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**Lords and Empresses in and out of Babylon: The  
EABIC community and the dialectic of female  
subordination.**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in African Languages and  
Cultures.

2013

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**Declaration for PhD thesis**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M.A.', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 25/09/2013 \_\_\_\_\_

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This thesis is not merely the fruit of my personal efforts. I come from a solid and proud family and community unit that fulfilled my spiritual, emotional, intellectual and financial needs throughout this process.

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*Irie, Hotep, Pa Plis Ki Sa, Thank You.*

## Abstract

In this thesis, I have questioned the influence of *whiteness* in the assessment of female subordination in an increasingly neoliberal Caribbean setting. Indeed, due the rigidity of the gendered role attribution on their commune, Bobo Shanti Rastafarians have universally been accused of institutionalising female subordination by most scholars of Rastafari. In Jamaica, where women have traditionally been key agents of their communities, a passive acceptance of a subordinated status can be puzzling. Is androgyny the only means to gender equality?

With the caution of strategic gender universalism against cultural relativism, I have endeavoured to analyse gender construction through the standards of this atypical community. It was the first time that a female researcher was immersed in the Bull' Bay community. It was therefore possible to analyse the EABIC *livity* from a female perspective, a point lacking in most academic publications about Rastafari, the EABIC and gender equality. From this qualitative study, I have suggested that the EABIC can be regarded as a radical social movement where the potential of its members needs to be federated towards the fulfilment of its objectives; creating a system where equal value is placed on defined gendered roles.

I have explored three main areas: the EABIC epistemology; the public; then the private spheres of the commune. I have found that nothing in EABIC theology, the EABIC's foundation for knowledge creation, neither justified nor encouraged female subordination. Men and women are considered to be divine. The *Universal* supports both men and women. If the EABIC does not promote gender equality "male style", it enforces the paramount importance of male and female agency for the survival of its purpose: *Repatriation with Reparation*. EABIC empresses' habitus may not fit the western notion of female empowerment; yet their chosen means to exercise agency in their community cannot be diminished.

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## Glossary

**Babylon:** is an important Rastafari term, referring to human government and institutions that are seen as in rebellion against the rule of Jah (God), beginning with the Tower of Babel to the institutions that have been oppressing Africa and its Diaspora for centuries through economic and physical slavery. In a more general sense, Babylon refers to any system that oppresses or discriminates against all peoples. Babylon the Great and Whore of Babylon are apocalyptic terms from the book of Revelation that may have been used to describe the pagan Roman Empire, which often persecuted Christianity. Babylon is also sometimes used by some Rastafarians with the more specific meaning of "police", insofar as they are seen as executive agents of Babylon's will.

**Bannerman:** name given to the flag bearers officiating during any official EABIC ceremonies and services.

**Bobo Shanti:** Name under which the members of the EABIC are also united. The accepted meaning of the word is: "Black Warrior" with "Shanti" being an allusion to the Ashanti kingdom.

**Bredren:** a Rastaman or a group of Rases. The term is used in both plural and singular cases.

**EABIC:** Ethiopian African Black International Congress. Official name of the Bobo Shanti mansion of Rastafari.

**Guidance:** is a badge made by Bobo Shanti men and women used as memoranda of the principles of Rastafari and Bobo Shanti. They can portray HIM Haile Selassie and Mennen, flags or King Emmanuel.

**Ital:** A way of life promoting health and holistic well-being. Applied to food, Ital, beyond the notion of vegetarianism is about nourishing the body with natural and unprocessed food and additions such as salt and sugar.

**Kingman:** The husband, the partner of a Rastawoman. The name implies that he is to be treated like a king and has the obligation to take financial, spiritual and emotional care of his family.

**Livity:** a way of life, a lifestyle. For instance, Rastafari is a livity. According to the EABIC, there are good and bad livities, which affect the body in a positive or a negative way.

**Obeah:** A term used in the Caribbean to refer to folk magic and religious practices derived from West African traditional religions, and specifically Igbo origin. Obeah is similar to other African derived religions including Kembwa (Martinique), Vodun (Haiti) or Santería (Cuba).

**Principles:** EABIC Principles are the set of rules and ethos governing the commune.

**Ras, Rases:** Originally, the word is an Ethiopian Court title equivalent to the European Duke. Ras currently used to refer to one or a group of Rastafarians.

**Reasoning:** In Rastafari parlance, a reasoning is not only a thought process, it is also the materialisation of this process in a conversation or a debate. A reasoning is indeed the name given to a conversation through which a Rastafarian makes a point. Throughout a reasoning, arguments will be logically laid in a very eloquent manner.

**Roots:** a fortifying beverage made out of plants drunk for the general well being of the body. Some roots boost the immune system; other give energy and some help the detoxifying process.

**Shakti:** Shakti is the concept, or personification, of divine feminine creative power, sometimes referred to as 'The Great Divine Mother' in Hinduism. On the earthly plane, Shakti most actively manifests through female embodiment and creativity/fertility, though it is also present in males in its potential, unmanifest form. Not only is the Shakti responsible for creation, it is also the agent of all change. Shakti is cosmic existence as well as liberation, its most significant form being the Kundalini Shakti, a mysterious psycho spiritual force Shakti exists in a state of svātantrya, dependence on no one, being interdependent with the entire universe.

**Sistren:** A Rastawoman or a group of Rastawomen. The term is used in both plural and singular cases.

**Universal:** economic system of the commune under which basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing are met by the community. Members of the EABIC will all work for the universal, which in turn will meet their needs. For instance, the Universal kitchen should cook for everyone.

**WFLL:** Women Freedom Liberation League. Name of the Bobo Shanti woman guild.

**Wombman:** Title given to a mother or a young woman to praise her ability to bring forth life.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The subordination of women in Jamaican society can be witnessed at every level. Men hold the most powerful political positions and control the more lucrative economy transactions. This political-economic stratification has its counterparts in everyday male/female relations. As Douglass (1992) asserts the “marked” status of the female cuts across class boundaries where women defer to men in spite of the level of economic independence of the former. What is important to understand relative to the connection between the secular and religious spheres, is that religious ideology and everyday practices are not separate from one another, but are mutually reinforcing in legitimizing sexual hegemony. Rastafarian women have been victims of the same constraints as Jamaican women, at large (Rowe 1985:16). Strict biblical interpretations and other cultural beliefs that constitute Rastafarian ideology, work to further institutionalize their subordinate status. These constraints include the absence of women in leadership positions, proscriptions on ways of dressing, and notions of female pollution. (Lake 1994: 6-7).

This analysis of the Jamaican socio-economic dynamics with regards to gender, class and religion is challengeable. If the facts regarding economic and religious circumstances are not to be argued here, one can question Lake’s conclusions and their implication in the portrayal of these women, especially as far as the Rastafarian women are concerned. Are the ability to occupy lucrative positions and the heavy secularisation of a society the only markers for a gender egalitarian society? Is, as Bergmann (1998) phrased it, gender equality “male style” the only path to take?

This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate that there are other arguments, and voices to be considered in the dialectic of women’s liberation. In order to do so, a specific Rastafarian community has been analysed: the Ethiopian African Black International Congress (EABIC) also known as Bobo Shanti. In this introductory chapter, firstly, I will discuss the concept of female subordination with the socio-economic, spiritual and historical factors pertaining to the Caribbean. Then, a section will be dedicated to Jamaica, and the strong connections between religious and protest/rebellious actions. Once these facts have been established, the emphasis will be placed on the theoretical tools that have allowed me to formulate the research question for this study. The following sections will then be dedicated to the methodology used to tackle this question, and the structure of this study.

### 1.1. Female subordination in Jamaica: socio-economic factor

It is an established fact that Caribbean women have generally occupied the lowest paid positions available on the job market (Barker 2005, Barriteau 2002, Roulston and Mills 2000). However, it has also been demonstrated that these women were, for most of them, part of kin or community networks, acting as social pressure valves where their lack of money could be counter balanced (Leo-Rhynie 2003, Senior 1991). These networks would allow the creation of frames where they could exercise agency, and have a voice.

From the opening quote, one could gather that leadership or the lack of it; specific clothing prescriptions and menstrual taboos are, according to Lake (1994) the main criteria under which the Rastawoman would qualify for the subordination label. The women of the EABIC are an interesting case, as they remain in seclusion twenty-one days per month. They also, never go in public with their hair exposed and they, at least from Lake's position, never participate in ecclesiastic affairs, and decision making activities (1994: 242). With all of these facts and allegations made upon them, a Bobo Shanti woman must therefore be the paramount of female subordination, not only in Jamaica, but also within Rastafari. It has been verified that within the EABIC principles, women cannot have access to priesthood, which in this *Priesthood Order*, is a very prestigious title in the *Congress'* hierarchy. Nevertheless, does it really mean that because they cannot be priests, EABIC women are devoid of agency in the community? Is their inability to access male position a sure indicator of their subordinate status?

Within the context of Jamaica, the systematic stigmatization of devout Rastafari women, based upon formal economic performance, may not be the best way to assess their true impact in the social reality of this geographical zone. But Lake's statement does not only pertain to financial sustainability. It would appear that the deeply conservative Judeo-Christian background of the island would contribute to female subordination, as economically successful women will still have to "defer" to men (Lake 1994: 6-7).

