Tomei, Renato 2015. *Jamaican Speech Forms in Ethiopia. The Emergence of a New Linguistic Scenario in Shashamane*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN (10): 1-4438-7152-4, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7152-5, 228 pp, 31 figures, 17 tables, 61 extracts. Hardback, 70,31 €

Review by Andrea Hollington, Global South Studies Center, University of Cologne

<1>   Tomei's book is the first comprehensive study focusing on language contact in Ethiopia that involves the repatriated Rastafari community. He focuses on Shashamene (also known as Shashamane) and studies the influence of Jamaican on the linguistic practices of Ethiopian youths.

<2>   The book is structured in six chapters plus references and appendices. In the first chapter, the author introduces the topic of his study, namely the study of Jamaican influences in Shashamene, and outlines four major research questions. These address various issues centering on how local Ethiopians are exposed to Jamaican speech forms (JSF), how JSF should be analyzed, described and categorized, the selected speakers' competence in and usage of JSF, and the role of these linguistic practices with regard to identity. Tomei goes on to outline his research methods, briefly describing the three domains in which he recruited the target groups for his research: 1. the school (the Rastafari-founded JRDC[1] school located in Shashamene); 2. the street (in particular the so-called King's Highway, the main road connecting Melka Oda, where the land grant on which most Rastafari have settled is located, to the center of Shashamene town); 3. the studio (which he describes in an extended way as a creative space in which musicians come together). His methods of data generation include observation and recording of various formal and informal interactions as well as structured and unstructured interviews. Importantly, the author takes his own position as a European researcher, member of the international Rastafari community and Reggae artist into account, and reflects on its implications for the research outcome.

<3>   In the second chapter, Tomei reviews the relevant academic literature and summarizes views on identity, including identity and belonging (which is of central meaning with regard to the repatriates' community[2]), processes of conscious identity formation (identity as agency) and the relationships between language and identity. He also discusses contributions in the field of Black Linguistics, in which he locates the study of the language of Rastafari, as well as the study of music and identity. He especially focuses on the role of multilingualism with regard to conscious identity building through music and linguistic practices.

<4>   The next chapter deals more deeply with theoretic and methodological aspects. It is divided into seven sections which discuss language policies in Ethiopia in a historical perspective (3.1), the role of English in Ethiopia (3.2), Jamaican language practices in the context of Caribbean Linguistics and World Englishes, drawing also on Creole linguistics (3.3), issues concerning

---

[1]   JRDC stands for Jamaica Rastafarian Development Community, see http://www.shashamane.org (accessed December 2016)

[2]   The repatriated Rastafari community in Shashamene constitutes a heterogeneous group. While the first settlers on the land which Emperor Haile Selassie I granted to members of the African Diaspora in 1948 came from the Caribbean and the United States, the community today comprises people from more than 20 countries all around the world.

lexicography and diglossia (3.4), Rastafari language practices and ideologies (3.5), the language of reggae, in particular how Reggae serves as a vehicle for spreading particular linguistic practices (3.6), and finally conversation analysis and the complex problems of transcription and spelling (3.7).

<5> Chapter Four, entitled "Collection and presentation of data", describes the research domains and the participants in more detail. The chapter starts with a section on the history and socio-linguistic profile of Shashamene, the Ethiopian crossroads town under study. The town has been growing rapidly and is home to people who have come from various places to settle in Shashamene. While the town hosts a range of Ethiopian ethnic groups from various parts of the country (due to its strategic commercial location), Tomei importantly points out that "[t]he international dimension of the Rastafarian community adds another element of cultural richness to the town; it is comprised of people from all across the Diaspora […]". In this chapter, the author also describes his three selected research domains in more detail, in particular the composition of the target groups of his study. In the JRDC school, he worked with 18 youths between 6 and 16 years old, both male and female, who are a mixed group consisting of Ethiopians and children of repatriates from various places, but particularly from the Caribbean. He also taught an Italian class at the school, and states that this direct involvement in school activities facilitated his data collection and gaining access to the youths. With regard to the domain of the street, Tomei worked with eleven male youths between 15 and 18 years old, most of whom have Ethiopian parents and who have been spending time in the streets of Shashamene in the area of the so-called "Jamaica Sefer", the part of town where most of the repatriates have settled. With regard to the third domain, the studio, the author presents a table giving details of 11 youths (one of them female) whom he describes as talented young artists. They constitute a mixed group of Ethiopians and repatriates of Caribbean and European origins, who exhibit the highest degree of multilingualism of any of his subjects (as compared to the other two domains). While Tomei outlines the differences of the three target groups with regard to aspects such as gender, age and background/origin, there are also similarities and overlaps. In fact, a few youths belong to all three groups. These three participants are referred to as "focal informants" by the author (p. 102). In the remainder of the chapter, the author describes the sociolinguistic background of these three speakers in more detail.

