

JOHN P. HOMIAK · GIULIA BONACCI · JAHLANI A. NIAAH

ENTER THE LION

THE 1966 STATE VISIT OF
EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I
TO THE CARIBBEAN

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the Caribbean), July 23, 1966 (*hamle* 16, 1958 a.m.). Ministry
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INTRODUCTION

Suddenly the rain stopped, the sun broke through the scattered clouds, and the Ethiopian airliner appeared in the sky over Palisadoes Airport in Kingston, Jamaica. There, tens of thousands of people—including many who had made pilgrimages from distant locations across the island—jostled in densely packed crowds that filled the waving gallery, the rooftops of various buildings, and every available space adjacent to the tarmac. As the plane taxied to a stop, a massive and enthusiastic crowd surged past the ceremonial honor guard, disrupting security lines and overturning the official state protocol. Clouds of smoke rose in the fervent atmosphere, and loud drums were accompanied by the sound of hymns, prayers, and songs. Red, gold, and green banners were held high next to framed photos of the Ethiopian emperor, colorful placards, and palm leaves. Many had tears in their eyes and Bible verses on their lips. After what seemed an interminable wait, the emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, appeared atop the gangway to his plane but was unable to descend due to the tumult and press of the enormous, enraptured crowd. Following consultation among officials, Ras Mortimo Planno, a charismatic Rastafari leader, was summoned to quell the crowd and open a way for the disembarkation of the Ethiopian sovereign and his entourage. Never before or since has such a tumultuous welcome been given to a dignitary or head of state arriving in Jamaica.

April 21, 1966, is a day that is indelibly etched in the hearts and minds of countless Rastafari in Jamaica and across the world. It is the day that His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, descendant of King Solomon and Queen Sheba, landed on Jamaican soil for a historic three-day state visit. This visit represented a landmark in the history of the newly independent nation and would become a catalyst for the cultural revolution about to sweep the country and the Caribbean region. The ad hoc rituals of state that were generated by the emperor's public presence cast the contending worldviews and expectations of the Jamaican establishment and the Rastafari community in stark relief. The former fully anticipated that Haile Selassie would publicly renounce the divinity attributed to him by the

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Rastafari—thus blunting the momentum of the movement. For their part, the Rastafari hoped that the emperor would embrace them as his “sons and daughters,” defining the way forward for their repatriation to Ethiopia.

For the Rastafari, who had proclaimed the divinity of Haile Selassie I since the time of his coronation (on November 2, 1930), the emperor’s arrival was nothing less than the Second Coming, an announcement that “Jah Kingdom Come.” In the next few days, enthusiastic crowds followed every move on the itinerary of the Ethiopian sovereign—packing stadiums, parks, halls, streets, and rail stops on his trip from Kingston to Montego Bay, until Haile Selassie’s final departure for Haiti. The conspicuous prominence of the Rastafari in virtually all official functions stood in stark contrast to their long-standing status as embattled and often maligned social outcasts. After decades of agonistic relations with the colonial and postcolonial Jamaican state, Rastafari leaders and representatives were, for the first time, elevated to the national stage alongside Jamaica’s elites. Their presence gave an unprecedented popular dimension to a formal state visit: it acted both as a long overdue acknowledgment of the African heritage in Jamaica and its identity as a Black nation. Black Power ideology was just beginning to penetrate the Caribbean, and this was the starting point for profound symbolic, cultural, and political realignments in Jamaica and across the region.

Enter the Lion traces the detailed itinerary of the Ethiopian delegation in the Caribbean region, from Trinidad to Barbados, Jamaica, and Haiti; it exposes the various political stakes of this visit, sheds light on the many commentaries and debates unfolding, and discusses the extensive transformative impact of the visit on Rastafari, Jamaican society, and more widely on the Caribbean and its Pan-African connections. What the visit ignited was widespread transformation on cultural, social, and political levels. With respect to Jamaica, we examine the ways that Haile Selassie’s visit amplified and recast Rastafari preoccupations around African identity, national belonging, and Pan-African linkages and politics.

THE REDEMPTION OF ETHIOPIA

By 1966, the symbolic and tangible bonds between Jamaica and Ethiopia were far from new, embedded as they were in the biblically derived philosophy known as Ethiopianism. Traced to the late eighteenth century in Britain’s North American colonies, Ethiopianism emerged among evangelized

