chap. II, Art. 2 which is available in English translation from the Amharic at: www.Nazaret.com (Ethiopian New Portal). See also Edward Ullendorff, *'The Queen of Sheba in Ethiopian Tradition',* in *Solomon and Sheba*, 105.

belongingness, a feeling of deep-rootedness and a sense of a sacred obligation to extend the genealogical line.[31] In the history of ancient Africa and the Middle East, we *ought* to be familiar with how a diversity of religious practices and beliefs lived together. Widespread throughout Africa there are still various cultural and spiritual traditions existing side by side (from pagan and animistic to Islamic, Judaic and Christian). RastafarI recognizes this pluralistic milieu which permeates the spiritual history of Africa. The theme of Ethiopia and its cultural traditions (the *Kebra Nagast*) are regarded by Rastafari as the expression of their African spirituality and not merely as justification for their self-esteem. The identity of the RastafarI movement is centred on the nostalgia for the Ethiopian lineage (the dynasty of David). The logic of kingship is not invented a posteriori; but it is an a priori hypothesis which is rooted in the source of the Ethiopian saga. However, it is certain that the legend of the Queen of Sheba, beyond the *Kebra Nagast*, is based on the biblical accounts. The Queen appears in the *Kebra Nagast* as 'Candace Queen of Ethiopians' (Act 8:27). According to the RastafarI movement, the mysterious woman known as 'the Queen of the South' is associated with the Mother of the Holy Land of Ethiopia along with her consort King Solomon. This is also borne out by the symbols of the Star of Solomon and of Ethiopia as well as one made of gold, the so-called 'Order of the Queen of Sheba'. In his biography Haile Selassie writes:

> Up to 1915 the Star of Solomon and of Ethiopia were the only two kinds of medals. But now We caused a gold chain to be made for the Solomon order and it was be awarded to foreign kings who had the rank corresponding to that of Emperor.
> We also had an order with gold chain made called 'The Queen of Sheba Order' which is awarded to the Queen Consort... [32]

[31] Philip M. Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *Story of Jamaican People,* 8-9.
[32] Edward Ullendorff, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress: 1892-1937*, 69.

However, the Queen of Sheba was the first woman leader of the eastern order who brought culture, wisdom and religion from the Orient to the Occident (Palestine) and vice versa. She was also a woman with an open mind who absorbed and embraced the teachings of Solomon. More importantly for Ethiopians and Rastas, this woman was the mother of Menelik of the dynasty of David, who, according the *Kebra Negast*, took the Ark of the Covenant with him to Ethiopia, which become the second Zion (both for Ethiopians and Rastas).

The Queen of Sheba is the prototype of the matriarch in Rasta thought (two queens in one person who are consubstantial with each other). This archetype of the Queen (Queen of Sheba) provides a hermeneutical tool to explore the role of woman within the RastafarI movement, which should not be divisive but harmonious and fused (consubstantial) with her opposite (man), like the two archetypes of 'Sol and Luna'. Luna (woman-darkness) is the archetypal companion of Sol (man-light). But Luna is also the mother of the sun which means that 'darkness gives birth to light'.[33] The woman is the queen of her Sol and the man is the king of his Luna. Jung uses the parable to describe the relationship of the Queen of Sheba and her king:

> Therefore I will rise and I go into the city, seeking in the streets and the broad ways a chaste virgin to espouse, comely in face, more comely in body, most comely in her garments, that she may roll back the stone from the door of my sepulchre and give me wings like a dove, and I will fly with her into heaven and then say: I live forever, and I will rest in her, for the Queen stood on my right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.... O Queen of the heights, arise, make haste, my love.... My beloved, who is ruddy, hath spoken to me, he hath sought and besought: I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys; I am the mother of fair love and of fear and of knowledge and of holy hope...I am the sweet smell of ointments giving an odour above all aromatical spices, and like unto cinnamon and balsam and chosen myrrh.[34]

[33] Johann W. Goethe, *Faust: An Abridged Version,* trans. Louis MacNeice, (London: Faber, 1951), 48. Cf. Carl G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis,* 177.
[34] Carl G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis,* 376-377. Cf. Parable XII.

This close connection between queen and king and thus between woman and man is the encounter and synthesis of two opposites. Even among Rasta adherents and leaders there are very few of them, like Yasus Afari, who think about the conjunction of opposites as a matter of Rasta dogma (the nature of God: 'Father-Mother') rooted in the Monophysite doctrine. Indeed, the Rasta expression and doctrine 'InI' *ought* to suggest a possible subject of reflection both for Rastas and researchers of this new movement. 'InI' is a perfect example of 'One' with a dual nature (male and female) which generates the 'third entity'. This assumption of 'pa-matriarchy' or 'ma-patriarchy', 'right and left', 'white and black', 'one and many-other' represents union and not separation. Finally, the concept of 'InI' that interprets the divine essence of a woman could revolutionize the patriarchal idea of God in Rastafari. The glory and worship which are offered to Solomon and His Majesty, Ras Tafari, take on a new form. The RastafarI notion of Jah as a male figure can be corrected in the light of Queen of Sheba's valuable contributions through the key word JHVH (both female and male). The image of God, the Logos incarnate, becomes a symbolic manifestation of beauty, mother and woman on the one side and masculinity on the other.

The Image of the Queen of Sheba: Is she 'Black'?

Garvey challenges the concept of negritude in the Solomonic lineage and traces its origin within the Sheba background:

> The new Negro doesn't give two pence about the line of Solomon. Solomon has been long dead. Solomon was a Jew. The Negro is no Jew. The Negro

> has racial origin running from Sheba to present, of which he is proud. He is proud of Sheba but he is not proud of Solomon.[35]

Such a starting point, a black queen playing a critical role in the Rasta movement via Ethiopian Christianity, could provide a role model for all women (young and old) of the African diaspora. What the interpretation of RastafarI and other religions often overlooks is that the origin of the movement began not with Solomon but with the Queen of Sheba. Moreover, it is certain that for Ethiopians and Rastas, the Queen of Sheba was an African woman. Indeed, the Bible calls her 'the Queen of Egypt and Ethiopia' (I Kings 10:1-10, 13). The claim of the Ethiopians and Rastas that the Queen of Sheba was an African finds its justification in sources such as the Bible and the *Kebra Nagast.* She is regarded as the Queen of Ethiopia and thus would have had a black skin. For RastafarI, the idea of blackness is a natural feature [36] of anyone who is a true African with liberative-justice tendencies. Black identity (Afrocentricity) is based on the idea in RastafarI terms of liberating the African soul and of contesting any racial and cultural hegemony. The Song of Songs is an example for African identity which has a considerable impact on the African and Rasta beliefs:

> I am black, and beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not look at me because I am blackened, because the sun has looked upon me. (Song of Songs, 1:5, 6)

This Afrocentric inheritance of 'blackness' is also present amongst many Ethiopians and Rastas. Many spiritual leaders of RastafarI believe that the negroes are Ethiopians and blacks are descendants of the union between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, which established the royal/divine line as far as Haile Selassie I. Therefore, the Queen of Sheba had an African lineage and she was the ancestor of Haile Selassie I. Haile

[35] Marcus M. Garvey, *More Philosophy and Opinions,* vol.3, Amy Jacques Garvey and E.U. Essien-Udon, eds., (London: Routledge, 1977), 235.
[36] Charles Price, *Becoming Rasta,* 141

Selassie himself said that the Queen of Sheba was his ancient ancestress. In the introduction to Emperor Selassie's autobiography it is claimed:

> ...We Ourselves, by Virtue of Our descent from the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, ever since We accepted in trust, in 1909, first the regency of the Ethiopian realm and later the Imperial dignity, right up to the present...[37]

Certainly, for Ethiopians the Queen of Sheba was from Ethiopia (the ancient Abyssinia, known also as Cush), although the story of this distant queen is influenced by diverse traditions. Hence, the Queen of Sheba stories show how her image has multiple identities. But for Africans (Christians, Muslim, Jews and Rastas) she was of negro ancestry: she was a beautiful black sister.

In his teachers' guide, *The Black Presence in the Bible,* Walter Arthur McCray writes that in the 70s there appeared for the first time an anti-racist group of black students whose purpose was to re-define the presence of black people in the scriptures. For them, there were several reasons to do this. First, they aimed to re-educate and inspire African people in order to reclaim their own identity; second, they worked fighting racism and classism. They also wanted re-evaluate their belonging to the African/black family tree, which according to their view derived from the sub-Saharan countries south of Egypt, including Nubia and Abyssinia, known as Cush in the Bible. Therefore, through interpretation of the Bible (in particular Genesis 10:6-8) they thought they were the descendants of the land of Africa, so that through their lineal genealogy David and Christ were thought to be black. Although most post-colonial and liberation theologies including the RastafarI religious movement see the Bible as 'the white's man book', most of the personalities of the scriptures have other traits. The Bible reveals the African legacy which values the 'black blood' of the African people. Thus, the names of people

[37] Edward Ullendorf, *The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Sellassie 1,* 5.

and nations are African (Cush, Genesis 10:6) and therefore these people are defined by ethnic characteristics.

