Ethiopia, Japan, and Jamaica:
A Century of Globally Linked
Modernizations*

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Modernization studies focus on bounded societies, ignoring interactions like those found among Japan, Ethiopia, and Jamaica. Prodded to modernize by foreign warships, Japan pursued unification, bureaucratization, codification, and military centralization. Following attacks from Sudan, Ethiopia undertook modernizations in which Japan and the Meiji Constitution became exemplars. Ethiopia became a model for African nations and diasporas, inspiring Rastafarianism in Jamaica. Rasta culture transformed from a religion of the oppressed to a worldwide force crystallized in Bob Marley's music, offering Japanese youth a vehicle for individualism in the 1980s. These interconnections came full circle in 2005 when dreadlocked pilgrims from Japan attended the Marley festival in Addis Ababa.

Accounts of modernization generally take the national society as the central unit of analysis. To be sure, most of the nineteenth-century theorists of modernization tended to hold an abstract, global imaginary in mind. This was true of Comte and Hegel, Marx and Engels, Spencer and Tönnies, and others. This perspective has been resurrected with increasing frequency in recent decades through the work of scholars like Talcott Parsons, Roland Robertson, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Saskia Sassen.

For most of the twentieth century, however, the dominant unit of analysis for modernization studies has been the nation. Whether the analytic focus was on social stratification, education, political organization, ethnic relations, language, banking systems, jural codes, or military capabilities, the empirical focus was circumscribed by the accepted boundaries of each nation-state. One thinks of Japan (Bellah 1957), Turkey (Lewis, 1961) India (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967), Ethiopia (Levine 1965), Lebanon (Binder, ed., 1966), Brazil (Ribeiro 1995), and the like.

Comparative work has simply grafted this perspective onto studies of a number of national societies. This was true of in-depth analyses of a small number of cases, like Geertz's work on state-building in Asia and Africa (1963), Ward and Rustow's volume on political modernization in Japan and

Turkey (1964), Wallerstein on Ghana and the Ivory Coast (1964), and books by Reinhard Bendix on authority in industry (1963) and on nation-building and citizenship (1996). It was also true of studies that used data from numerous nations, like the survey analyses produced by Alex Inkeles (1998) and Ronald Inglehart (1997).

This paper employs a different perspective, one that treats modernization not within the contours of a particular national society, singular or plural, or that adopts an increasingly familiar perspective of the world society. It focuses, rather, on lines of modernizing influence that flow from one country to another. This approach attempts to do justice to the point made by Bjœrn Wittrock, who observes: "The formation of modernity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is the first major period of cultural crystallization when *transformations in different parts of the world are directly interconnected*" (2000, 58; emphasis mine). I shall illustrate Wittrock's point by discussing three apparently unrelated countries in three different continents–Japan, Ethiopia, and Jamaica.

To begin with, let me introduce a paradigm of modernization, viewing it as a complex world historical development consisting of "breakthrough" processes in several separate but interrelated dimensions. These include specialization, individuation, unification, equalization, cultural rationalization, and personal rationalization. These processes have been associated with what have often been called a number of "revolutions" as shown in the figure below. My assumption is that once the modernity dynamic gets started in a particular society, for endogenous or exogenous reasons, there is a need, if not pressure, to secure resources to abet other revolutions, that can often be imported or modeled on breakthroughs achieved in other societies. That is the dynamic to be illustrated now in considering the linkages among Japan, Ethiopia, and Jamaica.

Figure 1: Modernity Revolutions and Their Effects[1]

PROCESS	Differentiation		Democratization		Rationalization	
	Specialization	Individuation	Unification	Equalization	Cultural	Personal
REVOLUTION	Industrial	Urban-Commercial	Integrative	Social	Academic	Disciplinary
BENEFITS	Commerce, goods	Freedom	Efficacy	Justice	Knowledge	Civility
DISADVANTAGES	Personal atrophy; Social deficits	Hyperspecial-ization; alienation; consumerism	Repressive centralization; Violence	Mediocrity	"Tragedy of culture"; Jacobinism	Psychic repression

Japan's Breakthrough to a Modern Polity

Pressures toward modernization began to percolate in Japan by the advent of the nineteenth century. An expanding economy began to weaken the patrimonial system of the Tokugawa shogunate, when family rank largely determined the makeup of the administrative hierarchy. Exposure to mathematics and business by members of lower classes prepared them for bureaucratic offices better than the Confucian classics absorbed by the upper classes. Increasing financial difficulties of the samurai opened the door to the purchase of status by low-class vassals. But these changes allowed only a "modernization by stealth and by loopholes" (Inoki 1964, 286).

