

Indian Influences on Rastafarianism

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by

Vincent E. Burgess

The Ohio State University

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Project Advisor: Professor Hugh B. Urban

Department of Comparative Studies in the Humanities

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Introduction

In the spring of 2005 I was taking a class on New Religious Movements, and we were about to begin studying Rastafarianism, a Jamaican religious movement which began in the 1930s. My professor, Dr. Hugh Urban, first showed the class some slides of sadhus (Indian holy men) who, for centuries now, have been growing their hair out in long, matted locks, and ritualistically smoking copious amounts of marijuana (ganja). Dr. Urban then showed us some slides of Rastafarians, who also grow their hair out in long, matted locks and smoke copious amounts of marijuana. After class I found myself fascinated by the mystery of these similarities. I continued talking with Dr. Urban and others about the possibility of a historical connection between sadhus and Rastafarians, and this question became the impetus for my senior thesis.

My goals with this paper are, first and foremost, to research any possible contact that sadhus may have had with the people of Jamaica, particularly the founders of Rastafarianism. I learned through my research that after England ended their official involvement with the African slave trade they began importing Indian laborers to work on Caribbean sugar plantations. This information not only confirmed the possibility of an Indian influence on Rastafarianism, but also led to an examination of religious syncretism and the unanticipated cross cultural influences that occurred as a result of British colonialism.

This paper will provide an examination of the sadhu lifestyle, including an analysis of the ritualistic means by which sadhus perpetuate their continued asceticism in relation to normative Indian society. It will then go on to describe the conditions which led to the systematic importation of tens of thousands of Indian indentured workers to the Caribbean, and the subsequent influence that the laborers had on the culture and spiritual climate of Jamaica,

followed by an in depth explanation of Rastafarianism and all of the various mythic traditions which were bricoleured in its formation, especially relating to Hinduism. The paper concludes with an analysis of the use of ritual as a mechanism of resistance in both Indic and Jamaican societies, addressing the question of how rituals function in both sadhu and Rastafarian communities, beyond the mere religious and spiritual rationalities, to further their respective goals within the broader society in which they dwell.

Hinduism: An Overview

To truly understand the monumental impact that Indian immigrants had on the spiritual climate of Jamaica, it is vital to first discuss the complex spiritual culture of India itself. Hinduism is a way of life, a way of thinking, and a way of identifying oneself not only in relation to the divine, but to society as well. The term Hindu was originally used by the Greeks, who referred to those who dwelt in the Indus Valley as Indu ('indoi')¹. The English word Hinduism was originally an outsider term, used by British writers in the early 1800s to refer to the religious practices of the people of India. What originated as a term of geographic distinction, referring more so to the people of India rather than a unified religious system, has, relatively recently, become a term of religious distinction.

Many practitioners believe that Hinduism has over 330 million gods, and many believe that Hinduism has only one. At some point during Hinduism's long transformation there arose three central deities; Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer). Some Hindus believe that these three personalities represent different aspects of one absolute divine being or conception (Brahman). Other Hindus believe that one deity is central above the others,

¹ Doniger, Wendy, Ed. *Encyclopedia of World Religions*. "Hinduism" p. 433

and they therefore worship that deity almost exclusively. The broad traditions that have evolved around the specific deities are Vaisnavism (the worship of Vishnu and his various incarnations), Saivism (the worship of Shiva), and Shaktism (the worship of the goddess). In terms of practical worship, Saktism replaces what would logically be the worship of Brahma, who is not popularly worshipped for various reasons.

Although all Vaisnavas worship Vishnu and are generally monotheistic, there are many different sects and philosophical interpretations, and the majority of practitioners piece together aspects of the various traditions and combine them with popular local practices. Vishnu is commonly referred to as the preserver, and is believed to descend to earth in times of crisis to save humankind. He is believed to have 10 *avatars* (literally “descents”), the most popularly worshiped of which are Rama and Krishna. Even though this notion of incarnation is found throughout Hinduism, it is most central to Vaisnavism.

The god Shiva is often associated with sexual potency and uncultivated or dangerous aspects of nature. The mythology surrounding Shiva is complex, and many of his principle qualities (death, punishment, ambiguous demonic attributes) can at times be quite fearsome. Shiva is, however, also referred to as “the Auspicious One”, and “the Peaceful One”; “for the god that can strike down can also spare”². Shiva embodies the notion that the divine is made up of simultaneously opposite yet complimentary aspects; such as terror and gentility, creation and destruction, and asceticism and sexual potency. Shiva is often referred to as the master of yoga, and is commonly depicted to be practicing constant austerities (*tapas*) and meditations, with his long matted hair twisted around his head, and his body covered in ashes. These ashes represent the renouncers (*sannyasis*) who take leave of the normative social order and set out in search of

² Ibid, p. 448

liberation from the mundane world. In addition, Shiva is also believed to demonstrate his mastery of yoga via the ingestion of intoxicants, such as marijuana. Many of these characteristics (near constant asceticism, wearing long matted locks, covering the body in ashes, and ritualistically smoking marijuana) are replicated by Shaivists, especially Shaivist sadhus.

Shaktism, the third broad category of Hinduism, encompasses the worship of goddesses, especially when perceived as an aspect of one single Goddess (*Devi*), or Great Goddess (*Mahadevi*)³. Shakti refers to the universal energy, personified as female and embodied by the Goddess, and is related to various traditions associated with strong female deities. The goddesses, particularly those associated with specific locations, are often seen as nurturing and protective of the earth and their devotees, but deadly and vindictive to outsiders and enemies. Shaktism is often associated with bloody animal sacrifices, and this practice is especially prominent amongst the worshipers of the goddess Kali. Worshipers of Kali believe that birth and death are inseparable, and that the fearsome aspects of the divine should be approached calmly. This apparent dichotomy, regarding the dual nature of protector and destroyer, is quite similar to conceptions of the god Shiva. This relationship becomes even more salient when the goddess is perceived as Shiva's consort, as is the case in many tantric practices.

Tantrism is the quest for spiritual power and liberation via the practice of secret rites and meditations, the repetition of sacred mantras (ritualistically employed words or phrases), and the utilization of special visual aids, such as mandalas (symbolic drawings). Tantra is especially focused on training oneself to realize universal energy as manifested within the body, and to utilize that energy to attain oneness with the divine, unifying flesh with spirit, via ritualistic and yogic means. It is this goal which defines tantra as inherently mystical in nature. Hindu tantra is

³ Ibid

commonly classified into “right-handed” and “left-handed” traditions. The right-handed is by far the most commonly practiced of the two paths, and involves metaphorical visualizations and development of subtle yogic practices focusing on self-abnegation and various degrees of physical asceticism. The left-handed path, however, utilizes a literal violation of standard taboos within Hinduism, known as the five “m”s. Left-handed tantrics are known to consume meat (*mamsa*), fish (*matsya*), wine (*madya*), and parched grain (*mudra*). The fifth “m” refers to fornication (*maithuna*), and is often interpreted as particularly forbidden sexual practices, such as incest⁴. The left-handed practice of tantra is extremely rare and is only believed to be practiced by very small groups, such as the Aghori sadhus.

Hinduism is an extremely complex tradition with multileveled interpretations and intermingling myths and rituals. The three above mentioned traditions of Vaisnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism should not be seen as encompassing the entire width and breadth of Hinduism. Their existence as broad categories within Hinduism, however, and the distinguishing characteristics between them, especially concerning the incarnation philosophy central to Vaisnavism and the salient rituals of certain Shaivists and Shaktas, will be an essential component of the following discussion.

The worship of deities within Hinduism is broadly referred to as *puja* (“praising”), and it takes many different forms. Puja often takes the form of an offering to god via a sacred image, icon, or idol. Such images can be actual visual representations of the deity (such as a statue of Krishna, Shiva, Ganesh, etc.), or aniconic representations (such as a sacred fire, plant, or stone). As the practitioner offers their puja, they in turn receive the *prasada* (“grace”) of the deity. These rituals often revolve around the offering of food, which the deity is believed to taste and

⁴ Ibid, p. 451

subsequently bless. Puja, however, can involve the offering of a variety of substances and methods of worship, such as the ritualistic smoking of ganja.

The sacred scriptures of Hinduism, believed to be produced by the Aryan inhabitants of India, are collectively referred to as the Vedas (“Books of Knowledge”, Veda is Sanskrit for knowledge). The Vedas are considered to be eternal truths, created by neither god nor human. This original, eternal knowledge was for centuries passed on via an oral tradition, and the earliest Vedic texts (thought to be compiled around 1200 BCE) deal almost exclusively with the proper procedures for ritual fires and sacrifice. The earliest Vedas are comprised of four primary Samhitas (“collections”), the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Artharva Veda, and Sama Veda. The succeeding Vedic texts represent the slow transition of Vedic textual tradition, which originally focused almost entirely on ritualistic procedure, to a more mythical and philosophical tradition encompassing discussion of metaphysical and cosmological questions. With the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and, especially, the Upanishads the interest and focus on the old gods of the Rig Veda is replaced by a conception of Brahman, the absolute. The old gods, however, did not disappear entirely, as Indra, Varuna, Surya, and Agni (the sacrificial fire) continued to hold a prominent place in the Vedic tradition.