descendants of Africans who discovered multiple references to Ethiopia in the King James version of the Bible. Henceforth “Ethiopia” served to establish the origins, identity, and divine heritage of all Black people in Africa and in the diaspora. Ethiopianism conveyed the myth of a Black nationality, the promise of redemption for those “scattered Ethiopians,” and punishment for their White oppressors (Drake [1970] 1991; Scott 2004; Price 2003, 33). Drawing upon biblical symbols and references, it provided a racial grammar and metaphysics of freedom for Black communities during slavery and colonialism and their aftermath. Preachers, activists, and intellectuals mobilized Ethiopianism to produce knowledge, to establish congregations, and to resist colonial injustice. Early in its development, Ethiopianism circulated internationally within Black communities wherever colonial and racial policies intersected—in the Caribbean and North America and in West, Central, and Southern Africa (Price 2003, 2009, 40–41; Asante 1977, 9–38; Chirenje 1987). A movement in which spiritual, racial, and political dynamics are entwined, it is understood as an “energizing myth” (Drake [1970] 1991, 11) and considered a forerunner to Pan-Africanism (Adi 2018, 16–18). It was the historical and ideological depth of Ethiopianism and its resonance within prevailing social and political conditions at the time that explains the fervor with which the Ethiopian emperor was welcomed in Jamaica.

Ethiopianism took hold in the British Crown colony at the close of the eighteenth century through the missionizing of George Liele (sometimes spelled Lisle), a literate Black preacher who traveled from Georgia to Jamaica following the American Revolution. Liele established the Ethiopian Baptist Church in Kingston in 1783 (Chevannes [1995] 1998, 33; Erskine 2004, 9). He also baptized Moses Baker, another freed Black who, along with George Gibb, established their own congregations in the western parishes of the island. All made extensive use of Psalms 68:31: “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia now stretches forth her hands unto God”—a verse often considered to represent the summation of Ethiopianism because of its evocation of the Old Testament chronicles of exile and its implicit promise of redemption. “Ethiopia” thus came to represent a site of identity and resistance to the conditions of enslavement and coloniality. References to the fate of Ethiopians and the primacy of Blackness were prominent during the 1831 Christmas revolt led by Sam Sharpe. As Charles Price points out, by the time of the Morant Bay Revolt (1865) led by Paul Bogle, Ethiopianism had become deeply entwined with the concept of a “moral economy” in which the formerly enslaved not only valued racial solidarity but also

claimed basic rights to identity and social justice. This included rights to land and subsistence (Price 2009, 26–27).

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the military victory of Ethiopia against Italy at Adwa (1896) stood out as Ethiopia became the only African country to successfully resist European colonization. This placed the East African country firmly in the international circulations of Ethiopianism and Pan-Africanism. It launched what is called “Modern Ethiopianism,” that is, a renewal of the Ethiopian ethos that interacts with the policies of the East African state. After the victory of Adwa, Ethiopia’s government reached out to Black people in the Western Hemisphere, and in turn, Black people from the Caribbean and the United States began arriving in Ethiopia, seeking the rulers’ support, and sometimes representing their interests. For example, Benito Sylvain (1868–1915), a Haitian, traveled on various occasions to Ethiopia and represented both Haiti and Ethiopia at the first Pan-African Conference in London in 1900.

FULFILLING THE ETHIOPIAN PROPHECY

By the early twentieth century, Jamaican prophets Alexander Bedward (ca. 1859–1930) and Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) began to make extensive use of the Ethiopianist intellectual reservoir. Both traveled during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Caribbean Basin, where they became attuned to the exploitative conditions imposed upon West Indian migrant workers. They were among the tens of thousands of Jamaicans and other West Indians caught up in far-flung circuits of labor migration and witnessed the racialized exploitation and discrimination against Black workers as North American capitalism penetrated the region (Austin-Broos 1997, 24–28). Returning from Panama in 1885, Bedward forged a congregation in August Town (Kingston) that—with ties to Panama, Costa Rica, and Cuba—gave Jamaican Ethiopianism some of its early transnational links (Senior 2014, 348). It was with Marcus Garvey, however, that the trope of Ethiopia took on a broader dimension. In an era when Black people were routinely depicted as inferior and uncivilized, Garvey’s Ethiopianism advanced an alternative history of Africa—one that positioned it at the center of civilization (Grant 2008, 169). His ideas had enormous appeal to the migrant West Indian workers who, under racialized conditions imposed by American overseers in Panama and Cuba, experienced a heightened sense of subordination that fused issues of race and class. Through the extensive

scale of these shared experiences, Black workers began to rethink their positions in relation to the politics of the state, region, and world through ideologies like Ethiopianism and Garveyism (Thomas 2004, 44–45).