In assessing the significance of biblical references to Africa and its people, RastafarI recognizes the Queen of Sheba as the Queen of Egypt and Ethiopia, thus having African origins. She is the descendant of the Cushite people who are of Hamitic stock, the first African genealogical line (Genesis 10:1, 6-20). According to the Bible, the descendents of Ham[38] (the father of the African people) were classified into those coming from Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. They are located both historically and geographically in African countries. For example, the Queen of Sheba is biblically associated with the people of Cush (Ethiopia), Egypt and Saba:

> I am the LORD your God. I am the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I am the one who saves you. I give up Egypt to set you free. I will give up Cush (Ethiopia) and Seba for you. (Isaiah, 43:3)

And also:

> The LORD says to the people of Jerusalem, 'You will get everything Egypt produces. You will receive everything the people of Cush and tall Sabeans get in trade. All of it will belong to you. And all those people will walk behind you as slaves. They will be put in chains and come over to you. (Isaiah, 45:14)

These criteria which trace and revaluate anthropologically and ethnologically their ancestral African nature serve to bring differences and boundaries together – the Jungian *mysterium coniunctionis* (equilibrium) of psychic opposites (white and black).

[38] Walter Arthur McCray, *The Black Presence in the Bible: Discovering the Black and African Identity of Biblical Persons and Nations,* vol. 1, (Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1990), 54-63.

Woman's Spirit Movement in RastafarI

The Queen of Sheba constitutes a visible model for African female liberation and creative ethnic and social endeavour. The Queen of Sheba acts the role of the African goddess-queen. As the goddess this figures drives women to seek their identity (*autocoscienza*) in relation to and equilibrium with the god-king.

For Afari, the RastafarI psychology which is based on *livity* has repositioned the movement towards gender harmony, balance and equality. In his work, *Overstanding Rastafari* Afari observes:

> For example, the RASTAFARIAN idea of the Godhead comprises: God, Goddess and the Spiritual children of God. This is considered to be manifested in the earth within the family of humanity, with Father, Mother and children, as it is in the heavens with sun, moon and stars. In logical harmony with this fundamental concept, man is seen as god in flesh and woman is seen as goddess in the flesh…[39]

The RastafarI thinking therefore, according to Afari, considers male and female gender as a quality and not a deprivation. Male and female are balanced and complementary to each other in 'spiritual, social, emotional and reproductive functions'. [40] Generally speaking, the relationship of man and woman is indispensable, a catalyst, for family and society in all spheres. The Rastas believe that many African people of the diaspora adapted themselves to the neo-colonial patterns of Babylon. Most of the black people in the world, according to Afari, are attracted by the education, religion, norms and cultures of the metropolitan West, which has disrupted the family unit and caused social decadence, [41] profound human annihilation, and separate identities, as well the 'geographical, physical and sexual border' of human beings. This imperial attitude,

[39] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding RastafarI*, 279-280.
[40] Yasus Afari, *Overtstanding RastafarI,* 281.
[41] Yasus Afari, *Overtstanding RastafarI*, 279.

operating through global financial markets, has great power in places where people have inadequate resources and little freedom. From a sociological viewpoint, this situation has changed the spatiality of traditional societies and visions, where the spaces are centred, organized and rationalized, becoming therefore artificial and not natural, thus homogenizing the human condition. This implies a difference between inside against outside, here against there, one against many, and thus male against female.

However, even if RastafarI has created self-definition, self-dimension and own space through African experience and tradition in its spirituality, culture, music and dance, this movement has converted women to a man-centred ideology of *livity*. The Queen of Sheba is a source for Rasta female psychology, a queen and empress who renders women capable of independence and self-determination. According to Jungian thought, male and female are not only opposite poles but they are in equilibrium with each other, crossing one other.

Conclusion

Since it has been demonstrated that there is historical influence between the EOC and RastafarI, not merely consonance of ideas, this session has also brought out somewhat more emphatically about the condition and role of woman in RastafarI and the EOC. In the West, the best-known references to the Queen of Sheba are in the Bible, in the books of Kings and Chronicles. In them, we read that the Queen visited King Solomon in Jerusalem to test his wisdom with riddles. She was impressed by his intelligence. In Muslim traditions she is known as Bilqis, a woman who ruled with a masculine character (she was both passionate and a hard worker). In contrast, the Ethiopian epic

Kebra Negast claims that she had a child (Menelik) with Solomon but she never lived with him as a wife. According to Ethiopian folklore and RastafarI, she is described as the mother of the Solomonic dynasty, the mother of all the kings who ruled Africa. In fact, all the Ethiopian leaders including Haile Selassie I (the last emperor) were said to be descended from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Moreover, it is said that it was Makeda who, along with her son, in secret took the Ark of the Covenant (in which the presence of God was believed to dwell) to Ethiopia, to the cathedral at Aksum.

The example of the Queen of Sheba helps all women, in particular Rasta women, to be free from the veils which they are obliged to wear. The Queen of Sheba, or Candace, or Bilqis, emerges as the liberator of all the oppressed. This woman helps oppressed people (the African women), who live in the 'third space', in the *terra nulla* or the *terra incognita,* to understand their space and to re-build their African identity. Hence, the Queen of Sheba is a focus for those marginalized and minority identities (class, gender or race) where social differences have become something else besides nostalgia for the past dissolving in the present. She can inspire the future to become synonymous with social, cultural and religious opening. In particular, her figure contributes to the visibility of the women of the African diasporas – the migrant woman or *Donna in viaggio* – who lived or are living under the legacy of western patriarchal society.

Chapter 8

The Bible and Rastas

The Spiritual Sources of the RastafarI Movement: from the Kebra Nagast to the Holy Piby

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Seven, there are different features to the identity of the Queen of Sheba. Her figure is celebrated in Islamic, Judaic and Christian folklore. Moreover, the study of the Queen of Sheba has explored the concept of Afrocentricity and matriarchy. This aspect of the Queen of Sheba as an African 'black' queen could rehabilitate the role of women and restore the African identity and self-esteem for people of the African diaspora, including the RastafarI movement. As has been shown the queen of Sheba is regarded as the mother of Ethiopia (the Queen of the South, in 2 Chronicles 21:16) with African origins. The African 'black' feature in the persona of the Queen of Sheba is significant also for African women, as the mother of their mothers, indicating thus the collective belief of Afrocentricity. This woman is grounded in the history of the African people and she represents those women who finally do not live in any form of subjugation (physical, psychological or cultural) to the dominance of men. For those resistance movements (first of all RastafarI), this woman constitutes the beginning of their revolution and reconstitution. In other words, the Queen of Sheba, like Queen Nanny, is an example of liberation for African minority groups.

This chapter raises some important questions. First, we consider the impact of the three Ethiopian literary sources (the *Kebra Nagast,* the *Fetha Nagast and* the *Lefâfa Sedek*) on RastafarI thinking, which is deeply rooted in the Old Testament. Second, Rastafari literature is based on the Ethiopian saga of the *Kebra Nagast* (the 'Glory of Kings') and the *Fetha Nagast* (the 'Law of Kings') which has close links with biblical Christianity (both the Old and New Testament). Third, RastafarI spirituality combines some magical-pagan rituals and prayers which appear in Ethiopian Christianity as well as in the *Lefâfa Sedek* (the Ethiopian Book of Death). Finally, RastafarI provides, thanks to the position of subalterns and post-colonial readers, a re-reading and re-using of the Bible. Hence, considering RastafarI as a new African religious and postcolonial movement, the RastafarI approach to the scriptures will be analysed; in other words, how this new liberative movement has brought to light its critical attitudes to every form of western power, using its intellectual and cultural resistance rooted in the concept of African hermeneutics (Afrocentricity).

The First Literary Source in RastafarI: The Kebra Nagast

Some Rasta people,[1] researchers like Clinton Chisholm[2] and other writers, depict the *Kebra Nagast* as the exclusive traditional source for the Rasta faith. This book, which expands the multiple metaphors of Ethiopian cultural and religious traditions, is considered by Rastas to be their own African cultural identity. The *Kebra Nagast* is

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[1] Gerald Hausman, *The Kebra Nagast: The Lost Bible of the Rastafarian Wisdom and Faith from Ethiopia to Jamaica,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 7. See also Lorenzo Mazzoni, *Kebra Nagast. La Bibbia Segreta dei Rasta,* (Bologna: Coniglio Editore, 2007).

[2] Clinton Chisholm, 'The Rasta-Selassie-Ethiopian Connections', in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, Murrell, Nathaniel Samuel, William David Spencer, et al., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998),166-177.

therefore an important source for both Ethiopia and the RastafarI movement. This book, which is also entitled *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* is considered by Wallis Budge to be another mode used by Rastas to describe their postcolonial process. This manuscript contributes to the Rasta discourse on African-Caribbean identity, hybridity, syncretism and diaspora. For Rastas, the *Kebra Nagast* talks about African-Ethiopian history, the 'black' history. According to Ziggy Marley the Holy Book of Ethiopia is about 'my history, black my story'.[3] For Marley, nobody has taught the history of African glory and the concept of Afrocentricity which is contained in the *Kebra Nagast*.[4] The *Kebra Nagast* narrates the fascinating lineage of the Ethiopian Emperors and depicts Ethiopia as the new Zion.[5]

The *Kebra Nagast*, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, is the main literary source after the Bible, and it incorporates Jewish, Egyptian (pagan and Christian), Ethiopian and Arabian sources. It is a sort of cultural *bricolage* which describes the non Western world. The *Kebra Nagast* is more than a legend for Ethiopians and Rastas. It is indeed a means of creativity and *veritas* (truth) for subalterns and marginalised people who attempt to create a postcolonial archetype of an imaginative and ideological liberation. The Glory of Kings however seems to have a plausible grounding in historical fact. Haile Selassie I, indeed, in one of his interviews during his visit to England in October 1954 which appeared in *The Sunday Dispatch,* stated concerning

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[3] Gerald Hausman, *The Kebra Nagast*, 7. [Text as original]
[4] Gerald Hausman, *The Kebra Nagast*, 7.
[5] Clinton Chisholm, 'The Rasta-Selassie-Ethiopian Connections', in *Chanting Down Babylon,* 167.

the *Kebra Nagast*: 'This is not a legend! It is based on the most universal book in the world – the Holy Bible'.[6]

No particular historical date is known when Rastas started to read the manuscript of the *Kebra Nagast*. According to Gerald Hausman, in *The Kebra Nagast: The Lost Bible of Rastafarian Wisdom and Faith from Ethiopia and Jamaica*, a copy of this allegorical text was found abandoned by a Rasta in a flat in Miami (presumably at the beginning of the twentieth century but there is not a date when it was found).[7] Although some Rastas have never read the book, with its mythical history of the Queen of Sheba and her visit to Solomon and the birth of the Ethiopian son Menyelik (the founder of the Glory of Ethiopian Kings), it is transmitted orally. However the theology of RastafarI stems from a rereading of the Bible (the King James Version) and the *Kebra Nagast*.