### 1.1.2 Female subordination in Jamaica: the religious factor

“Subordination and limitation were the result of sin because it was said to the woman after the fall: ‘you will be under male domination’ and Gregory said that ‘where there is no sin, there is no inequality’. But the woman is naturally of a lesser strength and dignity than man” (Thomas of Aquinas, arts.1, ad 2: np). As a cultural system of meaning, a given religion and its definite ideological content is the basis on which an individual, a community or a nation can elaborate its beliefs, policies or stereotypes (Yawney 1983). Consequently, the essentialist belief in an evil female nature present in the Torah<sup>1</sup>, the Bible<sup>2</sup> or the Quran<sup>3</sup>, has been the basis on which gender was constructed and deconstructed in Jewish, Christian and Muslim societies, with visible repercussions on the secular socio-economic spheres (Finn 1989: 203-232). Religion can also be used as a pretext for secular instances to camouflage the failure of their social policies with regards to ethnicity and gender.

In France, according to the particular republican principle of *Laïcité*<sup>4</sup>; devoted Muslim Frenchwomen who choose to live according to the Purdah, are openly persecuted regardless of the republican values of: *Liberté, Egalité Fraternité*<sup>5</sup>. Nordmann denounced the fact that the Stasi Commission<sup>6</sup> conducted a survey to prepare the law on secularity without consulting with the very women concerned by the measure: the Muslim Frenchwomen (Nordmann 2004). The former also exposed that, from 1989 to 2003, it has been estimated that one hundred girls were expelled from State schools because of their refusal to take off their headscarves (Idem 2004). The fact is that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and in a free country such as France, some women are denied the right to freely live their lives as normal citizens because of their personal religious convictions.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Torah, some verses paint women as minors dependent on their fathers, then on their husbands. Women cannot make a vow to God without the approval of their fathers or husbands (Numbers 30:3-16). In addition to this, rape could be regarded as a unfortunate means to courtship as a rapist, if discovered, must pay the father of the woman and take her as his wife (Deuteronomy 22: 28-29)

<sup>2</sup> In the Bible, some verses warned women against fineries and elaborated hairstyles. They were also warned against teaching men or their husbands under the pretext that they had been deceived by the devil (Timothy 2:9-15)

<sup>3</sup> In the Quran, some surats explicitly declare that men, on a judiciary, social, economical and sexual levels are worth more than women ( 4:11, 2:282, 2:228)

<sup>4</sup> Laïcité is the principle of secularity inherent to the French Republic.

<sup>5</sup> “Liberté Egalité Fraternité” can be translated by Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood.

<sup>6</sup> The Stasi Commission is a reflection group set up by former French President Mr. Jacques Chirac, in 2003. Its aim was to reflect upon the application of the *laïcité* or secularity principle.

Intertwined with the debate on French National Identity, many have suggested that even the Muslim headscarf should be prohibited. It has been commonly argued that those who chose an “occidental” way of life, fleeing oppressive political regimes or strenuous economic situations in their countries, should not hold on to the symbols of their native culture. The nature of the French Republic does not recognise the notion of community (Marine Le Pen, 2010). If some consider Muslim women wearing headscarves as threats to the republican notion of integration, others considered them to be a walking example of female subordination.

Prominent French feminist activists have declared Muslim girls refusing to take off their headscarves in schools “blind and manipulated” (Amara 2003). The later even stated that: “The Muslim headscarf is the affirmation of women’s humiliation” (Amara in l’Express 2003). Respected philosophers saw the headscarf as a symbol of patriarchal domination from an archaic form of religion (Defrance 2008). De Villiers warmly supported an Inn manager who did not authorise a veiled woman to take lodging in her establishment under the pretext that she was wearing a symbol for female subordination (de Villiers 2006).

These assertions, coming from the decision making spheres of the French society, were all fed to the public without being nuanced by the arguments of the other side of the story coming from Arabic and African women, who have been let down by the French government. Indeed, from *la banlieue et les cités*, the poorest suburbs of Paris, these women cling to their cultural communities and values for lack of perspectives and alternatives in the French society. The latter could not protect them from the harsh economic realities and insert them as normal French citizens (Seddik 2006). Even if one does not imply here that the Purdah should not be challenged and questioned, it would be hasty to systematically declare women with self imposed modest and demure apparel, subordinated.

In the Caribbean and more precisely in Jamaica, Lake suggested that the strong influence of conservative Christian ideology has created a “sexual hegemony” of which Rastafarian women are the first victims (Lake 1994). This subordination is visible though their “Purdah like” garments consisting of long veils covering their hair in



public, long skirts and dresses showing very little skin. I would suggest here, that similarly to the French Muslim women, Rastafari women are not to be regarded as hopeless victims of a patriarchal and sexist religious system. It is not because they are covered that they cannot have a say in the “sisterhood” discourse. To understand Rastafari and the Caribbean women who *manifest it*<sup>7</sup>, it is necessary to leap into the past, into an extremely complex society where race and skin colour were the sure indicators of class and economic status.

### 1.1.3. Female subordination in Jamaica: Context

In the Caribbean context, gender construction was made on very different social and religious grounds from Christian Europe. The systematic dehumanisation of the African men and women, articulated by the capitalist institution that was slavery, rendered the occidental conception of gender inapplicable in the Americas. A particular colour/class dynamic was created actively supported by official bills such as the French *Code Noir* or the British *Amelioration Act* in the fifteenth century. In these fundamentally racist societies, African men and women equally bore the contempt of their white masters in an equally shared subordination status. Aquinas’ sophisticated exegeses on the female nature were not relevant in these lucrative sugar cane fields. Indeed, Reddock underlines the fact that female slaves were expected to work as hard as men in the fields, in order to maximise production (1985: 64-65). Christian patriarchal biases were nevertheless observed in the European continuities of gendered activities different from field labour. Women did not have access to activities that their masters considered to be *male*. Activities such as carpentry or masonry were exclusively reserved to poor whites, mulattoes or black men, enabling the later to better their lives and even buy their freedom (Reddock 1985: 64-65).

Preventing enslaved women to acquire the necessary skills to access the few socially improving activities available to the enslaved, can be considered to be a tactic used by the planters to protect their capital. Indeed, a child born to a free woman was automatically free from birth. The enforcement of these “Christian” conceptions of gender *did* effectively serve the economic growth of the time. If women were not given

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<sup>7</sup> In Rastafari parlance, one manifests Rastafari. For instance, one should say, “I manifest Rastafari”, implying that it is a way of life, not a religion.

opportunities to better their condition, and that of their children, they surely elaborated strategies to gain their liberty through actions such as *Marronnage*, strategic concubinage, or sabotage and rebellion fomentation (Mathurin-Mair 2006: 66-67) engaging in cultural resistance.

It has been proven, that the enslaved women were the ones sustaining and adapting the African ancestral religious and medicinal traditions, despite their masters' efforts to eradicate these heathen practices (Idem 2006). The planters regarded African spiritual continuations as dangerous because they constituted a structure where rebellion and resistance could be excited and sustained (Burton 1997). Always in strategic positions allowing them to facilitate or hinder a rebellion, women; as sabotage and espionage experts; were directly and actively involved in the success or failure of such radical endeavours (Bush 1990: 193). If, in the eyes of the colonial authorities, they were useful but disposable commodities, within the African-Diasporic community, they were essential pillars maintaining the spirit of resistance, and organising a creole society where spirituality can never be wholly disconnected to rational activities. Therefore, if conservative Christian ideology is connoted to highly misogynistic ideas that have obviously shaped the realities of most European Catholic (and non- Catholic) societies (Daly 1986), the same cannot be blindly applied to the Caribbean. I will suggest here that religion, in Jamaica at least, is tightly intertwined with resistance and liberation in which, women are considered to be fierce warriors. The following section is dedicated to the demonstration of how spirituality is undeniably connected to the economic and socio-political history of the island, and why Rastafari is such a subversive movement.

## **1.2. The case of Rastafari: conscious of the “double consciousness”.**

The word Rastafari comes from the Amharic “Ras” meaning head or Duke in English and the verb “Fera” meaning “who is feared” (Bonacci 2002). These were the title and the name of H.I.M. Haile Selassie before his coronation. Although sharing the same title, the Ethiopian monarch was not the instigator of this spiritual, philosophical and ideological movement. Rastafarians are known for having reached a level of “consciousness” where the alternative to break free from the abuse, the violence and the racism encountered in post- colonial and neoliberal milieus, is to define their own moral, spiritual and social values regardless of the sanction of the authorities. Rastaman

and Rastawoman<sup>8</sup> are definitely aware of the effects of “double consciousness” described by Dubois (1994: 2-3), however, they do not see a solution either in the notions of integration, or in that of “a nation within a nation”. Rastafari advocates for a very radical “Repatriation” to the African continent.

The idea of the repatriation of the entire African Diaspora has been brewing in Jamaica long before the coronation of the emperor and the creation of Rastafari. In order to have a clearer idea of what Rastafari is about, I will attempt to paint the social, economic and spiritual background behind this forever striving movement, which fascinates people from all walks of life and from all over the world.