The young Garvey was a journalist and printer by training who sought to reform the subordinate condition of his race. From 1910 to 1911, he worked and traveled in Costa Rica, British Honduras, and Panama, witnessing the exploited condition of Black workers. In 1912 he journeyed to London where he was mentored by Dusé Mohamed Ali, the African nationalist and founder of the journal *African Times and Orient Review* (Adi 2023, 227–28). Thanks to his association with students from Africa and the West Indies, Garvey's Pan-African vision came into focus. Inspired by the autobiography of Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (serialized beginning in 1900), Garvey rhetorically asked, "Where is the Black man's Government? Where is his king and his kingdom? Where is his President, his country and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?" (Cronon 1969, 15–16). Not finding them, Garvey resolved he would "make them" by organizing an unbounded Black nation of "scattered Ethiopians." He would do this through the executive body and membership of his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA, established in 1914 in Kingston, Jamaica, and in 1918 in Harlem, New York). Drawing upon pageantry and ritual, Garvey's UNIA put into circulation a panoply of national symbols, including a flag, an anthem, and various uniformed military-like orders and social bodies devoted to business ventures encouraging self-reliance (Carnegie 1999; Burkett 1978, 7–8). Most significant were Garvey's newspapers, especially the *Negro World* (1918–33), which deeply influenced Black nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideas and praxis of the time. Overall, as it grew in racialized environments under colonial and imperial control, UNIA met with fierce hostility from colonial authorities.

At its height in the 1920s, Garvey's movement boasted millions of members among twelve hundred branches in more than forty countries, including in Africa (Martin 2004, 6). Two of his themes held a significant appeal for Black people scattered in postslavery and colonial societies: (1) the claim to a right of return to the African continent, encapsulated in the "Back to Africa" motto and the liberatory reference of Psalms 68:31; and (2) a reversal of the values imposed by a Eurocentric racial order. In Garveyism, Blackness is sacred, and Black people should see God in their own image, that is, through the "spectacles of Ethiopia" (Garvey [1923] 1986, 44). Organized around the perduring motif of nationhood, Garvey and his movement sought to create a form of Black civil religion among his followers (Burkett

1978, 29–33). The idea of racial upliftment was embodied in his slogan “Up You Mighty Race”—a phrase that framed the past greatness of Black people through their association with the origins of civilization and the promise that they would rise to be great again.

In addition to the ideological links between Garvey’s movement and Ethiopia made through these references, an often-overlooked formal contact was established during the Third Annual International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World held in Harlem in 1922. This came in the form of a message of congratulations to UNIA from “the King and Queen of the cradle of civilization, Abyssinia.” The correspondence from the Regent Ras Tafari Makonnen and Queen Zewditu included an invitation: “Assure them of the cordiality with which I invite them back to the home land, particularly those qualified to help resolve our big problems and to develop our vast resources” (Hill 1983, 1006).¹ This message was received with much applause by UNIA members and assisted in fueling the “Back to Africa” and “Ethiopianist” convictions of Garvey’s followers. Some of the early Caribbean settlers in Ethiopia were, in fact, Garveyites.²

Decades before becoming Jamaica’s first national hero, Garvey held a special place in the ethos, the dreams, and the imagination of the Jamaican underclass (Chevannes 1994, 99–110). The prophetic landscape tying Blackness, Ethiopia, and redemption that many Jamaicans read into Garveyism was profoundly resonant with sectors of the island’s overtaxed and uprooted peasantry, elements of the urban poor, and disillusioned veterans who had served among British forces during the First World War. Many, including those who would become the first Rastafari brethren and sistren, recalled Garvey’s statement after having been deported in 1927 from the United States back to Jamaica: “Look to Africa where a Black King shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near.”³

A few years later, when news and the photographs of the coronation of Haile Selassie I (November 2, 1930) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, started to circulate on the pages of newspapers and magazines like the *National Geographic* and *Illustrated London News* (Bonacci and Sohler 2023), or in religious texts such as *The Hope of the Race* (1934), it was but a small step to interpret this one-of-a-kind event as the fulfillment of both biblical and Garveyite prophecies.⁴ In fact, the titles of the Ethiopian kings associated the Messiah with the lion, the symbol of a royal and biblical dynasty represented by Israel and the House of David (Crummey 1988; Rubenson 1965, 77); these echoed the biblical titles reserved for the Second Coming (see Revelation 5:2–5; 1:14; Genesis 49:10). Here was a tangible manifestation of the Ethiopian prophecy

as the Second Coming, associated with the imminent redemption of Black people worldwide. In what represented a radical act of constituting their identity and individuality, the first Rastafari set themselves apart from all others by taking the precoronation name of the emperor: Ras Tafari Makonnen.⁵ The Rastafari movement was thus set in motion.