Literary sources such as the *Kebra Nagast,* the *Fetha Nagast* and the *Lefafa Sedek* are taken and read by Rasta houses (mansions) of Nyabingi or the EWF (the Ethiopian World Federation) in the city Pitfour in Montego Bay in Jamaica. During their national religious reunion (Groundation), the 'Elders' (*I-cient*)[8] of the RastafarI movement pray, sing, play drums (*Burru*) to commemorate their past (*I-tiopia*) and their reincarnate God (Jah) where according to the Ethiopian and Rasta traditions, the Son is the reincarnation of Father (the archetype of the eternal King-God). Rasta people celebrate the Solomonic

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[6] David Allen Hubbard, *The Literacy Source of the Kebra Nagast*, unpublished PhD thesis, St. Andrews University, 1956, p. 5.This source is available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10023/544. Cf. *The Sunday Dispatch*, October 24, 1954, p. 6.

[7] Gerald Hausman, *The Kebra Nagast*, 16.

[8] 'I-cient' is a Rasta term which indicates the ancient indigenous populations (the Ethiopians) and it refers to elders 'the wise men' of the RastafarI movement. The letter 'I' is not only a homonym of 'high', which signifies spiritual and divine knowledge, but it is also synonymous with the Roman number 'I', the first, and it refers to Haile Selassie I. Other examples are: I-tal (vital); I-ssembly (assembly); I-ses (praises); I-quality (equality); I-tiopia (Ethiopia); and Rastafar-I (the Word of God).

dynasty with its 225 generations until Haile Sellassie I. Indeed it is said that 'Rastaman never die', according to the prophecy of Garvey where a 'black' King from Ethiopia will be crowned in Ethiopia (Isaiah 9,5). Ras Tafari is ever-living and ever-faithful.

The *Kebra Nagast* has not only had a profound impact on Ethiopian history, but has also become an integral part of RastafarI beliefs. The *Kebra Nagast* is a national saga along with other manuscripts, such the *Fetha Nagast* (the 'Law of Kings') and the *Lefâfa Sedek* (the Ethiopian Book of Death), which has had a great impact on Ethiopian Christianity and the RastafarI movement.[9] As Edward Ullendorff says in *Ethiopia and the Bible*, the *Kebra Nagast* is the expression of Ethiopian national and religious feelings.[10] This is based on the Ethiopic narrative of the *Kebra Nagast,* which includes, according to Budge, 'the Law of the whole of Ethiopia; and the names of the chiefs, churches, and the provinces'.[11]

The *Kebra Nagast* consists of 117 chapters written originally in the ancient Ethiopic script Ge'ez (the Ethiopian ecclesiastical and secular language) by a monk[12] Nebura'ed Yeshaq of Aksum around the beginning of the thirteenth century. The first version of the book was thus in Ge'ez. Then it was translated into Amharic, Arabic and English. This manuscript became known in Europe after the middle of the sixteenth century thanks to the Portuguese Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, and it was translated in part into

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[9] Abba Paulos Tzadua, *The Fetha Nagast*, ed. and translated from the Ge'ez by Peter L. Strauss, (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2009).
[10] Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 75.
[11] This quotation is found in Edward Ullendorff's *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 75. Cf. Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 34-34. See a further edition of Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* (Cambridge, Ontario: In Publications Ethiopian Series 2000).
[12] Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* 3.

Latin. The first modern English translation of the book did not appear until 1922, by Sir E.A. Wallis Budge. There is another version of the Ancient Royal Abyssinian Manuscript *The Glory of the Kings,* which was translated into French at the beginning of the twentieth century by Hugues Le Roux, a member of the *Rouen Académie des Belles Lettres*. In the introduction to *Magda, Queen of Sheba,* Le Roux reports what the Emperor of Ethiopia Menyelik said: 'Mr. Hugues Le Roux is translating Our Book into French. Thus he strengthens the bonds which have always united France and Ethiopia'.[13]

In these words, there are four significant points. Firstly, it demonstrates friendly relationshisp between Ethiopia and France. Secondly, this 'poem'[14] is considered by Ethiopians to be a classic and a historical piece of writing. Thirdly, *Magda, Queen of Sheba* affirms the Ethiopian royal pedigree between Solomon and Makeda both to Ethiopian and Rasta people. Finally, there is a political theme which also emerges from this manuscript. In Chapter 5 of the French edition, for instance, there is a reference to the whole province of Gaza which Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba and her only son Menelik, also called Bainelekhem ('the son of the wise man'). The province of Gaza was the frontier of Judea. This land, although agitated,[15] became the inheritance of the kings of Ethiopia because they were the direct descendants of David. There are further versions of the book in Italian and Spanish.

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[13] See the introduction of Hugues Le Roux, *Magda Queen of Sheba*, trans. John Van Vorst, (London and New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1907), II.
[14] Hugues Le Roux, *Magda Queen of Sheba*, II.
[15] Hugues Le Roux, *Magda Queen of Sheba,* 74.

However, returning to the question of language matters, it is assumed that the Ethiopian manuscripts were translated into Arabic from Coptic. But there are still several questions about the original language of the *Kebra Nagast*. Indeed, Hubbard observes that the original language of the *Kebra Nagast* is still ambiguous, and the various etymologies of the name of Makeda, the Queen of Sheba, are according to the Italian scholar Carlo Conti Rossini (1872-1949) still unknown. This confusion stems from the fact that the Ethiopian languages (both Ge'ez and Amharic), along with most of the indigenous languages such as Tigrinya (spoken in Eritrea), Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew, are related Semitic languages. In Hubbard's view, most of the problems of language were problems of lack of knowledge:

> The question of the Coptic original may be disposed of quickly, both because I am not qualified to deal with the problem and because others who were qualified have not committed themselves.[16]

And concerning the Queen of Sheba's names, as Conti Rossini observes in *Storia di Etiopia*, there are several interpretations:

> Altri punti restano insoluti; per esempio, il nome di Machedà attribuito alla regina. Machedà è detta un'antica capitale, e così è chiamata una gente sui confini d'Agamè; Machedà nel Sudàn orientale è la stessa Abissinia.[17]
>
> Other points remain obscure; for example, the name of Machedà is attributed to the queen. Machedà is also an ancient capital, and it is a so-called people in the borders of Agamè; Machedà is the eastern part of the Sudan, which is the same as Abyssinia. [writer's translation]

However, what it is certain is that the *Kebra Nagast* contains different cultural and spiritual elements as well as languages (Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac and Ge'ez); it combines

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[16] David Allen Hubbard, *The Literacy Source of the Kebra Nagast*, 369.
[17] Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia,* (Milano: Lucini, 1928), 254. Cf. David Allen Hubbard, *The Literacy Source of the Kebra Nagast*, 304.

in its various forms Judaic, Islamic, Christian and Pagan rituals. The *Kebra Nagast* is the most important manuscript of Ethiopian Christianity which draws elements from the Old and the New Testament (for examples several quotations from the Psalms), as well as Jewish and qur'anic sources. The *Kebra Nagast* is for the RastafarI movement an African model which describes the story of Ethiopian civilisation, considering the African Ethiopian society as a noble ethnic group, 'the chosen one', and those people who were given the Ark of the Covenant by God's own angels.[18] On the foundation of the *Kebra Nagast*, the RastafarI movement has created its own African political and religious leader who is identified with the Emperor Haile Selassie I, the last of the Solomonic line of kings.[19]

The *Kebra Nagast* is also an account whose centrepiece is the legendary meeting of two heads of state, of Ethiopia and Israel, and two religions, paganism and monotheism. Furthermore, there is an ethnic motif in the *Kebra Nagast;* the figure of the Queen of Sheba is celebrated through her African 'black' identity while Solomon is an opposing colour, 'white'. But from the perfect union of opposite colours and cultures is generated a third entity, a third colour, the son (Menelik) of the wise King Solomon. Menelik is thus the first king of the Solomonic dynasty, the ruler of the kingdom of Ethiopia, and the keeper of the Law of God. However, for Rasta people and also for Africans of the diaspora, Chapter 64 of the *Kebra Nagast* may symbolise the concept of blackness. Indeed, the notion of *Afrocentricity* is emphasised in the following conversation between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon:

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[18] Gerald Hausman, *The Kebra Nagast*, 21.
[19] Gerald Hausman, *The Kebra Nagast*, 20.

