

《論文》

# Overcoming Differences in Race, Nationality, or Belief in God — The Japanese Way of Adopting Rastafari

Shuji Kamimoto

## 1. Introduction

This article focuses on Japanese practitioners of Rastafari (Rastafarians, in short Rastas). The purpose of this article is to clarify how Japanese Rastas became attracted to Rastafari and the distinctive features of their Rastafari interpretation and practice, and to examine how Rastafari is accepted in Japan.

Rastafari began when Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie (former name was Ras Tafari Makonnen) became Ethiopia's emperor in 1930, and some people identified him as the messiah described in the Bible. About 90% of Jamaica's population is of African descent, and the early Rastas believed that they were the people of Israel and they needed to be saved. They insisted on the need for a spiritual and physical return to Africa. Of course, for those living in Jamaica, which was then a British colony, such arguments were closely linked to anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. Therefore, Rastafari was regarded as a threat by the colonial authorities. However, Rastafari was spread among a variety of people, including those who moved within the Caribbean, Jamaican migrants to Western cities, and Rastas returning to Africa. From the 1970s

onward, reggae music, Jamaican-born popular music, made its presence known throughout the world, and the number of the followers of Rastafari increased.

As Rastafari became a global phenomenon, localized versions of it have arisen throughout the world. This localizing process, as experienced in several countries of the Caribbean, has been examined by Nagashima (Nagashima 1986 a; 1986 b; 1986 c; 1986 d) and there are reports with ethnographic analysis from various regions in Africa (Chawane 2012; Ishii 1998; 1999; Philander 2011 et al.). Collinwood and Kusatsu (2000) and Sterling (2010) have published two studies of Japanese Rastas. The former is based on surveys from 1986 to 1987, and the latter is based on surveys in the late 1990s and subsequent intermittent surveys. Previous studies on Rastafari in Japan are summarized below.

## 2. Perspective of this study

The former survey was conducted during the period when roots reggae was prevalent. Collinwood and Kusatsu found that the Japanese becoming Rastas were deviating from mainstream society and compared this process with

the Jamaican case. For example, they point out that while most Rastas in Jamaica are of poor backgrounds, many Japanese Rastas are from the middle class, and some have participated in student movements (Collinwood & Kusatsu 27). They also note that most Japanese Rastas do not consider Rastafari a religion and have little interest in moving to Africa or in the divinity of Haile Selassie. Their optimistic assessment was that Japanese Rastas are reevaluating and practicing traditional Japanese life and culture with Rastafari influence (Collinwood & Kusatsu 33).

Sterling shares the same perception, but instead of simply making a comparative study, he tried to understand Rastafari in Japan, placing it in the Japanese context. He pointed out that the Rastafari boom in Japan has something to do with the popularity of the counterculture movement that developed mainly in Europe and America (Sterling 154). Sterling also says that Japanese Rastas do not admire Selassie as Jamaican Rastas do. In addition, he says, Rastafari in Japan is not a “religion” but a “Rastafari-based movement” (Sterling 228-229). However, can a subculture that does not emphasize its own religiousness and does not adhere to objects of worship, be the foundation of the movement? Instead, Rastafari in Japan should be considered like a phenomenon closely related to the state of Japanese religion.

Based on this awareness of the issues, in this article, I would like to position Rastafari in the context of religion in Japan and deepen its understanding of it. This article refers to the concept of New Spirituality Movement / Culture concept used by Shimazono. He writes that the phenomenon of “New Age and its surroundings” in the spiritual world of Japan and in places such as the United States is a global phenomenon. He called such movements and cultures around the world the “New Spirituality Movement / Culture” (hereinafter, New Spirituality) (Shimazono 46). He

sees the driving force behind New Spirituality as the spiritual part of a counterculture (Shimazono 55) and argues that New Spirituality was established in Japan in the 1970s (Shimazono 66). To that end, Shimazono says New Spirituality should be viewed as a self-sustaining, multi-faceted movement that is under the influence of other regions around the world, but in a variety of ways (Shimazono 48). In other words, when viewed through the concept of New Spirituality, Japan’s Rastafari can be understood as a global and local phenomenon. On the other hand, as Nakamura points out, Shimazono’s discussion is limited to analyzing the process of the rise of New Spirituality (Nakamura 21). In this article, I try to describe the characteristics of the adoption of Rastafari among Japanese by positioning Rastafari in the context of Japan’s New Spirituality.

Therefore, in this article, I would like to discuss how the Japanese Rastas were attracted to Rastafari, the process of exploring Rastafari, and the characteristics of adherence to this movement. It is important to address the question “Who is a Rasta?” In Jamaica, where Rastafari was born, there are many denominations and small groups, the most powerful of which form a multinational, multiracial network that spans many parts of the world. In those sects and small groups, patterns have developed to some extent in terms of how to join the faith and perform rituals. However, there is no branch of the Rastafari sect in Japan. The Japanese Rasta community is a networked community in which individuals are loosely connected to each other and to Rastas abroad. Moreover, the Japanese Rastas does not seem to form a new sect or group. This is the main reason why it is not clear who is Rasta in Japan. Thus, in this article, I decided to look at people who think that exploring Rastafari is important to their life as Rastas.