### **1.2.1. Jamaica: connecting spirituality and social changes**

One could say that the word Ethiopianism describes a religious form of resistance to Christian colonial oppression in African and throughout its Diaspora. One of the first recorded instances of Ethiopianism was in 1892. M. M. Makone, a clergyman in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, is said to have led secession and formed the *Ethiopian Church* in Pretoria and Johannesburg. He did so because he resented the discrimination operated by his white “brothers” of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (Mills 1978: 51-61, Wright 1990). From then, Ethiopianism was manifested through various actions and ideas that could adopt the most radical to the most subtle discourse against colonialism and racism. For instance Rodriguez Toulis, while studying African-Caribbean Pentecostal Churches in England, argued that if these Churches were not openly political; they truly helped their members to “deal with the non-negotiable facts of racism” (Rodriguez Toulis 1997, 206). In a conference on Pan-Africanism, Muchie underlined the tremendous impact of Ethiopianism on the notion of Pan-Africanism in the Americas, even regarding it as the foundation of this movement (2013). In *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Sundkler insisted on the radical and subversive nature of these churches and described the uneasiness of the colonial institution when confronted to them (2004, 69).

If the conceptions and objectives of the movement are as numerous as the various forms of oppression affecting the African or African-Diasporic congregation,

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<sup>8</sup> Rastaman, Rastawoman will keep the singular form in this work as the plural form is connoted with evil in Rastafari parlance. This rule is discussed further in chapter 2, section 2.3.4.

most experts agree that the legitimacy of Ethiopianism is essentially fuelled by the biblical verse “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God” (Psalms 68:31, KJV).

In the Caribbean, where cruel measures were taken to ensure that the enslaved population forgot, and even denied their humanity and their African identities, spirituality in the form of *Ethiopianism* was an efficient means to allow the African-Jamaicans to somehow resist the destructive system in which they lived (Coleman 2005). As early as 1784, a manumitted itinerant preacher from the United States of America, George Liele, founded the first *Ethiopianist* church in Jamaica the: “Ethiopian Baptist Church”. Thousands of slaves rallied this “black Church” growing increasingly aware of their agency as Christians, human and later on as political beings. (Hall 2003; Lincoln 2003, 23).

One may suggest here that through its grassroots-led churches, Ethiopianism could be regarded as a means for the African-Diasporic population of the island to negotiate, claim and affirm its status within the Jamaican society. If the integrationist powers of these churches are arguable, their subversive muscles cannot be denied, as they were put to the test throughout the major socio-economic changes on the island.

The late nineteenth century (1857-58) saw an important spiritual Revival coming from the US. In Jamaica, this Revival took the island by a storm and quickly adopted traits of African worship styles the point that Gordon called it “a triumph of Myalism<sup>9</sup>” (1998, 86). Indeed, the Jamaican Revivalist movement saw its members express their devotion “in the spirit” by “speaking in tongues” and through healing miracles. Breaking away from the “white” Baptist Church, this movement had an important socio-cultural impact on the African-Jamaican population (Seaga 1982; Orr 1985; Barrett 1997: 55).

An example of the combined effects of the Ethiopianist churches and the Revivalist movement can be recognised in the Morant Bay Rebellion. After the emancipation, the former enslaved population lived, in almost the same revolting

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<sup>9</sup> See more information about Myalism in section 2.2

conditions. The planters did not allow them to make a decent living out of their hard work, which led them to extreme poverty. Even European visitors criticised the administration of this British colony (Barrett 1997: 51-63). In 1865, tired of these injustices, hundreds of people led by Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, both members of *Ethiopianist* churches fuelled by the Revivalist movement, agitated for fair trials, better living conditions, and a fair chance to economic development for African-Jamaicans population. The rebellion was crushed in extreme violence, but it can be regarded as a founding myths for the future Jamaican nation. Through the light of these events, one would venture to say that in Jamaica the Revivalist movement along with the tradition of *Ethiopianist* churches, created a privileged space for the African-Jamaicans to challenge the socio-economic status quo of the colony and build an African-Jamaican identity. In this light, it seems almost logical that this soil could also produce a Pan-African leader such as the Honourable Marcus Garvey.

### **1.2.2. Jamaica, land of Black Nationalism: Marcus Garvey**

In the colonial society that Jamaica had become by 1900, culture was an instrument of class domination to the point where the colonisers would say that Africans had no culture. Through the principal institutions of the colonial State, the ideas of white supremacy were circulated to justify the exploitation of black labour (Campbell 1985:62-63).

Even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a need to construct a national or cultural common identity that would encompass all ethnic groups present on the island. In spite of the formidable spiritual support provided by the *Ethiopianist* churches, the black working class still lived in abject circumstances. Many chased the idea of a better life, and sought employment in European and American economic endeavours, such as the construction of the Panama Canal. During the construction of this canal, a great number of skilled and unskilled workers from the Caribbean were recruited and worked in dreadful conditions, creating the first waves of voluntary out-migration (Garvey 2009, Green 2009) in the Caribbean. Amidst the serious demographic and questionable economic impacts of these large-scale migrations, leaving Jamaica was the opportunity for many to realise the quasi universality of the poor living conditions of people of African descent.

Marcus Garvey was one of them. Born in 1887, in St Ann Bay Jamaica he came from a rather financially stable family, where he was encouraged to read and study

(Babagbeto 1999: 49-67). From 1910 to 1912, Garvey worked both in Costa Rica and in Panama, where he had the opportunity to witness and experience a continuity of the racist ideology that was ambient in Jamaica: a white hegemony dictates the reality of a black majority. In order to counteract the effects of this system of value, he founded, in 1914, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). His objective was to unite all black people from all over the world into a powerful and self-determined economic, spiritual, social and cultural voice. With the help of his wives (he married them successively) Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques, Garvey was able to create space and means for people of African descent in Diaspora to voice their concerns, identify their problems and find pragmatic ways to address them. For instance, in 1918, the association started the publication of a periodical, the *Negro World*, promoting African-Diasporic aesthetic, culture, values and entrepreneurship (Assata 2008).

In addition to these fundamental ideas, the *Negro World* endorsed and admonished the return to Africa as the ultimate solution to white hegemonic power. From 1919 to 1922, Garvey established the Black Star Line, a shipping company, which was to facilitate the exchange of goods between Africa and the Americas and eventually repatriate people of African descent to Africa. Even though the company went bankrupt, it became a source of inspiration for many, and among them the future members of Rastafari.

Controversial, admired as well as heavily criticised, Garvey can definitely be remembered as a man who remained true to his vision and convictions. For many Caribbeans, he is the champion of pan-Africanism, a precursor in liberation theology, and advocate for gender justice in the midst of racial struggle (Gordon 1994, Assata 2008). A talented orator and extremely charismatic, it has been observed that myths around his persona were created while he was still alive, conferring upon him the status of hero long before the official recognition of the Jamaican government in 1964 (Chevannes 1994b). As such, whatever he said, or allegedly said, became proverbial and even prophetic in Jamaica. For instance, during his farewell speech in 1916, in Jamaica, he uttered the famous line: “Look to Africa for the crowning of a black king, he shall be the Redeemer” (Barrett 1997: 67). When Haile Selassie was crowned with the titles: “King of kings, Lord of lords, Conquering Lion of Judah, God’s Anointed,

Light of the World”<sup>10</sup>, several Garveyists saw him as the announced king, the leader of the Black Nation, a true Messiah.

### **1.2.3 Jamaica, land of radical thinking: Rastafari**

In the 1930’s, the economic situation of African-Jamaicans had not drastically improved since the Morant Bay rebellion. From land to sanitary problems, they were then confronted with the effects of a more global economy. Indeed, the 1930’s were the years of the great depression, which violently hit the sugar and banana industries, the main cash crops produced by Jamaica, at the time. Bertram explained that, in spite of the tepid attempts to redistribute the land equally, by 1912, more than twenty four hundred thousand acres of cultivable land reverted to the crown, due to the unwillingness of the big landowners to see the development of a striving independent black peasantry. This move left a considerable number of farmers landless and unemployed. By the 1930’s a real rural exodus had taken place, increasing the population of Kingston by three hundred percent (Bertram 2006). Another effect of the great depression was the return of thousands of Jamaicans who had sought employment in the United States or Canada (Green 1997).

Underpaid or jobless, these farmers, workers, men and women lived in abject conditions in the slums of Kingston, or on the plantations where they worked. What is particularly striking about this crisis, and makes it different from the Morant Bay rebellion, is the political consciousness of the population. In fact, the men and women who had migrated and returned to Jamaica were very much aware of racial prejudices and discriminations. Thanks to the efforts of people like Marcus Garvey and members of Ethiopianists Churches those who were to become Jamaicans had developed a state of consciousness that enabled them to organise themselves into powerful unions which challenged the established order. These unions put together strike actions, which culminated into the Frome Labour Riot of 1938 (Green 1997, Bertram 2006). It is in this atmosphere of socio-economic discontentment and self-determination that the seeds of Rastafari were sown.

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<sup>10</sup> These titles are the traditional ones for those of the royal lineage of the Solomonic dynasty. These kings come from Menelik, the son of Solomon and the queen of Sheba.

Leonard Percival Howell, a *Garveyite*<sup>11</sup> who had returned to Jamaica from New York in 1932, is regarded as the first person to preach the divinity of Ras Tafari, crowned *Neguse Negest ze-'Ityopp'ya* (King of Kings of Ethiopia) on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1930 (Lee 1999: 10). Howell, who was certainly under the influence of the mythical aura of the latter like many other Jamaicans, saw in the coronation of Ras Tafari, the redeeming king previously announced by Garvey. From the very beginning of his ministry, the authorities pronounced him to be a dangerous lunatic. He was jailed and committed to psychiatric asylums many times, but this did not stop him from going around the country preaching the fulfilment of the prophecy pronounced by Garvey, in the advent of an African Messiah, and to establish a commune.