> And she answered and said unto him, 'Thy son hath carried away thy Lady Zion, thy son whom thou hast begotten, who springeth from an alien people into which God hath not commanded you to marry, that is to say, from an Ethiopian woman, who is not of thy colour, and is not akin to thy country, and who is, moreover, black.' And Solomon answered and said unto her, 'Though thou speakest thus art thou not thyself of [that race] concerning which God hath not commanded us that we should take wives from it? And thy kin is her kin, for ye are all children of Ham…'[20]

In this scene there are certain references to the children of the African tribe of Ham, descendants of the sons of Ham. The tribe of Ham is important to individuate African cultural identity and ethnicity. The family of Ham represents thus the first inhabitants of Africa, like the tribe of Shem those of Asia and the sons of Japheth those of Europe.[21]

The Contents of The Kebra Nagast

For both Ethiopians and Rastas, the *Kebra Nagast* is the expression of their self-worth and empowerment. It symbolises their African identity with a long list of myths and symbols which come from the New Testament, in particular the Book of Revelation. To consider an example of the theology of Rastas, we need to identify the genuine link with the Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast*. The chapters of the *Kebra* emerge for Rastas as significant reading or 'reasoning' of the Ethiopian dynasty. The *Kebra* talks about the Second Coming of Christ. The book itself also blends the biblical, Judaic, Islamic and pagan nature of Ethiopia. It tells us how in ancient Ethiopia Christian, pagan, Judaic and Muslim traditions co-existed.

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[20] E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* 87-88.
[21] For further information see the link which is available on-line at: http://dianabuja.wordpress.com/2009/10/12/inventing-ethnicity-imagining-agriculture-the-tribes-of-ham-and-the-primitive-crops-of-africa/.

The first part of the *Kebra Nagast* (Chapters 3-17) deals with what the Glory of Kings consists of, with the belief that a copy was given by God to Moses who made an ark of wood overlaid with pure gold, and that upon this ark the word of the law (the Glory of God) was inscribed. In Chapter 13 of the *Kebra Nagast,* the episode of Abraham selling his father's idols is identical to that of the Midrash and Qur'an. In the *Kebra Nagast* there is also a remarkable number of Old Testament references. Chapter 42 contains the Mosaic Law, the law of God and his ordinance (the Ten Commandments regarding life, honesty, marriage, adultery, fornication, incest and so on); this plays a crucial role in Ethiopian life and also in RastafarI.

> Honour thy father and thy mother so that may be good to thee the many days that you shalt find in the land which the Lord thy God hath given thee.
> Thou shalt not go with the wife of [another] man.
> Thou shalt not slay a life.
> Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
> Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his house, nor his land, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his cattle, nor his ass, nor any of the beasts that thy neighbour hath acquired.[22]

In Chapter 44 we have a list of warnings against reviling kings who are protected and anointed by God:

> First, God shall overthrow for him his enemy, and he shall not be seized by the hand of his enemy. Secondly, God shall make him reign with Him and His righteousness, and shall make him to sit on His right hand. Thirdly, God shall make him to reign upon earth with glory and joy, and shall direct his kingdom for him, and shall bring down the nations under his feet.[23]

The main subject of this manuscript is the story of Makeda, the Queen of Sheba and her meeting with King Solomon and her only son Menelik I. The second theme is related to

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[22] Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik*, 51.
[23] Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik*, 55.

the Ark's move to Ethiopia (chapters 19-94). The Queen of Sheba heard of the wisdom of Solomon from a merchant of her kingdom, Tamrin, and she wished to travel to Jerusalem and know more about him. She learnt that Solomon built a tabernacle where he prayed to his king, the creator who was worshipped as a god (chapter 28). The Queen of Sheba's meeting with Solomon becomes an example for Rastas and Ethiopians of an occasion when two leaders of opposite religions and traditions interact and negotiate. The Queen of Sheba is a woman in a man's world who had the same power as a man.[24] In Chapter 32 there is the birth of Menyelik, and at the age of 22 the son of Solomon travelled to Jerusalem through Gaza to see his father. Solomon gave to him the ark from the Temple (chapters 45-48).

In Chapters 96, 105, 106, 110, 111 and 112 a vast number of references to the messianic prophecies are mentioned. These are interpreted by the Ethiopians and Rastas with reference to the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 18:15; Numbers 12:2 and 21:7), and to the coming of the promised redeemer, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. In Chapter 96, for example, we have the new legend of Moses:

> A prophet like myself shall rise up for you from your brethren, and hearken ye unto him; and every soul that will not hearken unto that prophet ye shall root out from among the people.[25]

In Chapters 105 and 106, there are several Ethiopian messianic prophecies concerning the Son of God which according to the book are foretold by prophets such as Abraham,

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[24] Gerald Hausman, *The Kebra Nagast*, 67.
[25] Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* 145.

David, Solomon and Micah. At the beginning of Chapter 106 one of Isaiah's visions of the coming of Christ is mentioned:

> A Son is born into us. A Child is given into us. Dominion is written upon His shoulder. He is, God strong in rule, King, great Counsellor is His name. [26]

Also in Chapter 106, there is the messianic prophecy of David on Ethiopia as *Zion*:

> God shall come in the visible form, and our God will not keep silence. (Cf. Psalm 1:3). He added: 'Blessed is He who cometh in the name of God: we have blessed you in the name of the Lord (Cf. Psalm 118: 26 and 113:8).

And also: 'The God of gods shall show Himself in *Zion'*. [27]

According to the *Kebra Nagast,* Christ is considered as descended from Solomon and the Patriarchs. He was the Son of God and thus the King of Ethiopia is a kinsman of God. Therefore he was both God and king (divine and human being) which is closely connected to the Rasta interpretation of the Rasta God-King Haile Selassie I, who is seen as the second coming of Jesus, a liberator, an avatar. The belief in Haile Selassie I's divinity comes from the theological reading of *Kebra Nagast* with its long list of African God-Kings.

Therefore, the legacy of the Old Testament in the *Kebra Nagast* comes with metaphors, narratives and royal genealogies (the Solomonic dynasty, Chapter 95 of the *Kebra Nagast*). The reason for the preponderance of biblical references (mainly the Old Testament) is the fact that Ethiopians believe in the legend of the royal dynasty of the Queen of Sheba and the Israelite King, Solomon. This enshrines the idea of

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[26] Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik*, 172.
[27] Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* 174.

Afrocentricity, thus placing African people in a prestigious position by employing their Ethiopian Semitic languages (Ge'ez and Amharic) and identity. Moreover, the source of the *Kebra Nagast* leads one to think that for the Ethiopians and the Rastas, the Ark of the Covenant or Zion (Exodus, 25:10-22; 37:1-9 and Deuteronomy 10:8; see also the chapters 103-104 of the *Kebra Nagast*) is in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Aksum. Zion, in fact, according to the Ethiopians and Rastas, is the mountain of God's holiness, his special habitation. This is not just a geographical place but the name of God's dwelling place.[28] The Ark of the Covenant served first to make possible the divine presence amongst his people, second, to facilitate God's speaking to Moses (Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89; I Chron. 28:2), and finally to be the vessel of the Ten Commandments. For Rastas, Zion is the spiritual place of return, regeneration and redemption where they gain their independence. Thus in a hermeneutical sense Zion along with Ethiopia rehabilitates Rasta people from a subaltern position to a liberative one. Moreover, what is noticeable is that these readings (the *Kebra Nagast* in particular) are for both Ethiopians and Rastas a vehicle to claim their African lineage and cultural background from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Indeed, as has been seen in the previous chapter, the history of the Ethiopian 'empire' begins with the encounter between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon and, most importantly, the fruit of their union, the birth of the first king of Ethiopia, Menyelik. But Menyelik is not just the son of the King of Israel and the Queen of Ethiopia; he is the only son of the religious and political agreement between two rulers and cultures (the West and the East), who was influenced by his mother, the Queen of Sheba, and who took the Tabernacle of the Ark, the

[28] Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 83-84.

Tabernacle of the Law of God and where the Trinity resides[29], from Jerusalem to Ethiopia. These books reflect how sub-cultures such as Rastas and Ethiopians can reconfigure an original interpretation of the biblical texts in the multiple contexts that is Ethiopia.

The Second Source in RastafarI: The Fetha Nagast

The *Fetha Nagast* (the Law of Kings) and the *Kebra Nagast* (the Glory of Kings) are biblical and non-biblical books in the Ethiopian and also Rasta literature. These Ethiopic biblical narratives play an important role in terms of the cultural and spiritual initiation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and RastafarI. The books contain several biblical and non-biblical references, and these are accepted as authentic sources for Ethiopian and RastafarI spirituality. Not only is the *Fetha Nagast* akin to the *Kebra Nagast* in attitudes and beliefs, but these books also combine spiritual and secular matters. Indeed, both of the texts include Mosaic Law and so Judaic traditions.

The *Fetha Nagast* is another important source for the Ethiopians and for the imperial legislation of Ethiopia. This remarkable manuscript was translated into English for the first time by an Italian Catholic priest and scholar. However, in Addis Ababa in 1967 there was a second printing in English published by Abba Paulos Tzadua. He had pursued his degrees in Law and Political and Social Science in Milan. In 1967 he moved to Addis Ababa where he was appointed Archbishop and translated the Fetha Nagast from Ge'ez into English. This important ancient work traces its origins back to

[29] See Chapter 5 of the *Kebra Nagast,* in Wallis E.A. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelik,* vi.

the Council of Nicea (318 C.E.) and became a source of authority in Ethiopia in 1908 when the Emperor Menelik II was appointed the first Ethiopian minister. Moreover, the Imperial Throne of Haile Selassie I and the Church of Ethiopia used the *Fetha Nagast* as the basis of their work on the Ethiopian Penal Code and it was also influential for church law.