The Vedic class system has traditionally been the primary structural feature of Hindu society. It is composed of four Varnas (literally colors), and is often referred to as the Varna system as well. A hymn in the Rig Veda describes how Purusha (the “cosmic man”) was sacrificed, producing a four part cosmos and a four part social order. The highest Hindu class are the Brahmins (priests, advisors), who is said to be born of Purusha’s mouth, the Kshatriyas (rulers, warriors) from his arms, the Vaishyas (merchants, farmers) from his thighs, and the Shudras (menial laborers, servants) from his feet. A fifth class was unofficially constructed to include all

of those outside of the traditional caste system, those known as untouchables are considered to be *avarna* (“classless”). Not having a place within the class system has meant that untouchables have traditionally existed outside of Hindu society as well. Historically untouchables were those members of society whose occupations required them to continually be involved in “polluting” activities (such as handling dead bodies or human waste). Although the Indian constitution of 1949 technically made it illegal to discriminate against someone based on their class, such discrimination continues to this day.

Sadhus

It was stated earlier that Hinduism is a way of life. Although most members of Hindu society are part of the normative construction of society, considered householders, some, known as sadhus, choose to separate themselves from householders and practice a life of continual spiritual renunciation. Sadhus, or Indian holy men, are characterized by their ritualized asceticism and renunciation of material possessions, except for a handful of personal effects (such as a staff, a water pot, an alms bowl, prayer beads, and a chillum pipe). Sadhus are often referred to as ‘wandering mendicants’, and although many do travel the countryside (alone or in small groups), sadhus may also live together in monasteries or isolate themselves in small huts or caves⁵.

The term sadhu is a rather generic description for a holy man from any sect of Hinduism, and a sadhu’s affiliation can usually be determined by their dress and ornamentation. Sadhus generally employ, to various degrees, ritual symbolism such as nakedness, matted hair, and covering themselves with ashes; all of which are signs of Hindu ascetic status and symbolize the sadhus’ individual identity and formal rejection of normative society (such as class and caste

⁵ Doniger, Wendy, Ed. *Encyclopedia of World Religions*. “Sadhu”, p. 958

distinctions, which are often denoted by one's dress)⁶. Although many sadhus have their head shaved at the time of initiation by a guru, and some keep their heads shaved, others, especially those who worship Shiva, allow their hair to become long and matted. Such matting of the hair, known as jata, is a sign of renunciation, and one of the many epithets of Lord Shiva is Jata-dhara ("the one with a crown of matted hair")⁷. The utilization of matted hair as a social signifier by sadhus is especially salient to the topic at hand, and will be discussed further in the following pages.

Robert Lewis Gross, in his book *The Sadhus of India*, has compared the continual ascetic existence of the sadhus to an "institutionalized liminality"⁸. Gross refers to Victor Turner's theory of liminality as a phase that is generally utilized ritualistically as a rite of passage from one social state to another. The liminal phase contains elements foreign to both the previous state and the coming state (the participant is therefore often referred to as a "threshold person", or existing "betwixt or between" two worlds), and often uses imagery relating to the symbolic death and rebirth of the participant⁹ (i.e., ritualized nudity, head shaving). Gross believes that it is the perpetual existence in a symbolic state, characterized by ritual and constant asceticism, which contrasts sadhus to the rest of Indian society, thus placing them "in a marginal cultural space existing in polar opposition to Indian social structure"¹⁰. For sadhus, the two worlds in between which they exist are those of the mundane, normative world and the transcendental or

⁶ Gross, Robert Lewis. *The Sadhus of India*, p. 302-303

⁷ *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, "Jata" and "Jata-dhara", p. 89

⁸ Gross, Robert Lewis. *The Sadhus of India*, p. 301

⁹ Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process*, p. 94

¹⁰ Gross, Robert Lewis. *The Sadhus of India*, p. 300

heavenly realm. Turner acknowledges the tendency towards institutionalized liminality as being especially prevalent with monks and mendicants from all religious traditions¹¹.

I believe that Turner's theories regarding liminality are widely accepted as being applicable to rituals within virtually every religion and society. The main point here is not to argue whether sadhus are or are not existing in a state of perpetual liminality, but rather to explore the rituals and identifiers employed to sustain such a state of separation from the caste system and mainstream society as a whole, such as the sacramental use of ganja and the growing of long matted locks. These same rituals, I argue, are also employed by Rastafarians to reach the similar goal of separation from their conception of normative society, Babylon. Therefore, to continue in Gross's utilization of Turner, both sadhus and Rastafarians are employing certain ritualistic techniques to exist in a state of perpetual, institutionalized liminality. These similarities between the two traditions are not mere happenstance. As we will see, these rituals existed in Jamaica long before they were used by the Rastafarians. Although it is more than likely that there was never a large population of Sadhus in Jamaica, their presence has been confirmed by a photograph from 1910¹².

The Colonial Influence

British imperialism had more to do with the development of Jamaican spiritual culture than may be initially apparent. The desire of the British to colonize numerous nations around the world eventually led to the intermingling of a wide array of various cultures.

At one point the British Empire covered 30 percent of the earth's total land area, and slavery was an essential component of that empire. As early as the mid 16th century it became apparent

¹¹ Ibid, p. 301

¹² Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 102

that there may be a profit in shipping African slaves, and by the end of the 18th century England was exporting some 38,000 of the 75,000 slaves taken from Africa every year¹³. Britain was responsible for around half of the total amount of slaves traded in the Atlantic, accounting for the forced transfer and acculturation of some 2 million displaced Africans¹⁴.

Jamaica's earliest inhabitants were the indigenous Arawak, who were systematically exterminated by the Spanish between 1502 and 1655 (the majority of the genocide being complete by 1525¹⁵). When Britain seized control of Jamaica from Spain in 1655¹⁶, the Arawak population on the island had long been annihilated, and the Spanish had been utilizing small numbers of African slaves as a source of labor. Under British rule nearly the entire island was transformed into one large sugar plantation, which necessitated the shipment of thousands of slaves to Jamaica¹⁷. For the next 200 years plantation owners relied entirely on African slaves for the cultivation of sugar.

In 1670 there were around 9,000 slaves in Jamaica, barely more than the number of Caucasians. By 1780, however, there were approximately 200,000 slaves in Jamaica (outnumbering whites in 12 to 1), representing more than 20 percent of slaves present in the entire British Empire, and producing more than 50,000 tons of sugar every year (half of all British sugar production).¹⁸ Jamaica was one of Britain's chief sources for the cultivation of sugar and therefore remained the focus of the British slave trade until its end in 1808, by which time there were over 300,000 slaves present in Jamaica.

¹³ Craton, Michael. *Sinews of Empire*, p. xix

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. xii

¹⁵ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 24

¹⁶ Craton, Michael. *Sinews of Empire*, p. 45

¹⁷ Barrett, Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*, p. 16

¹⁸ Craton, Michael. *Sinews of Empire*, p. 46

In the early 19th Century Britain officially ended their involvement in the slave trade. As of May 1st 1807, no British ship was allowed to leave a port with a cargo carrying slaves, and, as of March 1st 1808, no slaves were to land in any English colony from any ship whatsoever. British participation in the trading of slaves, however, did not end there. What had once been a legitimate form of commerce now took the form of clandestine smuggling operations. Further legislation was then passed in 1811 making the traffic and transportation of slaves a felony¹⁹. Although new slaves were, theoretically, not being transported onto British controlled lands, the slaves previously brought there were continuing to work under the same conditions. Slowly, as slaves died off without being replenished, Caribbean sugar plantations showed signs of losing profits. To speed up the abolition process within Caribbean colonies Parliament passed an 1834 Bill emancipating the entire slave population. Plantation owners, however, continued to fight for full rights to the ex-slaves labor, under the guise of “apprenticeship”, which was terminated throughout the British West Indies in 1838²⁰.

Indian Indentured Servitude

The history of Britain’s colonization of India is especially long and complicated. The clearest origins of British domination in India began with the British East India Company in the early 17th century. The East India Company grew in commercial and military power over the next 150 years, virtually ruling most of India, until it was dissolved in 1858 and India became a formal colony of the British crown. As the end of African slavery came into view the English planters of Mauritius began to look toward India to replenish their labor force. In 1835 an ordinance was drafted defining the terms under which Indian labor may be imported, and in 1838 an Ordinance,

¹⁹ Tinker, Hugh. *A New System of Slavery*, p. 1

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2

which included many residual elements of slave laws, was passed laying down the terms for Indian laborers. A similar Ordinance was proposed the same year in Demerara, Guyana; where plantation owners were also preparing for an influx of workers from India.

As of 1840, the primary labor force in the British colony of Mauritius was indeed provided by 18,000 Indians. Simultaneously, due to the labor shortage, a period of severe decay began in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean. As the British West Indies had absolutely no alternative work force, the plantation owners turned to India for laborers just as the planters in Mauritius had²¹. India filled the role of supplying the British Empire with cheap and disposable labor, and Indians were subsequently exported to meet the demand for said labor²².

The British government quickly designed an indentureship program to facilitate the exportation of a supplementary workforce from India and other parts of Asia, such as China. Although the program was met with protests from indigenous interests in both Asia and the Caribbean, it was nonetheless implemented and the first ship of Chinese laborers arrived in the Caribbean in 1837. For whatever reason, the Chinese workers were deemed unsuitable for plantation labor, and Indians were subsequently used instead²³.

The first wave of Indian migration to the Caribbean began in 1838, to the aforementioned Guyana, and then to Jamaica and Trinidad in 1845²⁴. On May 10, 1845 the ship *Blundell Hunter* landed in Jamaica's Old Harbor carrying the first load of Indian indentured workers to Jamaica. The workers were contracted to work on sugar plantations for a specific period of time before they were allowed to return home. All in all 36,412 Indians were brought to Jamaica between

²¹ Tinker, Hugh. *A New System of Slavery*, p. 17

²² Ibid, p. 38

²³ Hamid, Ansley. *The Ganja Complex: Rastafari and Marijuana*, p. xxxvi

²⁴ Mansingh, Laxmi and Ajai. *Home Away From Home*, p. ix

1845 and 1917. After their contracts expired 12,109 were able to return to India, while the rest made Jamaica their permanent home²⁵.