All that changed abruptly in 1853, when Commodore Matthew Perry guided American warships into Uraga. The Japanese were stunned by those steam-powered ships and intimidated by their armaments. Shogun Tokugawa Iesada (1824-1858) had little choice but to accept a treaty that provided for friendly trade with the United States.

Immediately upon this "opening" of Japan to the West, it became clear that future challenges would require a system that could harness and, indeed, cultivate all available talent. The administration began to recruit staff on the basis of merit rather than patronage, a shift that also entailed substituting loyalty to one's lord with loyalty to the emperor, who became increasingly affirmed as a symbol of the entire country.

With the ascendance of Emperor Meiji in 1868, Japan's government embarked explicitly on a program of economic, political, and cultural modernization. The young emperor signed a Five Charter Oath that proclaimed the goals of this modernizing program. It sought to dissolve the old feudal system by broadening the scope of political participation, abolished restrictions on occupational mobility, standardized legal codes and procedures, worked to fuse loyalty with talent in building economic and military structures that could rival those of the West, and established universal education. This involved consolidating provincial governments into a centralized apparatus, coupled with efforts to model the military after France and England, including conscription and a robust reserve force (Hackett 1964). These drastic and surprisingly rapid reforms in turn created needs for financial consolidation and tax revenue, an increase in exports, and an administrative structure to supporting it.

Japan as a Model for Ethiopia

Like Japan, Ethiopia was propelled into toward modernization by attacks from outside powers. Ethiopia's effort, too, took off in the 1850s, when

Emperor Theodore II made a determined effort to mobilize Ethiopian forces in the face of attacks from Sudan. Although he hoped to secure assistance from England, his relations with that country soured in a way that led to a massive invasion by British troops in 1868. The British also contributed modern arms to Theodore's Ethiopian enemies in the northern province of Tigray, a move that encouraged Tigrean Emperor Yohannes IV (1871-89) to equip himself further with modern arms in battles against invading Mahdi troops from Sudan. The succeeding emperor, Menelik II (1889-1913), became the first Ethiopian ruler to pursue a broad-gauged program of modernization. He drew on a number of European resources, including a Swiss advisor who played a crucial role. Under Menelik, Ethiopia acquired the first rudiments of a railway system, postal system, modern school system, and cabinet of ministers.

Menelik's most serious foreign threat was Italy, which acquired the Eritrean coast from Turkey and then launched a campaign to colonize inland as far as possible. The Italian venture was halted decisively by the Battle of Adwa in 1896, in which Ethiopia became the first non-white country to defeat a European colonial power. This victory drew international attention to Ethiopia, and within a few years dozen European countries had established diplomatic missions in the new capital of Addis Ababa.

Not long after, Japan became the second such non-white country in its defeat of Russia in the 1904-05 war. In so doing, Japan achieved even more international attention. Both countries became aware of themselves as staunchly independent nations with a venerable political history and a traditional society organized around the institutions of an ancient sacral monarchy. In the early years of the twentieth century, writers in both countries expressed awareness of their mutual affinities (Zewde 1990). This awareness continued for decades; an issue of *The Japanese Weekly Chronicle* in 1933 celebrated "the spiritual affinity between Japan and Abyssinia,"[2] while in Ethiopia, pre-war Foreign Minister Blattengeta Heruy Walde Sellasie (in *Medhara Berhan Hagara Japan* [*The Japanese Nation, Source of Light*]) and post-war Minister of Education Kebbedde Michael (in *Japan Indemin Seletenech* [*How Japan Modernized*]) described striking similarities between the two countries.[3]