Today, Ethiopian legislation is rooted in the *Fetha Nagast*. This work is thus the basis of law and the organization of justice in Ethiopia. The *Fetha Nagast* is itself a book of Law which regulates the life of the Ethiopian people and to which Rastas have traced back their spirituality (*livity*). Spiritual and secular affairs are included in this tome. The *Fetha Nagast* contains the complete secular and ecclesiastical law of the Church of Ethiopia, including the structure and rules of the churches, monasteries and their administrators such as patriarchs (the emissaries of God and his Son, Jesus Christ and his Apostles),[30] bishops, priests, and deacons, and as well monks and nuns. These ecclesiastical persons play a crucial role in the elections of the four patriarchs. As shown in Chapter 4, each patriarch is appointed by the application of reason. In other words, the candidates for patriarch should demonstrate that they are of high intelligence and sound mental health. This manuscript is divided into two parts: the first focuses on themes such as ecclesiastical law and the second is more concerned with subjects such as food, clothing, habitation, marriage, dissolution of marriage, prohibition of

[30] According to the Fathers of Nicea (375 C.E.), there should be only four patriarchs in the world, which represent the four elements of creation (fire, water, earth and air). The first is in Rome, the second in Alexandria, the third in Ephesus, and the fourth in Antioch. Cf. Abba Paulos Tzadua, *Fetha Nagast,* 17.

concubinage, donations, loans, guarantees, partnership, succession, wills and regulations of the church regarding hair, confession and circumcision.

Chapter 1, for instance, talks about the Church of Ethiopia and its regulations. First of all, the Church is considered a consecrated house, and is always built on the authorization of the bishop. The priest celebrates the mass and does not deal with secular matters. In the Church God is present in the Tabernacle or the *tabot*. The *tabot* is located on the altar in the innermost part of the Church. This symbolises the house of God. No-one should talk at the altar, but may pray before it. In the Church it is forbidden to eat and drink. Women are not allowed to pray and stay in the sanctuary.[31]

Chapter 2 describes the sacred books of the Bible, which is interpreted differently by Ethiopians and includes other materials and people which are not present in the Kings James Bible; these must be accepted and read, and in the Church of Ethiopia are as follows. There are the books of the Old Testament, that is the five books of the Law (the Pentateuch), the books of Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth and Judith. Also included are the books of Kings (four in number), two books of Ezra the scribe, the book of Esther, the book of Tobias, two books of Maccabees, the book of Job and the book of David. Moreover, it contains four books of the Wisdom of Solomon: the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (*Qohele*), the Song of Songs and Wisdom (Sapientia which is named *Bagor*). Finally, there are the sixteen books of the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. There is also the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son

[31] Abba Paulos Tzadua, *Fetha Nagast*, 11-12.

of Sirach. Of the books of the New Testament in the Ethiopian manuscript there are the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the book of the Apostles (which has seven epistles), the book of Paul with fourteen epistles and the book of the Apocalypse. These books are considered the authentic books of the God of Ethiopia and thus both Ethiopians and Rastas have introduced them in their liturgies and rituals.[32]

Chapter 5 refers to the appointment and consecration of Ethiopian bishops. After his consecration, the bishop should fast for three weeks and for the rest of the year on three days a week, on Wednesday, Friday and Monday, but not on the Sabbath (Saturday) and Sunday. When fasting, the permitted food is bread, oil, salt, vegetables and honey. He should not drink wine. He can take all the food he needs, but always in proportion to what is necessary for health: 'The food to be taken by the bishop throughout the year of his fasting is bread, salt oil, honey and vegetables; he shall not take wine.'[33]

This way of fasting which is typical of Ethiopian Christianity is also observed by Rastas. In fact, the Rasta people are vegetarians.

Chapter 10 depicts the monastic life, which plays a very important role in Ethiopian Christianity. The monks and nuns are regarded as 'earthly angels'.[34] Moreover, these people are as stated in the New Testament: 'There are eunuchs who have made themselves for the Kingdom of Heaven' (Mt. 19, 21). They could be unmarried or have

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[32] Abba Paulos Tzadua, *Fetha Nagast,*13.
[33] Abba Paulos Tzadua, *Fetha Nagast,* 28.
[34] Abba Paulos Tzadua, *Fetha Nagast,* 65.

left their wives and husbands to become monks. They are devoted to silence. They wear clothing of rough wool after their renunciation of the world as a sign of the spiritual adornment of the soul. This clothing is similar to Rasta robes. They pray, fast and read the Holy Book. [35]

The *Fetha Nagast* also discusses dietary prescriptions which derive, as Ullendorff states, from the Mosaic Law and are observed by both Ethiopian Christians and Rastas. All the regulations about food and drink are contained in the Bible. In Acts, there are many references to dietary restrictions. The consumption of blood is forbidden as follows: 'But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.' (Acts 15:20), and also: 'That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.' (Acts 15:29)

Similar ritual aspects of food also appear in RastafarI life (*livity*). Indeed, Rasta people eat once a day during the time of their reasoning or meditation. RastafarI *livity* is a celebration of the ascetic life which consists of 'praying without ceasing' (see the Rasta concept of 'reasoning') in every aspect of life, where Rastas pay homage to and get in touch with the Everlasting Creator (Jah), and the ultimate power. During this important phase of their meditation, Rastas should abstain from food in order to preserve their life and thus the soul. However, Rastas, like Ethiopian monks and other ecclesiastics, should eat and wear only what is sufficient and proper. The food is prepared with simplicity using basic, natural utensils, because this represents the first bond of purity. Indeed,

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[35] Abba Paulos Tzadua, *Fetha Nagast,* 71.

Rastas make plates, dishes and cups from wood, coconut shell and calabash. Cooking utensils such as pots and pans are crafted from clay and cast iron. Sometimes the calabash is used as a pot for cooking. Food and drink should not be consumed in an improper manner because food is the source of life. In his book on Rasta food and nutrition, Yasus Afari says:

> You are what you eat, food is the staff of life, and man and woman shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Most High, as well as let your food be your medicine and your medicine your food. [36]

Thus the RastafarI diet is similar to that of Ethiopian Christians, particularly the bishops and monks.

Chapter 15 prescribes when and how Christians should commence their fasting and also which dietary laws should be respected, in other words, which food should be eaten or avoided, as in Colossians 2:22 ('…which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?'). In Ethiopian Christianity, abstinence from food is observed at certain times of the year for the remission of sins. Many Ethiopian Christians and Rastas practise fasting because this serves to weaken any form of concupiscence, and is also a means to achieve a stronger spirituality, to learn and achieve more 'knowledge', which corresponds to reasoning and meditation for Rastas. Fasting can be considered empirically as a ritual for two reasons: firstly, it is associated with symbolic behaviour and is performed at a certain time of

[36] Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari*, 142.

year; secondly, it is a sort of repetitive action and spiritual practice. 'No meat shall be eaten during that period unless it is fish'.[37]

A point of particular interest in the present analysis of the *Fetha Nagast* is thus the link between the Ethiopian Church and the RastafarI movement. It is helpful to understand how the Rastas have included the law of fasting in their daily behaviour, becoming therefore a basic and fundamental form of their spirituality (*livity*). Although many Rastas are 'I-Tal' which means does not eat meat or fish, there are some of them who apply the dietary prescriptions of the scriptures. Deuteronomy 14 and Leviticus 11 provide a list of clean and unclean meat which might be healthy or poisonous for the soul and body.

The present analysis cannot conclude without a further observation. As has been seen, the *Fetha Nagast* shows a vast number of biblical allusions (the Old Testament in particular), and this extends broadly to many influences on Ethiopian Christian life and RastafarI *livity*. Finally, we can assume that the impact of the *Fetha Nagast* on Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI is necessary to understand how some African theologies have notably taken their shape from the East through their various non-western tasks.

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[37] Abba Paulos Tzadua, *Fetha Nagast,* 94.

The Ethiopian Pagan Sources: The Lefâfa Sedek and The Book of Enoch

Despite Ethiopian Christianity and RastafarI revealing monotheistic traits, there are other characteristically pagan features in their practices and rituals. An initial overview of African Christianity reveals that generally at the centre of all religions is a combination of monotheism and polytheism. The Supreme Being is complemented by the belief in a pantheon of divinities which exercise their influence through religious practices and cults. Magic existed before Christianity and still survives into its liturgies and worship. Christianity may be seen as a surface veneer imposed upon an undefined area that is therefore magic. The magic-esoteric traits in Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity were imported by Sabaeans from southern Arabia during the time of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. In ancient Ethiopian religious literature - such as *The Lefâfa Sedek* (Bandlet of Righteousness: An Ethiopian Book of the Dead), The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth and the apocalyptic work the book of Enoch - Ethiopian Christianity is not confined to orthodox theology but exhibits these pagan features. Indeed, the term 'Tewahedo' etymologically means being united, integrated and amalgamated, and this indicates how Ethiopian Christianity is a multiplicity of distinct religions which combine magic with the rituals and spirituality.

For Africans, it is generally said that magic is a divine code which comes into being through our perception. The body is a vehicle of any sensory-motor experience (Jean

Piaget and Bernard Aucouturier)[38] which allows each person through rituals to achieve the sublime or powerful force. The power passes through us and it is used by us. In doing so, the body expands holistically to those powers which guide us and extends to the ancestors (the mythic eternity). In this way, the body enables the self to deal with the occult and the supernatural (into the symbolic experience of the divine). Magic can be seen as a path of psychological and physical transformation where the supernatural speaks with the self. In the African understanding, the encounter with this power (the driving force) permeates all things (stones, animals, prayers and spells). This experience gives rise to the idea of prophecy (of benefiting the living and the dead), of the supernatural and the invisible spiritual powers (the Spirit Powers or *Mana*). The word 'magic' as an adjective derives via Latin 'magicus' from Greek 'magikos'. But the word 'magic' is also a noun with Semitic roots from 'mag' and signifies 'mason or magician'. This word is associated with mystery, occult power and secrets. Magic traces its origin to religious texts and works, and it appears in certain passages of Egyptian, Arab and Gnostic narratives.