PRAISING RASTAFARI

Historically, Rastafari are a people embedded in an Atlantic matrix, firmly grounded in local postslavery African-oriented religious practices while at the same time enmeshed in an accelerated international flow of ideas, perspectives, and representations (Yawney 1995; Thomas 2011, 249). Many of those who first gravitated to the movement were descendants of the island's dispossessed peasantry who later migrated across the Caribbean Basin and were radicalized by their experience in a world dominated by Whites (Austin-Broos 1997, 25–26). Evidence of this can be found in early proto-Rastafari and Rastafari texts that include *The Holy Piby* ([1924] 2000) by Robert Athlyi Rogers, *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* ([1926] 1996) by Rev. Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh, and *The Promised Key* (1935) by Leonard P. Howell. *The Holy Piby* was published by Rogers, an Anguillan Garveyite, when he was living in Newark, New Jersey; the short text circulated in the United States, Panama, Jamaica, and South Africa. Rogers addresses the lamentable condition of Ethiopians (i.e., Black people) and names Marcus Garvey as “Apostle” of the “God of Ethiopia” who will “lead Ethiopia's generations from the oppressive feet of the nations” (Rogers [1924] 2000, 26). Pettersburgh's tract, *The Royal Parchment Scroll*, appears to have circulated only in Jamaica, where Pettersburgh was born before migrating to New York City. His elaboration of Ethiopianist thought introduces the concept of “Black Supremacy” and establishes its theological opposition to White Supremacy, the cause of the moral degradation of African peoples. Black Supremacy is presented as a program of moral repair identified with “King Alpha and Queen Omega,” rulers of the “Kingdom of Ethiopia.”

Leonard Howell's short text, *The Promised Key*, draws heavily from these earlier prints and claims simultaneous publication in 1935 in Kingston and Accra, Gold Coast (now Ghana) (Spencer 1998, 363). In keeping with his assertion to have “travelled the world through,” Howell attributes editorship of the text to Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904–1996), a well-known activist and

intellectual from the British colony of Nigeria who was agitating against Italy's impending invasion of Ethiopia. Howell, in fact, was the most widely traveled of the first Rastafari evangelists. At one point, he lived in New York and was involved in Garveyite circles, and he later traveled as a merchant seaman, passing through Panama. He claims to have been present at the coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen in Addis Ababa. He is generally recognized as the first of the Rastafari founders to assert the divinity of "His Majesty King Ras Tafari," declaring that his kingdom represents Black Supremacy and rules over all. Howell is credited by his followers with having prophesized the return of Christ in the person of Haile Selassie I, asserting that the faithful "will be able to see him and touch him, and eat with him" (*Daily Gleaner*, March 17, 1934, 19). This prophecy was seen as fulfilled when Haile Selassie arrived in Jamaica in 1966. In 1940, Howell founded the first self-sufficient Rastafari commune, Pinnacle, under the banner of the Ethiopian Salvation Society. Howell, who had lived in Harlem and had corresponded with Trinidadian Pan-Africanist George Padmore (Hill 1981), was persecuted by the colonial government and then tried and convicted of sedition in 1934, with ongoing harassment following his release. From the 1930s through the 1950s, *The Promised Key* itself was treated as a fugitive text, routinely impounded and destroyed by colonial authorities. This pattern of simultaneous social innovation by its leaders and brutal repression by the state has shaped the Rastafari movement since its early days.

Often read primarily through a culturalist prism, the emergence of Rastafari is also connected to political dynamics. Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in late 1935 thrust Emperor Haile Selassie I and his kingdom onto the world stage, signaled the beginning of the Second World War, and ignited the first global Pan-African mobilization of the twentieth century around the cause of Ethiopia. Events associated with these hostilities were widely publicized by the print and broadcast media and closely followed by communities across the diaspora. Scholars have argued that no event in the twentieth century did more to evoke sentiments of kinship between Black peoples in the diaspora and continental Africans than Italy's threat to extinguish the last beacon of sovereignty and freedom on the continent (Weisbord 1973, 89). For their part, the members of the nascent Rastafari movement interpreted the conflict through the lens of prophecy (see Revelation 6:2, 17:14, and 19:11), positing, among other things, that the Vatican was complicit in Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. Following the demands of a delegation of Black intellectuals and activists to Bath, England, where Haile Selassie was in exile during the war, the Ethiopian Melaku Bayen was

sent to New York (Harris 1994, 104–19). There, he founded the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) to centralize the moral and financial support of Black people for the Ethiopian cause.

The EWF benefited from preexisting Garveyite geographies of activism and promoted Ethiopia as the “heritage of the Black peoples of the world” through its journal *The Voice of Ethiopia* (1937–41). In Jamaica, a branch of EWF was founded by Paul Earlington in 1939. There, despite petitions and mobilization, “Ethiopian volunteers” were deterred from direct involvement in the conflict. For the early Rastafari, this unequal and racialized colonial war served to reveal the moral authority vested in the Ethiopian emperor, who was forced into exile—with Ethiopia’s destiny cast as a prophetic Armageddon struggle between the forces of good and evil. During the period of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, another publication, *New Times and Ethiopia News*, founded and edited by British activist Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960) to support the Ethiopian cause, also circulated to Jamaica, where it was eagerly sought out by early Rastafari adherents.

By the 1940s and 1950s, the Rastafari were fully visible in Jamaica, with various groups organizing aesthetic norms and new patterns of ritual legitimacy. Widely persecuted by colonial authorities, the Rastafari saw Jamaica as a modern-day “Babylon,” a place of oppression and “sufferation” for Black people, with freedom and self-sufficiency possible only outside of Babylon.