The survey was conducted from April 2013 to July 2014. I had 28 informants. Twenty-one were men, and seven were women. The gender ratio is unbalanced. This is partly because the ratio of male/female ratio is unbalanced among Rastas in Jamaica. Among them, this article examines the cases of eleven men and two women, all aged between 20 and 70, who recounted their history. Interviews were conducted at music events, restaurants and the homes of survey participants in Ibaraki, Tokyo, Ishikawa, Fukui, Shizuoka, Aichi, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, Nara and Yamaguchi prefectures. I also conducted supplementary surveys using email and social networking services.

This article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines Rastafari in Japan. Section 3 analyzes the development of Rastafari in Japan in three periods. This distinction was made possible by the realization that the characteristics of the Japanese Rastas could be distinguished to some extent by the time Rastafari was introduced. The reason is that Japanese interest in Jamaican culture has basically nurtured through Jamaican music. The first period (1979-1991) included the research period of Collinwood et al., when roots reggae was at its height. The second period (1992-2000) was a period in which roots reggae declined and dancehall (reggae) took root. The third period (2001-) was a period when reggae became more indigenous. Sterling's research took place at the end of the second period and the beginning of the third period. Section 4 points out three common characteristics of Japanese Rasta: "emphasis on nature and living naturally," "weak belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie," and "emphasis on appearance," and examines each of them. Section 5 summarizes the previous discussions. In addition, ethnographic present in this article is 2014.

### 3. Outline

This section outlines Rastafari in Japan. In Japan, awareness of and information about Rastafari is generally introduced through roots reggae. Haile Selassie, the Lion of Judah, the Rasta colors (red, yellow, and green), the African flag, and dreadlocks have become widely known as symbols of the reggae subcultures. The term frequently used in the context of Rastafari, such as Zion (a heavenly place), Babylon (a place like hell), Jah (Jehovah, meaning God), and ital (Rasta cuisine), have been adopted untranslated into Japanese.

Japanese Rastas live in various parts of Japan. Many of them live in urban or suburban areas and have service-industry jobs at places such as restaurants, music shops, and fashion shops or do manual labor on construction sites or in factories. Rastas living in rural areas are primarily employed in agriculture but often work in service or manual-labor jobs on the side. Rastas who



Figure 1. Poster for 25th annual roots reggae event held in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2019

are musicians also makes money through live activities and music sales. Some sell Rastafari-related goods such as accessories and key chains and others are selling groceries. Many Rastas, men and women alike, have dreadlocks or do not cut their hair. Many men are growing beards.

They are each linked to a transnational Rastafari network. The network extends beyond Japan to Jamaica, major Western cities, and Ethiopia. The development of social networks drives this spread. Opportunities such as reggae events, world music events, and workshops on food, health and politics are also opportunities for Rastas to interact.

#### 4. Three periods

In this section, I divide the period from 1979 to 2014 into three periods. Then I select two of the people who joined Rastafari in each period and describe how they entered Rastafari and the process of their exploration. Of the 13 people studied in this article, 11 have traveled to Jamaica. However, even those who had never been to Jamaica had face-to-face contact with Jamaicans and the African-diaspora Rastas.

Table 1. List of Japanese Rasta in this article (order of appearance)

	gender	age	period of entry
A	M	60s	first
B	M	60s	first
C	F	40s	second
D	M	40s	second
E	F	30s	third
F	M	20s	third
G	M	40s	first
H	M	30s	second
J	M	20s	third
K	M	30s	first
L	M	30s	second
M	M	40s	first
N	F	40s	second

#### 4-1. First period

During the first period, as Sterling noted, Rastafari spread through the counterculture scene. During this period, Rastafari was introduced and connected to the context of the counterculture, including New Spirituality, through reggae musicians and reggae-related media. Five male informants joined in this period. They include people who were around 30 years old at the time, as well as people in their late teens and early 20s.

Bob Marley's 1979 visit to Japan was a historic event in Japan that led to increased attention toward Rastafari. In 1980, a store specializing in reggae records opened in Tokyo. In 1981, the movie *Rockers*, starring the musicians and Rastas who were active in the reggae scene at that time, was released. In 1983, a travel agency that had organized tours to India and Bali based on the theme of "Travels in the Spiritual World" began offering tours to Jamaica. In 1984, the Japanese version of Sun Splash, a major Jamaican reggae event, was launched with the involvement of musicians and promoters who had emigrated to Japan. Melodica player Augustus Pablo and herbalist Bagga, who have visited Japan many times since the early 1980s, have greatly influenced the Japanese Rasta scene.