The insider position, the African-based view of the Ethiopians and Rastas, sees spirituality and magic as integral parts of the culture and identity. God (the Great Holy One), angels and spirits are intrinsic to the thought of Ethiopians. Magic is found in many of their religious texts. Magic lives in Ethiopian religiosity; it sits side by side with spells and prayers which are not only for worship but also act as protective charms

[38] Bernard Aucouturier (France, 1934 -) is the founder of Abeq (Association Belge pour l'Etude de la Psychomotricité – The Belgian Association for the Study of Psychomotricity) based on a holistic perspective of the human being, on the unity of body and mind (psyche). He developed his therapeutic practice through helping children with educational difficulties.

to ward off demons. Magical practices, scrolls and talismans (including painted angels, crosses and saints) play a significant role in Ethiopian traditions. Ethiopian ceremonies and rituals introduce magical symbols which correspond to Masonic symbols such as the Star of David, the Seal of the Trinity, the Pentacle of Solomon and the Eye.

Ethiopian magic and rituals are based on worship, dancing and chanting as vehicles to resist any monotheistic influences which come from the Jewish, Christian and Islamic religions. Most of the magical practices have a pagan substratum and thus go back to the 'old Cushitic pagan beliefs'[39]. According to Ullendorff, demonology and magic were widespread in the ancient East although it is impossible to determine where they first emerged. [40] It is certain that mysterious practices such as magic, sorcery and witchcraft are still an integral part of most Ethiopian and several north eastern African and Semitic populations. The observance of magic represents the major spiritual interest behind the official religion of Christianity. Magic is a singular phenomenon of many African-Caribbean indigenous populations which, on the one hand, allows to them to re-discover their doctrinal and historical background and, on the other, to preserve their pagan traditions.

In the Ethiopian *Lefafa Sedek* is a text found in Wright, *Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscripts*[41], in the British Museum, which contains magic. The work was written in the middle of the sixteenth century, and can be seen as an updated version of what the

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[39] Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 79.
[40] Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*,79.
[41] For further information see: Wright, *Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscripts in the British Museums,* (London: No. CXLIV, 1877), 98.

Book of the Dead was for the Egyptians. As stated previously, it derives from apocryphal Hebrew, Gnostic, pagan and Christian works.

This manuscript is important in understanding how the theme of magic links with archetypically divine names within the structure of the unconscious mind and its spirituality. Amongst pagans, Jews and Ethiopian Christians - the Sabaean tribes - the name of their Almighty takes different forms. For Muslims the name of their God varies. In Chapter 1 of the *Lefâfa Sedek* Allah is mentioned and his name is written on amulets and talismans as protection. In Surah vii, 179 of the Qur'an, the Prophet Mohammed said that God has many beautiful names, ninety-nine, of which the following are examples:

Ar-Rahman	The Merciful	Al-Khalik	The Creator
Ar-Rahim	The Compassionate	Al-Bari	The Maker
Al-Malik	The King	Al-Musawwir	The Fashioner
Al-Kuddus	The Holy One	Al-Ghaffar	The Forgiver
Al-Salam	The Peace	Al-Kahhar	The Dominant
Al-Mu'min	The Faithful	Al-Wahhab	The Bestower
Al-Muhaimin	The Protector	Ar-Razzak	The Provider
Al-'Aziz	The Mighty	Al-Fattah	The Opener
Al-Jabbar	The Repairer	Al-'Alim	The Knower
Al-Mutakabbir	The Great		

Table 5 - The Names of God, according to the Qur'an

Equally, among African people there are several names given to their divinity. John S. Mbiti in his book, *Concepts of God in Africa*, quotes a long list of titles for the African God:

Architect	Hewer
Almighty	Lord of Life
Creator	Master
Caretaker of Children	Omnipresent
Distributor	Owner of all things
Eternal One	Protector of the Poor
Excavator	Supreme One
Father	Wise One
Father of Grandfather of all	

Table 6 – The African Names of God[42]

In the *Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth,* it is said that God takes nine different names (magical names): ’Adâm, Nâtnaw, Kabîkâ, Zardâ’êl, Daphlâ, Tatâ, Bazanadakâ’êl, ’Awlalâ’êl, ’Elâdâ’êl’,[43] while in the book of Enoch, God, the Holy One, appeared to Enoch, the righteous man with a dream-vision of the heaven of the heavens. During his visionary journeys Enoch sees the luminaries of the heavens, the holy angels and four archangels (Michael, Raphael, Gabriel and Phanuel) who show him the magnificent mountains of metal (of iron, copper, silver, gold, soft metal and

[42] John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of Gods in Africa,* (London: SPCK, 1982), 348.
[43]Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth*, (Berwick, Maine: Ibis Press, 2004), 57.

lead, which are in the presence of God),[44] the blessed place (Jerusalem) and all the secrets of the heavens where the sun and the moon are bound together and proceed in their path keeping faith with each other according to the will of the Lord[45]. In chapters XL and XLI of the book of Enoch there is reference to the archangels and their advent (cf. chapter LXXXVII). The fallen angels are also punished (cf. chapter LXXXVIII). The archangels are described as follows:

> This first is Michael, the merciful and long-suffering: and the second, who is set over all the diseases and the wounds of the children of men, is Raphael: and the third, who is set over all the power, is Gabriel: and the fourth, who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life, is named Phanue.[46]

The fallen angels include Jeqôn, Asbeêl and Gâdreêl. Chapter LXIX says:

> The name of the first was Jeqôn: that is, the one who led astray [all] the sons of God, and brought them down to the earth, and led them astray through the daughters of men. And the second was named Asbeêl: he imparted to the holy sons of God evil counsel, and led them astray so they defiled their bodies with the daughters of men. And the third was named Gâdreêl: he it is who showed the children of men all the blows of death, and he led astray Eve... And the fourth was named Pênêm: he taught the children of men the bitter and the sweet, and he taught all the secrets of their wisdom. And he instructed mankind in writing with ink and paper, and thereby many sinned from eternity to eternity and until this day… And the fifth was named Kâsdejâ: this is he who showed the children of men all the wicked smitings of spirits and demons, and the smitings of the embryo in the womb, that it may pass away, and the [the smitings of the soul] the bites of the serpent.[47]

The book of Enoch illustrates the triumph of good over evil and it is a vital resource for Ethiopian Christian thought and for the study of the Old and the New Testament. Moreover this book contains a prophecy of the coming Messianic Kingdom with the

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[44] *The Book of Enoch,* trans. by R.H. Charles, (Mineola and New York: Dover Publications, 2007), 70.
[45] *The Book of Enoch,* 59.
[46] *The Book of Enoch,* 60.
[47] *The Book of Enoch,* 89-90.

luminaries, the sun and moon, which are in relation each other in accordance with their circular movements, classes, dominion, seasons, names (the Sun has two names: Orjârês and Tômâs; while the moon has four names: Asônjâ, Eblâ, Benâsê, Erâe) places of origin and so on[48]. The sun and the moon create their circumference making their revolution by way of the North and entering the portals of the West; they come forth through the eastern portal on the face of heaven[49].

The knowledge of the different names of God is thus an archetypical source for religious people. Indeed tribal people believe in one supreme being who exists in the background of the other divinities and spirits (the archangels and angels). The title of 'God' is the representation of this for the Ethiopian consciousness and its liberation: at a practical level it is the expression of African philosophy. God, along with the pantheon of archangels, luminaries and prophets, symbolizes the divine power. To God are attributed numerous names which enable poor and oppressed people not only to free themselves, but also to achieve psychological power like the divine will, whose image is immense, omnipresent, eternal and independent.

Ullendorff makes an important observation regarding some Ethiopian magical practices. The Ethiopians are devoted to amulets, as are the Rasta communities; the Shield of David and the seal and net of Solomon are supported by magical spells to scatter evil spirits and to prevent illness.[50] There is also reference to Lilith, the female night demon who was the cause of abortion and murder of children. Other symbols are the pillars, the

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[48] *The Book of Enoch,* 95-99.
[49] *The Book of Enoch,* 104.
[50] Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 79-80.

areas and the *tabot*: the pillars are the prophets (on the left) and the apostles (on the right); the areas are the martyrs in the north-east and in the south-west the priests. Finally, the *tabot*, which was made in gold, is the Word of God and this dwells in the womb of the Virgin Mary who is the Mother of God. So, according to Ethiopian folklore, if the *tabot* is God therefore Mary is also the *tabot*, who was sealed in chastity.[51]

In Ethiopia, there is a certain desire to keep magical names which might have a Hebrew origin[52] and their use is popular. The Ethiopian people give two types of names to their children: one for common use and the other for secrecy or magic, the hidden name. However, it is also said that the names are from pagan lore. For example, names such as Maryam (Mary) and Krestos stress the pagan roots and appear the focal point of Ethiopian worship, in invocations, incantations, spells and prayers. Thus, Ethiopian Christianity has never abandoned its pagan rituals and ceremonies, employing many amulets (such as the crosses which contain the Seal of Solomon) and magical texts (like the Book of the Dead and the Book of Life) which were in use in Egypt, Athens and Rome and also amongst the first Christian Gnostics. For example, the *Lefâfa Sedek* is supposed to have been written by God Himself and copied by Our Lord with a pen of gold, and the names are revealed in it and handed on to Mary,[53] the names of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The *Lefâfa Sedek,* whose name derives from the word 'bandage', contains magical prayers which are inscribed on little rolls of parchment, which are then used to wrap the bodies of the dead as a sign of eternity, or

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[51] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth*, 46.
[52] Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 81.
[53] Wallis E. A. Budge, *Bandlet of Righteousness,* 61.

the reincarnation of the soul. These magical prayers, religious practices and customs, which, as Budge observes, occupy a prominent place in Ethiopian Christian doctrines, clearly come from Ancient Egyptian traditions, as do all the following: first, the belief in the immortality of the soul; second, the belief in resurrection in which the soul continues to live after death; and third, the belief in the use of words of power like names of divinities, and magical, repetitive formulae like in the Rasta saying 'Jah bless you. Our Almighty Ras Tafari'. The Ethiopians and also Rastas believe that their God never dies, but that his life is eternal (according to the principle of the transmigration of souls).