On April 25th 1939, he offered to take care of a piece of land in Sligoville, St. Catherine. This property consisted of over 500 acres of land, and was owned by an Asian tradesman. If there was a tacit agreement between the two men, there was no legal document recording a lease, or a purchase of this land by Howell, which he called pinnacle. This absence of legal evidence was problematic, as it enabled the police to effectuate countless raids on the commune, since they legally had no rights to be there. Nowadays, this historical site is currently the property of St Jago Hills Development Company limited. The Rastafari community has disputed the purchase since 2002, and the case is yet to be settled (William 2009). In spite of the numerous disadvantages related to the absence of legal documents linking Howell to pinnacle, one may suggest here that this unwillingness to officialise could be regarded as the most logical option for Howell at the time. Indeed, since one of the main objectives of Howell, and the other *Rases*<sup>12</sup> was to be “repatriated” to Africa, it made little sense to invest in real estate in Jamaica. Albeit these legal issues, it is on this property that Howell founded the first Rastafari commune, which was to become a refuge for many impoverished Jamaicans.

Breaking away from the profit-oriented practices that eventually led to the Frome Labour Riot, Howell established a community where goods were divided equally among its members (Lavigne 2003). Accounts on the activities conducted on the

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<sup>11</sup> Neologism usually attributed to the followers of the philosophy of Marcus Garvey: Garveyism.

<sup>12</sup> The Ethiopian Aristocratic title *Ras* is commonly used to refer to members of Rastafari. This word is therefore going to be favoured in this work as, in my opinion; it is more meaningful and coherent than the word Rasta.



commune vary. Some said that although Howell was never directly involved in the growing and the selling of Marijuana, the herb became the main source of income as the members of the pinnacle refused to “bust dem shirts”<sup>13</sup> trying to grow vegetables on the land (Lee 1999: 167). Others insisted that people on the Pinnacle mainly planted foodstuff, and that ganja<sup>14</sup> was cultivated for ritual purposes only (Afari 2007). Despite these divergences, one can say that the commune established by Howell was a striving one, where people seemed to enjoy a better quality of life than the average Jamaican working class. If all accounts seem to agree that Howell was a controversial figure, he can be commended for his organisational skills as he managed to coordinate a commune with a sustainable economy in times that were extremely difficult in Jamaica. In the early works on Rastafari, the principles of the movement was often defined as follows:

- Hatred for the White Race.
  - The complete superiority of the black race.
  - Revenge on white for their wickedness.
  - The negation, persecution and humiliation of government and legal bodies in Jamaica.
  - Repatriation to go back to Africa.
  - Acknowledging the Emperor Haile Selassie as Supreme Being, and only ruler of black people.
- (Barrett 1997: 85)<sup>15</sup>.

It is important to note that the first three principles stated above are no longer supported by current Rastafari organisations. The notion of love is now more prominent in Rastafari discourse than hatred. This shift of ideas or at least of discourse can be directly linked to the fluid nature of the movement (Hamid 2001; King 2002; Price 2009, Gadet 2010). In fact, there are no dogmas in Rastafari, as the personal experience and understanding of the individual is more valued than a collective unintelligible set of rules. For instance, Howell was not the only one to preach Rastafari, and although he was respected and revered as a knowledgeable elder, he has never managed to create a fixed religion applicable to all, and by all. Howell *did* start to promote the divinity of Haile Selassie, but the understanding and application of this idea remained decidedly different for each Ras.

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<sup>13</sup> A colloquial Jamaican expression implying intense work and effort. Literally “tear their shirts”

<sup>14</sup> Ganja is another name given to Marijuana.

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note that Barrett’s description of the movement is still the one commonly found and relayed in academic milieus, even though it blatantly clashes with most actual Rastafarian principles of love, tolerance and justice, portraying Rastafari into another violent and obtuse group such as the Ku Klux Klan.

One cannot close this section without mentioning the names of the elders Archibald Dunkley, Robert Hinds, Altamont Read, Paul Ezlington, Vernal Davis, Ferdinand Ricketts and Emmanuel Charles Edward, the founder of Bobo Shanti. They were prominent figures in the organisation of the movement and the resistance against the authorities' persecutions. One is aware that the details about the establishment of Rastafari are rather succinct, but thanks to works from Rastafarian writers and scholars such as Ras Mack (1999), Ras Merrit (2006), Ras Afari (2007) and Price (2009) among others, the history of Rastafari from its practitioners is spreading. Rastafari has started to tell its story from within. For the purpose of this thesis, I am going to look at three main branches, or *mansions* of Rastafari.

#### **1.2.4. Main Mansions of Rastafari**

“In my father’s house, there are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (KJV, John 14:2). If this biblical passage has sometimes been understood to refer to a new heavenly body available after death for the faithful (Smith 2005), or at some other times to mean that Christ was trying to reassure his disciples by promising to: “prepare a place to host a permanent union” with them (Grubbs 2009:4), Rastafari has a more pragmatic exegesis of the passage. Indeed, the word “mansion” is understood to justify the presence of the many different denominations<sup>16</sup> found in the movement. Most of these mansions were born in the late 1950’s at the time when Jamaica, led by the former trade unionists behind the Frome Labour riots, Alexander Clarke Bustamante and Norman Manley, worked towards its independence, which was to come in 1962. The public opinion, stimulated by the idea of an imminent “liberation” from its colonial pressure, emerged a more radical current in Rastafari emerged: the *Youth Black Faith*<sup>17</sup>. This group of young people, sought to revitalise Rastafari, stressing the importance of *Repatriation* over independence (Rowe 1998). Indeed, these young men, fearing that the Rastafari movement may settle for independence over *Repatriation*, questioned seriously the practices and the beliefs of the

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<sup>16</sup> The use of the term denomination is not quite appropriate here as Rastafari is not a religion. Nevertheless, for want of a better word, it is going to be used here before being replaced by the word mansion.

<sup>17</sup> See section 2.3.1. for further information on the connection between the socio-political state of Jamaica and the radicalization of Rastafari.

elders. Tensions and divergences between the Howellists became flagrant and small groups of like-minded Rases were formed, becoming the many mansions of Rastafari.

Therefore, if in Rastafari there are many “mansions”, for the purpose of this work, I am going to refer to three of them: the “Twelve Tribes of Israel”, the “Order of Nyabinghi” and the “Ethiopian African Black International Congress” also known as “Bobo Shanti”. These three mansions have been chosen because, on one hand, they are the first three currents that sprang from Howell’s Pinnacle, and on the other hand, they are the most popular ones.

#### **1.2.4. a. The Twelve Tribes of Israel**

The Twelve Tribes of Israel can be considered to be the most popular mansion of Rastafari. It was founded in 1968 by Dr. Vernon Carrington, also known as Gad, the prophet (Lavige 2003). As the name suggests, they claimed to be the authentic biblical tribes of Israel. Each member is connected to a tribe through his or her month of birth, in a horoscope-like manner. For instance, if one is born in February, he or she will be from the tribe of Joseph. They also accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and Haile Selassie as divinely chosen by the creator to represent him on earth. Due to the stigma associated with slavery, and the false use of the name Jesus by enslavers/colonialists not practicing what they preached, some prefer to use the ancient names of Christ - Yeshua or Yehoshua or JAH SHUA or Yesus Kristos.

One can also say that it is the most libertarian branch of the movement. Among them are people of mixed race, celebrities and very outspoken women. Bob Marley was allegedly affiliated to the “Twelve Tribes of Israel” philosophy (Lavige 2003), even though his teacher Mortimer Planno was from the Nyabinghi mansion. Most of them are vegetarian, but some members are known to eat meat. In an interview for Irie FM, the well-known reggae radio station in Jamaica, Gad the prophet himself explained that though the tribe members were encouraged to be vegetarians, they could also eat meat since the bible allowed it (Gad the Prophet interviewed by Ms Andrea William on Irie FM. 1998). In this same interview, Gad underlines that there is no hair law. Tribe members are free to wear their hair as they wish, since they are “saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, not by their hair” (Gad 1998).

The “Twelve Tribes of Israel” did not live in communities. They remained in the cities and therefore were the most visible and accessible Rastafarians. They opened a lot of vegetarian restaurants, and were very involved in the artistic aspect of the movement (Lavige 2003). This was quite a unique attitude. Most Rastafarians were moving away from the cities, the heart of *Babylon*, while the “Twelve Tribes of Israel” remained in the city to make a difference. The following is a photograph of Vernon Carrington; Gad the Prophet, while he was already a Rastafari leader:



**Figure 1** Prophet Gad, founder of the 12 Tribes of Israel.

It is interesting to note his beard in a Howellite fashion, the absence of dreadlocks, his open shirt, and of course the gold pendant representing the Star of David, the emblem of the “Twelve Tribes of Israel”.