Outside of the media, knowledge of Rastafari was shared through Matsuri, a festival of Japanese hippie culture. Inochi-no-Matsuri, a memorial event held in Yatsugatake, Nagano Prefecture in 1988, is one of the biggest events connected to Matsuri<sup>1</sup>. Such events attracted people with a range of different ideas and principles, and they shared ideas and practices with each other. The book *Lion's Song: Message through Bob Marley* (Bamboo Books 1989), written by some of the artists and promoters who helped organize and run Inochi-no-Matsuri, indicates how Rastafari vocabulary is recontextualized

in modern Japan. The book is full of self-help messages and critiques of civilized society. In 1991, Keita, a Japanese who visited Bagga in 1986, published *Syncro Vibes*, a book introducing Rastafari. In the same year, *Reggae Bloodlines* (1977) by Stephen Davis and Peter Simon was translated into Japanese.

A was born in Tokyo, used to be owner of a reggae shop in Tokyo, has been promoting the exchange of information and person-to-person relationships by holding numerous workshops and publishing a fanzine. He now lives in Hokkaido. His interest in Rastafari began when he attended a memorial event at Hibiya Public Hall for Bob Marley, who died in 1981. At the event, some people connected to reggae talked about Marley's achievements and their feelings about him, and videos of Marley were screened. A was greatly shocked by two scenes captured in Marley's hospital room in Florida. The first featured Marley, who had lost his dreadlocks due to his cancer treatment and who had a sad look on his face. The other scene featured a conversation between Marley and his mother. A told me, "It was then I felt that I wanted to adopt something of him."

In fact, A has been interested in and involved in right-wing, left-wing and various other ideologies and movements since his school days. However, he always felt alienated. For him, Rastafari was the most convincing belief or movement he had ever encountered. What particularly attracted him to it was its "criticism of the modern world and advanced countries as expressed in the term 'Babylon.'" He says he learned from Marley about the reality that "squabbles, cruel managers, and stupid rulers" dominate the world and how to survive this reality. About two years later, in 1983, he and his wife opened a reggae shops in Harajuku district of Tokyo named "Trench Town," after a town where Marley spent his

youth. When A went to Jamaica to buy goods, he also went to Tuff Gong Studio, which Marley used to record in. It was there he had the mystical experience of seeing a vision of Haile Selassie floating in the blue sky. This experience convinced him to grow his hair. In 1991, A published a novel called *Rastaman Vibration*, which featured a young Japanese man and a Jamaican Rasta.

B, who is from Hokkaido, has formed several reggae bands since the 1980s, and has been engaged in music-related activities while working in agriculture. Even before he was deeply involved in Rastafari, he had a strong interest in alternative diet and lifestyle practices, and through his friends, he was deeply involved in Ainu culture. Since his adolescence, he has been searching for "the way to God," and reading books on the beliefs of "religious leaders and wise people," and participating in workshops. In particular, he has read about New Age, Seishin-Sekai (Japan's own New Age movement), Native Americans, Indian gurus, the Osho Rajneesh Movement, Oomoto, Beat literature, and he has participated in social movements related to fighting pollution and nuclear power. In 1985, he moved from Tokyo to Nagano Prefecture. He was also acquainted with members of Buzoku (meaning "the tribe"), the first hippie commune in Japan, and worked with them for some time. In 1988, he built a Rasta-themed camp at Inochi-no-Matsuri and participated as a music performer. Some of my informants became attracted to Rastafari after seeing his work at Inochi-no-Matsuri.

In 1993, B was staying in the Ainu community of Nibutani, Hokkaido. A friend living in Kamakura brought Pablo and Bagga there. After staying with them for about a week, he sympathized with Bagga's medical theory and worldview, and he became more deeply interested in Rastafari. The following year, he visited Bagga's

nursing home in Kingston. Through his approach to nature, which he developed while living with the Ainu, he believes his “identity as a Rasta emerged.”

#### 4-2. Second period

Four male informants and one female informant joined Rastafari in this period. In this period, the roots reggae boom ended and interest in Rastafari declined. Instead, dancehall, whose ethos is more individualistic and materialistic, became popular. In the 1990s, Jamaica became better known in Japan as a resort island, and the number of Japanese visitors there increased. In 1996, more than 23,000 Japanese tourists visited Jamaica, and 85% of whom were honeymooners [Travel Vision 2011].

Of the other 15% of Japanese who visited Jamaica, some were attracted to reggae and dancehall. Many of them were in their teens and 20s, and some of them stayed in Jamaica for long extended periods and began to learn the Jamaican lifestyle and language (Patois). They acquired a perspective on the local people that the previous generation could not acquire. As a result, they have grasped the differences between Jamaican and Rasta cultures, which previously were not so clear. This “dancehall generation” noticed that the Rastafari practiced in Japan was influenced by a counterculture and was a special interpretation.

Rastas first appeared in the Jamaican dancehall scene in the mid-1990s. This “dancehall Rasta boom” was a short-lived movement rooted in the Jamaican scene. As a result, many Japanese came to know Rastafari through dancehall. Of course, the influence of Rastafari had waned considerably since its peak in the 1980s. Since the late 1990s, some musicians and deejays in Japan have been influenced by dancehall Rasta. In 1996, the Leonard Barrett’s book *The Rastafarians*

[1976] was translated into Japanese, making it easier to obtain systematic knowledge of the religious movement. In 1998, *The Patwa Handbook: The Jamaican Language*, by a Jamaican woman living in Japan, was published; it was sold in many record shops and reggae shops.