In the second section of the *Lefâfa Sedek*, which opens with the words, 'In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, One God',[54] it is said that 'Jesus wrote with His own hands the following names'[55] (about sixty-nine magical names) as a sign of protection from any evil, disease, death and enemies. Section Eight says that the death of Jesus Christ can never occur because he is the only begotten Son of God who will never perish but have everlasting life. Indeed, one of the characteristics of Egyptian theology is the essential unity (*homoousia*) between God and his Son, as Jung observes in *Psychology and Religion,* and both are the same persona (the King).[56] The third person appears in the person of his mother (the procreative power). Thus, God and unity are present in the three persons of the Holy Trinity and he takes refuge in each name; they are also used by Rastas in their chanting:

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[54] Wallis E. A. Budge, *Bandlet of Righteousness,* 65.
[55] Wallis E. A. Budge, *Bandlet of Righteousness*, 65-66.
[56] Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion,* (London: Routlege and Kegan Paul, 1958), 115.

’Alfa and ’O (Omega)
’Alfa ’Alfa ’Alfa ’Alfa ’Alfa ’Alfa ’Alfa
’Iya’el ’Iya’el ’Iya’el ’Iya’el
’Iya’el ’Iya’el ’Iya’el
Hida’el Hida’el Hida’el Hida’el
Hida’el Hida’el Hida’el
Yodna’el Yodna’el Yodna’el Yodna’el
Yodna’el Yodna’el Yodna’el
Urna’el Urna’el Urna’el
Hirna’el Hirna’el Hirna’el Hirna’el
Hirna’el Hirna’el Hirna’el
’Amis ’Amis ’Amis ’Amis
’Amis ’Amis ’Amis.[57]

According to the *Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth*[58] and oral tradition, the Three Persons of the Trinity existed in names and not in persons. For the Ethiopians, the names of the Trinity lived in the waters of the primeval ocean and these three persons are identified as the major deities and spirits of the ancestors (in the Ancient Egyptian Religion). This demonstrates how the Ethiopian Orthodox Church flourished alongside magic and thus pagan traditions. Therefore, the practice of magic and thus the adoption of magical names, including prayers, sacrifices and totemic beliefs, is a feature of Ethiopian Christianity and moreover is still in use particularly in many African spiritualities, such as among the Ashanti, Yoruba and Oromo, and in the African-American diaspora, in RastafarI, Candomblè, Obeah, Santeria or Lukumi and

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[57] Wallis E. A. Budge, *Bandlet of Righteousness*, 85. The union of these list of names which symbolises the absolute One (the Deity) is unfolded into Three (the relation between one and three) which is expressed by the equilateral triangle and the following Pythagorean formula where A=B=C. Moreover, according to Pythagoras the three produces the four which is expressed by the geometrical figure of the square which is included in the triangle. Furthermore, the number four in Christianity is represented in the cross. Indeed, if we trace two segments from the opposite angles of a square these are perpendicular, forming a cross. But also there is another neutral figure, the circle (which could also express perfection) which can be inscribed and from the square where its internal segments or sides form a pentacle star, that is the star of Solomon.

[58] The *Book of the Mysteries of Heavens and Earth* is an Ethiopian manuscript which is edited by Perruchon in French and is in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (1917). To notice that there is no date of publication.

Voodoo. Magic, with its symbols, spells and rituals, is therefore the core of Ethiopian philosophy and metaphysics and still survives both in the Ethiopian milieu and in that of the African diaspora as an expression of their Afrocentricity (*autocoscienza*).

The Final Source: The Rasta Bible - The Holy Piby

Although many Rastas still use the King James version of the Bible, there is another version of the Bible which comes from Ethiopia, and for Rastas, the Bible can be a version of the Egyptian Book of Dead and the Ethiopian Book of Life, which are considered the 'first Bible' and whose prayers and hymns are similar to the Bible. Furthermore, the origin of the Bible can be traced back to Ethiopia. Indeed, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I says of the Bible: 'We in Ethiopia have one of the oldest versions of the Bible, but however old the version may be, in whatsoever language it may be written, the word remains one and the same. It transcends all boundaries of empires and all the conceptions of race. It is eternal.'[59] Thus, Haile Selassie influenced RastafarI thinking. Rastas, therefore, have undertaken their biblical studies and readings from an opposing position. Firstly, the RastafarI movement celebrates Amharic as the true language of the Bible, as a Semitic language which comes from the Ethiopian milieu. Secondly, Rasta people believe that most of the first copies of the Old Testament were introduced into Ethiopia by Syrian monks before the intrusion of European Christianity via the Roman Church.

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[59] Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah, *Rastafari,* 98.

Moreover, beyond the Bible and the biblical scriptures like the *Kebra Nagast* and the *Fetha Nagast*, there is a further written source which is used and read in RastafarI *livity*. Rastas differ amongst themselves regarding the Holy Scriptures and beliefs. One of the books which is closest to a postcolonial critique and is also associated with the concept of Afrocentricity, is the so-called 'Holy Piby' (The Blackman's Bible). The Holy Piby is an alternative and revolutionary re-reading of the scriptures from an Afrocentric and postcolonial perspective. It stresses the importance of Africa or negritude and the ideological resistance to the West (or Babylon, which is a term used by the movement and borrowed from the Bible – see the chapter on language). The westerners, according to Rastas, have spread scriptural imperialism. In other words, the Bible's translation into European languages, for Rastas, was used as a colonial means of exporting western values and traditions. The Nyabinghi Order said:

> Babylon is a term of varying levels of concreteness and specificity; historically, the predecessor of the Romans and the entire white European colonial world; presently, the entire post-colonial western structure and its supporting ideology apparatus; the oppressive condition of 'exile' in the Black diaspora; the cosmic domain presided over by the pope of Rome and his Anglo-European political cohorts; the source of death-dealing and destructive spiritual power.[60]

Before exploring the Holy Piby narrative in detail, we need to go back to the time of the early forms of liberation movements for the African people in America. In 1924, a Rasta leader known as Robert Shepherd Athlyi Rogers (who committed suicide in 1931) established his first Afrocentric programme in America in the footsteps of other African intellectual political leaders like Du Bois and Garvey. Athlyi celebrated the first Afro

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[60]Ennis B. Edmonds, 'Dread 'I' In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization', in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 24.

Athlican Constructive Church called also the Most Holy House of Athlyi. He put into practice his Afrocentric action (as the Pastor or Shepherd of the black God) within the African communities of New Jersey and Massachusetts in the US, telling of the Law of Ethiopia and preaching in favour of African revolution, redemption and unity. Beyond celebrating the teachings, values and beliefs of the African heritage, Shepherd Athlyi provided an alternative way to escape the dominance of western Christianity, thus creating a new religion of liberation or of struggle. He launched the deification/sanctification of Garvey's national*ism* (Ethiopian*ism* with its black God) while at the same time rejecting the White God.

The proclamation of the House of Athlyi was important for all the Africans who were developing their own Afrocentric 'authentic' tactics of liberation. The programme of the Church followed Garvey's programme of African cultural independence contained in the Universal Negro Improvement Movement, which manifests the meaning of Afrocentric philosophy, of negritude, or just the power of the black race. As we know, African Americans as well as a large part of the Caribbean populations, including Jamaica, are experiencing their forms of postcolonial resistance and marginalized protests through sabotage and insurrection against the dominant politics, culture and religion.

The Holy Piby was published by Shepherd Athlyi in Newark, New Jersey in 1924 and was written with two purposes. The first was to reinterpret the Bible through advocating Ethiopian traditions. It is said that the Holy Piby was written in Amharic as a cultural and theological tool to demonstrate the RastafarI eschatological attachment to the God of Ethiopia. The second was that the new holy scripture should be a hermeneutical tool

of resistance to religious and cultural imperialism and economic colonization by the West. In postcolonial discourse, the Holy Piby has become the fulcrum in RastafarI ideologies. In fact, in the Blackman's Bible emerges the anti-colonial stance of the African people of the diaspora. This book captures the resistant mood and action of Africans and also of Rastas. The subordinate from a marginal situation becomes the protagonist, no more a 'silent voice', *una voce silenziosa,* of subversive action, sabotage and defiance. The Holy Piby can be seen as symbolic intervention against the colonial power and as a sign of refusal by the oppressed people to participate in the western 'hostile milieu' that is Babylon. The term 'Babylon' is used generally to denote Rastas who live outside the Promised Land, which according to their view is the cause of all cultural, social and racial dislocation, displacement and thus alienation.

