

STYLIZED PROTEST: RASTAFARIAN SYMBOLS OF IDENTIFICATION

by

Yasmin Jiwani

Simon Fraser University

ABSTRACT

This paper examines some of the symbols of identification used by the Rastafarians. The paper provides some historical background dealing with the emergence of the Rastafarian movement and in particular, the emergence of various symbols of identification. The meaning and representation of these symbols is discussed in light of the movement's political and religious beliefs. Within the framework of current anthropological thought regarding symbolism, the paper analyzes Rastafarian symbols of identification in terms of their representation of the polarities of nature versus culture and pure versus profane.

ABSTRAIT

Une protestation stylisée d'identification Rastafariens.

Cet article examine quelques uns des symboles d'identification utilisés par les Rastafariens. La trame historique derrière l'émergence du mouvement Rastafarien est étudiée, en particulier l'émergence d'une variété de symboles d'identification. Le sens et la représentation de ces symboles sont discutés à la lumière des croyances politiques et religieuses du mouvement. Dans le cadre de la pensée anthropologique actuelle en ce qui concerne le symbolisme, cet article analyse les symboles Rastafariens d'identification, en termes de leurs représentation de la polarité nature versus culture et pure versus profane.

INTRODUCTION

New religious movements such as the Rastafarian one do not emerge in a social vacuum. Rather, it is the dialectical relationship between environmental factors and the collective psychology of the masses that catalyzes the birth of all such movements. The Rastafarian movement is a black Jamaican based millennial movement. Its membership is largely composed of young Caribbean blacks who believe in Haile Selassie as their living God. This paper isolates and discusses some symbols of identification used by the Rastafarians to display their allegiance to Rastafarianism.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The genesis of the Rastafarian movement can be traced to the seeds of protest and rebellion sown by Marcus Mosiah Garvey in the late nineteen twenties and early thirties (Barrett 1977). Garvey is viewed by the Rastafarians as playing an analogous role to that of John the Baptist when he announced the coming of Christ. In this sense, Garvey is also perceived as being the first Rastafarian (Barrett 1977).

Marcus Garvey

Marcus Garvey was born in St. Anne's Bay, Jamaica. After a somewhat unsuccessful career as a printer, he left Jamaica and travelled through the Latin American countries, England and the United States. It was during his stay in the United States that Garvey first began his lifelong task of uplifting the status of his fellow blacks (Cashmore 1979). The concrete manifestation of his work appeared in the formation of the United Negroes Improvement Association (UIA) (Barrett 1977). Garvey represented a combination of both charismatic leadership and extreme religiosity. His speeches were full of biblical quotes and references to God. The following excerpt highlights these traits. Upon entering prison in Atlanta, Garvey revealed the following message to his followers:

Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for, with God's grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of Black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies and the millions in Africa to aid you in the fight for Liberty, Freedom and Life (in Simpson 1978:145).

Garvey's philosophy combined elements of black superiority, repatriation to Africa and a strong bias towards Ethiopianism (Barrett 1977). Garvey was also instrumental in upholding the superiority of black civilizations. According to Garvey, blacks were the chosen peoples of God, and God was perceived as being black as well (Barrett 1977). In nearly all his speeches, Garvey constantly alluded to the splendour and glory of the Egyptian and Ethiopian civilizations. These themes are clearly illustrated in the following passage written by Garvey on the subject of God:

We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no colour, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, and since the White people have seen their God through White spectacles, we have only now stated (late though it may be) to see our God through our own spectacles. The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob let Him exist for the race that believe in the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the ever-lasting God - God the son, God the Holy Ghost, the one God for all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship Him through the spectacles of Ethiopia (in Barrett 1977:77).

To the down-trodden blacks in the States and elsewhere, Garvey's message provided inspiration and pride in being black. It also illuminated a path outwards: a path leading to Africa, the ancestral land of all blacks. There are many sociological reasons as to why Garvey's movement did not succeed. When Garvey was forced to return to Jamaica, he succeeded in attracting some adherents to his ideology. However, it was not until his death that the full realization of the import of his message was understood and made use of by some of his followers in order to meet the changing social and economic climate. Among the prophecies revealed by Garvey, one in particular received a great deal of attention when the event prophesized actually came into being. It is believed that Garvey had stated, "Look to Africa, when a Black King shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near" (Kitzinger 1969:245).

The Early Rastafarians

Thus, when Ras Tafari Haile Selassie was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia and took the titles of 'Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Lion of Judah, 225th in line of succession, direct descendent of Solomon and Sheba' (Barrett 1977), some Garveyites saw this as the fulfillment of Garvey's prophecy. A number of Jamaicans, notably Leonard Howell, Joseph Hibbert, Archibald Dunkley, Robert Hinds, Paul Earlington, Vernal Davis and Ferdinand Ricketts soon became pioneers of a new religion as they circulated around the island preaching their revelation and belief in this new found truth. It is interesting to note that all these individuals had arrived at this interpretation independently. Furthermore, the religious backgrounds of all these individuals was markedly different (McPherson 1982). Thus, the beginnings of Rastafarianism can be located in the early 1930's which heralded the coronation of the first black emperor to be recognized by the world.

The Rastafarian Exegesis

To substantiate their new found 'truth', the founders of the Rastafarian movement drew supportive tracts from a vast body of literature connected with Ethiopianism, Garveyism, the bible - both the King James version and the 'Holy Piby' or the 'Black Man's Bible' written by a Robert Athlyi Rogers in 1924, and a Jamaican publication - the "Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy" written by a Reverend Fitz Balintine

Petersburgh in 1926 (Hill 1983). The most significant Rastafarian text to emerge in this early period was the Promised Key written by Leonard P. Howell and published in 1935 in Ghana (Hill 1983; McPherson p.c., 1983). This text contains material which is largely taken from the 'Holy Piby', and is full of references to the divinity of Haile Selassie and the idea of black supremacy.

With the seeds of Ethiopianism, black supremacy and repatriation to Africa laid down by Marcus Garvey, the work of Howell, Hibbert, Dunkley, Hinds, Earlington, Davis and Ricketts soon became the nurturing power facilitating the growth of what was to become the Rastafarian movement. Some of the biblical passages which formed the Rastafarian exegesis were the following:

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice: who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, ..., was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.... And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not: behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof (Revelations 5:2-5).

For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am Black; astonishment hath taken hold of me (Jeremiah 8:21).

And I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was White as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire (Daniel 7:9).

Here the verse "... and the hair of his head was like pure wool", reveals according to Rastafarian theology, that the King was black since it is blacks who have woolly hair. Similarly, the words "burning fire" indicate blackness or burnt black. The song of Solomon, too, refers to this theme of blackness.

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Keder, as the Curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.... His head is of the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven (Son of Solomon 1:5-6 and 5:11).

Another reference commonly cited also points to this motif of blacks as the chosen people, as the true Israelites.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and he said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, true, O king. He answered and said, lo, I see four men loose,

walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt;
and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God
(Daniel 3:24-25).

Other biblical passages citing the various titles of Haile Selassie also assumed new significance and were consequently incorporated into the Rastafarian exegesis. In this regard, Revelation 19:16 forms a vital part of this highly specific interpretation.

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name
written: KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS (Barrett
1977).

In addition to the above, the following passages from the Bible are also used by the Rastafarians to support their interpretation of Haile Selassie as the divine messiah and as the personification of God: Daniel 3:24-25, Ezekiah 30, Timothy 6, Revelation 17 and Isaiah 43 (Barrett 1968, 1977; McPherson 1982). There are also numerous psalms and passages from the old testament to be found in the Rastafarian exegesis.