Rastafari developed a holistic cultural system known as *livity* that represented Africanity and self-determination in the face of institutionalized and racialized inequalities imposed on the population by the dominant colonial order. The Black self thus resided “in the world” but was not “of the world”—with the Rastafari asserting themselves as Ethiopians-in-exile and “a peculiar people among the people.” During the first four decades of the movement’s development, the primary symbols and signifiers of Rastafari identity evoked the liminality of their bearers. This included the wearing of dreadlocks and the crafting of a new language called Itesvar or Iyaric (Homiak 1995, 160–73). Central to this language was the concept of “I,” representing the Godhead that dwells within the Black body or the “Temple of Jah.” The concept of “I” and the ubiquitous dual pronoun “I-n-I” served to convey the ever-present inner dwelling of “God-within-man” and man as the site of divinity. Accompanying this new architecture of the self was a diet rejecting what was associated with “slave food,” and an ubiquitous use of the Nyahbinghi drums contributed to shaping the interventions of Rastafari in Jamaican society. Various Rastafari “mansions” (organizations) loosely

structured relations among the faithful. Largely misunderstood and maligned, the Rastafari were seen as an affront to “respectable” society, if not an actual threat. Even after Jamaican independence (in 1962), Rastafari were understood as existing beyond the bounds of Jamaican citizenship. In fact, ferocious repression was conducted by the government on numerous occasions, including what is known as the 1963 Coral Gardens Massacre, during which 150 Rastafari were arrested and an undetermined number were killed, maimed, forcibly trimmed, systematically harassed, and imprisoned by the state (Thomas 2011, 174). Unsurprisingly, the Rastafari continued to agitate for the right to leave Jamaica for Africa, claiming their nationality as Ethiopians and asserting allegiance to the state ruled by Haile Selassie I.

This identification was fortified by the fact that Haile Selassie I had granted land in Ethiopia to the members of the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) to thank them for their support during the war. The land grant, situated in Shashemene, a southern Ethiopian town, was publicly announced in Jamaica in 1955 by Mayme Richardson, an African American soprano and international organizer for EWF who had met personally with Haile Selassie in Addis Ababa in 1948 and in New York in 1954 (Bonacci 2013). During her visit to Kingston, Richardson held public talks and met with local members of EWF and the Rastafari movement. Her intervention had the effect of encouraging Rastafari claims of repatriation to Ethiopia, something that predictably further alienated them from mainstream Jamaican society. Compelled to face a reenergized and growing Rastafari movement and following the government-endorsed 1960 *Report on the Rastafari Movement*, the Jamaican authorities in 1961 sent a Back to Africa mission to five independent African nations that included Rastafari representatives who met with Haile Selassie I on this occasion. A technical mission to Ethiopia to study the possibility of settlement of Jamaicans followed the next year, but its results were buried by the independence of Jamaica in August 1962. A 1963 nongovernmental mission of three Rastafari delegates spent time in Ethiopia, a period during which various gifts and letters were exchanged between Rastafari and the Ethiopian monarch.⁶

Furthermore, it is important to underscore that by 1966 Haile Selassie carried with him more than just an Ethiopian aureole. As the founding chair of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the emperor had come to stand as the symbol of African continental unity. In May 1963, thirty-two heads of African independent states had gathered in Addis Ababa to establish the OAU. Thanks to his diplomatic astuteness, the emperor, as the senior African statesman, encouraged consensus among a younger

generation of African leaders who were at the forefront of the struggle for decolonization and independence in their respective countries. This specific role in establishing a major Pan-African institution led some observers, including many Rastafari, to call Haile Selassie the “Father of Africa” (Asfa-Wossen Assefate 2015, 254).

ENTER THE LION

In the mid-1960s, the Rastafari represented a vocal yet ambiguously positioned movement—still suspect and subject to repression by authorities yet exploring new ways to relate with Ethiopia. It was in this context that the historic 1966 state visit of Haile Selassie I took place and precipitated major postcolonial transformations. We reflect on these by centering “the Lion” in our book’s title. More than a simple reference to one of the titles conferred upon Haile Selassie at the time of his coronation (i.e., Conquering Lion of Judah), the entry of “the Lion” links the formative period of the Rastafari movement to the state visit in 1966. One of the earliest chants sung during early Rastafari street meetings, worship, and rituals of the faithful was the simple refrain:

The Conquering Lion
Shall break every chain
And give us the victory
Again and again