According to the RastafarI perspective, the Bible was the vehicle of the West which depicted Jesus Christ as the 'white' living God. The biblical narrative was a means to hide the hegemonic and imperial codes of the West. The whole story of the scriptures was modified and influenced by Babylon, which relegated and ignored the true African identity, where its God and his biblical persons were portrayed as Africans and so 'people of colour'. Second, some Rastas assumed that western belief systems have enslaved African history and monopolized education, legislation and spirituality.

Conclusion

From all the texts which are considered in this final section, it is clear that the RastafarI movement incorporates in its *livity* several elements of the traditional African milieu, which are the expression of pluralistic beliefs and faiths - from pagan, Arab, Judaic and

Christian traditions. But what emerges in this concluding chapter is that RastafarI is an African-centred movement which intends to promulgate an alternative version of the Bible (the Holy Piby), a resistant Scriptural text which goes against western Christianity and the Bible of the colonial era.

However, although RastafarI criticizes the cultural authority of the western Bible, what becomes evident is that RastafarI with its African literatures (the *Kebra Nagast*, the *Fetha Nagast* and finally the Holy Piby) aims to re-define its historical and cultural reality, which, according to this writer's view, has specific links with the Bible. As has been seen above, biblical texts are within the African tradition and the Bible is regarded by Ethiopians as a holy book. Even if there is a certain tendency in RastafarI literature to reconfiguration and re-reading of the Bible as well as the repositioning of Christianity, they are rehabilitating the role of Africa in rediscovering the African heritage.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this thesis has been to identify and address some related issues: the emergence of the RastafarI movement as an African-Caribbean liberation and patriarchal movement, the links of RastafarI with Ethiopia, how RastafarI has established its roots through the doctrines of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and how the figure of the Queen of Sheba has established a prominent place in Rasta thought. The research analysed the cultural, social and religious connections between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the RastafarI movement and evaluated these from a phenomenological perspective, to determine if all beliefs, doctrines and practices are present in similar contexts to each other. Their doctrinal and spiritual features were also examined and understood in an attempt to establish if they assumed any alternative philosophical and theological significance, which is rooted in the Monophysite doctrine, as an important choice to develop the belief in One Eternal and Single Nature (both human and divine) of the Word of God. In many respects it is this philosophical belief in one Nature that came to predominate in Eastern and Ethiopian Christianity and then became crucial for RastafarI. The fact is that Rastas have portrayed their own religious identity through the veneration of Haile Selassie I as God and as an African Black Messiah as developed in the Ethiopian Monophysite philosophy. Moreover, Haile Selassie I was a firm believer of the EOTC and was also seen both by the Ethiopians and Rastas as ‘King-God’ of Ethiopian Christianity. As Williams David Spencer observes:

> The key for Rastafarians who truly wish to follow Selassie is to trade worship of the emperor for following the worship example of the emperor, that is, not to worship the emperor as God, but to worship the emperor's God: Jesus.[1]

The reason behind this is that RastafarI is more linked to the Ethiopian religious milieu than to Western religions. As has been explained in Chapter 3, RastafarI takes its name from the Ethiopian name Ras Tafari and it refers to the Ethiopian teachings and rituals regarding the Trinity. In fact the words Ras TafarI signify head and thus Christ and Haile Selassie, "the Power of Trinity".[2] Within the area of study of the RastafarI movement, the hybrid or syncretistic aspect of its African-Caribbean (Creole) theology was generally found to be within the Ethiopian and Jamaican contexts which reflect a socio-political minority group of the oppressed.

One of the important contributions of this thesis was to ascertain in Chapter 8 that the theology of RastafarI is centred on the African liberative view in reading God as human-divine, through the Ethiopian texts such the *Kebra Nagast* (the Glory of Kings), the *Fetha Nagast* (the Law of Kings) and the *Lefafa Sedek* (the Ethiopian Book of the Dead) which combine Ethiopian legends and allegories. Another important source for the RastafarI movement is also the place of the Rasta "Bible" known as the *Holy Piby* which indicates a new route to interpret the socio-cultural problems of the oppressed. The Rasta Bible expresses their Afrocentric identity and the concept of blackness in the face of racial and cultural discrimination. What is certain is that the Rastas have created an alternative way of narrative to support African, exploited and oppressed people who have lived long in exile. Outside the religious study area, the RastafarI movement was

[1] Williams David Spencer, *Dread Jesus*, 163.
[2] Williams David Spencer, *Dread Jesus,*165.

often found associated with a political movement, such as African liberation theology, accompanying and manifesting its revolutionary psychology to the West (Babylon) and steeped in the Garveyite ideology. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5, the evidence suggests that Garvey promoted an anti-'White' political programme among African participants and these anti-colonial ideals may have been more intimate and inclusive in Rasta communities. However, this thesis has challenged the views of Garveyism and Ethiopianism and has seen the RastafarI movement not only as an outcome of anti-colonial Creole religions but as a hybridized religion which has a strong womanist streak in it.

The evidence shows that RastafarI expressed what the Jamaican political critic Garvey articulated against Babylon as the hegemonic system of White imperialism. Indeed, there is certain anti-'White'/western cohesion among black Africans; in general RastafarI follows and develops a specific Afrocentric and post-colonial pattern that is not as evident elsewhere. Identifying in RastafarI its Afrocentric, resistant and anticolonial psychology, this research has been also sensitive to themes and issues of Rasta liberative language (Rasta Talk), rituals, symbols and food (I-Tal), as indicated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. In addressing these themes, my aim was also to remind the reader that the phenomenon of RastafarI, in response to the hegemonic culture of Babylon, reflects the spirit of liberation which is associated with the re-discovery and re-appropriation of Africa. Looking to the theme of liberation served to give to Rastas less of a sense of patriarchy in the movement. Seeking the African heritage in RastafarI, Chapter 7 discussed gender liberation thanks to the leading non-western and 'black' figure of the Queen of Sheba, who represents, a woman who had an impact not only on world religions and who was a response to colonialism, but also contributed a different

understanding of emancipation and anti-patriarchal behaviour for Rasta women within their own Rasta communities. Revisiting the status of this woman, from a gender angle, this research has recognized how the female contribution of a ruler was relevant for the development of the Ethiopian dynasty and Christianity, but most importantly for the emergence of the RastafarI movement. The presence of the Queen of Sheba as a leader, a pioneer and a forerunner to RastafarI in a way liberated people from their marginal and submissive position.

The majority of Rasta communities are located within the marginal zones of the West in subaltern areas, and the Rasta activities at these locations suggest the postcolonial campaign of the movement which elaborates the concept of freedom from the status of subalternity. As this thesis has shown, RastafarI is a case study for post-colonialism and a reconstruction of African identity. Indeed, this initiative (mainly in Chapters 4, 5 and 6) and approach offered to RastafarI, with its euphoria for freedom, the rehabilitation of African rights, dignity and justice, the realization of a liberative God, and an alternative language and culture, is a salient example of this empathetic understanding of the phenomenon. In such an excursus of RastafarI socio-cultural-linguistic and religious identity, the visibility of this marginal phenomenon provides relevance in the interpretation to those marginalized people who try to re-contextualize their present and past situations, finding a new liberation and a God who is no longer subjugated to the religious authority of the West. This new God operates for historical and cultural decolonization, for the revaluation of the primal-indigenous religion of the oppressed,

and persuades them to find alternative ways - 'hermeneutic competency'[3] - to think, act and value freely, in their own right, according to the spirit of their God. In conclusion, the postcolonial movement is relevant to RastafarI and is itself (postcolonialism and RastafarI) a product of a new religious movement. The RastafarI organisation may appear weak at first sight, but their status may be substantiated when placed against more visible protests against Babylon. Consequently, this postcolonial visibility analysis of RastafarI demonstrated how the majority of the Rastas were inter-visible in other African religious traditions, and they occupy is a very prominent feature in the post-colonial landscape.

Finally, the thesis revealed an interesting link in that the revolutionary behaviour of RastafarI appeared to have associations with other African people, not only in Ethiopia, but also in other areas of the world. Admittedly the existing numbers of Rasta are low (around one million followers) in comparison with other African religious movements, but the group has considerable significance. The RastafarI philosophy may have held special relevance for African communities in relation to their beliefs, language, food, music, rituals, symbols, non-western literatures and perhaps the Ethiopian-African ancestors and prophets.

As demonstrated in this thesis the association between Rastas and Africa and their repatriation to Ethiopia (the homeland) may have more far-reaching significance in the interpretation and understanding of colonization and the Rasta attitude to freedom. The Ethiopian Christian world and its place in the Rasta philosophy includes certain aspects

[3] Clodovis Boff, "Hermeneutics: Constitution of Theological Pertinency", in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World ,* R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., (London: SPCK, 1991), 30.

of African ideology and may provide a basis to challenge African studies. In addition, the link between Ethiopian Christianity and other African ancestral religions may be a catalyst for understanding other forms of African new religious movements in the future. The reason for Rasta connections with African-Ethiopian traditions is a valuable source for future research which could focus on other social, cultural and geographical areas which desire to investigate the concept of Afrocentricity and religious inter-dialogue between Eastern and Western Christianity. While previous studies, such as those of Barry Chevannes, Ennis Barrington Edmonds, Horace Campbell and Leonard Barrett, have demonstrated the RastafarI understanding of Ethiopia as a goal, this project has argued that the Ethiopian understanding of Christianity not only has affinities with the Rasta worldview, but has actually provided a direct influence. RastafarI cannot accurately be understood without Ethiopian Christianity. By investigating the contribution of Afrocentrism, gender and postcoloniality within the RastafarI context, this thesis has demonstrated that the liberation of RastafarI is entrenched in belief in the Monophysite doctrine which stems from Ethiopian Christianity.

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