Strengthened by their particular interpretation of these religious texts and the added discovery that the name 'Haile Selassie' literally translated meant the power of the Trinity, these pioneers embarked on the road of freedom through repatriation as laid down by Marcus Garvey. But, unlike Garvey, they chose a messianic outlook. They were awaiting the return of their messiah to lead them to Zion - in this case Ethiopia. Thus, Ethiopia was viewed as heaven and Haile Selassie as Christ incarnate.

Over the course of time, biblical language and worldview became the principal tools for the construction of a Rastafarian reality. World events as well as local upheavals were interpreted through this worldview. The motifs of black supremacy, repatriation, and the divinity of Haile Selassie were embroidered into the biblical tapestry that was the Rastafarian reality. Thus when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, the Rastafarians interpreted it as Revelation 19:19, which states:

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth and
their armies gathered together to make war against him
that sat on the horse and against his army.

Similarly, when Haile Selassie confronted the League of Nations in 1936, the Rastafarians equated his position to that of the 'lamb' in the Bible as for example Revelation 19:25:

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it
he shall smite the nations.

When Haile Selassie returned to govern Ethiopia in 1941, the following biblical text was cited by the Rastafarians:

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet

that wrought miracles before him with which he deceives them that worship his image. These were both cast alive (Revelation 19:20) (Barrett 1977).

Clearly the 'beast' here refers to Italy and more particularly to Mussolini. The latter was also considered to be the 'false prophet' since the Rastafarians felt that Mussolini had influenced the other countries to vote against Ethiopia (Barrett 1977).

It can be seen that the Rastafarian interpretation is rooted in the bible but differs radically from all others. It is an interpretation specifically suited to a people caught in a situation created by history; a prolonged social condition that denied them any sense of pride and dignity.

Rastafarian Cosmology

The Rastafarian use of these biblical texts varies from one group to another. While they pay attention to specific passages that validate their belief in the Emperor Haile Selassie, other passages are also given symbolic meaning allowing for development of a particular Rastafarian cosmology. For example, the story of creation is interpreted in a specific sense by the Rastafarians. According to the account given to Nicholas (1979) by her informants, creation was begun by the shaping of the black race. Since God was black and since He created man in His own image, it logically follows that the first man to inhabit the earth was a black man. Black women were created with their male counterparts and as their 'equals'. God commanded this pair to be fruitful and multiply to replenish the earth. The creation of Adam and Eve (the originators of the white race) is said to have occurred after the first creation (i.e. after the black race). However, Adam and Eve were not given license to procreate which they nevertheless did and for which they were punished.

According to this account, Adam and Eve were created for the sole purpose of tilling the land. They were, in other words, subservient to the blacks. One can see the reversal of roles here as in the blacks holding a superior position while the whites are allocated to an inferior position of labouring and providing for the blacks. However, the 'chosen' blacks also fell from God's grace by emulating the white man's evil ways. It is also from this type of reasoning that white civilization is construed as epitomizing corruption and oppression and is therefore named 'Babylon'. The biblical context of this term is one reason for its popular usage amongst the Rastafarians who conceptualize it in the very manner in which it is described in Revelation 17:1-5:

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was

arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications: And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth (Barrett 1977).

It is interesting to note that although the Rastafarians claim that women are 'theologically' equal to men, they still conceptualize Babylon in the form of a woman; a woman who represents evil, corruption, sexual promiscuity and filth. The implications of this discrepancy between the 'ideal' reality as opposed to the 'actual' reality can be found in the social fabric of the Rastafarian lifestyle (the 'livity'). This point will be discussed in more detail in the latter part of this paper.

In this particular case as in others, one can see a relationship between the aspirations of the masses and their perceptions, worldview and dogmatic beliefs as manifested by their adherence to this kind of belief system. Weber (1930) describes this as a process of 'elective affinities', whereby the followers of any religion take only those elements of the religion that fit well within their existing ideological framework or belief system. In the case of the Rastafarians, the ideological base of Garveyism that preached a black God, and blacks as the chosen people fits in well within the overall religious interpretation and choice of this faith. Such an ideological leaning then allows the individual to construe phenomenon in such a way as to bend reality to suit the ideology. Thus, the verses of the bible, picked with such care and selectivity end up 'proving' a reality which needs no proof.

Socio-economic factors influencing Rastafarianism

It is significant to note that the movement first gained impetus in the slums of Kingston (Kitzinger 1969; Nettleford 1972). Literature in the area of the sociology of religion indicates that millennial movements usually consist of members drawn from the lower echelons of society (Hobsbawm 1959; Lanternari 1963; Lefever 1977; Simpson 1962). Ghetto life in Jamaica certainly reflects the desperation and frustration of its lower class inhabitants. The Rastafarians are usually found in the worst slum areas of Kingston (Kitzinger 1969). When all roads to social and economic mobility are barred to a particular group (as in the case of blacks in Jamaica), the subculture in question often attempts to create other ways of attaining the same material rewards as that enjoyed by their white, socially mobile and economically well-to-do counterparts. It is in this sense that some members of the black subcultures in the United States have resorted to 'pimping' as an attempt to psychologically maintain some kind of dominance and physically attain the same material rewards as their white counterparts. Rastafarianism represents one creative avenue as used by Jamaican blacks to transcend the frustration and hopelessness of their situation as they perceived it (Chevannes 1971; Kitzinger 1969; Watson, 1974). Even now, Rastafarians remain highly concentrated in the ghettos of Jamaica (Barrett 1977; Nettleford 1972). With so much poverty and lack of basic essentials, it is likely and possible that blacks in these areas would respond to an ideology that promises them wealth, power and prestige.

Confrontation with the Law

The Rastafarian movement's attitude towards all governmental agencies of social control is negative to say the least. The roots of this attitude can be traced both historically as well as through an understanding of Rastafarian beliefs.

Barrett (1977) provides an informative account of one such direct confrontation that resulted when one of the founding members of the Rastafarian faith - Leonard Howell - was arrested on grounds of preaching anti-establishment and racist beliefs. This incident occurred in 1933 and a closer examination of Howell's rhetoric reveals the general direction of the movement at this time. Among the principles that Barrett identifies in Howell's speech as indicative of Rastafarian ideology are:

- (1) Hatred for the White race;
- (2) the complete superiority of the Black race;
- (3) revenge on the Whites for their wickedness;
- (4) the negation, persecution and humiliation of the government and legal bodies of Jamaica;
- (5) preparation to go back to Africa; and
- (6) acknowledging Haile Selassie as the supreme being and only ruler of Black people (Barrett 1977:85).

This exemplifies the rebellious and violent direction the movement was taking. Two points need elaboration here. The first is the extreme hatred for the white race. It can be seen from the brief discussion of Rastafarian cosmology that the Rastafarians blame the white man for leading the black man astray. Black attitudes can be understood when placed in the historical context of colonialism and slavery.

As Jamaica was a colonized country until 1962, British domination was still visible in the 1930's. Land was owned by British landlords who were for the most part absent. The task of overseeing the plantations was carried out by overseers who would be appointed by these absentee landlords (Hurvitz and Hurvitz 1971). It was the overseers who were often very cruel and unbending taskmasters as it was their lot to turn out the profits and thus ensure the longevity of their jobs. The majority of the blacks in Jamaica are descendents of the slaves who worked these plantations (Hurvitz and Hurvitz 1971). The memory of slavery is still fresh in their minds. It is not surprising then that the whites are viewed as oppressors. The Rastafarians, in particular, never forget that they are descended from the slaves that came from Africa (Barrett 1977; Nettleford 1972; Owens 1976).