Most of the Indian workforce was composed of poor farmers who were willing to tear themselves away from their homeland. They differed, however, with regard to their caste and cultural background, and therefore brought a variety of skills and occupational specializations along with them. The indentured workforce was joined by a small group of enterprising merchants, who paid their own passages and sought to earn a living by supplying the workers with goods and services imported from India²⁶. It was through these laborers that Hinduism and the Indian mystical tradition was introduced to Jamaica, creating a cross cultural intermingling that would come to have profound influence on the development of new religious movements on the Island, specifically Rastafarianism.

The Afro-Jamaicans demonstrated a great deal of respect for the Indian immigrants upon their arrival on the island. When the first boat load of Indians arrived hundreds of ex-slaves had lined the roads, greeting them with food and drinks, and newspapers from the time are filled with reports of friendships developing between the two groups²⁷. Several factors are believed to be responsible for the close relationship between Indian and Afro-Jamaican; such as an equal socio-economic status, the development of a mutual respect from working alongside one another in the sugar cane and banana fields, and a general camaraderie fostered through their minority status on the island.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 1

²⁶ Hamid, Ansley. *The Ganja Complex: Rastafari and Marijuana*, p. xxxvii

²⁷ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. "The Impact of East Indians on Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions", *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 40

Almost 90 percent of the immigrants were Hindu (about 10 percent were Muslim), and most of the immigrants came from villages that practiced various forms of parochial Hinduism²⁸. The Indians' parochial Hindu traditions also included various tantric elements. Tantrism was very popular in the Chota Nagpur area of Bihar, from which many of the earliest laborers immigrated. Most of the immigrants had only a vague knowledge of the Vedas and Upanishads, and knew little of their contents. For them the salient texts were the mythic stories of Rama and Krishna found in the Puranas and the epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, including the Bhagavad-Gita²⁹; in which many of the complex philosophical notions of the Vedas are explained in simpler stories and parables.

There were Hindu priests among the laborers, and they would often lead the nightly readings. Reading such scriptures after a day working on the plantation, or during specific prayer meetings, was a primary component of the Indians' familial, social, and spiritual life in Jamaica. It was common on the weekends for the Indians to celebrate with a community religious celebration, including formal prayers, rituals, dinners, music and dancing. Although these celebrations were initially only attended by Indians, the Indian's barracks on the plantation were close to those of the ex-slaves. As relationships began to form between the two cultures, Afro-Jamaicans began to participate in the celebrations at various levels as well³⁰.

At regular intervals the Indian laborers began to secretly perform a Kali puja. Certain practitioners would go off to a secluded spot near the plantation and sacrifice an animal, usually a ram, while loudly chanting sacred mantras invoking the goddess Kali. Ajai Mansingh wrote of Hindu rituals on the Jamaican plantations,

²⁸ Ibid, p. 39

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

“Initially, these activities were restricted to Indians only, but as friendly neighborhood contact evolved with Afro-Jamaicans, the two cultures began to join in each other’s rituals...After certain ceremonies which involved the smoking of ganja, the congregation would return to the home of the host, chanting and shouting ‘Jai Kali Mai!’ Drinking of *bhang* (marijuana), smoking of ganja, hailing the goddess, and dancing and singing...Curious Afro-Jamaicans would always eavesdrop at a distance in hidden places. Some of them would join the festivities as guests.”³¹

Ganja bhang had been the preferred drink and method of ingesting marijuana at Indian community dinners and Kali puja and festivals, however smoking was also popular. Although there were no reports of ill effects related to the use of ganja it was nonetheless deemed unacceptable by the Europeans in charge of the plantations. Indians had begun to share their bhang and chilam pipes with the Afro-Jamaicans, and ganja was believed to cause a decline in production. In 1913 the plantation owners in the Jamaican Parish of St. Mary called for a ban on ganja, and in 1915 the government of Jamaica outlawed its planting³².

Marijuana was originally transported to British colonies in the Caribbean by the Indian indentured laborers, and by 1845 Indian workers in Jamaica were known to have ganja growing freely on their provision grounds. In most of the Caribbean colonies to which it was initially exported (such as Trinidad, Suriname and Guyana) the growing of ganja withered out and virtually disappeared within a few decades. In Jamaica, however, ganja thrived and its use

³¹ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. “The Impact of East Indians on Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions”, *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 39

³² Mansingh, Laxmi and Ajai. *Home Away From Home*, p. 123

quickly became popular not only amongst its Indian forbearers but also amongst both rural and urban Afro-Jamaican populations³³.

The size of the Indian population in Jamaica between 1845 and 1917 was small in relation to the other Caribbean colonies. Therefore the Indians were viewed as posing little threat to established institutions and social arrangements, and virtually no attempt was made to assimilate them into broader Jamaican society. For this reason, Indian cultural elements (food, clothing, and the use of ganja) continued unimpeded and became part and parcel of the Jamaican cultural milieu. By the late 1800s, the use of ganja had become widespread throughout the Jamaican countryside, and it was widely used by Indians and Afro-Jamaicans alike³⁴.

The Development of Rastafarianism

Rastafarianism is a combination of many long standing myths, rituals, and discursive mechanisms which were pre-existing in Jamaica, and Hinduism is only one of many religious traditions which have influenced the development of Rastafarianism. Rastafarian bricolage can be seen not only in relation to the pervasive mysticism and ritualistic practices adopted from Hinduism, but also in intrinsically Judeo-Christian elements such as the citation of Bible verses. Rastafari embodies a radical and revolutionary political rhetoric, which would come to render its practitioners as targets of governmental oppression.

Aware of the strong connection between the Euro-centric Christianity of their oppressors, the latent power dynamics of colonialism and slavery, and the role of established religion as a means of perpetuating an unjust social system, many Afro-Jamaicans were searching for alternative religious traditions for spiritual solace. Beginning around 1930 as a politico-religious movement

³³ Hamid, Ansley. *The Ganja Complex: Rastafari and Marijuana*, p. xv

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. xlii

in Jamaica, Rastafarianism embodies the long standing Ethiopianist tradition, combined with political and ideological elements of Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa movement, and certain ritualistic devices utilized to separate the practitioner from mainstream society, "Babylon".

Rastafarianism maintains a decidedly Afro-centric interpretation of the Bible. Members believe that the original Jews, held captive in Babylon, were in fact African. They believe that God's chosen people are still exiled, via slavery, in Babylon, where they suffer continual oppression by the White race. The discourse of Rastafarianism is centered upon the idea of African as Israelite and Africa as Zion. To the Rastafarian, Babylon is a very real, constant source of oppression and exploitation.

Babylon is seen as manifested via all social, political, economic, and religious institutions created by the white man. Babylon is representative of the institution of slavery, the creation of false gods, corrupting ideas³⁵, and pervasive lies created by the "White", western world as a means of oppressing the Black race. It encompasses virtually everything that hegemonic world powers (i.e., America and Europe) have ever done; beginning with slavery, and including imperialistic tendencies, wars, educational institutions (including textbooks full of "lies"), and oppressive economic policies and institutions (such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund). Babylon is believed to be responsible for perpetuating the misconception that the Jews of the Bible, and Jesus in particular, were Caucasian instead of African. For example, many Rastafarians believe that the Babylonian pronunciation of "Jesus" (gee-sus) refers to a false, white notion of the biblical savior, going so far as to say that "gee-sus" is Satan. These Rastafari brethren believe that the name of the savior is actually pronounced as "jës-us", and this pronunciation refers to the "true" savior of African origin. The concept of Babylon is an

³⁵ Ansley, Hamid. *The Ganja Complex*, p. 87

example of the blending of pre-existing myths, in this case biblical in origin, with modern political ideologies to further the movement's goals of social resistance within the broader society.

Rastafarians believe that Haile Selassie is the Messiah and God incarnate, who has appeared in order to redeem all Black people living in the world of white oppression (Babylon)³⁶. Rastafarians consider Africa in general, and Ethiopia in particular, to be Zion, the Promised Land where all Black people will return following their exile in Babylon. The name of the movement is directly derived from Haile Selassie's pre-coronation name of Ras Tafari Makonnen (Ras was his pre-coronation title, and is Amharic for Duke, Chief, or Prince). Rastafarianism is further characterized by the use of marijuana as a ritualistic sacrament, and the wearing of long dreadlocks by members.

The imagery of Ethiopia in biblical writings has had a powerful impact on the religious imagination and rhetoric of Africans in Jamaica. In the 1800s, when proponents of slavery attempted to portray the Afro-Jamaicans as uncivilized and lacking in humanity, Black preachers turned to the Bible (the only book which they had access to). There they discovered that both Ethiopia and Egypt (i.e., Africa) not only played prominently in the Bible, but were also essential to the history of civilization as a whole. References to the Black race in the Bible are believed to have inspired the mythology of "Ethiopianism", and the conception that the Jewish bondage in Egypt and the African enslavement throughout the Americas were not merely similar, but that Black people were actually the original Jews³⁷. Such Ethiopianist conceptions would eventually become central to Rastafarian ideology. Long before the emergence of Rastafarianism,

³⁶ Barrett, Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*, p. 1

³⁷ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 54

Ethiopianism was energizing Black spirituality in Jamaica and influencing the ideology of many Black leaders on the island, including Marcus Garvey³⁸.