The following are the cases of one male and one female. They discovered Rastafari as an extension of the first period of counterculture and the roots reggae boom, but they were less affected then. Both were drawn to Rastafari after becoming interested in dancehall and experiencing Jamaica.

Born in Hyogo Prefecture, C is a pioneer of female dancehall deejay in Japan. She performs in Jamaica and Japan. In the mid-1980s, she began her musical career as a band vocalist for punk, pop, and new wave music, mainly in the Kansai region. Later, she became attracted to funk music, Africa and the Caribbean. It was then that she learned about the early days of dancehall. “Ethnic” (especially, third world) things were familiar to her in those days. The shop she frequently visited, selling Indian incense and chai and owned by a person with dreadlocks, often held workshops on nuclear power and Native American affairs. Therefore, most of the people she met were “people with a new age vibe.” At that time, her awareness grew concerning issues such as mass consumption, environmental pollution, and nuclear power plants, as well as her interest in Africa. Since then, she has come to believe that she might have been destined to find Rastafari. At the time, however, there was little information about Jamaica. Thus, Rastafari was so distant that she never thought she would pursue it.

C went to Jamaica for the third time in 1992-1993. She stayed for a year. She met her current partner on that visit. He was a Rasta. She came to believe that Rastafari was a core part of

Jamaican black culture and that learning about Rastafari would allow her to understand Jamaica on a deeper level. Spending time with him, she adopted customs such as adhering to a vegetarian diet, reading the Bible, and not cutting her hair. Through her partner, she has developed close contacts with leading Rasta denominations, including the Nyabinghi Order and the Twelve tribes of Israel. From around 1995 to 2000, she read many texts related to Rastafari. She has posted information about Jamaica and Rastafari on her website, along with information about her music activities. She published the Rasta magazine *Empress Voice* with two Japanese Rasta women.

D, a man from Kyoto Prefecture, was a deejay in the mid-1990s. Currently, he runs an online store that sells fashion items related to black culture and holds musical events. He loved the street-wise feeling represented by music like punk and hip-hop. He listened to roots reggae a little, but he was more attracted to the masculinity represented by dancehall musicians.

After graduating from university, he worked at an import record shop in Osaka and helped organize reggae events. He became interested in Rastafari when he helped a Rasta chorus group called Israel Vibration perform in Japan. Because each of the group members had had polio, they were physically disabled and needed assistance, and had to go to the hospital. While accompanying them to the hospital, D became attached to them. Above all, the Japanese Rastas whom he had known before were people who lived a completely different life from himself, such as “People who like India, saniyasin (followers of Osho Rajneesh Movement), and hippies.” Thus, he was shocked by their way of life as (genuine) Rasta. He obtained information about Rastafari from *Reggae Magazine*, *Riddim*, and CD liner notes. But at the time, he was not interested in

becoming a Rasta himself.

He visited Jamaica in 1995. He was impressed that Rastaman always treated him kindly. Relaxing with them allowed him to ask himself many questions. He regards his long stay in Jamaica as having been very meaningful in his life.

At that time in Jamaica, the David House Crew, led by Capleton, who converted to the EABIC sect of Rastafari and became a dancehall Rasta, was attracting attention from reggae fans. D was fascinated by how the crew members covered their dreadlocks with a turban and dressed in khaki or navy, like soldiers. After returning to Japan, D started telling his friends how cool Rastafari was, and he started reading the Bible with them and playing the Nyabinghi drums (ceremonial drums) that he acquired in Jamaica. It was during this period he started to grow their hair. He learned the proper way to wind the turban from a dancehall Rasta, a member of the EABIC group who came to Japan in 1999.

He opened his own shop in Kyoto in 2001. The store also sold clothing and merchandise purchased in New York and Jamaica, books on reggae and Rastafari, amulet badges created by EABIC Rasta, and original items. He felt that many of Japanese Rastas were too exoteric. Thus, he tried to make Rastafari more accessible to dancehall fans and street culture enthusiasts.

#### 4-3. Third period

Two male informants and two female informants joined Rastafari in this period. All of them became involved with Rastafari in their teens and 20s. Many of them were influenced by people in the first and second periods, but of course, they have also created their own specific perception of Rastafari through their experiences.

During this period, *Japarege* (Japanese reggae), which had evolved independently in Japan,

became very popular. Japanese and Japan-based reggae players have also become prominent on the global stage. In 2001, Miki Dozan's CD *Lifetime Respect* sold 800,000 copies. This song was the first reggae song to win first place in the competition run by the prestigious magazine *Oricon*. In 2002, a Yokohama-based group of ethnic Chinese known as Mighty Crown won the sound-clash contest in New York. A Japanese woman also won the Dancehall Queen Contest in Jamaica. As a result of these events, the number of reggae songs released in Japan increased, and reggae events in Japan expanded. On the other hand, the number of Japanese tourists to Jamaica has been decreasing. In 2010 about 1,600 tourists from Japan traveled to Jamaica (Travel Vision 2011). During this period, some reggae players and reggae fans continued to visit Jamaica, but few of them were drawn to Rastafari.