The Rastafarians also view the Jamaican government with suspicion. To them, the government represents 'Babylon'. They are cognizant of the fact that it is in the government's interest to keep them in Jamaica. They refuse to accept the fact that they are now Jamaicans and that since independence, Jamaica is a free nation. According to the Rastafarians, Jamaica is still dominated by foreign interests and to this extent they are quite right. However, there is also another reason as to why the Jamaican government is viewed with disfavor. The Rastafarians believe in divine government or what they term as 'divine theocracy' - a country ruled by God (Nicholas and Sparrow 1979).

Divine theocracy comes close to Plato's idea of a domain ruled by a philosopher-king. In this respect, Haile Selassie is viewed as the divine ruler. According to one Rastafarian:

Theocratic Government is a divine government that shall rule Creation in Love, Purity, Holiness, and Unity with all the ingredients of Affection, Compassion, and Humility. The Theocratic Government was projected from the foundation of Creation. But because Lucifer polluted it, it broke apart. We come to reunite it into one gigantic force, that it must cover the whole world, like a water cover the sea. That's what the Theocratic Government are: we are no pain, no sickness, no tears, no woe, no man that eat dead cow and woman having birth control and man that put on panther (condom). Because Satan and his host have been trampled under brutal feet of death. When we conquer Babylon, when we conquer the deceiver Pope under brutal feet of death, then it shall be one ruling government - theocracy. Combined with Time, Nature, and Space - those are the three ruling forces of theocracy. The Rainbow is the emblem, the dominion, and the power and the glory for all the Theocratic Government, and that's the reason why all those who belongs to this Theocratic Government should project qualities. Not only talk it but utilize it among others. Be a mirror, reflect qualities (Nicholas and Sparrow 1979:43).

This serves to explicate to a degree why the Jamaican government is viewed so negatively. Jamaica is still seen as participating in the world-wide 'Babylonian conspiracy' geared towards the continuing oppression of the black race and more specifically, towards barring any real repatriation of blacks to Africa (Barrett 1979; Nettleford 1971; Owens 1976). In this vein, the Pope too, is seen as being part of this conspiracy as he is seen as the protector of a corrupt established Church that not only withholds the truth regarding early Christianity from the masses, but that also allows for the distortion of Christianity and hence the continued oppression of blacks (Barrett 1977; Nettleford 1972; Nicholas and Sparrow 1979; Owens 1976).

The Rastafarians also claim that Britain had given Jamaica a substantial sum of money for their repatriation to Africa. Jamaican leaders have tried in vain to explain to the Rastafarians that the money in question was actually given to British landlords of Jamaican plantations in order to compensate them for the loss of a labour force due to the abolition of slavery (Barrett 1977).

In an historical context, this anti-establishment feeling and belief in conspiracy became more pronounced when Howell set up one of the first Rastafarian settlements in the hills of St. Catherine, Jamaica.

Pinnacle

The commune, established by Howell in the late 1930's, was named Pinnacle. It was instrumental in laying down the foundations of

Rastafarianism (Barrett 1977). It was during this period that the major symbols of identification amongst the Rastafarians emerged. The growing of 'dreadlocks' and the smoking of 'marijuana' became intimately associated with the Rastafarians who populated the Pinnacle. Elaborate social laws were also formed in this period, especially regarding the status of women and children. The Pinnacle, to some degree, was a 'state within a state' (Barrett 1977) particularly since the authorities were unaware of its existence during its early phase. In July, 1941, the police invaded the commune and arrested seventy Rastafarians (Barrett 1977).

Although destroyed by the police, the Pinnacle while in existence had served several functions. As has already been mentioned, it created a cohesive in-group atmosphere and this in turn led to the development of a specific Rastafarian culture. The Pinnacle fostered a distinctive pattern of life based on a specific set of beliefs. When a group is put into isolation, and is surrounded by hostile forces, it will very likely create visible and other 'differences' between itself and its surrounding environment. These 'created differences' can take many forms, and amongst the Rastafarians these differences took the form of their symbols of identification. By heightening the differences, the Rastafarians were also conveying their message of rebellion and protest against established Jamaican society (Kitzinger 1969; Simpson 1962). In defiance of traditional norms, the Rastafarians maintained their long dreadlocks and their marijuana smoking habits. They refused to marry in churches and defied all social laws and conventions (Barrett 1977).

Claudius Henry

Another important historical event that served to fortify group solidarity and outline group boundaries was the 1958 Universal Rastafarian convention (Barrett 1977). It took place in Jamaica and provided an impetus for all (Jamaican) Rastafarians to get together and perform religious rituals. More importantly, the convention spurred yet another attempt at repatriation. Claudius Henry perceived himself to be the Black Moses who would lead his brethren to the promised land. According to Barrett (1977), Henry distributed thousands of cards bearing the following message:

Pioneering Israel's scattered children of African origin "back home to Africa". This year 1959, deadline Oct.5th; this new government is God's righteous Kingdom of Everlasting Peace on Earth. "Creations Second Birth." Holder of this certificate is requested to visit the Headquarters at 18 Rosalie Avenue. . . August 1st 1959 for our Emancipation Jubilee, commencing 9 a.m. sharp. Please reserve this certificate for removal. No passport will be necessary for those returning to Africa etc. We sincerely, the Seventh Emmanuel's Brethren gathering Israel's scattered and annointed prophet, Rev. C.V. Henry, R.B. Given this 2nd day of March 1959, in the year of the reign of his Imperial Majesty, 1st Emperor of Ethiopia, "God's elect", Haile Selassie, King

of Kings and Lord of Lords, Israel's Returned Messiah"
(Barrett 1977:96).

The response to these certificates was enormous as can be evidenced from Henry's success at selling close to fifteen hundred of them. The symbolism inherent in this certificate reveals several things. In the first place, it shows how much the writer is steeped in the Rastafarian ideology. Secondly, it demonstrates the extent to which repatriation was viewed as an impending reality. Hundreds of people sold their possessions and congregated at Henry's headquarters on the appointed day (Barrett 1977). As with all doomsday cultists, when prophecy fails, the strategy is to extend the deadline (Festinger and Schacter 1968; Zygmunt 1970). Claudius Henry tried to do just this. When this failed, he denied ever having suggested repatriation as a reality (Barrett 1977).

A Change in Orientation

Until the 1960's, Rastafarians suffered from a very negative public image. Not only were they strange to look at, but they were also perceived to be violent and dirty. In order to counter this image, the leading brethren approached the then head of the University College of West Indies and requested that a study of the movement be undertaken so as to inform the public about the true nature of their faith (Smith, Augier and Nettleford 1960). As a result, three sociologists were assigned to the task. Their research culminated in a short report to the government and people of Jamaica. The report, which was published both in the newspaper and separately, outlined the history of the movement, its beliefs and values, as well as its religious doctrine. The report also made several recommendations to the government requesting that more civilized living quarters and basic amenities be made available to the Rastafarians. The overall impact of the report was a positive one although it also fuelled internal dissension within the movement. However, it served to enlighten the public to the true nature and plight of the Rastafarians. The report also advocated that the government begin making immediate inquiries into the possibility of repatriation (Smith, Augier and Nettleford 1960).