#### **1.2.4.b. The Order of Nyabinghi**

One can say that the order of Nyabinghi played a very important role in the development of reggae. Regarded as radical, it often carries a very strict, and sometimes racist image. Iah C in an article, from the official Nyabinghi website<sup>18</sup> explained that the Nyabinghi order was an existing organisation. Its alleged aim was to rid Africa of its colonial attaches. As Iah C stated: “The name Nyabinghi was said to mean death to the whites or death to the Europeans”. In fact, on 7 December 1935, shortly after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, an article was written in the *Jamaican Times*, exposing a vile secret society. This order purportedly had the mission to root white people out of Africa. It was called Nyabinghi, and His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie was supposedly the

<sup>18</sup> Article available on: [http://nyabinghi.org/rasta\\_movement/beginnings.htm](http://nyabinghi.org/rasta_movement/beginnings.htm) (17/03/08)

head of it. In Jamaica, the Rastafarians took this movement seriously and many of them joined it. The word Nyabinghi was included into the Rastafarian vocabulary. From “Death to the Europeans” it came to mean “Death to downpressors” (Iah C 2008).

However, there is another proposition for the etymology of the word Nyabinghi. Indeed, Nyabinghi can be directly linked to a Ugandan queen of the same name, who fought against European colonialists. Her spirit is said to possess any female or male whenever the country needs to free itself from an oppressive regime. It has been suggested that the term actually means “She who possesses many things” (Rotberg 1971). As a potent force to fight Babylon, and as a spiritual link to African spirituality, this definition of Nyabinghi is usually favoured by the majority of Rastafarians that I have had the privilege to interview, and one tends to believe that the idea of being possessed by ancestral spirits of resistance, befits better the Nyabinghi function of *Chanting Down Babylon*<sup>19</sup> than the hypothetical existence of an anti-colonial secret society.

In the article *The Theocracy Reign*, Bongo Thyme explained that the movement acknowledged Haile Selassie to be the spiritual leader. They strongly believe that they carry the “instrument of Justice”, which will liquidate and terminate all evil conceptions. Their mission is to crusade for the spread of the Rastafari values and beliefs, which are considered to be the only divine and righteous ways of living. There will be everlasting life for those who choose the right path; this is “Justice to the just”. Nevertheless, justice for the unjust is death to “downpressors”. They do not associate with any other church or movement, except for the Nyabinghi Order, which is regarded to be from Melchisedek<sup>20</sup>, the High Priest and King of Righteousness.

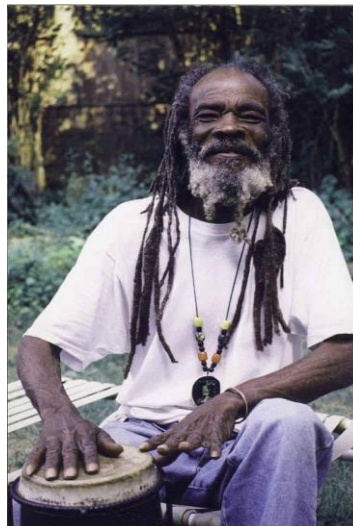
The *Order of Nyabinghi* has many famous *patriarchs*. One of them is Ras Lightning, a hero who saved the life of many from the fire of a plane crash in Kingston airport. There is also Ras Sam Brown, the first Rasta to be seriously involved in politics both in Jamaica and in Ethiopia. There is also Mortimer Planno, the teacher of Bob Marley and a powerful elder. He was so respected that he became a folk fellow at the

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<sup>19</sup> In this instance, Nyabinghi comprises chants, drumming and dance. For further details, see section 2.5.2 of the second Chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Melchisedek is a biblical figure, which gave bread and wine to Abraham after a battle. Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoil. The story can be read in the book of Genesis 14:18-20.

University of the West Indies from 1997 to 1999. There are also many musicians and the poets who, thanks to the Nyabinghi drums<sup>21</sup>, developed new musical genres such as ska<sup>22</sup> and reggae. The following is a picture of the late Ras Pidow, a poet and a musician From the Nyabinghi mansion. One will note the dreadlocks, the beard and, of course,



one of the Nyabinghi drums on which he plays:

**Figure 2 Ras Pidow, Nyabinghi elder.**

#### **1.2.4.c. The Ethiopian African Black International Congress: the Bobo Shanti**

The third mansion of Rastafari that is the focus of this work, is the Ethiopian African Black International Congress (EABIC), also known as Bobo Shanti order. The origins of the name may appear quite obscure, but it has been generally accepted that the word “Bobo” means “black” in Jamaican patois; and that Shanti comes from the name “Ashanti” as in the former Ashanti empire in Ghana; famous for its warriors. Bobo Shanti therefore means Black warrior<sup>23</sup>. The name Bobo Shanti may suffer variations in its orthography, with a “y” replacing the “i” in “Shanti”, but in this thesis, the spelling “Bobo Shanti” will be privileged as I believe that an etymology linked with the well-known tribe of the Ashanti is closer to the ethos of the community, than one associated with the diminishing “Shanty towns”.

<sup>21</sup> These drums are used to chant prayers. The chants are on a two bits rhythm that goes along with the heart bit of the performer. Nyabinghi is therefore a sacred rhythm. See more about it in Jah Stéphane’s interview in annex.

<sup>22</sup> Ska combined elements of Caribbean mento and calypso with American jazz and rhythm and blues. It is characterized by a walking bass line, accented guitar or piano rhythms on the offbeat, and in some cases, jazz-like horn riffs.

<sup>23</sup> The explanation has been given by the Honourable priest Jah Karl in reasoning in 2008.

Emmanuel Charles Edward founded this mansion in 1958, after the first *groundation*, a grand manifestation for repatriation in Kingston, where many Rastafarians were arrested and molested. On that day, that he was to be called King Emmanuel, was badly beaten because he stood up to the local authorities as the leader of the protest. After this event, he decided to separate himself from those who did not follow the principles of Rastafari, and founded the first Bobo Shanti community (Van Dijk 1993, Chevannes 1994a), first established in the slums of Kingston, then on the hills of St Andrews in Bull Bay. It is on the commune of Bull Bay that this researcher has had the privilege to conduct this research. About one hour away from Kingston, Bull Bay is a beautiful coastal village where the EABIC commune is located. After climbing quite a steep hill, the red, gold, and green houses of the camp can be seen, regal amid the trees and the boulders overlooking the sea.



Figure 3 Map of Jamaica

From the slums, to the beautiful natural environment the Bobo Shanti, Rases have grown to define themselves as constituting the “Priesthood Order” of Rastafari. This appellation is neither innocent nor pompous, as the EABIC has been an extremely organised and centralised community, functioning both as a school, and a government as well as being a social haven for impoverished people.

The EABIC has settlements in Bull Bay, Jamaica, in Wharf Trace, Trinidad, in Ghana, and also in Ethiopia. Out of the context of the commune, Bobo Shanti Rases are present in most European countries, in the Caribbean and in the United States, justifying

the mention of “International” in the name of the organisation. These international members are not necessarily from Jamaica. The classical pattern is that people from all over the world would come to the Jamaican commune, in order to acquire knowledge on the *Principles* of the EABIC, and would go back to their countries to spread the word further. For instance, all the members of the French EABIC chapter, are French of European, African and Caribbean descent, and few of them have been to Bull Bay. One may wonder why and how such a small community of Rastafarians in Jamaica can radiate as far as Europe, and throughout the Americas. It can be suggested, that it is due to the organisational genius of the founder King Emmanuel.

The latter had indeed established a centralised system able to regulate all the international chapters. For instance, all neophytes need to go to the commune of Bull Bay, in order to get the theological training and the accreditation from the headquarters. When he or she “graduates” and becomes priests, prophets or recognised Empresses, the new member goes back to his or her country to agitate for repatriation, and lives according to the EABIC *Principles*. Due to their sacerdotal functions, EABIC members appear more severe than the Rases from other mansions of Rastafari. Men and women do not show their dreadlocks, which are always wrapped in a turban or in a coif. Unlike the other mansions, they do not listen to Reggae, or any other type of music, which they consider to be satanic. As much as possible they tend to live in camps, and tend as much as possible also to be self-employed (Jah Stéphane 2008). Women are expected to respect a period of ritual separation from the rest of the community, for twenty-one days each month during the purification of their bodies by their menstrual flow<sup>24</sup>. King Emmanuel had also emphasised the social function of the EABIC. The commune of Bull Bay is, in fact, a place where the “havenots” can come and get free shelter and food thanks to a system based on sharing called the *Universal*<sup>25</sup>.

In addition to being a school and a centralised organisation, the EABIC is also a place for radical theology. One of the most noticeable traits about EABIC beliefs is the composition of its trinity. The Bobo Shanti pantheon is composed of the founder of their community, King Emmanuel Charles Edwards, along with Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie and his consort empress Menen. Haile Selassie is himself regarded as the

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<sup>24</sup> See section 3.4.3. For more information on the principle of pollution.

<sup>25</sup> See section 5.2. For more information on the Universal.



reincarnation of King Alpha, who along with Queen Omega reincarnated in the Empress Menen, created the universe. The godhead is therefore male and female, unlike most other religion from the Judeo/Christian aspirations.

The following is a picture of the current President of the EABIC, the Honourable Priest Morgan, and the leading empress, the Honourable Empress Esther, taken in the office of the Jamaican commune. As typical Bobo Shanti, one can note his beard, his long sleeves and the turban covering his locks. One will also note that likewise, the woman has her hair covered and wears long sleeves.