If Ethiopia's survival in the twentieth century depended on military equipment and training which it acquired from Europe, it needed no less the institutions of a modern political system that had some affinity with its distinctive political traditions. This made Japan an obvious model to imitate. Ethiopian intellectuals became known as "Japanizers." They worked to advance connections between the two states in order to facilitate this transformation. The process reached a kind of climax with the promulgation of Ethiopia's first constitution in 1931, which incorporated directly many passages from the Meiji Constitution of 1889. These included the description of the person of the

emperor as "sacred and inviolable," and a jural conception of the emperor as, at one and the same time: "1) a constitutional monarch, head of an authoritarian state established by a constitution granted by the emperor, not demanded by the people; 2) supreme authority over the armed forces, independent from control of the cabinet; and 3) a monarch of divine right" (Eisenstadt 1996, 35).

Ethiopia as Inspiration for Self-affirmation among Jamaican Blacks

Japan and Ethiopia were both non-Western countries with traditions of national independence tied to the institutions of a sacral monarchy. Provoked by modernized European states, they strove to secure modern, centralized armies, which in turn entailed constitutional restructuring to legitimate a strong central authority and adumbrate a more rational political bureaucracy. Their examples in turn inspired peoples still under colonial or caste-like rule to aspire for self-determination, another lynchpin of the modern agenda. In this process, the example of Ethiopia had far-reaching effects.

From the time of the Adwa victory onward, an image of Ethiopia the Independent was cherished increasingly by colonized Africans and repressed Afro-Americans. In 1892, the efforts of some Bantu Christian leaders to emancipate themselves from the authority of European missions led to the formation of an independent Black South African denomination named the Ethiopian church. For secular leaders of colonial Africa, moreover, the image of independent Ethiopia offered a constant source of inspiration. The threat to this symbol posed by the Italian revanchist invasion so upset Kwame Nkrumah, he recalls in his Autobiography, that he became motivated to work for the day when he might play a part in bringing an end to so wicked a system as colonialism. Jomo Kenyatta spoke for many Africans when he envisioned Ethiopia's response to the invasion: "Ethiopia, with her Emperor leading, relies on her soldiers, her courage, her traditions. There will be no concession; Ethiopia will fight, as she always has fought, to preserve her independence against this encroachment of Imperialism." Together with J. B. Danquah of the Gold Coast, Mohammed Said of Somaliland, George Padmore of Jamaica, and others, Kenyatta formed a group that came to provide leadership for the African liberation movement, the International African Friends of Abyssinia (Levine 2000.)

Similar stirrings across the Atlantic drew strength from the independent kingdom of Ethiopia. A key figure in this movement was Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940), who formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the 1920s with the goal of uniting black people with their African homeland. After traveling in the United Stated and Great Britain, Garvey returned to Jamaica to spread his views among the black working class. He assured his followers that

the hour of Africa's redemption was nearby and told blacks to watch for the crowning of a king in Africa for evidence of their coming redemption. When Prince Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned as emperor of Ethiopia in 1930, taking thrown name of Haile Selassie (Power of the Trinity), the Rastafarian movement began officially. Inspired by what they viewed as a monumental event that marked the fulfillment of Garvey's prophecy, Rastafarians formed a number of different groups, all of which worshipped Haile Selassie as the sole divinity and proclaimed their faith as a basis for collective self-determination. The Jamaican Rastas embraced Ethiopian symbolism with gusto, employing those symbols--the lion, the drum, the chalice, and the flag of red, green, and yellow stripes--to express their resistance to a white minority government (Carter 2005).