While most of the recommendations have been followed, repatriation remains a problem. Since the Rastafarians are a semi-educated and unskilled population, their chances of being repatriated or even accepted by most African nations is slim indeed. Nevertheless, there have been some drastic changes in the movement's ideology stemming from the Emperor's historic visit to Jamaica in 1966. In addition, recent socio-political changes occurring throughout the Caribbean region have influenced the movement's emphasis on repatriation.

The Emperor's visit drew throngs of Rastafarians from all parts of Jamaica. The event was a memorable one for all Rastafarians. They came in thousands and settled themselves on the airfield (Barrett 1977). Many brought with them their Ethiopian flags and other Rastafarian paraphernalia (Barrett 1977). According to Barrett's sources, it was a rainy day heavy with clouds in the sky. However, as soon as the plane landed, the sun suddenly shone. To the Rastafarians, this was yet another sign of Haile Selassie's divinity. All the Rastafarians rushed towards the plane breaking security lines in the process. There was such a commotion that the Emperor himself, having stepped out, retreated into the

plane and did not emerge for another half hour. In the meantime, officials recruited an influential Rastafarian - Mortimo Planno - who quietened the mob, allowing the Emperor to step down and be led away. In the course of the Emperor's visit, many leading Rastafarians were invited to banquets and other official functions, and were given time and opportunity to converse with the Emperor (Barrett 1977; personal observation in Jamaica, 1983).

The result of this was quite startling. A new slogan replaced the old one of repatriation. The motto now became "liberation before repatriation" (Barrett 1977). The brethren claimed that Haile Selassie had instructed them to liberate blacks in Jamaica before seeking repatriation (Barrett 1977). This shift in orientation has resulted in a number of positive outcomes. The most significant change has occurred in the Rastafarians attitude towards Jamaica as their nation. Rastafarians are now contributing actively to Jamaican culture and economy (though not always in ways that conform with the government's stated ideology and values). The Rastafarians are only now beginning to feel that they are active agents capable of changing society. Barrett (1977) calls this a process of routinization, indicating that the movement has now settled down, accepted its environment, and as a result lost some of its original revolutionary energy and thrust.

RASTAFARIAN BELIEFS

Systems of belief provide cult movements with a major source of power. This power, . . . , does not derive from a body of systematic or logical truths but rather from the psychological, emotional content of the ideology. This is especially true of Rastafarian beliefs. To the outsider much of the Rastafarian rhetoric appears to be meaningless babbling yet, on the deeper level of communication, it appears to project a message to native hearers despite the seeming madness (Barrett 1977:103).

Six basic beliefs characterize the Rastafarian faith. The first and foremost is the recognition and implicit belief in Haile Selassie as the living personification of God (Barrett 1977; Nettleford 1972). In conjunction with this is the belief that black people are the chosen people, the true Israelites reincarnated from the ancient Israelites. The exile of the true Israelites is a result of 'white trickery' and corruption. From this follows the underlying belief in black superiority. Jamaica is viewed as an exile and as hell (Barrett 1977). Repatriation is thought to be in the process - both on the governmental as well as the divine levels of reality. Finally, a belief that the world will soon be under black domination is also expressed. It must be noted that the rigidity of these beliefs varies from one Rastafarian group to another. There are many Rastafarians who are quite amiable and open to whites.

Their notions of black superiority does not translate into a dogmatic hatred for all whites.

The Rastafarian belief system also carries within it very strict rules regarding diet and behaviour. An excerpt from Ras Samuel Brown's treatise on the Rastafarians will serve to shed light on the nature of these rules:

1. We strongly object to sharp implements used in the desecration of the figure of Man; e.g. the trimming and shaving, tatooing of the skin, and cutting of the flesh.
2. We are basically vegetarians, making scant use of certain animal flesh, outlawing the use of swine's flesh in any form, shell fishes, scale-less fishes, snails, etc.
3. We worship and observe no other God but Rastafari outlawing all other forms of Pagan worship yet respecting all believers.
4. We love and respect the brotherhood of mankind, yet our first love is to the sons of Ham.
5. We disapprove and abhor utterly hate, jealousy, envy, deceit, guile, treachery etc.
6. We do not agree to the pleasures of present day society and its modern evils.
7. We are avowed to create a world of one brotherhood.
8. Our duty is to extend the hand of charity to any brother in distress, firstly for he is of the Rastafarian faith, secondly to any human, animals, plants etc.
9. We do adhere to the ancient laws of Ethiopia.
10. Thou shall give no thought to the aid, titles, and possessions that the enemy in his fear may seek to bestow on you; resolution to your purpose is the love of Rastafari (Barrett 1977:156).

This ten point moral code serves to illustrate the essence of the movement's ideology. Although everyone is considered to a brother, and help may be extended to all, a Rastafarian's first priority is towards his fellow brethren. Again, it must be noted that individual interpretation and degree of adherence to these rules is extremely varied. It is this variation that has led some researchers to criticize Barrett's use of a single source in this particular area of his study of the movement.

Dying and Death

Other elements of the Rastafarian belief system which need to be elaborated are the concepts of death, the role of the bible, and the status of women. Rastafarians do not believe in physical death. The true Rasta has eternal life (Owens 1976). This in its own way poses a contradiction in social life since Rastamen are not supposed to die. The process or reasoning by which this death is rationalized is always in keeping with the basic tenet of the denial of death. Rastafarians will rationalize death by attributing it to the Babylonian conspiracy, or when such evidence is lacking, death is attributed to the inability of that

particular Rastaman to be a true and righteous Rastafarian. However, once again, the interpretation of death varies with individual Rastafarians. Some Rastafarians acknowledge the reality of death but add that the soul of a Rastafarian is eternal and lives in glory in Mount Zion - Ethiopia (Owens 1976).

The Bible

The bible is highly revered amongst the Rastafarians. In fact, the most common ritual prescribed involves reading a chapter of the bible every day (Barrett 1977; personal observation 1983). The version of the bible most commonly read is the King James one. The Rastafarians claim, however, that King James distorted the true content of the bible partly because of his inability to translate the Amharic text accurately and partly as a deliberate ploy to perpetuate the suppression and oppression of the black race (Barrett 1977; Owens 1976). So although the bible is read and venerated, the Rastafarians only choose to read those passages which they 'intuitively' feel are 'correct'. Clearly, the Rastafarians will only read those passages that lend support and credence to their religious beliefs.

Women

The Rastafarian view of women deserves some mention here. Women are seen as being second to men. Although the Rastafarian story of Creation ascribes women an equal status, this notion is interpreted in a somewhat peculiar manner such that in the final analysis, it is equality only in letter rather than deed. However, with regard to their world-view and perception of reality, Rastafarians truly believe that their women are considered and treated as their equals. In this respect, the women too, sharing the same world-view consider themselves as 'equals' and believe that they are treated accordingly (personal observation 1983).

Nonetheless, when one considers such behavioural features as the fact that Rastafarian women are not allowed to keep their hair open and unbound, are not allowed to practice any form of birth control, are not allowed to 'paint' their faces or adorn themselves in attractive ways, are not allowed to wear trousers or dresses that cling to their bodies (Barrett 1977; personal observation 1983), then one wonders if this is not a form of oppression or a curtailment of individual freedom. Aside from this, Rastafarian women are discouraged from participating in male dominated ritual activity such as gatherings where the process of 'reasoning' occurs. The symbolic value of such features associated with the status of women will be discussed in the latter part of this paper.