Marcus Garvey, the influential black leader and founder of the “Back to Africa” movement, was born in St. Ann Parish, Jamaica in 1887. In 1914 Garvey organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Kingston, which would eventually become the largest Black movement in history³⁹. The UNIA sought to unify Black peoples everywhere, liberate Africa from colonial rule, and create a strong, self-sustaining nation to which all Black people could return. Garvey’s agenda was not immediately accepted by the majority of Jamaicans. Whites considered him to be a threat to the Colonial status quo of the Pax Britannica, and many Blacks, striving for the acceptance of the middle and upper classes, sought to distance themselves from his fiery rhetoric. Garvey’s vision, however, found tremendous success in the United States, where he attracted huge crowds to his UNIA conventions at Liberty Palace in New York⁴⁰. Once his skills as a leader had been demonstrated he gained legitimacy in his homeland of Jamaica as well, and is today considered to be a national hero⁴¹.

It is believed that just before Garvey left for the United States in 1916 he told a crowd to “Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King, he shall be the Redeemer”⁴². This quotation would later inspire the belief that Haile Selassie was the Redeemer Garvey spoke of. As a result of Garvey’s belief in “Africa for the African at home and abroad”, and his prophetic statement regarding Black redemption in Africa, Garvey holds a mythic place in the history of Rastafarianism. In his book, *The Rastafarians*, Leonard Barrett writes that “all Rastafarians

³⁸ Barrett, Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*, p. 68, 70

³⁹ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 21

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 30, 31

⁴¹ Barrett, Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*, p. 65-67

⁴² Ibid, p. 67

revere Marcus Garvey as their inspirer...in the pantheon of the Rastafarians, Marcus Garvey is second only to Haile Selassie.”⁴³

The 1930 coronation of Haile Selassie was therefore viewed by many Jamaicans (especially Garveyites, Ethiopianists, and those who would soon become the first Rastafarians) as an extremely significant event. Haile Selassie means “Might of the Trinity” and he was awarded the additional titles, traditionally given to all Ethiopian Emperors, “King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God and Light of the World”⁴⁴. These titles placed him in the lineage of King Solomon⁴⁵, further added to his prophetic mystique, and for believers continue to serve as proof of his Divinity.

The Founders

The principle actors in the founding of Rastafarianism were Joseph Hibbert, Archibald Dunkley, Robert Hinds, and Leonard Howell, who became the leading figure in the development of the movement. Hibbert, Dunkley, and Howell had all traveled outside of Jamaica, but happenstance brought them all back around the time of Haile Selassie’s coronation. All four men are believed to have been ministers of one sort or another, and claimed to receive the revelation that Haile Selassie was the Black Messiah.

Joseph Hibbert was born in Jamaica in 1894, and moved to Costa Rica in 1911, where he became a member of a Masonic society called “The Ancient Mystic order of Ethiopia”, before returning to Jamaica in 1931. Hibbert began preaching in St. Andrew, but soon moved to Kingston where he met Leonard Howell, and is often referred to as Leonard Howell’s principle

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Chevannes, Barry. *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, p. 42

⁴⁵ Barrett, Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*, p. 81

“lieutenant”⁴⁶ in the early days of the movement. Archibald Dunkley was a seaman with the United Fruit Company and spent time in Central America, in Panama, before returning to Jamaica in 1930. Dunkley began preaching in Port Antonio, before moving to Kingston as well Robert Hinds had been a follower of Bedward, a preacher near Kingston and the founder of the populist Jamaica Native Baptist Free Church. Bedward was believed to heal the poor through Baptism in the rivers just outside of Kingston (the same rivers are still used for baptisms by certain Rasta sects today). Bedward was persecuted by the police much like Leonard Howell would later be, and was placed in Bellevue psychiatric hospital by the authorities, where he died in 1930. In 1932 Hinds became part of the burgeoning Rastafari movement, finding a new leader and ally in Leonard Howell⁴⁷.

According to a birth certificate, Leonard Percival Howell was born June 16, 1898 in Crooked River, Jamaica⁴⁸. Reliable records on Howell’s early life are, however, virtually non-existent. For instance, according to a monograph written by three university professors in 1960, Howell served in the Ashanti War in 1896⁴⁹; two years before his birth certificate says he was born. It does, according to all accounts, appear that Howell moved around quite a lot between 1912 and 1924, mostly between Panama, Jamaica, and New York (where he is purported to have first met Marcus Garvey). Howell, like many Jamaicans (including Joseph Hibbert and Archibald Dunkley), spent time in Colon, Panama working on what would eventually become the Panama Canal. From 1924 to 1932 Howell is believed to have spent most of his time in New York, before returning to Jamaica in 1932. Howell is believed to be the first to preach the Divinity of

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 21

⁴⁷ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 21

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 6

⁴⁹ Barrett, Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*, p. 82

Haile Selassie, and his return to Jamaica is considered to mark the beginning of Rastafarianism⁵⁰.

Howell's original Six Principles, according to Leonard Barrett, were:

- 1) Hatred for the White race.
- 2) The complete superiority of the Black race.
- 3) Revenge on 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.
- 6) Acknowledging Emperor Haile Selassie as the Supreme Being and only ruler of Black people⁵¹.

Due to the radical nature of these core principles, and the zealous evangelizing characteristic of the early moment, Howell was often targeted by the Jamaican authorities for suspicion of seditious activities. One of the earliest incidents occurred in January, 1934 when Howell and Hinds were arrested following an open meeting where they were advocating the six above mentioned principles. Howell was convicted of giving a seditious speech and attempting to excite hatred for the King of England and the Jamaican Government, he was convicted to two years in jail. Hinds, his accomplice, was sentenced to one year. The authorities viewed the new movement as immanently dangerous, and soon arrested Dunkley and Hibbert as well. Although

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 37

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 85

the four founding fathers of Rastafarianism were in prison, the movement continued, underground and in secrecy⁵².

By 1940 Howell had taken his followers (membership estimates are fuzzy, ranging between 500 and 5,000) and moved into the Hills of St. Catherine, about twenty miles west of Kingston. They named their commune “Pinnacle”, and it was the first of many Rasta hill camps that are present to this day. The creation of Pinnacle marks an extremely important event in Rastafarianism, a stage which solidified the ideological tone of the movement into the present. The creation of Pinnacle was the Rasta’s first withdraw from normative society into the hill camps, and represents both the literal and spiritual distance that they seek to put between themselves and Babylon. In addition to ideology, it is also at Pinnacle that many of the key ritualistic components of the religion began to manifest, especially the smoking of ganja and the growing of dreadlocks.

At Pinnacle the Rastas grew copious amounts of marijuana, both for sacramental use and as a cash crop, and it is suspected that it was here that the ritualistic use of ganja was incorporated as a regular practice. In July of 1941 the commune, accused of acts of violence and the cultivation of a dangerous drug, was raided by the police and seventy Rastas were arrested. Leonard Howell, however, managed to evade the police and disappear into the hills⁵³.

By 1953 Pinnacle had been re-organized into a new phase, which is when members began to first grow their hair out into matted locks. This second phase did not last long, as the police raided it again in 1954, arresting 163 members, including Howell and his lieutenants. The judge

⁵² Ibid, p. 86

⁵³ Ibid

acquitted them, but the police destroyed the hill camp, forcing the Rastas back into the slums of Kingston.

Soon after Pinnacle was destroyed Howell's mental state deteriorated considerably, and he eventually lost the support of his early followers. In 1960 Howell was placed in the Kingston Mental Hospital. He was later released, and died in St. Andrew in 1981.

Early Tensions between Howell and Garvey

Leonard Howell had first been exposed to Garvey in New York, but his relationship with the movement was tumultuous. Howell was accused by Garveyites of "a number of nefarious practices", including being an Obeahman (Obeah is the Jamaican counterpart of voodoo)⁵⁴. Most of these accusations are thought to relate directly to a "tea room" which Howell opened on 136th Street (a UNIA stronghold), where he is reported to have been producing a version of ganja-bhang. That would only be the beginning of a rocky relationship between Howell and Garvey.

Although Garvey eventually came to hold a prominent place in Rastafarianism, there is evidence that he was not always a respected figure within the movement. Ajai and Laxmi Mansingh, in an article for the *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, point out many incidents and points of tension between the early Rastafarians and Garveyites. The Mansinghs write that Garvey's famous prophecy regarding the crowning of a Black King was actually taken from an address given by a Black clergyman, the Reverend James Morris Webb, in September 1924. The clearest points of conflict came in the years just following the inception of Rastafarianism.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 32

The early Rastas had taken to selling pictures of Haile Selassie around Kingston; the pictures were to serve as passports on the imminent voyage back to Africa. Marcus Garvey preached from a very orthodox Christian perspective, and early in 1933 Garvey attempted to prevent Howell from selling the photos at Edelweiss Park⁵⁵, where Garvey conducted his Sunday services. Howell responded on June 14, 1933 by creating a scene at Coke Methodist Chapel, another of Garvey's favored speaking spots. Howell, Hibbert, and others were there, once again selling pictures of Haile Selassie, when Howell began to speak against the Church, calling it a useless institution full of corruption and thieving priests⁵⁶. Additionally, over a year later, the Kingston UNIA Convention denounced all "new cults [that were] entirely contradictory to the set principles of true religion"⁵⁷, and the August 25, 1934 edition of *The Jamaican Times* reported that in an interview, Garvey "referred to the Ras Tafari cult, speaking of them with contempt"⁵⁸.

