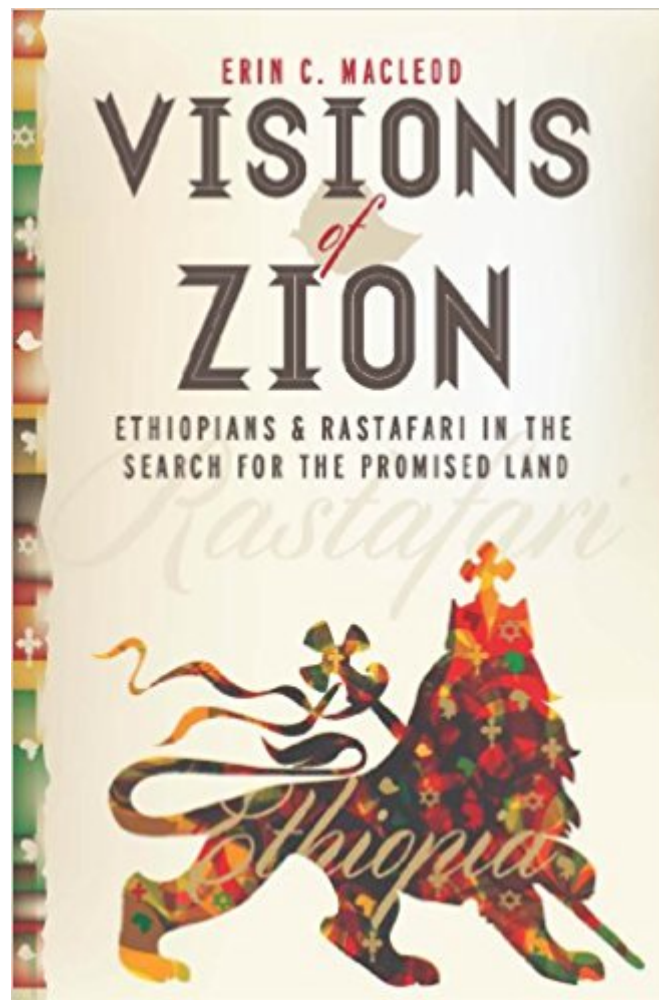




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# Visions Of Zion: Ethiopians And Rastafari In The Search For The Promised Land



## Synopsis

In reggae song after reggae song Bob Marley and other reggae singers speak of the Promised Land of Ethiopia. “Repatriation is a must!” they cry. The Rastafari have been travelling to Ethiopia since the movement originated in Jamaica in 1930s. They consider it the Promised Land, and repatriation is a cornerstone of their faith. Though Ethiopians see Rastafari as immigrants, the Rastafari see themselves as returning members of the Ethiopian diaspora. In *Visions of Zion*, Erin C. MacLeod offers the first in-depth investigation into how Ethiopians perceive Rastafari and Rastafarians within Ethiopia and the role this unique immigrant community plays within Ethiopian society. Rastafari are unusual among migrants, basing their movements on spiritual rather than economic choices. This volume offers those who study the movement a broader understanding of the implications of repatriation. Taking the Ethiopian perspective into account, it argues that migrant and diaspora identities are the products of negotiation, and it illuminates the implications of this negotiation for concepts of citizenship, as well as for our understandings of pan-Africanism and south-south migration. Providing a rare look at migration to a non-Western country, this volume also fills a gap in the broader immigration studies literature.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“The fact that it is the first published monograph in the English language on a long-overdue subject makes it a welcome contribution. Researchers will benefit immensely from its rich documentation of primary and secondary sources, as well as from its sporadic theoretical

forays into Africa. To African countries overwhelmed by undocumented diaspora communities, either from refugee crises or from labor migrations, MacLeod's concept of "ethnic citizenship" provides food for thought that presents alternative possibilities of national belonging.

**International Migration Review** "Ethiopia has been for centuries a beacon for those in the New World who have considered themselves its descendants and exiles. But what happens when an imagined and narrated homeland is actually encountered? By deftly documenting in rich detail the complex negotiations of citizenship and belonging between immigrant Rastafarians and Ethiopians in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Ethiopia, Erin C. MacLeod critically intervenes in the accepted paradigms of academic migration theories and popular perceptions alike by revealing the often difficult dialogues characteristic of African diaspora cultural politics." -Kevin A. Yelvington, editor of *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora* "Examines the ways in which Jamaican immigrants to Ethiopia are received by the Ethiopians themselves. While the immigrant Rastafari view their presence in Ethiopia as fulfillment of a sacred repatriation, Ethiopians have received them with a variety of reactions, from tolerant acceptance or hopefulness for the resources they might bring, to outright hostility and scorn. MacLeod shows how Ethiopians make sense of the newcomers' unique understanding of Ethiopian identity and their reverence for Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie. The way that she documents the Ethiopian engagement with and appropriation of Jamaican cultural arts makes this a valuable book for communication students in particular." -Anita Waters, Denison University "An engaging, probing, and definitive account of Ethiopia's response to its Rastafarian 'repatriates.' This book is admirably human in its approach to the lofty subjects of immigration and national identity." -Emily Raboteau, author of *Searching for Zion: The Quest for Home in the African Diaspora* "Canadian scholar Erin C. MacLeod has written a thorough interdisciplinary analysis of Rastafari, the colorful, if very small in number, group of ferengis, mostly from Jamaica, who comprise an anomaly in present day Ethiopia."