SYMBOLS

The symbols I propose to discuss here by no means run the total gamut of Rastafarian symbols. They cover only a minute portion of this vast and rich area. I would even go so far as to argue that almost everything the Rastafarians engage in is symbolic in one sense or another. The

definition of 'symbol' that I have chosen to work with is not unique; versions of it can be found in a variety of theoretical frameworks. In arriving at a viable definition of the word 'symbol', I have utilized various approaches dealing with symbology. Primarily, I have used the work of Victor Turner, Raymond Firth and Dorothy Lee.

Turner's definition of a symbol seems to fit best with the Rastafarian material. It also avoids the theoretical pitfalls stemming from the distinction between private and public symbols - although this issue always exists in the background. Turner draws his definition from the Oxford dictionary which contains the following explanation. A symbol is "... a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought" (Turner 1967:19). This definition is particularly viable given its common understanding as it is shared by virtually all speakers of the English language. As such it is part of the mutual knowledge of society and in this respect it is a useful tool given that the construction of reality rests on what can be regarded as the common stock of knowledge.

Firth, in his extensive literary review of symbolic thought, points to another interesting definition of symbol as advanced by Dorothy Lee. According to her definition:

"A symbol ... is not a thing but rather a point in a creative process of symbolization whereby the physical reality is transformed into the thing, the experienced reality. The symbol conveys the meaning of the situation in which it participates, and has no existence and no meaning apart from this situation.... Lee has argued that a symbol is part of a whole, a component of a field which also contains the so-called thing, as well as the process of symbolizing and the apprehending individual (in Firth 1975:172).

The most appealing aspect of Lee's definition is her stress on the context as well as her insistence on the process and unity of the act of symbolization. Firth's definition is well worth quoting here as it sheds more light on the whole concept of symbols. According to Firth:

In a broad sense, symbols may be said to occur when some components of the mind's experience elicit activity and values ordinarily associated with other components of experience (1975:168).

All of these definitions emphasize different aspects of symbols. Firth emphasizes the mental associational process which gives rise to symbols. Lee stresses the contextual aspects and Turner points to the relationship of representation. The definition of symbol utilized in this paper shall attempt to encapsulate all these facets. In addition, the definition of symbol used here will also contain both the metaphoric and metonymic aspects of symbolism. Thus, a symbol may be something that represents something else, or it may be a part standing for the whole. The relationship of representation may be metaphoric in the sense that

something real stands for an abstract principle.

RASTAFARIAN SYMBOLS OF IDENTIFICATION

The symbols of identification used by the Rastafarians include: the wearing of dreadlocks, the utilization of colours of the Ethiopian flag in clothing or other forms of ornamentation, music, argot, the smoking of marijuana and diet. I shall discuss these in relation to the dichotomous distinctions between nature versus culture, sacred versus profane, and more generally black versus white expressions of culture.

Dreadlocks

The Rastafarians wear their hair in long coiled locks. These are called 'dreadlocks'. Barrett (1977) indicates that the wearing of dreadlocks originated in the days of the Pinnacle community. Rastamen wear locks for several reasons. First of all, it differentiates them from their non-Rasta counterparts. Secondly, it is a symbol of rebellion. While the rest of the Jamaican society believes in short hair and the 'clean cut' look, the Rastas consider long hair to be natural and a source of vitality and strength (Barrett 1977). More importantly, long hair symbolizes an attachment to their ancestral and racial 'roots'.

The Rastafarians claim that by growing locks, they are concretely realizing that they are Africans (personal observation 1983). Some even claim that the wearing of locks began after they had seen the locks of some East African tribesmen such as the Masai (Barrett 1977). Other Rastas, however, refer to the bible as the source of the custom. Leviticus 21:5 is the commonly cited passage in defence of the wearing of dreadlocks. This passage, one may recall, constitutes the first 'commandment' of Ras Samuel Brown's ten point moral code. Specifically, Leviticus 21:5 states the following:

Thou shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corners of their beard nor make any cuttings in the flesh.

In this respect, the Rastafarians equate themselves with the Nazarites and more particularly with Samson. Firth (1975), in his discussion of Christian symbolism, postulates that in the Judeo-Christian tradition hair was regarded as a source of strength and vitality. This analysis could also be applied to the Rastafarians, but another more plausible theme explains this phenomenon more clearly. The Rastafarians place more value on natural as opposed to cultural or artificial aspects of reality. Seen in this light, the growing of dreadlocks is a manifestation of this tendency towards the natural.

Natural, according to the Rastafarians, represents 'roots' or rather the well-springs of their heritage which is 'Africa'. In keeping with the above principle, Rastafarians do not use any chemically based soaps or

detergents (Barrett 1977; personal observation 1983). Rather, they wash themselves, whenever possible, with herbs and rainwater. Processed water, is generally, taboo. Oppositions such as clean or pure versus dirty or polluted, natural versus unnatural, and sacred versus profane come to mind here. However, the important point to note here is that although this describes a general attitude prevalent amongst the Rastafarians in Jamaica, it is not necessarily a completely uniform cultural trait. There are exceptions in every group and amongst the Rastafarian groups, many variations both in terms of the interpretation of the belief system and practice of these beliefs is in effect (Jiwani 1984).

The association of negativity with anything processed and hence unnatural can be viewed somewhat as an extrapolation of the Rastafarian attitude towards the wider society and more particularly with the foreign imperial powers that to this day affect the economy and cultural make-up of the island (Albuquerque 1977; Campbell 1980a; Hurvitz and Hurvitz 1971). Processed water, as with anything else that is processed represents a kind of pollution - a pollution inflicted on the object by its relationship with the technology that has finally produced it in that form. Technology is the Babylonian instrument of power - used to suppress and oppress the masses in the Third World. Technology stands in direct opposition to the principles of nature by which a true and upright man is supposed to live. On a deeper and more mystical level, technology and its misuse directs one away from the central goal of life - to become a righteous being, in harmony with nature. Instead, technology gives man the impression of being powerful enough such that rather than achieve a harmonious existence, the end goal becomes one of seeking to dominate others (Jiwani 1984). The oppositions of nature versus culture, pure versus polluted and sacred versus profane can also be discerned in other aspects of the Rastafarian lifestyle, as for example, in the attitude toward women.

Rastafarian attitudes toward Women

While men are allowed to keep their hair open, women are supposed to conceal it underneath a head dress usually made of cloth. Women are clearly seen as agents of pollution. When a woman is undergoing her menstrual periods, she is not allowed to cook for her man (Barrett 1977). The concept of pollution always raises questions regarding the corresponding 'rituals of purification'. One would suppose that if something were considered polluting, then measures would exist regarding its purification as means to counter the polluting effect. To this date, nothing of this nature has been recorded in the Rastafarian literature. Personal interviews have revealed that notions of purification do exist, but these are very subjective and individually oriented in practice. In one case that I encountered, the Rastafarian in question believed that this sort of purification can be accomplished by such means as bathing right after coming in contact with the source of pollution (personal observation in Vancouver 1983). One possible ritual of purification could be the smoking of marijuana as it has often been described as having a cleansing effect.

Thus, one can atone for sinning, but the atonement takes the form of individual redemption through prayers and offerings to God. Even the very act of becoming a Rastafarian is an individualistic one. The individual just comes to realize the sinful nature of his life and becomes a

Rastafrian upon this realization. The subjective element in this particular subculture cannot be underestimated even with respect to its manifestation in other parts of the world and hence in cultural milieux that are completely foreign to it. It is to this prevailing subjectivity that one can attribute in part, the lack of external or coercive means of control. The kind of coercive control that is often found to exist in religious 'sects' is by and large absent in the many Rastafarian groups within Jamaica (personal observation in Jamaica, 1983).