It appears that Howell and the original Rastafarians originally wanted to keep their distance from institutionalized Christianity. They originally regarded Haile Selassie as a God incarnate (similar to Rama, Krishna, and other Hindu deities). Garveyites, on the other hand, viewed Haile Selassie as Christ incarnate, placing him into a millenarian paradigm of Christianity. It is believed that the early Rastafarians had very little clear-cut doctrine, and when Howell's popularity and prominence as a prophet declined due to police persecution and declining mental health the movement relied more heavily upon a biblical structure in order to sustain itself. Such incorporation came easily enough to both Garveyites and the Jamaican population at large, who

⁵⁵ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. "The Impact of East Indians on Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions", *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 48-49

⁵⁶ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 66

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.47

⁵⁸ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. "The Impact of East Indians on Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions", *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 48-49

were already very familiar with the Bible. Therefore, Garveyite ideology, such as millenarianism and a messianic conception of Haile Selassie, became more prominent in Rastafarianism after Howell's popularity faded in the 1950s. As the millenarian vision became stronger, the Rastafarian brethren began to look to the Bible for doctrinal support of their faith; re-interpreting biblical verses to convince followers of Haile Selassie's divinity as a Biblical prophecy come true. The Mansinghs propose that since the Garveyites already believed in 'Black-Christ' and other 'Black-Biblical personages', Garvey himself was reverently placed into the Rastafarian pantheon only as a conciliatory effort between the two, formerly opposing, groups. Or, as the Mansinghs say, "they dragged him into the movement only because a John the Baptist was needed"⁵⁹.

Hindu Influences on the Founders of Rastafarianism

Hinduism had been present in Jamaica for almost an entire century prior to the coronation of Haile Selassie. In an interview, Joseph Hibbert recounted to Ajai Mansingh how, in 1921, he had acquired books to learn about the Indian deities Rama, Krishna, and Buddha, and the influential ruler Ashoka. After learning about the God incarnates, Hibbert came to believe that every nation, every race, had their own God. As a result, when Haile Selassie was crowned Emperor, and given his auspicious titles, Hibbert and others viewed him as God incarnate, the God of Africa⁶⁰.

Leonard Howell was born in Clarendon Parish, just west of Kingston, which has had a strong Indian presence since their first arrival in 1845. Howell is purported to have had a close relationship with the Indians around Kingston, and this relationship is believed to have sown the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 46

seeds of eastern mysticism in Howell long before Haile Selassie's coronation⁶¹. Before Howell began spreading the Rastafarian message he became friends with an Indian man named Laloo, who served as his bodyguard for a time in the 1930s⁶². Laloo is credited with giving Howell a Hindu identity by changing his name to Gagunguru Maragh (a.k.a, Gong Maragh, the Tough King, or Tough Gong), which derives from the Hindi words *gyan* (knowledge), *guna* (virtues), *guru* (teacher), and *maharadj* (king of kings)⁶³. Howell used this name as a pseudonym when, in 1935, while still in jail, he published *The Promised Key* (a text describing Haile Selassie's coronation, and borrowing heavily on the Ethiopianist philosophy of influential preacher Reverend Fitz Balentine Pettersburgh⁶⁴). Howell continued to use this name until the 1960s. The giving of a new name is characteristic of an initiation into Hinduism, and it is highly possible that Laloo was acting as a sort of guru to Howell. The practice of taking on a new name is still practiced today in many Rastafarian sects. The names, however, do not reflect a Hindu identity, but rather a biblical identity (i.e., Noah, Joseph, Solomon).

Laloo is also credited with the introduction of many mystical Hindu beliefs, practices, and language into Rastafarian philosophy and prayers. Early Rastafarian prayers contained many Hindi, Bengali, and Urdu words, and are believed to have been chanted in "Hindu mantra style"⁶⁵.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 100

⁶³ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. "The Impact of East Indians on Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions", *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 48-49

⁶⁴ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 97

⁶⁵ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. "The Impact of East Indians on Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions", *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 47

A popular early Rastafarian prayer begins:

To Allah alpha, Tu Mata edoo koo

To Gangungoo roo

Manage anne jaboo novy moosoo

Hal at ataga garir

The above prayer was written phonetically in a 1936 edition of *The Daily Gleaner*, and the Mansinghs identified the Hindi words *tu* (you), *mata* (mother), they believed that *edoo koo* was a misspelling of *ye dekho* (look here), *Gangungoo roo* (Leonard Howell's Hindu name), *mange* (beg), *anne* (food grains), *jaboo* (when), *halat* (condition), they believed that *ataga* was a misspelling of *atana* (so much), and that *garir* was a misspelling of the Hindi *garib* (poor)⁶⁶.

The Rastafarian use of the word 'Jah', to refer to both God and Haile Selassie, is popularly believed to have biblical origins as a shortened form of either Jehovah or Yahweh. Although a biblical connection does reinforce its usage, the Mansinghs believe that it was originally derived from the Hindu term 'Jai' (victory). In an article for the Kingston *Sunday Gleaner* they wrote:

One can hear the loud chants of Jai Bhagwan, Jai Rama, Jai Krishna, of Jai Kali (Victory to God/Rama/Krishna/Kali) at any private or community Hindu Pooja or prayer meeting...As Ras Tafari gained the status of African Lord Rama/Krishna during the 1940s, phonetic usage of the word Jai was continued. But Rama, Krishna, and Kali were replaced by Ras Tafari⁶⁷.

The Mansinghs also believe that the Rastafarian adoption of a vegetarian diet was a result of Hindu influences. Some Rastafarians hold to strict dietary restrictions, known as *I-tal* ("food in its essential, natural state"), and many Rastas abstain from alcohol, coffee, or processed teas.

⁶⁶ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. *Home Away From Home*, p. 119

⁶⁷ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 100

Although some Rastafarians do eat scant amounts of some meat (such as small, fresh fish), pork and shellfish are expressly forbidden. I-tal cuisine focuses on fresh fruits and vegetables, with one of the principle notions, along with the absence of meat and alcohol⁶⁸, is a complete lack of salt in the cooking process, and very limited additional condiments (especially those which have been transformed from their natural states)⁶⁹. It is said that a “real, true Rasta will choose the ital diet, but he or she has no choice in the matter. If you are going to reach into life everliving, you must eat divinely, *of life everliving*.”⁷⁰

Although many Indians do occasionally eat goat, lamb, or pork, most Hindus do have a predilection towards vegetarianism⁷¹. The majority of sadhus, regardless of sectarian affiliation, refrain from eating meat, fish, and eggs. The consumption of such foods is believed to violate the ethical doctrine of non-violence (ahimsa)⁷². Traditional Indian dietary science believes that ganja makes the body hypersensitive to toxins associated with meat, and, subsequently, religious cultures that place a high value on the use of ganja also tend to encourage a vegetarian diet⁷³. For this reason, it is likely that the Rastafarian tendency towards a vegetarian diet also has its roots in Hinduism.

Although all of these Indian influences reinforce the notion of religious pastiche, it is the ritualistic smoking of marijuana and the growing of long, matted hair which appear to illustrate the most direct connection between the two traditions, and will be the focus of the next sections.

⁶⁸ Nicholas, Tracy and Bill Sparrow. *Rastafari*, p. 62

⁶⁹ Barrett, Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*, p. 141

⁷⁰ Nicholas, Tracy and Bill Sparrow. *Rastafari*, p. 62

⁷¹ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. *Home Away From Home*, p. 15

⁷² Gross, Robert Lewis. *The Sadhus of India*, p. 338

⁷³ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 102

Ganja as a Sacrament

The cannabis plant is believed to have originated in Central Asia, and the earliest known recorded references to it are found in the ancient literature of China (in some Chinese languages the same word is used for both “plant” and “marijuana”)⁷⁴. The use of ganja in Northern India arose some 5,000 years ago (it is believed to have been brought there by Neolithic nomadic tribes of Northeast Asia and China⁷⁵) and it quickly spread throughout the Indian sub-continent. Over the next several centuries the use of ganja continued to expand, along with the practices of Hinduism and Buddhism, throughout Southeast Asia.

The ritualistic use of marijuana within Hinduism is seen most predominately amongst the sadhus. Although not all sadhus use drugs, many of them do use intoxicants on a daily basis. The hallucinogens marijuana (ganja) and hashish (charas) are by far the preferred intoxicants used in ritual (other intoxicant used, to a much lesser extent, include opium, datura, and alcohol)⁷⁶. Although the ritualized use of ganja is a practice which cuts across sectarian lines, the use of ganja is especially connected with the worship of Shiva⁷⁷, and Saivite sadhus (especially the Dasanami Nagas and Kanphata Jogis) are known to consume much larger amounts than their Vaisnava counterparts who, if they do use ganja, are generally more moderate⁷⁸.

The practice of smoking ganja is considered a type of *sadhana*, a method for attaining God realization, and the resulting intoxication is interpreted to be God’s blessings (*prasad*). Amongst Saivite sadhus, ganja is often interpreted to be symbolic of stronger toxins and poisons, such as

⁷⁴ Hamid, Ansley. *The Ganja Complex: Rastafari and Marijuana*, p. xxx

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. xxxiv

⁷⁶ Gross, Robert Lewis. *The Sadhus of India*, p. 362-363

⁷⁷ Hamid, Ansley. *The Ganja Complex: Rastafari and Marijuana*, p. xxxv

⁷⁸ Ibid

venom, which Shiva is said to have ingested. The belief is that Shiva was able to conquer such toxins via his mastery of yoga, and by using ganja the sadhus are emulating the consciousness of Shiva. Ritualized use of marijuana, leading to a state of divine intoxication, affords the practitioner with the opportunity to strengthen their own yogic skills, while simultaneously communing with the divine.