Figure 4 The Honourable Priest Morgan Figure 5 The Honourable Empress Esther<sup>26</sup>

From all accounts, they may be academic or not, the Bull Bay commune from its creation has been an example within Rastafari in terms of economy, organisation and education. However, since the late 1990's, with the death of its charismatic leader, the population has drastically decreased and the institutions such as the school, or the *Universal* have been weakened. Far from the descriptions of Chevannes (1994) or Van Dijk (1993), it is a declining community that has welcomed this researcher in order to conduct this research. The production of the commune is not sufficient to sustain its inhabitants and the external financial contributions from the visitors, and other Bobo Shanti members are slowly becoming an important factor in the survival of their way of life. This fact makes the testimonies of the EABIC empresses even more relevant and

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<sup>26</sup> Pictures taken by this researcher on the Bull Bay commune in 2009.

important as, even though the ethos of the EABIC is increasingly popular throughout the world, its original pattern, the commune is nowadays seriously threatened.

### 1.2.5. Recapitulation

“The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free your very existence is an act of rebellion” (Camus 2000). The epitome of rebellion, Rastafari is the result of long periods of economic crisis, coupled with social and racial injustice that existed in Jamaica throughout and long after slavery. Resistance to this systematic oppression was spiritual, political and at times economic. A recipient of all the history of Black Nationalism and Black Theology, one may suggest that Rastafari has built a systematic resistance to systematic oppression, which they call *Babylon*. If they have not yet achieved their objective of *Repatriation*, they can be considered as living censures of the cultural, economic and political orientations of Jamaica.

Rastafari is not a uniform movement. From these pictures, and the information gathered, it is clear that each mansion has its own system of beliefs, mores and attires. The members of the Twelve Tribes of Israel are very close to Christianity. They do not have specific instructions on how to wear their hair or trim their beards. The “Nyabinghies” can also show their hair, which are to be worn in dread locks. They are very interested in evangelising, and worship Haile Selassie as a divine being. Repatriation is a way to get rid of the “downpressors”, which is the *Babylon*. The EABIC is the only one to claim to be a *priesthood order*. Rather austere in their ways, they do not condone Reggae music, and advocate Nyabinghi chanting to be a divine rhythm that all should listen to. This diversity and freedom in the act of resistance so peculiar to Rastafari is the main reason why this researcher seriously questioned Lake’s conclusions on a universal subordination status for the Rastawoman.

### 1.3. Theoretical tools

In Jamaica, there seems to be a pattern where financial and political crises are connected to spirituality, which are linked to visible social changes. Rastafari can be regarded as being born of this pattern, in spite of its many forms and various systems of belief. This work is dedicated to the EABIC, and the following is the list of the

theoretical tools that have been used to elaborate the hypothesis of this research on female subordination in the Bobo Shanti community.

### 1.3.1 Understanding Whiteness/Babylon

For the purpose of this work, I am going to associate the notion of whiteness to the Rastafari concept of *Babylon*. Although both models are quite different, *Babylon* often being regarded as a Christian eschatological symbol whilst whiteness essentially deals with the “white skin privilege” (Allen 1994, Lipsitz 2006), they are both thought provoking and I believe that collating these theories will help one to better understand the EABIC normative system. *Whiteness* is a concept under which scholars and activists such as hooks (1982) Welsing (1992), DeGruy Leary (2005), Lago (2005), Jensen (2005), Butler (2006) or Henry (2007), federate the manifestations of systematic racial inequity incrustated in the psyche of both white and non-white people, generated by centuries of social, racial inequality<sup>27</sup>. Most of them agree that the impacts of Whiteness on the society usually call for both reparation and re-education. These past prejudices have left people with a conscious or unconscious bias towards non-white people.

According to the *whiteness* theory, everyone suffers or benefits from this “white privilege”. For instance, Butler observed that people considered white were often not aware of these privileges which can materialise into better housing, education and career opportunities. She argues that these people must “crack the code” in order to have a relevant and healthy conversation about race (2006). In order to effectively treat the effects of this bias, many activists prone the importance of all white re-education groups for the participants to really question and change their actions and beliefs (Katz 1978, Frankenberg 1997; Jensen 2005; Buttler 2006, Perry 2011).

In some instances, non-white people have been known to perpetuate these biases against themselves. In Jamaica the effects can be recognised in the complex of colourism where the lighter the skin, the higher socio-economic status equation is still relevant in the twenty first century (Burton 1997). In Martinique, many non-white women have tried to alter their appearance in quixotic attempts to reach the ideal of

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<sup>27</sup> For instance the institution of slavery in the Americas or the cast system in Asia can be regarded as responsible for generating the “white privilege”.

“pretty” always quite far from their natural endowments. These complexes are passed down from mother to daughters and are often reinforced by the local media. Indeed, the intricate braids; plaits or twist befitting the natural African curl pattern do not fit the image of professionalism vectored by the media, and many women have to wear weaves, or chemically alter the texture of their hair in order to have them straight in order to fit into the imposed (often self-imposed) alien norms of beauty. These unhealthy and onerous “beauty” treatments have been proven to negatively affect the self-esteem of these women, who are highly likely to pass down the same complexes to their daughters. For these cases of negative self-concept, there is a genuine need for healing and self-recovery (hooks 1993, Sméralda 2004).

As aforementioned, the effects of Whiteness on society also call for reparation. One way to do so is through “affirmative action” plans. Among others, the federal government of the United States has launched an “affirmative action” plan since the 1960’s at the end of the civil rights movement. This plan aimed to allow ethnic minorities and women a fairer chance to integrate areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded (Cosson 2007, Fullinwider 2011). Even though the efficacy of the method has been challenged<sup>28</sup> and at time, the very existence of *whiteness* is questioned<sup>29</sup>, tragic events like the murders of young black men<sup>30</sup> bring back the question of race and social justice in the conversation.

As a power system, *whiteness* is present at all levels of society. Mass communication, entertainment and religious institution are tools enforcing these norms. As a power system, one believes that *whiteness* is, in many ways, similar to the Rastafarian concept of *Babylon*, which also calls for reparation.

In the post emancipation, and colonial context, the African-Jamaican woman was subordinated, not to the black man, but to the norms of a “Patriarchal, White Supremacist and Capitalistic” system, to borrow from bell hooks, that the country had inherited. This racist/colourist, sexist and neoliberal approach to society will be defined

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<sup>28</sup> Corlett (2010) explains how affirmative action mainly benefits white women, and is not enough for the process of reparation.

<sup>29</sup> Many conservative spokespersons from the tea party in the US or the Front National in France claim that there is now reverse racism phenomenon, preventing white people access to employment and housing to the benefit of an immigrant non-white population.

<sup>30</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting\\_of\\_Trayvon\\_Martin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Trayvon_Martin)

in this work under the concept of *Babylon*. In addition to the identification of the “white privilege”, *Babylon* in this work will also be referring to economic and gender injustice.

*Babylon*, in Rastafari parlance, can have two different meanings, which can even be regarded as the cause, and, the consequence of each other. The first meaning of the word is geographical: *Babylon* is a place. To understand the pertinence of this word, it is necessary to look briefly at Jewish history. In fact, sacred and secular texts state that the “Children of Israel” formed two separated kingdoms: the kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. Israel, and its capital Samaria fell in 722 BCE into the hands of the Assyrians, who caused massive deportations of the native people to be replaced by Assyrians (Brett 2002), or in Cesaire’s word, the victorious Assyrians organised a perfect genocide through substitution. Around 586 to 538 BCE (Ackroyd 1968), it was the turn of the Kingdom of Judah to fall. The Assyrians, having lost their hegemony over the region, the Babylonians were the ones responsible for the exile of this other kingdom.

The impact that these deportations, exiles and raids had on the psyche of these populations was expressed and recorded through the biblical narratives, where the notions of sorrow, fear, resistance, rebellion, and judgement are omnipresent (Dever 2001). From these traumatic experiences, the name *Babylon* encompassed more than a mere city. The evidence of this change comes centuries after, as *Babylon* had turned into a byword of evil in the Judeo-Christian tradition: “And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother of Harlots, And Abominations of the Earth...Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and is become the habitation of devils...” (KJV, Revelation 17:5, 18:2). It can be suggested, that this shift from a definite place to an allegory for sin and evil, is the result of the feeling of powerlessness and cultural alienation experienced by the deported Jewish people, and passed on to their descendants as a post-memory.

In a similar fashion, Rastafari uses *Babylon* to refer to the Americas, continent and islands where the triangular trade sourced people from the African continent to enslave them in a “new world” without promises, nor hopes of return. Jamaica is *Babylon* while Africa; “Mama Africa”, is the land of their forefathers and mothers where they hope to be culturally, spiritually, and economically restored as a people. The

choice of the name Babylon can be regarded as a deliberate attempt to underline the connections between the fate of the Jewish people, and the children of the African Diaspora. Rastafari was not the first movement to establish such a connection, as it has been reported that the enslaved, throughout the Americas used the stories of the “Children of Israel” to foster hope and build arguments for the imminence of their liberation (Jacobs 1861, Painter 1992, Colman 2005). Nevertheless, they were the first group to identify their location, and their predicaments under one same name: *Babylon*. In fact, *Babylon* in Rastafari parlance is also a byword for evil and oppression that concerns not only the African Diaspora, but also the entire human family. If one considers that *Babylon* encapsulates the post-memories of slavery, its effect on the psyche of the Jamaican population can be devastating. In fact, if one associates this state of oppression with what Degruy Leary calls the Post Slavery Traumatic Syndrome (2005), the actions of the EABIC can be regarded as a ritual space for healing.