Women are also not allowed to engage in any form of birth control that is not 'natural', or rather that which involves some form of technology as in the modern contemporary methods of birth control such as the 'pill'. This abhorrence for modern birth control methods stems in part from a belief in the natural as opposed to the unnatural. But the Rastafarians also place importance on the whole notion of procreation - its naturalness and its implications in terms of perpetuating the race. In other words, for the individual Rastaman, his 'seed' is considered to be a gift from God and its destruction through birth control methods is viewed as a sin. However, in this case as in others, the attitudes vary from one Rastafarian to another and to extend these attitudes to a whole population would be similar to regarding the whole group as a monolith - something that it is definitely not.

Ganja - the Wisdom Weed

'Ganja' smoking can also be discussed as a symbol of identification amongst the Rastafarians. The term 'ganja' itself is an Indian word for hemp. It is derived from the Indian pilgrimage ritual of smoking the herb on the banks of the river Ganges (Jiwani 1984). The river Ganges represents 'purification' since bathing in its waters is considered to exercise purifying effects on the soul. One can only speculate that the Rastafarian usage of this term comes from its early association with the Indian community in the West Indies. Whether the Rastas consider ganja to have purifying effects is not quite clear. Certainly, the ritualized consumption and smoking of this herb seems to indicate this to be the case.

Another synonym for ganja is 'Kali' weed. Again, Kali is the Indian Goddess whose centre of pilgrimage is the river Ganges. Ganja is considered sacred by the Rastafarians. For them it symbolizes peace and meditation. Because of its soothing properties, the drug plays a primary role in religious rituals. Ganja is also considered to be the 'weed of Solomon' - a label derived from the tale that the herb was one of the three found to be growing on Solomon's grave and thus in a sense, embodies Solomon's wisdom (Barrett 1977).

Ganja is also used as a medicinal herb and is utilized in the preparation of food and tea. However, the Rastafarians claim that not everyone can smoke ganja and derive peace and wisdom. The herb will only bring out these qualities in a true Rastaman (personal observation in Jamaica, 1983). For those steeped in Babylonian ways, the drug will only serve to confuse them or create madness in their minds. In this sense, the Rastas claim that Babylon is trying to control and above all destroy the cultivation of ganja for the very reason that it brings out negative and destructive behaviours in them. Thus, ganja serves a variety of purposes and represents a variety of phenomena.

Just as in the growing of dreadlocks, the smoking of marijuana emerged as a Rastafarian practice in the Pinnacle phase of the movement. It can be argued that the excessive use of marijuana by the Rastas stemmed from a need by the latter to differentiate themselves from the rest of Jamaican society. This can be construed as a kind of rebellion where the Rastas gladly subsumed what the rest of society considered to be dangerous. Thus, in a manner, ganja symbolizes a form of 'mute' protest; a defiance against the laws of society.

Rastafarians also advocate the use of ganja over any other form of intoxication such as alcohol. While ganja is viewed as a natural herb, alcohol is seen as a brewed mixture that is unnatural because of the 'rottenness' of the fruit used and the various chemicals added in its process of production. Rastafarians will often quote passages from the Bible in defence of their intake of marijuana. They claim that ganja is a gift from God, and that man is encouraged to use it to derive wisdom and peace of mind. The most often cited passages are derived from Genesis (in Barrett 1977):

And the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed as in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:12).

... thou shalt eat the herb of the field (Genesis 1:18).

He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man (Psalm 104:14).

It is interesting to note that when ganja smoking occurs, each Rastafarian will smoke his own 'spliff' which is a rolled up cone like structure made either from newspaper or corn leaves and stuffed with a mixture of marijuana and tobacco (Barrett 1977 as well as personal observations). In ritual ceremonies, the 'spliff' may be replaced by a pipe or a 'chillum' (which is an Indian pipe specifically used by pundits and other Hindus for smoking marijuana). Serious Rastafarians (that is those deeply committed to the Rastafarian lifestyle or 'livity'), will also possess a chalice. The chalice, in most cases, is a coconut shell, half filled with water with a pipe coming out of a single opening. The chalice is used primarily for smoking ganja. The use of the word 'chalice' automatically conjurs up the ritualized use of this instrument in Christianity. The chalice, in terms of its Christian usage, is a kind of silver tray containing the wine and bread, elements of the Eucharist. In Christian theology, wine symbolizes the blood of Christ while the bread represents the body of Christ. The ceremony of Eucharist represents a partaking of the body of Christ. One can speculate from this that the term 'chalice' as used by the Rastafarians, indicates that they perceive the ritualized smoking of ganja in the same fashion as the Christians perceive the ceremony of Eucharist. Ganja, according to the Rastafarians, opens their eyes to the spirituality of JAH (a Rastafarian term for God, the origin of which can be traced to the Bible).

Red, Green and Gold

Not all Rastafarians grow locks. Most of them identify themselves as Rastafarians by wearing items of clothing or accessories with the colour red, green and gold. These are the colours of the Ethiopian flag. Kitzinger (1969) has analyzed the symbolism of these colours in terms of their representation on the Ethiopian flag. According to her, the green stands for the land of Africa, the yellow or gold represents the gold or wealth of Africa, and the red represents the power of the church in Africa and particularly in Ethiopia (Ethiopia has always maintained a very old form of Christianity as it was one of the earliest areas to be Christianized). Since the Rastafarians' main aim is repatriation, and since Ethiopia was the birth place of the Emperor Haile Selassie, who the Rastas believe is their messiah returned, it only follows that the Rastafarians are more likely to identify with that which is Ethiopian rather than Jamaican.

In addition to the notion of identification, the Rastafarians by displaying their allegiance to anything Ethiopian are rejecting the dominant stream of cultural nationalism that seems to be arising in Jamaica. Their non-participation in Jamaican political and social affairs reflects to some degree not only their disillusionment with this political system but also depicts a form of rebellion against this society. Furthermore, their association and ties with Ethiopia as their 'true and native' land mirrors their need to identify with their ancestral roots as Black Africans. By aligning themselves to the glory and status of Biblical Ethiopia, the Rastafarians are also trying to awaken the image of the black as a dignified and historically majestic figure.

The Lion as King of Beasts

Another visual symbol often utilized by the Rastafarians is the image of the lion. It is often painted on doorways and meeting places. Even in musical concerts, the Rasta musicians will often lower a flag bearing a picture of a lion. The lion represents Haile Selassie as the 'Lion of Judah'. The image of the lion conveys certain qualities which are considered to be positive by the Rastafarians. These include such attributes as strength, dominance, nobility and 'righteousness'. These attributes are to some extent derived from the popular image of the lion as symbolizing the 'King of Beasts' - hence the power and prestige associated with such a kingly position. According to Barrett:

... the lion represents not only the King of Kings, but the dominant maleness of the movement. The Rastafarians simulate the spirit of the lion in the way they wear their locks and in the way they walk (1977:142).

Whereas the lion is the king of beasts in the forest, Haile Selassie's title as the Lion of Judah represents to some degree his role as the king of the Rastafarians, albeit a king who is no longer physically present.