The Rastafarian movement went through four stages. In the 1930s, it manifested itself as a religion, providing solace and inspiration to suppressed blacks, giving them a sense of pride and hope for freedom through repatriation to Africa. During and after the war, when Jamaica's economy deteriorated dramatically, black workers were plagued by malnutrition and poor wages, and the Rastafarian movement became politicized; their leaders intensified opposition to the colonial state by defying the police and organizing illegal street marches. In the 50s and early 60s, Rastas turned from political action toward private withdrawal, concentrating on meditation and self-medication through their omnipresent marijuana. Because of their lower-class manners, marginal status, and unkempt appearance, Rastas were violently repressed by edgy Jamaican police. In the 1970s Rastafarianism underwent yet another transformation. It became more of a positive cultural force, contributing to Jamaican art and music, especially reggae. One outstanding reggae musician, Bob Marley, came to symbolize Rasta beliefs and values. Reggae became the Rastaman's living Bible as well as a bully pulpit and a forum for artistic expression. Bob Marley's popularity ensured a diverse audience for Rasta messages and concepts, and diffused Rastafarian symbols worldwide.

Jamaican Rastas as Inspiration for Japanese Moderns

Of all instances of cultural diffusion in the last century, that of Jamaican culture to Japan would seem the least likely. Two more dissimilar cultures and lifestyles are hard to imagine. The Japanese aesthetic seems the very antipode of Rastaman, based as it is on suppression of affect, rigid control, and symbolic subtleties. The fervent religious belief displayed by reggae musicians lies outside the experience of the largely non-religious Japanese (Carter 2005). There is powerful religiosity and little subtlety in the lyrics of Bob Marley:

We sick an' tired of-a your *ism-skism game -
Dyin' 'n' goin' to heaven in-a Jesus' name, Lord.
We know when we understand:
Almighty God is a living man.
You can fool some people sometimes,
But you can't fool all the people all the time.
So now we see the light (What you gonna do?),
We gonna stand up for our rights! (Yeah, yeah, yeah!)

In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, Jamaica Rasta served as the medium for the appropriation of Ethiopia-derivative elements into modern Japanese culture. Visits by Marley and other reggae musicians to Japan in the 1970s exported the stimulus. Japanese youth resonated to the rebellious message and pounding rhythms of reggae and the vague mysticism of Rastafarianism. Thousands of young people attended Marley's concerts in Japan and identified with him, his message, his lifestyle, and his look. In the 1980s homegrown Japanese reggae took root and flourished. The appeal of Rasta culture may be illuminated by referring to the schema of modernization processes noted above. While Japan made large strides in the areas of political unification, occupational specialization, and cultural rationalization, and personal discipline, it lagged behind in the areas of social egalitarianism and individualism.

Although the Meiji reforms erased the ascriptive inequalities of shogunate feudalism, they accentuated an attachment to Japanese ethnicity as privileged. This included both the well-known prejudices against foreigners (*gaijin*) and against local minority groups, Ainu and Koreans. On the other hand, in the post-Meiji drive to absorb modern culture from abroad, the Japanese developed a highly selective orientation to the outside world. Their concept for such cultural importation, *kokusaika*, is elitist, connoting identification with the major industrialized nations. Japanese Rastas, by contrast, exhibit a kind of egalitarian internationalism. They do not approach Jamaicans with the attitude of 19th-century white missionaries who looked down on the black and brown inhabitants of the globe. Rather they seem to believe that, in some ways, Jamaican Rastas have found a way of life that is *superior* to modern Japan.

This lifestyle ministers to other needs that appear to have been lacking in Japan's modernizing culture. Perhaps reggae's most direct and immediate appeal was what it offered on behalf of individualism, especially in the sense of self-expression. Reggae provides a means for Japanese youth to resist the "straightjacket society" in which they live, where their life plans are already determined by the time they reach thirteen years. Although Rasta culture originated as a medium for collective self-affirmation for oppressed people, it

took on the colorations of its engendering milieu and became a popular vehicle for defiant expressiveness–in clothes, hairstyles, marijuana use and, above all, music. In the words of one young Japanese, "We're always told to be a good child, a good student, but still we don't know how to be ourselves. Reggae is helping us to do that" (More, 3).