In this work, I have associated *Whiteness* with the Rastafari concept of both tangible and intangible *Babylon*, and that Babylon fits better with the socio-cultural reality of Jamaica. The eventful history of the formation of the Rastafari movement has always coincided with major social, financial and political crisis in Jamaica. I am arguing that the Rastafari elders identified that, in spite of the many changes of names, colonialism, post-colonialism, neo-colonialism and even neo-liberalism always benefited a privileged *white* minority to the detriment of the impecunious *non-white* majority. I will suggest here that Bobo Shanti provides a means to deal with the symbolic violence of whiteness not only by claiming reparations but also by offering a system of in house re-education.

If one agrees that the norms of *whiteness* are among the vectors of female subordination (hooks 1990) in the Caribbean, the notion of female subordination, especially when Rastafari is concerned, has to be examined with spectacles other than economic production, hierarchy and religious devotion. The following section will be dedicated to identifying the tools necessary to analyse a community as complex as the EABIC.

### 1.3.2. Tools to measure female subordination

Leahy (1986) in her work on development, came up with a list of indicators, which according to her, may be used to assess and measure female subordination. She went on to establish these indicators:

There tends to be general agreement that in any social system and at any level of development, female status can be defined in both public and private spheres with reference to (1) women's power and authority and (2) society's perception of women's acceptable roles. Women's equality relative to that of men's, in this regard is generally measured by (1) women's abilities to acquire and exercise influence, power, and authority as compared with men's abilities; and the parameters of acceptable social relations, there is general agreement that in any society 'the position of women represents a coherent structure in which all the elements [of social relations] are integrated: ideology, the role of the family, role in society, economic role, sphere of activity and sphere of forbidden activity, etc. (Leahy1986: 10).

In defining the indicators of women's status and equality, she was cautious to underline that these markers must be flexible enough to fit the context in which these women live. Female subordination can therefore be observed in three sectors: the political, economic and social ones. Therefore, in a given community, if women are thought and represented in the media, or by the moral authorities to be intrinsically inferior to men, if the norms and policies ban them from decision making spheres, and if they are systematically denied access to activities that would enable them to sustain themselves and families, there would be the basis for female subordination. For the purpose of this study, the moral authority of the spiritual factor is extremely important. As a socio-religious movement, the EABIC's theological frame is a sure means to measure female subordination within the community. Ritual seclusion and non-access to the priesthood status are the main arguments used by most scholars (Lake 1998, Yawney 1989) to recognise female subordination within the EABIC. Is priesthood the end, and the most fulfilling role in the EABIC? The question is going to be thoroughly investigated in the fourth chapter of this work.

Even if the notion of context and relativity is important in this work, I am aware of the danger to diminish genuine gender issues in the name of cultural difference. St-Hill's (2003) Caribbean application of Mohanty's "strategic gender universalism" is a tool that can enable me to assess the EABIC value system. Indeed, St-Hill blamed "Difference feminism", for undermining fundamental problems under the pretext of cultural diversity:

Feminism cannot jettison all the promises of universal human progress and emancipation that are contained in the modernist project if all we get in return is a deconstruction of society and a value-absent postmodern focus on fragmentation difference (St-Hill 2003: 47).

Indeed, if a community fails to satisfy *practical gender needs* and *strategic gender interests*, this society is an oppressive one, regardless of the cultural context (St-Hill 2003: 54). Applied to the Bobo Shanti, not only must the researcher assess the *practical gender needs* (water, food, clothing, security), but also the *strategic gender interest*, which encompasses: the outlawing of physical and sexual violence, equal pay and political rights (St-Hill 2003: 54). While agreeing with St-Hill on most of her points, one can wonder about the universality of *gender interests*. In a radical community such as the EABIC, *gender interests*, would they be male or female, and even the definition of the notion of *needs*, may be very different from what other men and women in developing countries may experience. For instance, is the most important concept of *abolition of sexual division of labour* in Europe as relevant in the EABIC theocratic context?

In this work, I suggest that the notion of female subordination should be measured according to an EABIC worldview, in lieu of intrusive occidental standards. I will assess this community according to its own normative system with the indicators listed by Leahy (1986). Coupled with the “strategic gender universalism” concept, this should allow me to obtain a balanced approach to gender construction in the EABIC.

### **1.3.3. Female power and valorising gendered activity**

Traditional sexist thinking would usually define female power in relation to men. It is essentially portrayed as an unfortunate influence over male’s *weakness* to primal needs such as sex and food. In the Pentateuch<sup>31</sup>, characters such as Eve, Delilah or Bathsheba have all used their charms to corrupt God-fearing men and make them turn away from their divine. In Nigeria it is called “Bottom Power” (Newell 1996). The “bottom power”, according to numerous Nollywood<sup>32</sup> productions, is very effective on

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<sup>31</sup> The Pentateuch is composed of the first five books of the Bible, and is the common roots with Judaism, Islam and Christianity, three of the major world religions that has shaped the ethos of billions of people throughout history.

<sup>32</sup> Nollywood is the name given to the Nigerian film production.



influential men in the political or economic spheres. Though undeniably effective, this power is not legitimate.

“Real” or masculine power is usually found in the production spheres of the community where traditionally in Western thinking, women do not belong. The difficulties that women encounter to climb the economic and hierarchal ladder in politics and corporate milieus, are daily documented in feminist and mainstream publications. Equal pay and the abolition of gender division of labour are still points on which women struggle to carry across as though political leadership and highly remunerated jobs, are in essence male bastions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the word power without any qualifying adjective is still not readily associated with women.

In her article *Gender and Power in Contemporary society* Leo-Rhynie (2003: 283) has looked into this issue. Indeed, based on Schaeff (1992) and Gilligan (2003) theory of female power, she endeavoured to investigate the notions of womanhood and power at the University of the West Indies. Schaeff and Gilligan’s work is interesting in the sense that they have managed to define, in an existentialist manner, the concept of female power in its own rights. Schaeff in *Women’s Reality: an emerging Female system in a White Male Society*, offers the theory that there are two conceptions of power: a male and a female one. From her research, the “female power” is “energy and strength” instead of “domination and control” pertaining to males. It is a source of synergy, with the notions of teaching and sharing being predominant. (Schaeff in Leo-Rhynie 2003: 283).

The “female world” is constructed around the notions of love and duty. The “male world” is based on competition and manipulation (Gilligan 1982). According to the latter, men see the world in terms of hierarchy of powers, while women see power as being the construction of relational networks. To women, it is more important to maintain these networks than to be separated from them to be put at the top, as the male hierarchy conceives it. Leo-Rhynie’s aim in this article was to verify the existence of the female and male power and assess how these two entities interacted. She led a case study in the administration of a student guild in the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica. She observed that though there were more females registered on campus, a great majority of student leaders were males. She exposed the dissuasive

methods employed by these *gentlemen* against the prospective female candidates, attacking generally their private lives. Fuelled by the competition and the need to be seen, the male students often succeeded in discouraging the female postulants to the higher functions in the guild. At the time of the study, a woman could not therefore be a “leader of men”.

Both Leo-Rhynie and her predecessors convincingly presented the fact that women organised themselves in a different manner than men in decision-making structures. Yet, beyond the fact of acknowledging these differences, one can question the social recognition that both male and female agency receive. Indeed, a man in a leadership position receives more prestige and recognition than a capable female personal assistant. Carefully designed policies and major reforms in socialisation are the means by which ambition and vision could be equally promoted in both men and women (Leo-Rhynie 2003: 297). Although Leo-Rhynie’s study is very representative of the general gender bias found in Jamaica, one cannot help but question the desirability or effectiveness of a *degenderisation* of social roles. Indeed, the problem is not only on the “gender” of an activity, but also on the way it is rewarded by the community. Since money is the common means to value an activity, highly remunerated activities will still be more prestigious than lower paid ones.

It can be argued here, that along with the preparation of the general opinion to female leadership, real female empowerment could also come from the equal valorisation of the female “energy and strength” and the male’s “hierarchy of power”. This point can be illustrated by the gender leadership arrangements found in the Anglican Church. The fact of having female priests is not necessarily a proof of female empowerment. It only reinforces the attractiveness of the traditionally male positions to the detriment of the female ones. As demonstrated in Wade’s work: “Degendering jobs but still privileging masculinity” (2008), true female empowerment would come from an equal valorisation of both the position of priest and nun for the good of the community. An example of this phenomenon can be found in Cuba. Indeed, it is the number one country in the Western hemisphere with the most important number of women in parliament (Inter Parliamentary Union, 2005). It has also been recorded that Cuba has implemented measures to encourage men to take part in household chores, and women to aspire to more masculine activities (Leahy 1986, Luciak 2007). With these

progressive ideas, it is a fact that Cuba is much more advanced in the gender debate than other capitalist societies. It can be suggested here that the effort to degenderise the communities' activity is due to the radical nature of the communist social movement. Similarly, with the phenomenon of gender cooperation in a nationalistic/liberationist struggle, this radical approach to production needs the support of all its members, regardless of gender, in order to survive the pressure of the wider capitalist global community.