**Journal of Modern African Studies**

Erin C. MacLeod is on the Faculty of General Studies at Vanier College.

Truth be told, I began reading *Visions of Zion* with some trepidation. I thought it might be too scholarly--that it was written for academics, policy makers and other researchers. While I am sure scholars about immigration and assimilation can learn much from Ms. MacLeod's well-researched and insightful narrative about the Rastafari and Ethiopia, *Visions of Zion* deserves a much larger audience. Ms. MacLeod tells a story that will be of interest to anyone interested in Rastafari,

Reggae, Bob Marley, Jamaica or Ethiopia. Ms. MacLeod's narrative is enlivened by her affection for Jamaica. Rastafari and Ethiopia, as well as by the quality and scope of her research. She has the skill to use Bob Marley's lyrics to educate us about Rastafari, as well as the ability, and the generosity, to find just the right source to illuminate a particular observation or description. I was fully engaged by page 7 of her book when I read the following observation by Edward Chamberlin (a fellow scholar) about Rastafari, "What Rastafarians have done is to make up a story-and I say this in high tribute-that will bring that back home while they wait for reality to catch up with their imaginations." Ms. MacLeod reminds us how the bitter legacies of slavery and colonialism inspired Rastafari to imagine a new, purer identity and to have the courage to travel there. The passage was not easy. As Ms. MacLeod makes clear a pure imagination did not soften the challenges they have encountered in Ethiopia. While I have much to learn about immigration and assimilation, Ms. MacLeod enabled me to see Jamaica, Rastafari, Bob Marley and Ethiopia differently: with a greater appreciation and respect. I recommend *Visions of Zion* very highly. . .

VISIONS OF ZION: A BOOK REVIEW by Albert and Tempie Williams Crawley United Kingdom  
*Visions of Zion*-Ethiopians and Rastafari in the search for the promised land (ISBN: 978-1-4798-8224-3,) New York university Press, is a welcome extension to the growing body of work written about the Rastafari movement. The author, Erin C Macleod, in this book, presents candid and thought-provoking insights into the sentiments of the Ethiopian people, especially as it relates to the Rastafarians who began arriving in the country since the 1960s at the invitation of then monarchy. Although there are many books written on the Rastafarians of Jamaica, there are not many that have delved in such great depth into the question of repatriation to Ethiopia by the Rastafari adherents who regard the last Emperor of Ethiopia, His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie The First, as the Living God, and consequently regard themselves as his true sons and daughters. This Macleod has managed to do, conducting her research with great sensitivity, both to the Ethiopian-born respondents, and to the Rastafari community. Macleod's strong work ethic and true ethnological approach is self-evident, and she draws on a rich set of scenarios, conversations, anecdotes, reflections and memories acquired during her stay in Ethiopia between 2007/08 and intermittent stays between 2004 and 2013. First as a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia, a Christian, non-governmental development agency, then as a traveler, or should we say, a truth-seeker. "I formerly interviewed over 90 people primarily in Shashamane," she says. Macleod E (2014,21) The anecdotes she shares illustrate an inquiring academic mind that seeks to peer underneath this cloak of nationality, race and

immigration using appropriate methodologies to analyze a plethora of data to produce an authoritative piece of work that quickly establishes her, in our opinion, as an authority on the subject of Rastafari and immigration. If ever there was a book that a student of Rastafari; a Rastafari living in Shashamane, Ethiopia, or one planning to migrate there, should read, then it is this one, Visions of Zion-Ethiopians and Rastafari in the search for the promised land. Moreover, this is a publication that could easily be added to the reading list of humanities modules; sociology anthropology, law etc courses at universities and colleges throughout the Caribbean and the African continent, and academia in general. Particularly those concerned with Caribbean religion in general, and Rastafari in particular. This first edition of Visions of Zion-Ethiopians and Rastafari in the search for the promised land published in 2014, started its life as a theses entitled, Leaving Out of Babylon, Into Whose Father's Land? The Ethiopian Perception of the Repatriated Rastafari back in 2009 as partial fulfillment of the requirements for her Phd in Communications at McGill University, and we are very happy that Macleod had decided to have the work published as a book so that a wider audience could avail themselves of her excellent research in a still widely misunderstood religio-socio movement which finds solace in identifying themselves as Ethiopians in the diaspora, (to chagrin of their Ethiopian hosts,) hence the ubiquitous use of the red, yellow and green colours of the Ethiopian flag, with the image of the conquering lion emblazoned as its centre piece. Visions of Zion-Ethiopians and Rastafari in the search for the promised land is a 300-page, hardback publication, and is also available as an ebook as well. It has 7 chapters, an introduction complete with a reference section notes for further reading, and the all important index, for finding those key words in the text. The front cover, designed by Micheal Thompson features a graphic of the Lion of Judah decorated with Ethiopian motifs and endorsements on the back. In closing, we would advise anyone reading this book, to do so slowly. It is a journey in which one should savor and enjoy the process of getting to their destination, as much as getting to the destination its self. Read and enjoy. We can't wait to read what Erin C. Macleod will publish next.

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