The chilam, a clay pipe, is the most common tool for smoking ganja and charas. The chilam and cannabis are ceremonially prepared before the ritualistic smoking takes place (*chilam-puja*). The chilam is cleaned before each use, and the hash is heated until pliable and then mixed with tobacco to form the smoking mixture, called *charas*. If ganja is being smoked, it too is generally mixed with tobacco. Many sadhus carry a small knife and a small block of wood that is used a cutting board to chop the ganja. After the marijuana has been placed into the clean pipe the chilam is offered to the ceremonial fire, to Agni-deva, and then to Shiva or, possibly, another deity, such as Kali. The sadhu then recites a loud chilam-mantra before the smoking commences. The chilam-mantra is called to make the deities aware of the ensuing ritual intoxication, consecrate the marijuana as a sacrament, and further identify the chilam-puja as a sacred event. Most chilam-mantras are short epithets of Lord Shiva, glorifying his marvelous qualities in the hopes that he will bestow his protection and blessings as the intoxication commences. A more aggressive chilam-mantra, to Kali, the black goddess of death and destruction, asks her not only to bless the experience but to also make it intense and to never let the participants come down from their intoxication. It goes on to beseech her to destroy anyone in proximity who may object to the chilam-puja. Vaisnava sadhus will direct their chilam-mantra to their own sectarian deity, an example of which is the call “Sita-Rama”.

The chilam is then hit and passed to the left hand side, for the next sadhu to partake. Sometimes the chilam-puja is performed only once or twice a day, however certain sadhus smoke near constantly, and the arrival of visitors generally calls for a repetition of the chilam-puja as well. Often times the ritual of chilam-puja can continue until all available ganja and charas are exhausted⁷⁹.

The chilam is a symbolic representation of Lord Shiva himself. The bowl, where the marijuana mixture is placed is his head, and the stem is his torso and limbs. The marijuana simultaneously represents Shiva's unknowable divine substance and the act of offering oneself to God. The chilam-puja, therefore, is seen as a form of self sacrifice. The subsequent intoxication, as mentioned before, is perceived as a manifestation of God's grace and allows the sadhu to experience a sense of Shiva's divine nature. Robert Lewis Gross has described the chilam-puja as "a symbolic ritual of transubstantiation in which the sadhus absorb the substance and essence to their personal deity in order to become one with Him."⁸⁰

Beyond the symbolic self sacrifice, divine communion and darsan (seeing, and being seen by, the Divine) associated with smoking marijuana, sadhus attest that ganja also helps with the pains of arthritis and rheumatism, extreme weather, fatigue, and hunger. Some say that smoking ganja helps them more clearly delineate their place in society from the worldly life of householders, providing a psychological distance from the mundane world⁸¹.

As explained earlier, marijuana was introduced to Jamaica by the Hindu workforce in the 1840's, and quickly became popular amongst the Afro-Jamaican population. Indians were not only responsible for the introduction of marijuana to Jamaica, but the popular term ganja has

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 365

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 367

Indian origins, and marijuana is also sometimes referred to as Kali⁸², originally in honor of the goddess⁸³. A vast majority of the rural Afro-Jamaican population came to believe that ganja was an extremely beneficial substance. They saw it as possessing numerous healing, spiritual, and religious properties, and therefore used it liberally from birth until death⁸⁴. Furthermore, Jamaican laborers thought that smoking marijuana built up their strength, and allowed them to work longer, harder, and faster⁸⁵. Less than a decade after its introduction, ganja had assumed an important social, economic, cultural, and folk-pharmacological status amongst the Afro-Jamaican population, a status it had for centuries held in India. Ganja became a popular ingredient in folk remedies, for example, Jamaican mothers would often steep marijuana in rum, and offer it as a tonic to sick and teething children. Those Jamaicans adept at using ganja medicinally gained a certain amount of prestige and became known as “bush doctors”⁸⁶. Leonard Howell was believed to be practicing these techniques at his New York City tea room, where he was accused by Garveyites of being an Obeah-man for preparing ganja-bhang tonics.

The role of ganja in Rastafarianism cannot be overemphasized. Marijuana is viewed as a natural product of the earth, a gift from God, and it is viewed as not only the most natural and direct route to communion with God and the Rastafari brethren, but is also used as an essential element in prayer and meditation. Ganja is the primary sacrament of Rastafarians, and its ritualized smoking is paramount to their way of life.

Although the presence of ganja in Jamaica, and its initial implementation as a religious sacrament, can be traced directly back to India and Hindu rituals, Rastafarians today regularly

⁸² Owens, Joseph. *Dread*, p. 157

⁸³ Mansingh, Ajai and Laxmi. “The Impact of East Indians on Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions”, *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 47

⁸⁴ Ansley, Hamid. *The Ganja Complex*, p. xxxvii

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. xxxix

defend the glories of ganja by citing Bible verses. The most popular of which are Genesis 1:29 “God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat”, Revelation 22:2 “the herb that bear the various fruits, the leaf of it shall be the healing of the nation”, and Psalm 18:8 “Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth”⁸⁷. In an open letter to a local paper, a Rastafarian named Ras Dizzy wrote “All I ask the public to note is that, in substitute of bread and wine, the true Rasta offer a sweet and burning cup of sacrifice unto their Creator. Please don’t say that the Rastafari movement does not use herbs for the love, honour, and divine confirmation of the holy Sacramental Order”⁸⁸.

Although the Hindu origins of ganja as a sacrament have been all but forgotten by the Rastafari, the similarities within the rituals are apparent. Ras Dizzy referred to the smoking of ganja as a “sacrifice”, just as it is in the sadhus’ *chilam-puja*. When Rastas come together to communally smoke ganja it is known as ‘reasoning’ or ‘grounding’⁸⁹, and is structured quite similarly to the *chilam-puja*. Every act of smoking ganja is considered a form of religious worship, and is approached with reverence. This is especially true of the communal reasoning. The Rastafari will take off any head coverings and say a blessing, usually one of various Christian Psalms⁹⁰, to Jah Rastafari. This act is reminiscent of the *chilam-mantras* called out by sadhus before smoking commences. Although Rastafarians are prone to smoking their own personal marijuana cigarettes, or “spliffs”, throughout the day, for the reasoning the Rastas will generally, like sadhus, smoke out of a *chilam*. They are, however, also fond of using a *chalice*, which is made out of a coconut shell and often referred to as a cup. The smoking of ganja is

⁸⁷ Owens, Joseph. *Dread*, p. 159

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 161

⁸⁹ Chevannes, Barry; Editor. *Rastafari and other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, p. 17

⁹⁰ Owens, Joseph. *Dread*, p. 160

frequently compared to the sharing of the communion cup within mainstream Christian traditions. Joseph Owens recounts, in his book *Dread*, how one Rasta, while “puffing deeply on his pipe” told him “This is the cup Je-sus said we should take from: He who sippeth of this cup, sippeth of me.”⁹¹ The ganja is cut up, sometimes dampened with a little water, and mixed with some tobacco from a cigarette. This preparation is quite similar to the charas as prepared by sadhus. After smoking, a passage of scripture may be read or a spiritual topic brought up for group discussion. Just as with the sadhus, this ritual is generally repeated whenever guests arrive.

From their inception, the Rastas were often targeted by the police for their radical and revolutionary stance toward the state. Their use of ganja was a tangible excuse for the authorities to target the group, and the Rastafari use of ganja incurred the imposition of very stringent penalties. Upon a 1954 raid at the first Rasta commune, *Pinnacle*, the police seized a copious amount of ganja⁹², which not only served ritualistic purposes but was also a primary source of income for the Rastas. As a result of this crackdown, which was not necessarily directed at the use of ganja as much as it was at the subversive lifestyle and radical, revolutionary rhetoric of Leonard Howell and the Rastas, the sale of ganja, which was hitherto able to be purchased in the open market along with other herbs and plants, was pushed underground and allocated primarily to the Rasta camps and communes.

The Jamaican government’s attempts at suppressing the use of ganja were interpreted as a further attempt of Babylon to suppress the people, and led many Rasta communities to elevate the role of ganja as an integral theological component of their religion⁹³. As Joseph Owen puts it

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Chevannes, Barry; Editor. *Rastafari and other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, p. 84

⁹³ Ibid, p. 85

in his book *Dread*, “Babylon insists upon persecuting the brethren for this sacred substance which is integral to their worship, but the very opposition thus encountered only solidifies the Rastas in their use of it”⁹⁴. To avoid individual persecution by the police, Rasta communities encouraged followers not to carry ganja on their person, instead to keep and use it communally; therefore the subject of persecution would not be the individual but the larger assembly of Rastas.

By sanctioning the ritualized smoking of ganja as their primary means of worship, the Rastas were expressing their contempt for the Jamaican state and the dominant social norms imposed by that state, which was in effect a manifestation of their general resistance to Babylon. If the authorities say that ganja is destructive to society it only encourages the Rastafari to use it. As Rastafarians see it, smoking ganja is ‘harmful’ in that “it makes poor people think about the system and want to change it”⁹⁵. Ganja is therefore endangering to Babylon, to the corrupt society which condemns it.