<6> The fifth chapter is concerned with an analysis of the data and describes in detail the Jamaican speech forms (JSF) found in the three domains, the school, the street and the studio. He presents a list of JSF that he found in the language use of youths and adolescents in Shashamene, and compares them across all three domains. This list includes:

demonstratives [the use of Jamaican demonstratives]	personal pronouns [the use of Jamaican pronouns]
/a/ copula	zero copula
no past tense	no /-s/
/a/ /a go/	modals [the use of Jamaican modals]
/neva/ /no/ /na/	metathesis
substitutions [of consonants/sounds]	interjections
verbal expressions	rhetoric questions
bad words [swear words]	greeting
DT [Dread Talk/Rasta Talk] category I[3]	addressing

---

[3] Unfortunately, the author does not explain what these three categories refer to. I assume that they reresent the three categories of word formation in Dread Talk as outlined by Pollard (1994). Pollard defined

DT category II	reggae/dancehall
DT category III	/dem/ [as a plural marker]

<7> The author represents the use of these JSF for all speakers in all domains visually in tables and diagrams. The diagrams show that the domain of the studio features the highest occurrence of JSF in the language use of the youths, while the author observed and recorded the second highest amount of JSF in the domain of the street and the lowest (but still significant) in the JRDC school. Tomei also illustrates the use of JSF by including a number of excerpts from his data (such as transcriptions of recordings/interviews, responses to questionnaires and extractions from other data sources). While these excerpts offer a little insight into the context of the youths' practices, it would have been interesting for the reader to learn more about the actual sociolinguistic and situational context of the communicative action. In a multilingual setting, the contexts and situations of communicative behavior usually play an important role and could shed additional light on the linguistic choices made by the youngsters in particular situations.

<8> Tomei summarizes the results of his study in the three domains by comparing the amount of JSF in the speakers' linguistic performances and their competence in JSF. He explains his findings by using a "rite of passage" metaphor from 'school' to 'street' to 'studio' (p. 143), which describes the speakers' transition to deeper levels of using JSF. He states that this development is triggered by "personal inclination" rather than "institutional organization" (ibid.) and stresses the individual's aspiration for speaking Jamaican as one aspect of expressing identity and belonging, in a space in which Reggae and Rastafari are strong markers of cultural identity. In his final chapter, Tomei therefore elucidates on language as a means of expressing and creating identity. In this last chapter he also explores the multilingual nature of the Ethiopian setting in Shashamene as a breeding ground for new multilingual practices that are emerging through contact between local (multilingual) Ethiopians and the repatriated Rastafari. In particular, the Jamaican language plays an important role in the creative space of the studio as a means of expressing new stylized linguistic forms involving JSF to the highest degree. Finally, he comments on the role of codeswitching and language mixing, which plays a major role in linguistic practices in multilingual Shashamene and has given rise to the youths' new speech form, *Jamharic* (*Jamarigna, Jamaric*, a contraction of *Jamaican* and *Amharic*).

<9> The book presents a first comprehensive study of the multilingual situation of the contact scenario involving repatriated Rastafari in Shashamene, focusing on the use of JSF among youths. While the book opens up a range of follow-up questions for further research, such as the influence of the Amharic language on the repatriated settlers, the use and spread of new speech forms (*Jamharic*), and the linguistic practices of women, it constitutes an important study of this complex multilingual community. It makes an important contribution to the study of language contact and multilingualism in Ethiopia, a field in which many contributions (e.g. the volume *Language Contact and Language Change in Ethiopia* 2009, edited by Joachim Crass and Ronny Meyer) do not even mention the multilingual community of Shashamene, despite the significant influences of Jamaican in Ethiopian language contact phenomena beyond the scope of Shashamene. Tomei argues convincingly that the role of Jamaican is a force to be

---

Category I as a group of words where "known items bear new meanings" (ibid.: 8) and Category II as "[w]ords that bear the weight of their phonological implications with some explanations" (ibid.: 10), while category III refers to the so-called *i-words* (/ai/ words) in which the sound /ai/, represented through <i> in writing, functions as a kind of prefix and replaces the beginning (e.g. the first letter or the first syllable) of a word.

reckoned with in Ethiopian language contact phenomena, especially with regard to youth language and music.

Reference

Pollard, Velma 1994
    Dread Talk. The Language of Rastafari. Kingston: Canoe Press.