The rise of the Internet has changed the way people gather information. For example, in the mid-2000s there was a lively exchange and discussion on Rastafari on the social networking site, mixi (Kamimoto 2013). Since then, the popularity of Facebook and Twitter has made it easier to communicate directly with foreign Rasta, and it has become much easier to get information.

A Japanese translation of *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism* (2003), a study of early Rastafari leader, Leonard Howell, was recently published. In 2002, a record guide for roots reggae and related genres, edited by Koya Suzuki, was published. In 2004, Suzuki edited a companion volume with related articles. In 2000, a Japanese edition of *The Birth of the Lymphatic System* was published under the supervision of Bagga in 2005. During this research, I never heard the word Seishin-Sekai from this generation. The following are the cases of two people.

E from Osaka Prefecture works as a sports trainer, rehabilitation trainer, and vocational

school instructor. She has been involved in music as a musician and organizer of events since around 2010. Because she has a sister with a disability, she has "the habit of looking at the world not from the perspective of healthy people but from the side of those who are difficult to live in," and she has always felt compelled to seek out a better way of living in society. After graduating from a vocational school, she started working as a chiropractor. Speaking with elderly people about the prewar era, E learned about and became interested in life and values in the old days. Then she rented a plot of land in the suburbs and started farming so that she could leave urban life behind at any time.

She encountered the message of reggae and Rastafari around July 2011. For her, Rastas' view of the world seemed to overlap with her own, which reflected the views of the marginalized and vulnerable. She also sympathized with the approach of emphasizing living more naturally. She thinks Rastafari suits her because she has not seen or heard any principles from Rastafari that she cannot understand. Because of that background, she said, "I am living as a Rasta by chance."

Her boyfriend at the time was an African-American man. He quickly understood what she sought through Rastafari. She started reading the Bible as well as the popular Rastafari books. As she became interested in the biblical world, she visited several Christian churches and attended a reformist church in Kobe for two years. By the time she adopted her current lifestyle, she had actually seen how several Japanese Rastas lived their lives, including Keita, the author of *Synco Vibes*, which enhanced her interest in joining Rastafari. She began to consider it important to live "a natural life" as much as possible, and she began to avoid eating processed foods. She also stopped taking medication for a chronic illness,



which she had been taking since childhood.

F was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture. His parents were organizers of the Inochi-no-Matsuri in Daisen in Tottori Prefecture in 1990. Since his childhood, he has participated in a campaign led by his parents against a nuclear power plant planned by Chugoku Electric Power Co. His parents love reggae music, and his father used to play it, so he has seen many reggae-related videos since childhood. Watching *Rockers*, he thought, “Rastaman is cool.” And when he was in a junior high school, he listened intently to Rastafari stories from Japanese Rasta, who had an interaction with his parents. He is more acquainted with B and the musicians of the first period, and sometimes performs music with them.

F started growing dreadlocks immediately after graduating from a local agricultural high school. He saved up money by working part-time, and he eventually was able to visit Jamaica. In Jamaica, he stayed at Scotts Path, one of the Nyabinghi strongholds, where a Japanese Rasta family lived. He did everything Rastas asked him to do in Scotts Path, including numerous chores like drawing water.

When he was 23, he decided to visit Ethiopia on the advice of the elders of the Nyabinghi. On the plane there, he sat next to two Rastas, who were heading to the branch of EABIC in Shashamane in Oromia District. He decided to go with them. He spent about a month at Shashamane where there were many kinds of Rastafari. He got involved in any way he could. He attended ceremonies and helped with mowing and digging holes for trash. Life in Shashamane was a great deal of fun. Rastas were wearing a turban and he asked them to let him wrap his head with it. One of the priests allowed him to wind the turban on condition that he should learn certain parts of the Bible by heart. He received a red turban.

He loved living with EABIC followers so

much that in 2011 he visited Bobo Shanti, the headquarters of EABIC in Jamaica. Bobo Shanti had a higher proportion of non-black Rastas than Shashamane. As a result, he began to sympathize with the idea that he heard from EABIC followers that “all people are originally black.” He realized that Rastafari was a global network. Even after returning to Japan, he still follows the EABIC habit of fasting, which he feels is good for his health. In the winter of 2013, he stayed in Bobo Shanti for about half a month with his wife and friends. He has also been actively interacting with local musicians who organize dancehall through events and producing music. Some of them have also been exploring Rastafari with him.

## 5. Three elements

In Jamaica, where Christianity is dominant, becoming a Rasta generally means breaking away from the Christian world and, often, mainstream society. Each of the six people mentioned in the previous section found Rastafari at a different time and pursued their own form of Rastafari. None of the six were born into a Christian family. This fact reflects the characteristics of accepting Rastafari in Japan. This section discusses the Rastafari interpretations and practices of the informants, including those mentioned in the previous section, focusing on the following three points.