I-tal Style

Another area of symbolism which is associated with the Rastafarian lifestyle is food. Rastafarian food is called 'I-tal' food. The word 'I-

tal' is derived from the word 'total' (Barrett 1977). Most words used by the Rastafarians will have the subject 'I' prefixed instead of the first half of the word. For example, children becomes 'I-dren' as does meditation become 'I-ditation' and protection 'I-tection'. This usage of the 'I' will be discussed in detail in the section dealing with the Ratafarian argot.

I-tal food is total food because it is completely natural and has no additives and is not processed or reduced in any way. As has been pointed out before, the Rastas place more value on natural things as opposed to artificial things. Meat is forbidden, the reason being that meat is construed as dead flesh (Barrett 1977). Since humans are living entities, they should not partake of anything 'dead'. According to one Rastafarian:

...consuming meat, fish, eggs or poultry makes your stomach a cemetery as you are taking in dead flesh (Nicholas and Sparrow 1979:58).

Rastafarians prefer to cook their own food and are extremely wary of foods from unknown sources. Anything that is in any way processed is taboo. Concepts of purity and pollution can be seen in effect here. For the fear of being contaminated, Rastafarians even refuse to drink processed water. Only rain water is used as it is totally natural and pure. Again, one can see the emphasis on 'nature' as opposed to 'culture'.

Dread Talk

'Rasta talk' is an interesting product of the movement. As has already been mentioned, the letter 'I' is affixed to most words. Even when chanting the name of the Emperor, Rastas will often add 'I' at the end of each word. Hence, instead of saying Haile Selassie, they will often say 'Haile I, Selassi I'. Another common term used to address God and Emperor, or God as the emperor is 'Jah Rastafari'.

A Rastafarian, in everyday speech, will never refer to himself as 'me' but only as 'I and I'. What this represents is both the spiritual part of himself as well as the physical aspect of his being. The first 'I' connotes the spiritual aspect representing the spirituality of the whole universe. The second 'I' indicates the existence and unity of the physical part of the man. The body houses the soul. Hence, both facets of existence are recognized in the phrase 'I and I' (Owen 1975). One can almost see the beginnings of a duality which may come to occupy a prominent place in Rastafarian theology in a more sophisticated form.

Another term commonly used is 'dread'. This is derived from the term 'dreadful'. When people first perceived the locks of the Rastafarian, they called them dreadful because of the fear and awe they inspired (Barrett 1977). Now, a Rastafarian will refer to another Rasta as a 'dread', indicating the common ties of appearance that bind them. Joseph Owens describes the experience of dread as:

The well-spring of Rastafarian theology, the centre around which everything revolves and from which all moves outward, is the experience of dread. Dread is an experience of a people with a primordial but historically denied racial selfhood (1976:3).

Dread then indicates a collective experience which because of its traumatic nature has left its mark on the minds of the people. Above all, it seems that the notion of 'dread' separate the Rastas both from other religious groups that are located on the fringes of Jamaican society and the wider society as a whole. This separation and group isolation is in some senses perpetuated by the Rastafarians themselves primarily through their use of a highly specific argot.

Barrett describes this argot as:

... a religious language of a strange type. Few outsiders can make sense of what the average cultist says. In the first place, it is ungrammatical when spoken by the uneducated; secondly, it is Jamaican dialect used on the philosophical level, a burden which it was not created to bear; and finally, the Rastafarian speech is almost devoid of subject-object opposition as well as without verbs (1977:143).

Rastafarians believe in 'wordsound power' (Nicholas and Sparrow 1979; Owens 1976). According to Rasta theology, God created the world through the very act of speech. Thus, words have the power to create an atmosphere. Speech then becomes a powerful medium of communication. Changing words into the argot enable the Rastafarian to create a subjective world of meaning. Certain common words form the base of the argot and serve to communicate one Rastafarian's identity to another. Thus, words such as 'Irie', 'seen Dread', 'overstand', 'one love', 'Babylon', and so on would be incomprehensible to the outsider but have a very real message amongst the Rastafarians.

A favourite past-time of the Rastas is to sit in small groups of anywhere from two to ten persons and engage in conversation. This process is referred to as 'reasoning' (Cashmore 1979). Reasoning can be about anything, from politics to discussion of the religious doctrine. It is this collective 'reasoning' that perpetuates the existing argot and the innovation of other elements which are then added to the argot.

Although the Rastafarians lack the kind of elaborate structures that characterize other religious institutions such as churches, they do perform specific ritual ceremonies that can be likened to those engaged in by other religions. Rastafarian rituals consist of a Grounation ceremony performed once every year on the twenty-first of April to commemorate Haile Selassie's visit to Jamaica (Barrett 1977). In addition, there are the Nyabinghi gatherings, and finally, there are the weekly meetings to discuss the movement's problems and progress. The latter type of meetings are contingent on the type of Rastafarian group being observed. Some groups such as the Twelve Tribes organization have these kinds of regular meetings, however others vary depending on the membership and the particular individuals who are the 'leading brethren' of these groups (Jiwani 1984).

The Rastafarian movement, within Jamaica, is not a highly structured organization. Rather, it is more like a loosely structured movement containing a wide variety of structured and unstructured groups within it. However, the common belief in the Rastafarian tradition is what holds these groups together even though their interpretations to the tenets of the faith vary quite drastically (Jiwani 1984).

Rastafarian Music

Music plays an important part in the movement, although the type of music varies with each group. Nonetheless, music performs several functions for the movement as a whole. It not only serves as some kind of unifying element but also functions as a mechanism of identity, especially for the Rastafarians outside of Jamaica. With the commercialization of one variant of Rastafarian music - reggae - this music has now become synonymous with the Rastafarian image. Reggae music is often referred to as 'ghetto' music - the music of the oppressed. Some musicians claim that 'reggae' represents that which is 'regular', hence reggae music is the music of the regular masses, the ones who are not at the top of the social ladder (e.g. Hibbert Toots, see Reckord 1982).

The evolution of reggae music can be traced back to the days of American rhythm and blues and the early Jamaican 'mento' music. The fusion of these two musical traditions and styles produced the earliest form of reggae - ska. The influence of such Rastafarians as Count Ossie and his Mystic Revelations was a key determinant in changing the fast beat of ska to the slow and heavy bass beat of reggae (Shibata 1981). Most of the lyrics of reggae songs sing about Jah, Zion and of course the evils of Babylon. Reggae is also a popular medium for social comment. A great deal of Rastafarian theology can be gleaned from these lyrics. Reggae groups often take on such biblical names as the Israelites, the Nazarites etc.

Through the argot, food, music and lifestyle in general, the Rastafarians have managed to keep themselves distinct and separate from the wider society which they view as being polluted, infiltrated with the agents of Satan, and consequently Babylonian in all its aspects. Babylon, then, represents all that is profane. The Rasta vision of man as an upright, righteous, God fearing being, engaged in a pure lifestyle that is in harmony with nature and with the divine plan, reflects for them the sacredness of their doctrine and above all, a striving for the spiritual and hence, sacred side of man.

THE STYLIZATION OF CONFLICT

The Rastafarian symbols of identification are above all symbols of social protest against established Jamaican society. This stylized conflict (Hebdige 1979), although at first emanating from the political teachings of Marcus Garvey and retaining the primacy of repatriation to Africa, has over time taken on the colouring of a distinct religious ideology - that of Rastafarianism. The Rastafarian tradition as it now appears, is therefore a curious blending of socio-political and religious elements. The development of this movement through time has, as with the case of every religious movement arising from the peripheries of society, resulted in its routinization (Barrett 1977; Cashmore 1979; Weber 1930). This stage is often marked by the decline of political and religious fervour which in turn is often brought about by its co-optation into mainstream ideologies.