This was perhaps the first and most persistent chant that greeted the emperor upon his arrival at Palisadoes in Jamaica. But it also resonates with a significant shift in the psychocultural orientation of the Rastafari to the hegemonic structures of Jamaican society following the visit. As first noted by Barry Chevannes, this shift shaped a way of being in the world not only for the Rastafari but for other Jamaicans too: from the orientation of the folkloric spider figure Anansi, who drew upon wits, guile, and deception to escape and survive difficult life situations, to a new self-assertive and self-possessed ethos of “the Lion” as a mode of postcolonial transformation (Chevannes 2006, 95–105). “The Lion” served as a metaphor for dominance and strength and became a figure of courage and action, generating narratives of African consciousness and empowerment. Over time, the metaphor entered vernacular usage as one of the many terms of

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address used by the Rastafari: The Rastaman is identified with the lion and the Rastawoman with the lioness. Carole Yawney, the first ethnographer to be immersed with the Rastafari in the 1970s, captured this ethos in her doctoral dissertation “Lions in Babylon” (1979). In the aftermath of the emperor’s visit, it became abundantly clear across all sectors of society that the Lion had “passed through” and left his mark indelibly on Jamaica and the region.

Beyond Jamaica, the visit sanctioned a Caribbean regional shift in Black consciousness and the establishment of new networks of exchange and solidarity among Rastafari communities, and more widely among a generation of Black activists promoting diasporic consciousness and Pan-African ties and culture. This transformation is especially visible in the birth and growth of what Rex Nettleford (1972) describes as the “African Presence,” the politics of aesthetic representation and celebration seen in Africa-related musical and visual arts—one need only think here of reggae music starting in 1968. *Enter the Lion* argues that, thanks to the visit, the Rastafari came to serve as the vanguard of a cultural revolution of Blackness and of the Pan-African practice of postcolonial politics.

CONSTITUTING AN ARCHIVE

Enter the Lion is the first book to comprehensively document and analyze Haile Selassie I’s 1966 visit in terms of its specifically Jamaican focus, its broader regional dimensions, and its impact on the Pan-African connection tying the Caribbean and Africa. While virtually all scholarship on the Rastafari movement makes mention of the visit as a watershed moment in its development and its impact on Jamaican society, there has been no extensive treatment of this historic encounter. It has been evoked as an event that “pointed up the weaknesses of Jamaican nationalism” (Nettleford 1972, 62), as “an important event in the routinization of the movement in the life of the island” (Barrett 1997, 160), and as an event that “gave Rastafarians unprecedented publicity and created a sustained national and international interest in the movement” (Murrell 1998, 8). The visit has become a classical chronotope for unfolding the social history of the Rastafari in Jamaica, and to date the main narrative has been presented by Frank Jan van Dijk (1993, 169–79).

Here, we draw upon multiple source materials, including local news reportage in all the countries involved, journalistic and political commentary, broadcast transcriptions, records from the British Colonial Office,

visual and artistic evidence, personal communications, and, most notably, selections from the oral archives of the Rastafari themselves. It should be noted that the latter represent a “counterarchive” that contends with the archive of the state and other records of secular society (Thomas 2011, 176–79). In fact, as much as we acknowledge the cultural power and authority still attributed to state and colonial archives, we introduce a range of vernacular materials derived from local grassroots sources. In centering the voices of the Rastafari, we foreground the agency, experience, and interpretations of a people historically marginalized and deprived of dignity by the colonial and early postcolonial state. Also, in rejecting the possibility of a single authoritative account, we bring together multivocal and mixed media representations of the visit, including a wide range of firsthand materials drawn from distinctive cultural and political contexts. We also present materials from Ethiopia: newspapers, official prints by the Ethiopian government, interviews, and published references. In fact, in the aftermath of Haile Selassie I’s regional tour, the Ethiopian Ministry of Information published a comprehensive booklet in Amharic (the translation of which we share with our readers) on the emperor’s visit to the Caribbean.⁷ This was hardly an unusual move, seeing the exposure given to Haile Selassie’s diplomatic visits in various prints in Ethiopia. While the emperor’s visit clearly had more far-ranging impacts within the Caribbean than it did in Ethiopia, what the archive reveals is the renewal and transformation of ancient bonds of a Pan-African nature tying Ethiopia and the Caribbean.

“Constituting an archive”—a process explored by Stuart Hall (2001)—represents a significant moment when a random collection of materials becomes something more ordered and considered: an object of reflection and debate. By its very nature, what Hall calls the “living archive of the diaspora” is characterized by dispersion and the difficulty of defining its boundaries. In fact, the geographies of this archive of the 1966 visit blur distinctions between different types of repositories and materials mobilized from distinct spaces. Monique Bedasse convincingly demonstrates how a scattered archive assumes a multisited search for documents that encourages us to rethink Caribbean intellectual history in different ways. She notes that when freed from the limitations of imperial, colonial, or national archives and boundaries, Caribbean intellectual history is made by “transnational histories created within and across the global South” (Bedasse 2021, 131). This is exactly the case with the archive we have constituted with the understanding that its present form is contingent upon new inquiries and expanded research.