### 5-1. Emphasis on nature and living naturally

Among the people introduced in the previous section, B and E stated that Rastafari was connected to their “interest in nature itself” and “interest in a natural life.” This sense of attaching to nature and natural conditions overlaps with the “criticism of the modern world and advanced countries expressed in the term ‘Babylon’” that A refers to.

Among these informants, interest in nature

itself is tied to a penchant for natural clothing and natural daily necessities such as household detergents. For example, they are interested in hemp products. They also emphasize not wasting power. Instead, many of them use wood stoves for heating and use electricity generated by solar panels.

“Living naturally” is related to health and nutrition. For example, Rastas recommend a vegetarian diet called “ital,” which emphasizes the use of pesticide-free ingredients and those grown organically. Most of the Japanese Rastas I interviewed were vegetarians, and they also tended to refer to their health-conscious diet as ital. have broadened the meaning of ital, which is originally referred only to a Jamaican dish. Their definition of ital includes macrobiotic-based meals and Indian vegetarian curries. As for psychological health, they tend to encourage being honest about their own feelings.

G told me that in the late 1980s, when he discovered Rastafari, “a vegetarian diet was cutting edge,” and his interest in vegetarian food was the biggest catalyst for his approach to counterculture and Rastafari. E said, “When I talk to vegetarians, vegans<sup>2</sup>, and people who are interested in food, I feel they have the sense of Rastas even though the words used are different.” By sharing a health orientation through food with non-Rastas, Japanese Rastas create an area of empathic domain. Many Japanese Rastas are interested in agricultural practice, and seven out of 13 people I interviewed had experience in agriculture. In particular, interest in organic agriculture and natural farming is high. A book by Masanobu Fukuoka, *One Straw Revolution: Introduction to Natural Farming* [1975], is widely read.

I would like to make one more point about how Japanese Rastas take care of their health. In the interviews, many of the informants referred to their experiences of illness and medication. In

general, they dismiss the drugs prescribed by modern medical institutions as artificial chemicals. In the previous section, E mentioned that she had stopped taking her medicine. H also said that he cured his asthma by no longer taking his medicine. In addition, J said that his emphysema was cured when he stopped eating meat following the instructions of a Rasta who practiced macrobiotics.

Japanese ideas and practices in Rastafari are also accepted by Rastas from other countries. Male Jamaican-American O, who came to Japan as a music promoter and now works as a private medical practitioner, is a practitioner of Kai-Igaku, an alternative medicine founded by Ryosuke Uryu. The author participated in an ital food workshop held by Haitian-American male P ital food workshop held in Nara Prefecture in July 2014, and P’s knowledge of macrobiotics was applied to his cooking.

## 5-2. Weak belief in the divinity of Haile

### Selassie

In this section, the weak belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie among Japanese Rastas is discussed in relation to the meaning of profession of faith.

The first important point is that in their conversation with me, the informants rarely spoke of the existence of Jah as the only absolute being, or the divinity of Selassie. The rejection of the Bible itself by Bagga, who was familiar to the people mentioned in the first period, may have helped enable the Japanese to accept Rastafari while remaining relatively indifferent to the worldview of the Bible.

Japanese Rastas recognize the authenticity of Rastafari in Jamaica. Some regretted not having knowledge of the Bible and rituals and jargon of Rastafari. Another one gained confidence when a Jamaican Rastas told him, “You’re Rasta.” On the

other hand, most Japanese Rastas, including the informants, attempted to relativize, de-contextualize, and re-contextualize the ideas inherent in Rastafari, regarding the black diaspora as elites, and the exclusive worship of Selassie and Jah as being behind Rastafari.

B and D, introduced in the previous section, shared the view that the roots of all divine beings, including monotheistic gods, were the same. L said that he respects “all of the various religions in the world, including the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Christianity, and Buddhism,” but he has chosen to be a Rasta because he thinks “Rastafari is the one among them that has the most impact and makes people positive in this era.” This type of view is widely shared by all generations. However, as B and L, from and after the second period, mentioned above, knowledge and recognition of Seishin-Sekai are gradually declining.

Musician Jah K.S.K., who is from the same generation as A and B, used the term “Jah Rasta Buddha” in his songs and poems, attempting to bring Rastafari doctrine into a Japanese context [Jah K.S.K. 1988]. L, who discovered Rastafari in the second period, said, “Jah, who created the universe, is a similar entity to eight million gods in Japan, so I don’t consider Haile Selassie is an absolute object of worship.” He also said that expressing gratitude to nature and worshipping in Buddhist style at seasonal festivals is like praying to Jah.

The Japanese Rastas I interviewed saw a big difference between calling themselves Rastas and calling themselves followers of Selassie. In short, they shared a resistance to and fear about declaring their worship of Haile Selassie<sup>3</sup>. This is because professing to worship someone is a manifestation of faith, and thus it carries the risk of being treated like a fanatic by those in Japan outside the Rasta community. For instance, M

stated, “I think I am about 80% Rasta, but I can’t say I am 100% Rasta, because 20% of me is always questioning.” Other frequent comments are “It’s hard to answer the question about worshipping Selassie, who as an autocrat once oppressed the people” and “I can’t believe in the divinity of Selassie because I’ve never met him.”