The paradigm underlying the Rastafarian movement can best be described as that of 'ritualized rebellion' (Gluckman 1956). While the Rastafarian tradition emerged as a response to external social and economic circumstances, its marriage with a religious ideology has resulted in a change whereby the original political and revolutionary fervour which gave rise to it is now being channelled into religious activities, albeit religious activities that cloak the political sentiment. Thus, the corollary of this marriage is one where the rebellion has become ritualized through its production and reproduction via religious rituals and sentiments. Evidence of this kind of siphoning of political energies can be found in a number of characteristics of the movement as it is manifest in Jamaica today.

Firstly, Rastafarian symbols of identification have penetrated the popular culture of the island resulting in a situation where even non-Rastas are to be found using specific Rastafarian symbols of identification. Secondly, the core of the movement, that which can be defined as existing from its inception and guiding the conceptions and traditions of Rastafarianism, has to some extent either become weakened or diluted as a consequence of time and further as a result of the co-optation of the movement. Needless to say, part of this process may have resulted from the death of several charismatic Rastafarian leaders as well as the commercialization of the Rastafarian tradition brought about by the commercialization of reggae music on an international scale. This process has in turn led to a situation where many so-called Rastafarians have joined the fold of the movement. Many of these 'pseudo-Rastafarians' have motives that are clearly individualistic to the extreme.

The inherent characteristics of the Rastafarian tradition in terms of its emphasis on the subjective realization of the validity of the faith and its tolerance for subjective interpretations has also facilitated its growth and the inclusion of many members who are either functional, political, religious or pseudo-Rastafarians (Jiwani 1984). The end result of these factors, has, in my opinion, led to the weakening of the movement and of its overall political orientation. However, this is not to say that the political underpinnings of its ideology have completely been watered down. There are at present many groups within the Rastafarian fold that espouse totally political interpretations of the Rastafarian faith. Nonetheless, these are balanced by other groups that hold a wholly religious interpretation of the faith.

CONCLUSION

Many researchers have prophesized the imminent demise of the movement due to its lack of a centralized organizational form and the absence of any form of concrete leadership. The failure of this prediction (which can be attested to by the fact of the movement's survival and rapid expansion over the last fifty years), rests on the operation of what Turner (1967, 1974) has conceptualized as 'anti-structure' or 'communitas'. This is the affective feeling or bonding that unites people together over and above the structural aspects of any group. So with the

Rastafarians, it is the oneness of their feeling and the identification with what they consider to be the only true path to salvation that ties them together. This feeling then may be what Owens (1976) has called 'dread'.

REFERENCES

- Albuquerque, K.
1977 Millenarian Movements and the Politics of Liberation: The Rastafarians in Jamaica. Ph.D. Thesis. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.
- Barrett, L.
1968 The Rastafarians: A Study in Messianic Cultism in Jamaica. Puerto Rico: Institute of Caribbean Studies.
- Barrett, L.
1977 The Rastafarians. The Dreadlock of Jamaica. Jamaica: Sangsters Books Ltd.
- Brown, Ras Samuel E.
1966 Treatise on the Rastafarian Movement. Journal of Caribbean Studies 16 (1).
- Campbell, H.
1980a Rastafari - Culture of Resistance. Race and Class 22(1):1-22.
- Campbell, H.
1980b The Rastafarians in the Eastern Caribbean. Caribbean Quarterly 26(4).
- Cashmore, E.
1979 Rastaman: A Study of the Rastafarian Movement in England. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Chevannes, A.B.
1971 Jamaican Lower Class Religion: Struggles Against Oppression. M.A. Thesis. University of West Indies, Jamaica.
- Chevannes, A.B.
1975 Religious Cults of the Caribbean - Trinidad, Jamaica and Haiti. Social and Economic Studies 24 (1):162-163.
- Clarke, S.
1980 Jah Music. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Davis, S. and P. Simon
1977 Reggae Bloodlines, New York: Anchor Books.
- Festinger, R. and S. Schachter
1968 When Prophecy Fails. New York: Garden City.
- Firth, R.
1975 Symbols, Public and Private. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Gluckman, M.
1956 Custom and Conflict in Africa. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Hebdige, D.
1979 *New Accents, Subcultures: The Meaning of Style.* London: Metheun and Company Ltd.
- Hill, R.
1983 Leonard P. Howell. *Jamaica Journal* 16 (1): 24-39.
- Hobsbawm, E.J.
1959 *Primitive Rebels.* New York: W.W. Norton.
- Hurvitz, S. and E. Hurvitz
1971 *Jamaica: A Historical Portrait.* New York: W.W. Norton.
- Jiwani, Y.
1984 *The Forms of Jah: The Mystic Collectivity of the Rastafarians and Its Organizational Precipitates.* M.A. Thesis. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University.
- Kitzinger, S.
1966 *The Rastafarian Brethren of Jamaica.* *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 9: 33-39.
- Kitzinger, S.
1969 *Protest and Mysticism: The Rastafari Cult in Jamaica.* *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8 (2).
- Lanternari, V.
1963 *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Lefever, H.G.
1977 *The Religion of the Poor: Escape or Creative Force?* *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 16 (3): 225-236.
- McPherson, E.S.P.
1982 *The Validity of Oral History as Means of Historical Investigation: A Case Study of the Ras Tafari.* Unpublished manuscript. University of West Indies, Jamaica.
- McPherson, E.S.P.
1983 *From Black Churches to the Nyahbinghi Order The Youth Black Faith.* Unpublished manuscript. University of West Indies, Jamaica.
- Nettleford, R.
1972 *Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica.* New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Nicholas, T. and B. Sparrow
1979 *Rastafari: A Way of Life.* New York: Anchor Press.
- Owens, J.
1976 *Dread. The Rastafarians of Jamaica.* Jamaica: Sangsters Books.

- Patterson, O.
1964 Ras Tafari: The Cult of Outcasts. New Society 111: 15-17.
- Pochard, F.
1983 The Rastafarian I-lect. Unpublished manuscript. University of West Indies, Jamaica.
- Reckord, V.
1982 Reggae, Rastafarianism and Cultural Identity. Jamaica Journal 4.
- Semaj, L.T.
1980 Rastafari: From Religion to Social Theory. Caribbean Quarterly 26(4).
- Shibata, Y.
1981 Rastafarian Music in Jamaica: Its Historical and Cultural Significance. M. Thesis. School of Area Studies, University of Tsukuba, Japan.
- Simpson, G.E.
1962 The Rastafari Movement in Jamaica in its Millennial Aspect. In Millennial Dreams in Action. S. Thrupp, ed., The Hague: Mouton and Company.
- Simpson, G.E.
1978 Black Religions in the New World. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Smith, M.G., Augier, R. and R. Nettleford.
1960 The Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica. Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of West Indies, Jamaica.
- Tafari, J.
1980 The Rastafari - Successors of Marcus Garvey. Caribbean Quarterly 26(4).
- Turner, V.
1967 The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual. London: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V.
1974 Dramas, Fields and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society. London: Cornell University Press.
- Watson, G.L.
1974 Patterns of Black Protest in Jamaica - the Case of the Ras Tafarians. Journal of Black Studies 4(3): 329-43.
- Weber, M.
1930 The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. London: Unwin University Books.

Zygmunt, J.F.

1970 Prophetic Failure and Chiliastic Identity: The Case of the
Jehovah's Witnesses. *American Journal of Sociology* 75: 926-48.