Finally, we aim to create a dialogue between these various materials, and between them and a wider readership. We are moved by the consciousness that history can become a liberating tool, and that the act of a community consciously collecting and documenting its history can forge a practice of democratizing history (Gray 2022, 195). We are confident that this process of harvesting source materials among different repositories and rendering them available, thus exposing the way memory and interpretations are crafted, contributes to decolonizing and democratizing the making of knowledge. As argued by Jacques Derrida, effective democratization of power can only be measured by one criterion: “the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution and its interpretation” (quoted in Gray 2022, 195). The archive itself is shaped by various factors related to the political and social context of the time. Emperor Haile Selassie I entered the Caribbean amid the various contentions that flowed from the failed attempt to create a Federation of the West Indies. He was there to thank the newly independent nations of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica for the moral and material support their citizens provided to Ethiopia during the second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935–41). He also aimed to include these nations in the Pan-African agenda, which was recently institutionalized through the founding of the OAU. A major concern of the OAU and Pan-Africanist networks was discussed at every step of the visit: the Rhodesian situation, where the White minority unilaterally declared independence in 1965. With this background in mind, we frame the 1966 visit of Emperor Haile Selassie to the Caribbean as the acme of the relationship between Rastafari and their god and king. Following the 1966 visit, none of the actors and places involved would be the same. In 1974, Ethiopia would undergo revolutionary political change, and Rastafari would launch a worldwide mission to vindicate the social and political rights of oppressed peoples and repair the historical and cultural ties between the Caribbean and Africa.

THE JOURNEY OF THE LION

Shaped around these contexts and themes, *Enter the Lion* embarks the reader on a journey across the Atlantic. Chapter 1 presents the Caribbean stage through the different social and political dynamics at play in relation to each of the four countries of the region the emperor visited. We discuss how the visit reignited rivalry and tensions between Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica over their role in the ill-fated West Indies Federation

as well as the political concerns at play in the emperor's visit to Haiti, a nation stamped with pariah status due to the conduct of the Duvalier regime.

Chapter 2 reviews the preexisting links between Trinidad and Tobago and Ethiopia. It details the public reactions to Haile Selassie's arrival and his public presentations and movements, particularly his visits to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church on both islands and to his brief stops in Barbados and Haiti. The testimonies of two Rastafari—ten and sixteen years old at the time of the visit—attest to the impact that Haile Selassie had on the region, preparing the ground for the spread of Rastafari in the Eastern Caribbean.

Chapter 3 explores the government's maneuvering to get representatives of the Rastafari movement to conform to the official ceremony for the emperor's arrival. It canvasses reportage on the major venues and events of the first day of his visit, including the tumultuous greeting Haile Selassie received after landing, the usurpation of the official state protocols of welcome by the Rastafari, and Selassie's interactions with Rastafari representatives at King's House. All underscore Rastafari's presence as a ubiquitous backdrop to the visit.

Chapter 4 foregrounds the emperor's appeal to shared African blood as the basis for solidarity and cooperation within the international order. The emperor's emphasis on education as the key to progress and advancement is highlighted through the honorary doctorate conferred upon him by the University of the West Indies and his stone-laying for a high school to be named after him.

In chapter 5 we present a selection of testimonies that gives voice to the experiences and interpretations of various Rastafari during the visit. This includes both brethren and sistren and four individuals who were presented gold medals by the emperor for their efforts in promoting relations with Ethiopia. We introduce the concept of "mythopoetic" discourse to frame these testimonies.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses texts created by representatives of the British administration, Jamaican commentators and politicians, and the Rastafari, both at the time of the visit and years afterward. They express a range of reactions to and opinions about the emperor's visit by individuals with different social locations in the class-color hierarchy of Jamaican society. Following David Scott (1999, 82), we understand these documents not merely as elements of a collection but as part of a generative system: one that shapes the production of statements, social memory, and relations of belonging (see Thomas 2011, 178–79).

Chapter 7 explores the “afterlife” of Emperor Haile Selassie’s visit through some of the actual impacts it had on the Rastafari movement, reggae music, and Jamaican culture, politics, and society. Among other topics, the development of a community of returnees in Ethiopia and the influence of Rastafari visual arts are examined in terms of sustaining the “presence” of the emperor, even after the Ethiopian Revolution (1974).

Our postscript places emphasis on developments within Rastafari globally that have taken place since 1966. We also provide a glossary of terms, including those from Jamaican patois, Rastafari creative speech forms, and Amharic.

We argue that without the 1966 visit, the Jamaican Rastafari movement probably would not have achieved the global reach we witness a quarter of the way through the twenty-first century. Rastafari has brought Ethiopianism to unforeseen heights through a culture and philosophy grounded in the teachings of Emperor Haile Selassie I. It is manifested as a Black liberation movement embedded in an international network of Pan-African solidarity with footholds on the African continent as well as a universal consciousness that binds adherents across boundaries of race, class, language, ethnicity, and nation.