Wearing of Locks

The Sadhu practice of wearing long, matted hair is yet another means by which they seek to replicate the iconographic and mythological depictions of Lord Shiva, the King of Yogis. Shiva’s long, magical jata was the primary means by which he was able to control the tremendous power of the goddess Ganga, who descended from heaven upon Shiva’s thick head of hair, and manifested herself in the river Ganges. For this reason Shiva is regularly depicted with the Ganges flowing out of his jata locks. A sadhu’s jata is often considered to be the seat of

⁹⁴ Owens, Joseph. *Dread*, p. 161

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 163

their yogic or magical powers, and symbolizes the ability to control natural and physical forces, just like Shiva⁹⁶.

As mentioned earlier, some sadhus choose to keep their head shaved. Most, however, do keep their hair and beard long and matted as a physical manifestation of their ascetic liminality and status as holy men. A sadhu's spiritual capital can often be measured by the length and abundance of their locks, which can represent seniority, sectarian rank, and level of spiritual attainment. The jata are known to be ritually smeared with cow excrement, ashes, and/or mud from the Ganges. Such rituals represent the sadhus' disregard for their physical appearance, which reinforces their social separation as jata stand in marked contrast to normative Indian hairstyles and manner of hair care. The sadhus' employment of jata is a means of formally rejecting normative social conventions and a physical marker signifying that they have forsaken participation in all worldly activities, thus solidifying their identity as outsiders and non-conformists⁹⁷.

The single most recognizable characteristic of a Rastafarian is their long, dreadlocked hair. The term dreadlock originated from the notion that the long, matted locks were meant to inspire dread in Babylon. During the early days of the movement in the 1930s and 1940s most Rastas, including Leonard Howell, did not wear dreadlocks. Aside from Sadhus the only Jamaicans who wore dreaded, matted hair were the derelicts on the streets who had virtually dropped out of society and, and in the words of Barry Chevannes, "ceased to conform to the acceptable human standards of behaviour."⁹⁸ Chevannes argues that the adoption of dreadlocks was a phenomenon

⁹⁶ Gross, Robert Lewis. *The Sadhus of India*, p. 304

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Chevannes, Barry; Editor. *Rastafari and other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, p. 88

that took place late in the 1940s, by a small band of young Rastas⁹⁹, as a means of creating a greater symbolic distance between Rastas and the society at large. The wearing of dreadlocks was a visible manifestation of an internalized desire to become outcasts within Jamaican society, further distancing themselves from Babylon. If the first Rastas had recognized that shaving was merely a means of conforming to society, then logically so to was combing one's hair. It was the children of Babylon who conformed to shaving and combing their hair, it was the children of Israel who, as outcasts and non-conformists, ceased shaving and combing to grow beards and wear dreadlocks.¹⁰⁰

Although there is a strong possibility that Rastafarians were inspired by the dreaded hair of the Indian sadhus, most Rastafarians prefer to relate the wearing of dreadlocks back to African roots, such as Haile Selassie's tribal guards (the "Mountain Lions"), Masai braids¹⁰¹, the Nyabinghi tribe, or the Mau-Mau. Many Rastafarians believe that Christ and the prophetic leaders of ancient Israel all wore locks, and the spirit of Ethiopianism is continued via the notion that Ethiopian monks, soldiers, and Haile Selassie's guards all wore locks as well¹⁰². Just as with the smoking of ganja, biblical verses are often cited to defend the practice, specifically from the Books of Numbers and Leviticus. For the Rastafarians, dreadlocks are often viewed as a physical manifestation of their connection to biblical Africa, when, it is believed, all Ethiopians wore locks as a signifier of their priesthood¹⁰³. Furthermore, such a connection signifies Rastafarian attempts at separating themselves from modern Babylonian society, and is reminiscent of similar goals within sadhu communities to transcend mundane society via

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 78

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 89

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Owens, Joseph. *Dread*, p. 155

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 156

continued asceticism. This connection will be discussed more extensively in the following pages.

The origins of Rastafarian dreadlocks are the subject of much debate amongst scholars. The prevailing theory was that the practice originated at Pinnacle, amongst the followers of Leonard Howell, and the Mansinghs believe that the practice was directly influenced by sadhus and the Hindu immigrants to the island. In *Home Away From Home* the Mansinghs make specific reference to the Rastafarian use of the Hindi terms of *jata* for ‘locks’ and *jatawi* for ‘locksmen’. Helene Lee further verifies the connection when she writes of dreadlocks, “which some Rasta elders remember as ‘zagavi’ (from the Hindi jatawi) were possibly inspired by Indian Saddhus, religious mendicants whose presence in Jamaica is confirmed by a 1910 photograph”¹⁰⁴.

Barry Chevannes, a scholar of Rastafarianism, discounts the Mansinghs’ theories for various reasons, including a lack of evidence. Chevannes criticizes the Mansingh’s theories relating the dreadlocks of the sadhus and those of the Rastas, citing the dichotomy of the Sadhu’s locks as manifestations of their holiness, and the popular Afro-Jamaican conception of dreadlocks as symbolizing dereliction and non-conformity. He says,

“While it is true that both prophet and derelict have one thing in common, namely their marginality from society, it is by no means insignificant that the holy man is a revered intercessionary, whereas the derelict is a despised vagrant outside society altogether. It seems odd that the Rastafari would emulate the matted hair practice of the Hindu sadhus but disregard its symbolic meaning. And why imitate sadhus when there are derelicts? Was the

¹⁰⁴ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 103. This citation is in reference to Mansingh, Ajai. “Rastafarianism”.

intention that they be taken as black sadhus rather than outcasts?”¹⁰⁵

It does not, however, seem necessary to consider the two theories as being mutually exclusive, as they both shed light on very important aspects of an essential ritualistic component of Rastafarianism. Especially given the history of bricolage within Rastafarianism, and the fact that the inherent characteristics of Levi-Strauss’ bricolage necessitate that as cultural symbols are adopted their meaning is also adapted and redefined by the bricoleurs. John Clark has written, regarding the assemblage of social signifiers and the construction of discourse, “when the bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed.”¹⁰⁶

The Hindu influences on Leonard Howell and Joseph Hibbert have already been discussed in previous sections¹⁰⁷. Such connections to Indian spirituality amongst the founders of Rastafarianism, coupled with the fact that dreaded sadhus had a presence in Jamaica during the formative years of Rastafarianism, is reason enough to postulate a connection between Rasta locks and Sadhu locks. Chevannes’ theory that dreadlocks did not become pervasive amongst the Rasta community until the late 1940s and 1950s, and then were not used to characterize themselves as mystic holy men but rather as social derelicts and outcasts, merely adds another logical element to the previous theory of the Mansinghs.

The mutual inclusivity of the two theories can be seen in Chevannes’ concession, “it is true that both prophet and derelict have one thing in common, namely their marginality from society”, and it is this statement which truly gets to the heart of the similar ritualistic goals of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 94

¹⁰⁶ Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture*, p. 104

¹⁰⁷ Lee, Helene. *The First Rasta*, p. 97

both Rasta and sadhu. The correlation of both prophet and derelict (i.e., sadhu and Rasta) as embodying a marginal existence within society further connects the two traditions within Gross' paradigm of institutionalized liminality. Just as the sadhu perpetuates his liminal status via a continual asceticism and the adoption of rituals meant to separate him from normative society, the Rastafarian also seeks to attain such an institutionalized liminality by utilizing similar rituals, most notably the growing of long dreadlocks and the smoking of ganja. As the sadhu seeks to transcend the mundane world in pursuit of a mystical connection with the divine, the Rastafarian seeks to transcend Babylon in pursuit of a mystical connection with Jah.

Theoretical Interpretations

Bricolage

The concept of *bricolage* is attributed to the structuralist theories of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, and refers, generally, to the improvisational means by which people respond to the world around them via the construction of 'new' myths and rituals from the remnants of pre-existing myths, rituals, and other discursive mechanisms¹⁰⁸. The term derives from bricoleur, or brick-layer, as one who builds something (such as a wall) from smaller pieces of something else (such as bricks). The bricoleur has a limited number of resources, and therefore has to make do with "whatever is at hand"¹⁰⁹.

Levi-Strauss believes that mythic thought expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which is inherently limited. Therefore, mythic thought is a kind of intellectual bricolage¹¹⁰. The Rastafarian movement embodies the essential characteristics of bricolage, as

¹⁰⁸ Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture*, p. 103

¹⁰⁹ Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*, p. 17

¹¹⁰ Ibid

the founders of were highly influenced by Indian mythic thoughts such as the notion of a God incarnate, by Ethiopianist mythic thoughts regarding the idealization of Africa, Judeo-Christian mythic thoughts such as the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.

Formation of a Subversive Habitus

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is known for his theories analyzing the adoption of unconscious characteristics that serve to further structure one's role within society. Bourdieu describes these unconscious characteristics, these manifested behaviors, as one's *habitus*. A habitus is a set of generally unnoticed dispositions, "structured and structuring structures"¹¹¹, which are manifestations of a more deeply rooted social position or class. A habitus can be seen when social and cultural characteristics, such as occupation, education, and taste preferences for certain foods, clothes, and general aesthetic sensibilities, are compared with the social and cultural characteristics, the habitus, of another¹¹². A habitus is "structured" in that it is the manifestation of a more deeply rooted social and cultural class, it is "structuring" in that, once internalized, it serves to further perpetuate the unquestioned and unexamined notions about society and one's place within said society. Bourdieu's term for the unquestioned, commonsensical, ideas about society is *doxa*, and it is his version of the pervasive ideology espoused by Marx and Gramsci. Bourdieu employs the economic metaphor of *capital* to more fully explain the relationship between one's habitus and one's position within society, and virtually any structured disposition can serve to increase one's capital within a given social

¹¹¹ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction*, p. 171

¹¹² Deal, William E. and Timothy K. Beal. *Theory for Religious Studies*, "Pierre Bourdieu"

structure¹¹³, whether it is financial, cultural, or, in the case of the sadhus and the Rastas, religious and spiritual capital.