It is not only the modernist value of individualism that supports such yearnings, it is also a rebellion against certain modernizing traits themselves. One of those, labeled 'personal rationalization' above, concerns the heightened forms of personal discipline required by industrial forms of production, bureaucratic management, and modern urban living. All known instances of modernization thus entail new types of socialization that produce these heightened forms of discipline and self-discipline. Processes that have been analyzed, variously, by Max Weber on the ascetic dimensions of capitalist entrepreneurship and bureaucracy, Norbert Elias on *The Civilizing Process*, and Georg Simmel on the modern metropolis, they amount to what has been called a Disciplinary Revolution (Gorski 1993).

In reaction to these disciplinary pressures, a common phenomenon of the modern order is the eruption of what may be called protest individuality–a feature of the counterculture that is also an essential ingredient of modernity.[4] Two other features of modern countercultures likewise appear in the Japanese resonance with Rastaman. One is the yearning for the world we have lost, sometimes glossed as neotribalism or the search for *Gemeinschaft*. As close observers have noted, in its affinity with traditional village *matsuri* festivals and the *bon odori* festival music, Reggae offers contemporary Japanese a taste of the simpler lifestyle and values of earlier Japanese life (Collinwood and Kusatsu 1988, 3; More).

In sum: the identification of Jamaicans with Haile Selassie I has radically transfigured core symbols of traditional Ethiopian culture. Jamaican Rastas produced a new subculture that offers young Japanese moderns the elements of a nonwhite protest against dominant features of modernity. In its emphases on expressivity and on egalitarianism, and its idealization of pre-modern lifestyles, Jamaicans created a nonwhite version of the counterculture that has been co-constitutive of modernity ever since Rousseau and the various movements of European romanticism of the early 19th century.

Conclusion

The custom of conceiving of social phenomena as concrete bounded entities has formed the basis of innumerable valuable analyses and insight. This tendency has, however, tended to obscure the very real connections among different groups, near and far. In an earlier work (Levine 2000) I demonstrated

how the image of historic Ethiopia as consisting of a number of discrete ethnic groups led needed to be supplemented by awareness of the numerous ways in which those groups had been interlinked over millennia–through trade, combat, migration, intermarriages, functional exchanges, and joint ceremonies and pilgrimages. A tenacious penchant for thinking of contemporary nations and civilizations in that manner has similarly obscured the innumerable forms of interaction among them. The histories of Japan, Ethiopia, and Jamaica can each be told without any reference to the facts recounted in this paper. And thereby, some of the most interesting facts about modernization process in the twentieth century would not be known. And one would be hard-pressed to make sense of the fact that at a memorial celebration in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, honoring the sixtieth anniversary of Bob Marley's birth in February 2005, the visitors included dreadlocked pilgrims from Jamaica and Japan.

Notes

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[1] This figure is adapted from Figure 2 of *Powers of the Mind: The Reinvention of Liberal Learning in America* (University of Chicago Press 2006).

[2] Such perceptions of affinity fed the pronounced sense of solidarity with Ethiopia expressed by the Japanese public following Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935—evident, for example, in the decision of the Osaka Chamber of Commerce to provide straw sandals to Ethiopians to protect their feet against poison gas, in the dispatch of 1,200 Japanese swords to Ethiopia to assist in the war effort, and in the applications of Japanese volunteers to join the Ethiopian Army that flooded the Ethiopian consulate in Tokyo (Zewde 1990).

[3] Scarcely noticed among those similarities was not only the fact that Ethiopia and Japan were the only non-European countries to defeat modern European imperialists but even that earlier in history, both nations had distinguished themselves by withstanding other imperial powers: Japan against Mongols in the 1280s, Ethiopia against Ottoman Turks in the 1580s, and both had welcomed intercourse with the Portuguese early in the 16th century, whom they then extruded abruptly early in the following century.

[4] Whatever feature one may select as a hallmark of modernity, one need not look far to identify its opposite. That is why, following Simmel, I have long argued that the most prominent defining feature of modernity may be its tendency to amplify opposed characteristics (Levine 1991). An increase in popular mobilization for war is accompanied by an increase in organized pacifism. Increased central authority stimulates heightened assertion of sub-national identities. Increased mobility and equality of opportunity generate

new forms of inequality. And increased levels of self-discipline are linked with increased pressures for self-expression.

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