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General notes: (1) Biblical references throughout the book are to the King James Version. (2) “Jakes Homiak” and “J. Homiak” refer to John P. Homiak. (3) In the Ethiopian context, the abbreviation *a.m.* stands for *amete mehret*, meaning “year of mercy”—the standard way to express a date in Amharic.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This correspondence was read in absentia at the convention. It was conveyed by H. H. Topakyan, Consul General of the imperial Persian government and representative of the Ethiopian government to the United States (Hill 1983, 1006).
- 2 These included Barbadian Rabbi Arnold J. Ford, the musical director of UNIA and husband of Mignon Innes, who arrived with a group from the Virgin Islands in the early 1930s, and the first Shashemene settlers, Helen and James Piper, who hailed from Montserrat in 1948 (Scott 2004; Bonacci 2018).
- 3 Over the years, this statement attributed to Garvey has been so frequently repeated by the Rastafari and republished by scholars as to be uncritically accepted as fact. It is unlikely, however, that Garvey ever made such a statement. Barry Chevannes (1988, 126) suggests that its source was a play, *The Coronation of an African King and Queen*, written and produced by Garvey around 1928. Robert Hill (1981, 33) directs attention to a statement that Paul Earlington attributed to Garvey: “There was a man coming forward behind him whose shoe heel he, the Honourable Marcus Garvey, would not be able to unleash.” Two of Jakes Homiak’s oldest Rastafari interlocutors independently claimed having heard Garvey make this same statement (pers. comm., Aubrey Duhaney to J. Homiak, September 1980; and Edgar Reid to J. Homiak, July 1989).
- 4 *The Hope of the Race* (1934) was authored by Frank Lorin Peterson, an influential African American Adventist preacher. It contained a chapter on Ras Tafari Makonnen (i.e., Emperor Haile Selassie I) with photographs that expounded on the influence of early Christianity in Ethiopia.
- 5 Tafari Makonnen was born in Ejersa Goro, close to Harar, Ethiopia, on July 23, 1892. He became governor of Sidamo Province in 1908 and of Harar in 1910. Following a Palace coup that removed Lij Yassu, Menelik’s daughter Queen Zawditu sat on the throne, and Tafari Makonnen became

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heir apparent, carrying the title *Ras* between 1916 and 1928. He negotiated Ethiopia's acceptance for membership in the League of Nations following the abolition of slavery in his country. His early diplomatic tours, in particular through Europe in 1924, exposed him to the world like no prior Ethiopian ruler. He was crowned *Negus* (king) in 1928 and *Negusa Negest* (king of kings) in 1930, an event that focused the world's attention on Ethiopia and his reign. In 1974 he was overthrown by a revolution, which ended the Solomonic dynasty of Ethiopian monarchs.

- 6 Correspondence in the Ethiopian National Archives testify to the exchanges that took place between various Rastafari and the Ethiopian sovereign in the 1960s and 1970s: letters of presentation from delegates of the Back-to-Africa missions, petitions of Jamaicans willing to settle in Ethiopia, letters calling the attention of Haile Selassie on personal situations, an invitation by Reverend Claudius Henry to the opening of his church, etc. Some photographs, a photo album, and various other objects extended as gifts to Haile Selassie are also found in the National Palace of Ethiopia.
- 7 We thank Sister Katia Girma and Ras Kawintseb Kidane Mehret Selassie for the translation of this booklet from Amharic into English.

CHAPTER 1. SETTING THE STAGE

- 1 Pers. comm., Ras Maurice Clarke to J. Homiak, July 17, 1991.
- 2 Eric Eustace Williams (1911–1981), who led Trinidad and Tobago to independence on August 31, 1962, was dubbed the Father of the Nation. He was the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and, as a historian deeply involved in issues of Caribbean development, most noted for his book *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944).
- 3 Note from Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 21 May 1964, DO 200/170, National Archives, Kew, UK. All further mentions of file DO 200/170 are from the same repository.
- 4 DO 200/170, 11 November 1964.
- 5 Pers. comm., Ras Ravin to J. Homiak, August 13, 2019.
- 6 Elizabeth II, born in 1926, was queen of the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth realms from February 6, 1952, until her death in 2022. Queen Elizabeth made numerous visits to the Caribbean throughout her reign, including a major February 1966 tour referred to as the Royal Tour of the Caribbean, which covered British Guiana, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent, Barbados, St. Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat, Antigua, Jamaica, and the Bahamas. The close temporal proximity of this tour with that of Emperor Haile Selassie I in April 1966 invited comparison of the two sovereigns and evidenced the popular fervor of Caribbean peoples for the Ethiopian king.