The habitus of sadhu and Rasta, as the preceding pages have aimed to illustrate, have numerous similarities, most notably the ritualistic smoking of ganja, wearing of dreadlocks, and residing in habitats which exist outside of the normative conception of a proper home. All of these dispositions serve to set them apart from the normative roles of society at large, serving to increase their spiritual capital. In the case of the sadhus, their adoption of an ascetic lifestyle distinguishes them from others within the social field who are caught up in the normative trappings of the material world, and in that sense their habitus, as holy men, serves to increase their spiritual capital.

In the case of the Rastafari, their spiritual capital is also increased via their employment of a socially subversive habitus, which has a much more overt political message regarding social justice than that of the sadhu. The Rasta habitus is a physical manifestation of an internalized ideology, characterizing their rejection of the Babylonian doxa in favor of a newly formed doxa of resistance. For instance, Leonard Howell did not wear dreadlocks. The dreadlocks were a later manifestation related to the role of Rasta as social outcast and vagabond. First the conditions of existence were altered, and then the alterations manifested themselves within the habitus.

In the case of both Rasta and sadhu, however, the newly created doxa serves to structure, and is also structured by, the employment of the Rasta/sadhu habitus, the dispositions that serve to define their location and role within the larger hegemonic society¹¹⁴.

¹¹³ Ibid.

It is significant that, with regards to the wearing of dreadlocks by both sadhu and Rasta, Chevannes chose to say that "...the holy man is a revered intercessionary, whereas the derelict is a despised vagrant outside society..." Although his assessment of the perception of the sadhu as mendicant and holy man is entirely appropriate, his understanding of how and why they have achieved such a spiritual capital is lacking. The sadhu is revered from a spiritual perspective precisely because they have come to live a life of institutionalized liminality, characterized by continual asceticism and abnegation, removing themselves from the confines of the broader social structure and embraced the role of non-conformist, outcast, derelict, and vagrant.

Chevannes mistakenly attributes the goals (the desire to be perceived as outcasts) of the young Rastas as being in contrast to those of the sadhus. Therefore, although the sadhu appears to don the habitus of a holy man, and the Rasta the habitus of a derelict, the two are one in the same and serve to achieve the similar goal of resisting the normative expectations of the hegemonic society, thereby increasing their cultural and spiritual capital amongst the subgroup and those sympathetic with their endeavors.

Ritual as Resistance

Bruce Lincoln, in his book *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, analyzes the means by which discourse is utilized by both dominant and subjected groups within society, and the ways that the normative discourse of the hegemon may be inverted by peripheral and oppressed subgroups within society. Rituals, according to Lincoln, "play an active and important role in

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

the construction, maintenance, and modification of the borders, structures, and hierarchic relations that characterize and constitute society itself.”¹¹⁵

Those who define themselves as existing outside of the mainstream society will often employ rituals that seek to subvert the normative social constructions of the hegemon. This is explicitly seen with regard to the ritualistic dispositions adopted by the Rastafarians. Although ganja had been a sacrament since the beginning of the movement in the 1930s, it was the disproportionately negative attention its use garnered from the Jamaican authorities in the 1950s that catapulted its ritualized role within the Rastafarian belief system. The same can also be said of the wearing of dreadlocks, which served to further distinguish the Rastafarians as social outcasts, existing in a constant state of deviance and non-conformity to the normative expectations of Babylon.

The following excerpt from *Discourse and the Construction of Society* describes the transgressive behavior of a certain sect of sadhus.

“Among the better known are the practices of the Aghorins (those without dread), a class of Tantric ascetics...whose cult centers in cemeteries, where they drink from skulls; eat feces and all manner of flesh (human included) in defiance of normative vegetarianism; engage in incestuous intercourse and relations with prostitutes; and meditate on exhumed corpses. Far from being orgiastic revels, however, these are taken to be sacred rituals in which the Aghorins seek to enact their absolute liberation from the human condition itself, together with all its arbitrary restraints. It is significant, also, that they live lives of vagabondage and

¹¹⁵ Lincoln, Bruce. *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, p. 75

thoroughly reject the fundamental structure of Indic society: the caste system”¹¹⁶

The Aghorins habit of eating flesh, “in defiance of normative vegetarianism”, is especially salient given the previously mentioned connection between Indic and Rastafarian dietary tendencies. The co-option of vegetarianism by the Rastafari, which is a normative social tendency in Indic society, has served to further distinguish their habitus as existing outside of the normative tastes of mainstream Jamaican society. In the case of the Aghorins, the *violation* of vegetarianism is a means of deviating from normative social expectations, while with the Rastafarians, the *adoption* of vegetarianism is a means of deviating from normative social expectations. In both instances a similar goal of distinguishing oneself from the broader social strata is met via alterations to one’s dietary habitus, however the ritual is inverted with respect to the normative dietary expectations of the mainstream society.

Although considered sadhus, the practices of the Aghorins are taken to extremities rarely seen manifested, at least in the same way, by the majority of sadhus. It is Lincoln’s reference to the life of vagabondage (which echoes elements of Chevannes’ perspective regarding vagabondage as being unique to the Rastafari, and re-affirms my point to the contrary), and the implementation of ritual as a means of rejecting the normative structure of Indic society, the caste system, which speaks most notably to the subject at hand; the structuring of one’s habitus with regards to one’s doxa.

Indian towns were historically constructed as physical manifestations of the caste system, with the highest castes (the Kings and Brahmins) residing in the middle, and subsequent castes radiating out, in a circular pattern, from there, culminating with a wall around the city, separating

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 114

the inhabitants from the impurities of the cremation grounds. Lord Shiva is said to have dwelt in the cremation grounds, and therefore those who emulate him by residing in the cremation grounds are literally (via their location) and symbolically (via their behavior) removing themselves from the pervasive reaches of the caste system. It is through the dual paradigm of Bourdieu and Lincoln that the manifested disposition, the habitus, of the sadhu can be seen as a direct means towards subversion of the dominant discourse of the hegemon.

Such tendencies are equally as pronounced, if not more so, in the Rastafarian tradition. Leonard Howell organized the first Rastafari commune, Pinnacle, in the early days of the movement. The idea of reclaiming lands outside of the confines of the town, away from the pervasive influences of Babylon, to live and grow ganja and natural, unprocessed (ital) food, has since been an inherent characteristic of the Rasta lifestyle. This conception of free, communal land is an essential element to the Rastafari inversion of the normative Babylonian discourse concerning the ownership of land¹¹⁷, which is especially salient given their historical relationship to land, in the form of the plantation, as it relates to the institution of slavery. Since the early days of Pinnacle it has become common for Rastafarians to isolate themselves from the broader, Babylonian, society. Whether it be in a communal or solitary setting outside of the city, or merely setting up a tent in someone's yard, the tendency towards a non-conventional habitat is merely one more element that intrinsically connects Rastafarians with sadhus, and further illustrates their adopted habitus as a mechanism of social resistance.

¹¹⁷ Chevannes, Barry; Editor. *Rastafari and other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, p. 69

Conclusion

Although modern Rastafarianism relies heavily on Judeo-Christian imagery and textual influences, Rastafarianism is ultimately a syncretic tradition which encompasses aspects of many pre-existing myths, rituals, and ideological systems which were present in Jamaica before its creation.

Hinduism had a profound influence on the inherent mysticism found in Rastafarianism, including a reverence for all things in their natural state (as embodied in the I-tal diet, the sacrament of ganja, and the growing of long beards and dreadlocks). The influence of Hinduism can also be seen in the notion of avatars and the concept of God incarnate, which were so influential on Leonard Howell and Joseph Hibbert, the use of Indian inspired words and phrases (such as Jah, ganja, and Leonard Howell's pseudonym, Gagunguru Maragh), and, most notably, the ritualistic use of ganja, and the possible inspiration for dreadlocks.

The Indian laborers were transported to Jamaica as a result of the economic demands placed on the region by the institution of slavery and its abolition. Therefore, one of the major influences on the development of Rastafarianism, Hinduism, was introduced to Jamaica via the institution of slavery and the colonial demands on the British Empire, just as the Africans originally were. In this way, the bricoleured elements present in Rastafarianism represent the ramifications of colonialism, globalization, and the institution of slavery on numerous different levels. On the surface of Rastafarianism are the most apparent ideological manifestations, namely that Africans were brought to Jamaica as slaves by Babylon, and continue to live in Babylonian captivity. Woven throughout Rastafarianism, however, are the relatively hidden threads of Hinduism, which are also representative of colonialism and the institution of slavery.

Rastafarianism, for this reason, is a unique example of a new religious movement that did not merely develop in opposition to normative society and oppressive institutions, but was virtually created by the same oppressive systems and institutions which it is rebelling.

Disagreement exists amongst certain scholars regarding the relationship between Hindus, specifically sadhus, and Rastafarians. The historical documentation is, however, significant enough that it would be remiss not to attempt to analyze the relationship. The preceding pages have attempted to marshal the available evidence into a convincing argument for the Rastafarian bricolage of elements of Indic society, Hindu mysticism, and sadhu rituals. It is my hope that this paper has also begun to shed light on certain theoretical aspects directly relating to both Rastafarian and sadhu ritualistic elements, and their role in resisting and restructuring the normative discourse of hegemonic, mundane, and Babylonian society.

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