### 5-3. Importance of appearance

Dreadlocks, the symbol of Rastafari, were introduced in the mid-1950s by a group called Youth Black Faith in Kingston (van Dijk 108). This practice is justified by citing commands like “do not shave part of your hair or shave off the ends of your beard or hurt yourself” (Chapter 21, Section 5) in the *Levi*. I pointed out in Section 4-2 that few Japanese Rastas worship Selassie, but many of them have grown dreadlocks. Ten out of 13 have had dreadlocks, and seven still have them. What does being passive about Selassie worship have to do with accepting the appearance of a Rasta?

In this part, I will describe the characteristics of Rasta appearance and behavior beyond dreadlocks. Japanese Rastas, like Rastas in other countries, often wear clothes with the red-yellow-green color scheme and various symbols as motifs and wear similar accessories and necklaces. And those who wear them often exchange Jamaican or Rasta-related greetings when they are introduced.

Such fashions are worn or put aside depending on the scene, and the ways of greeting and various expressions can be changed to fit the occasion. However, dreadlocks are different. As I understand it, their motivation for growing dreadlocks was often to identify themselves as part of an existing Rastafari community. However, the existence of the Rastafari community itself is hardly known in Japan, so growing dreadlocks makes them conspicuous in daily life.

Japanese Rastas are often questioned by police because they stand out even when their dreadlocks are tucked into large hats or tied up with hair bands<sup>4</sup>.

In the first place, it is not easy for most Japanese, who originally have straight hair, to grow dreadlocks. According to A, in Tokyo in the early 1980s, one of the customers of his reggae shop made dreadlocks by applying adhesive to his hair. In the mid-1980s, hairdressers began using perming solutions to make dreadlocks out of typical Japanese hair. Some hairdressers explain the origin and meaning of dreadlocks to the customer before the procedure to ensure that is really what the customer wants, because dreadlocks worn without a belief in Rastafari are sometimes called “fashion dreads.” The procedure is expensive, usually costing over 50,000 yen. Some of my informants confessed that they have had dreadlocks made at a beauty parlor, and all of these informants mentioned they were reluctant to make dreadlocks artificially, by perming their hair.

In general, the length of dreadlocks indicates the number of years a person has lived as a Rasta, so those who grow long dreadlocks may be given special respect. In addition, by growing dreadlocks and beards, which put a burden on the body, the Rasta’s posture and use of his body more closely resemble the so-called “real Rasta,” and his authenticity increases. As such, growing dreadlocks is a good indicator of commitment to Rastafari. On the other hand, A, who also has experience with dreadlocks, stated, “Don’t rely on dreadlocks because it appeals the belief easily.”

Some have argued that people cannot understand what it means to live as a Rasta unless they grow dreadlocks. Some Rastas think growing dreadlocks may lead to increased contact with other Rastas and may also lead to share experiences. C said that when she was young,

she was reluctant to dress or look like a Rasta, and she was not treated as a Rasta and felt lonely in Jamaican Rasta society. After that experience, she said she realized that “appearance is important” and decided to commit herself to a Rasta look. She said, “I realized that I could neither escape nor hide if I changed my appearance to a Rasta.” Generally, it is not easy for a man to get a regular job if he has long hair or a beard, not mention dreadlocks. Thus, growing dreadlocks also reflects a willingness to abandon social norms and to accept the disadvantages that arise from that.

Some Japanese Rastas who have dreadlocks later get rid of them. D, for example, had rid himself of dreadlocks and restored his straight hair, but he kept the Rasta teaching “to keep one’s hair uncombed.” Therefore, when an acquaintance in Jamaica saw his hair and asked, “Have you quit Rastafari?” he explained that straight hair was natural for Japanese. N, a big fan of Bob Marley, was convinced by his mother’s words, “Is it really necessary to wear dreadlocks to represent his message?” and cut his dreadlocks off.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to discuss the adoption of Rastafari in Japan by clarifying how Japanese Rastas became attracted to Rastafari and the distinctive features of their Rastafari interpretation and practice.

In Section 3, I discussed Rasta’s relationship with reggae music, which is closely related to the Japanese interest in Jamaica. By discussing time periods that were not fully considered in previous studies, we have been able to address both those features that change over time and those that not.

The case in Section 4-1 shows that Rastafari in Japan is, as Sterling points out, positioned in the counterculture. During the second period,

however, the new generation developed an understanding of Rastafari that was at odds with that of Rastas associated with New Spirituality. Although the new generation continues to find authenticity in Rastafari in Jamaica, interest in the counterculture and New Spirituality has declined. Nevertheless, E's parents' experience of Matsuri and F's visit to Keita indicate that one of the Rastafari catchments in Japan is, to this day, the counterculture scene.

In Section 5, we focused on and analyzed three common elements that reflects the characteristics of Japanese Rastafari. In section 5-1, I pointed out that Japanese Rastas cherish nature and living naturally. Such an idea can be said to overlaps with the idea of deep ecology, which encourages awareness of the harmony of the body, nature and the earth. Section 5-2 discussed the weak belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie. Few Japanese Rastas say they worship Selassie. Even if this worship were to be expressed, it would be necessary to dislocate Rastafari's core by relativizing the focus on the black diaspora, on the assumption that all religions had the same roots. However, they also insist that they are Rastas. The inclusion of macrobiotics and Japanese food in the ital category expands the realm of Rastafari and honors its universality. That attitude is reflected in the fact that many Japanese Rastas were very attached to the Rasta appearance. They were able to participate in the transnational Rastafari network without professing their faith in Selassie by adapting their external appearances, such as by growing dreadlocks.

While they recognize the authenticity of Jamaican Rastafari, Japanese Rastas reinterpret the beliefs and practices of Rastafari to make it natural to them. As mentioned earlier, when they reinvented Rastafari, they used resources thought to be indigenous to Japan. The

African-diaspora Rastas who moved to Japan also began share their resources. This fact shows that Rastafari's taking root in Japan is deeply connected to transborder New Spirituality and the steady extension of the Rastafari sphere.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The slogan for this event was "No Nukes One Love" because participants shared a sense of crisis from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident. This sense of crisis has also fueled anti-nuclear movement since 2011 (Horie 2013). The second and subsequent events were held irregularly at places such as Daisen, Tottori in 1990, Rokkasho, Aomori in 1991, Asahimura, Aichi in 1992, Amakusa, Kumamoto in 1993, Kurosawa Highland, Nagano in 2000, and Asagiri Highland, Shizuoka in 2012.
- <sup>2</sup> Vegans are also vegetarians but keep a more restrictive diet that excludes eggs, dairy products, or other animal products.
- <sup>3</sup> On the other hand, in the context of everyday life, it is sometimes easier to state that Rastafari is a religion. A Rasta couple's son, who had been growing dreadlocks, was asked to explain why upon entering high school. The father explained to the teacher that his son was part of the Rastafari movement, but school officials did not understand this, and the son's hairstyle was recognized as being maintained for "religious reasons."
- <sup>4</sup> Perhaps this issue is also related to the fact that many Rastas endorse the use of marijuana, which is illegal in Japan.

## Works Cited

- Chawane, Midas "The Rastafari movement in South Africa: Before and after apartheid." *New Contree* vol.65, 2012, pp.163-188.
- Collinwood D. W. Osamu, Kusatsu "Japanese Rastafarians: Non-Conformance in Modern

- Japan.” *The Study of International Relations* vol.26, 2000, pp.23-35.
- Horie, Norichika “The Spirituality of the Anti-Nuclear Power Movement.” *Modern Religion 2013: Post 3.11*, International Institute for Religious Studies, 2013, pp.78-112.
- Ishii, Miho “Transboundary Rastafari Movement: Development of Social and Religious Movements in Tanzanian Cities.” *Minzokugaku-kenkyu* vol.63, no.3, 1998, pp. 259-282.
- “A New Trend of Rastafari, Centered on Tanzanian Rasta’s Farm Construction Movement.” *Religion and society* vol. 5, 1999, pp.3-19.
- Jah K.S.K. *Pray for Peace*, Buddha 69,1988.
- Kamimoto, Shuji “Spirit within Subculture: Acceptance of Rastafari in Contemporary Japan.” *A.P.O.C.S.* vol.7, 2013, pp.15-32.
- Nagashima, Yoshiko “Report of the Subcommittee on Islands Research and Kansai Region (9) Part 2: <Slide Description> Rastafarism in Jamaica.” *Journal of the Pacific Society* vol.29, 1986a, pp.67-78.
- “Report of the Subcommittee on Islands Research and Kansai Region (9) Part3 <Slide Description> Diversity of Rastafari Movement.” *Journal of the Pacific Society* vol.29, 1986b, pp.79-102.
- “Rastafarians in Anguilla.” *Journal of the Pacific Society* vol.31, 1986c, pp.111-137.
- “Rastafarians in St. Kitts.” *Journal of the Pacific Society* vol.32,1986c, pp.61-75.
- Nakamura, Shinsuke “A survey of university students in Fukuoka Prefecture on the perception of ‘spiritual boom.’” *Bulletin of Faculty of Human Sociology, Fukuoka Prefectural University*, vol.19, no.2, 2011, pp.19-31.
- Philander, L. A. “An Ethnobotany of Western Cape Rasta Bush Medicine.” *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* vol.138, no.2, 2011, pp.578-594.
- Shimazono, Susumu *The Future of Seishin-Sekai*, Tokyo-do Publishing Co., Ltd,1996.
- Sterling, M. D. *Babylon East: Performing Dancehall, roots reggae, and Rastafari in Japan*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Van Dijk, F. V. *Jahmaica: Rastafari and Jamaican Society*. One Drop Books,1993.

#### Website

- Travel Vision “Increase Japanese Travelers to Jamaica to 25000 in 2014” (<http://www.travelvision.jp/news/detail.php?id=47746>), Feb 10,2011.