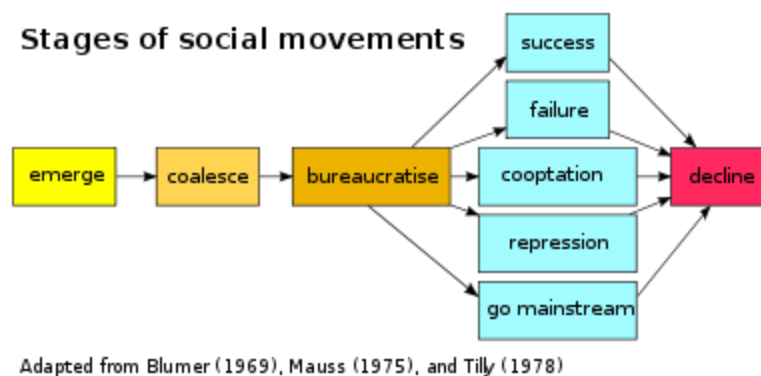
On the Bobo Shanti commune of Bull Bay, the activities are undeniably strongly genderised. Nevertheless, because money is not the means to reward such activities, I have strived throughout chapter five to assess, how the male and female activities were rewarded, and if the sexist distribution of activities could be regarded as a medium for female subordination.

#### **1.3.4. EABIC: a gender equalitarian social movement?**

Social movements are usually defined to be a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others. Tilly (1978) identified three major components to social movements:

- \_Campaigns: A sustained, organized public effort making collective claims
- \_Repertoire: Creation of special purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statement to a public media, pamphleteering.
- \_WUNC displays: participant's concerted public representation of Worthiness, Unity, Number, and Commitments on the part of themselves and their constituencies.

From "relative deprivation" to "rational choice", numerous are the reasons why one would choose to join the EABIC. Nevertheless, it is also evident that the EABIC social movement is constituted of a group of individuals seeking to legitimate their own worldviews and potentially change norms, values and laws within an established wider society, which make them counter cultural (Hall and Jefferson 1991). From Tilly (1978), Mauss (1975), and Blumer's (1969) work, five major stages in the evolution of the social movement could be recognised:



**Figure 6 Stages of the Social Movement.**

These stages can be identified in the organisation of the Bobo Shanti commune. The EABIC was indeed incepted at the occasion of a spiritual gathering in 1958. King Emmanuel gathered a small number of people under his banners/*campaign*. Constantly agitating for repatriation, the EABIC never ceased to build a *repertoire* organising marches and Nyabinghi *vigils*. It has been bureaucratized with the writing of the *Congress* constitution and establishments of principles. As a radical movement within the Jamaican society and Rastafari, the Bobo Shanti Order is clearly resisting the pressure to *go mainstream*.

In spite of its usefulness, Tilly's (1978) description of the social movement evolution fails to take into account the gender struggle within the given movement. This particular aspect of the social movement or revolution has been discussed by Al Ali (2010) and Pankhurst (2007), and is going to be discussed further in the next section.

Because the EABIC claims are not merely political, but challenge the very conception of humanity, in its liberation theology, gender equality should therefore be an important part of its ethos. In its relentless struggle against a slow absorption by the mainstream Jamaican society, the EABIC becomes a fantastic opportunity to analyse the evolution of a countercultural social movement with the re-definition of gender roles in its priorities.

### **1.3.5. EABIC structure: “post-conflict backlash” theory**

The phenomenon of gender cooperation during a war effort has been observed whenever a population endeavoured to oust a colonial hegemonic group. Nevertheless,

except on atypical occasions<sup>33</sup>, nationalistic ideas and policies usually have priority on gender related issues after the termination of the conflict, relegating women to their “natural” place. For instance, Turshen (2002) observed that during the Algerian war of independence 1954-1962, women bravely fought along their fellow men to overthrow French colonial rule. In spite of the real danger of rape and torture from the French soldiers, these women also had to put up with the paternalist, and sometimes dismissive attitudes of their male counterparts in the FLN<sup>34</sup> (Schneider 2003). In spite of the undeniable female bravery, blatant discrimination could be observed after the war. On one hand, these women were denied a pension as veteran fighters for everything was carried out as though they never took part in the war effort. On the other hand, their reinsertion in society was made almost impossible as they neither were, nor wanted, to be considered as “normal women” (Schneider 2003).

The difficulty for female fighters to reintegrate into the community as “normal women” was termed “post-conflict backlash” (Al Ali and Pratt 2007, Luciak 2007, Pankhurst 2007). This “backlash” can take different forms. From complex socio-economic, psychological or even biological reasons that vary from country to country, men would usually use violence against women (Pankhurst 2007) and “return” to a fantasised “pure” pre-colonial cultural past where the “freed” women have to demarcate themselves from the women of the former hegemonic group, who very often were occidental women (Al Ali and Pratt 2007:82). This cultural consciousness usually encourages the creation of new “traditions” particularly detailed as far as women’s clothing is concerned, as it has been observed and studied in Iraq (Al Ali 2010). One may suggest that both the violence and the cultural creations are signs of an eagerness to rebuild a cultural identity distinct from the formerly oppressive one<sup>35</sup>.

In its struggle against colonial oppression, one may suggest that a post-emancipation and post-independence backlash happened, and is still happening in Jamaica. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the enslaved officially won their status as men and women,

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<sup>33</sup> In Eritrea and in Cuba, women equally fought along their men and were recognized as such after the war (Gebremedhin 2001, Luciak 2007)

<sup>34</sup> *Front National de Libération* National Liberation Front was the name under which the Algerian nationalists fought for their independence.

<sup>35</sup> The creation of new canon for the body has been discussed in chapter three within the EABIC context.

but the hegemonic colonial power, sustaining the inhuman system, remained in place. In this tense environment, the notion of dominant masculinity was white; leaving quasi emasculated black men to fit somehow within the new social dynamic, while black women were deferring to white men and women for their survival, and that of their children (Welsing 1976: 120). As a result, one may argue that the post emancipation backlash affected both men and women. As it was mentioned earlier, planters denied to the newly freed population its rights to land, property and education <sup>36</sup>(Senior 1991, Besson 1995).

These means to express their humanity, to decolonise their imagination, could be found in their spirituality. From Ethiopianism, Revivalism to Rastafari, Jamaican men and women were able to create traditions and rituals that allowed their voices to be heard, and in the case of the EABIC, separate them from the colonial system of values. It is the object of this study to analyse the Bobo Shanti microcosm, in its cultural, social economic and spiritual rebellion. I aim to evaluate a potential backlash against Bobo Shanti women in the form of female subordination. This creation of traditions and ritual will be discussed in the first two chapters of this work dealing with EABIC theology and conception of the body.

#### **1.4. Research question**

In light of all that has been discussed in the previous section, I have been able to formulate the following interrogation. Indeed, Momsen (2004) argued that, in developing countries, women were purposefully kept in the reproduction spheres of unpaid work, while men dominated the lucrative production and public spheres. Narrowing the scope of the statement to Jamaica and Rastafari, Lake (1998) defended that Rastafari women were subordinated because of the rigid gendered role distribution of their community, preventing them to access *male* spheres, which is, according to Bergmann (1998), the only way to gender equality. From this perspective, I am nevertheless asking: Is androgyny, or the action of “degendering” the spheres of production/reproduction, the only way to gender equality? Here, I am eager to allow Bobo Shanti Rastawomen, and men to narrate their own experiences as Empresses, and

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<sup>36</sup> See chapter 2 section 2.2.

Lords, Gods and Goddesses of creation<sup>37</sup>. This thesis endeavours to question the relevance of a “white” approach to feminism applied to a radical community striving to demarcate itself from this same “white” system of value.

The EABIC is going to be regarded in this thesis as a radical social movement, with a clear agenda for gender justice. It has been observed that to the struggle of achieving *repatriation* and *reparation* is added the efforts to differentiate their own mores to that of Jamaican mainstream culture. The EABIC is indeed openly challenging the value system of the neo-liberal social order that did not change in essentials from the colonial era. Sustaining their marginal status, EABIC members wage a spiritual and social war against *Babylon*. Their particular principles and beliefs deliberately prevent them from integrating the mainstream society, maintaining the movement perpetually radical.

I suggest that a social movement that has not attained *success*, or the *go mainstream* stage, is bound to maintain gender cooperation, in order to gather enough human support to the fulfilment of the cause. Within this belligerent context, I will argue that akin to physical liberation conflicts studied by Turschen (2002), or Pankhurst (2007), women of the EABIC are fighting as hard as their men, to overthrow the social and cultural hegemony of *Babylon*.

## **1.5. Methodology**

This thesis is a qualitative study, which aims to analyse the Bobo Shanti *Campaign*, *Repertoire* and *WUNC*, and their practical implication as far as gender is concerned. The following is the methodology that has been used to do so.

### **1.5.1. Choice of Location**

The Jamaican EABIC commune of Bull Bay has been chosen as the main research space, as it is the foundation for all the other communes worldwide. Even if the South American continent has the most important number of EABIC members in camp structures, the Jamaican commune still remains the *Congress*, the head of the centralised administration. In addition to its administrative function, the Bull Bay commune was also the place where the founder, King Emmanuel lived. The symbolic importance of

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<sup>37</sup> These are titles by which women of the EABIC are known.

the *Congress* has led many to go on pilgrimage, or apprenticeship to this particular commune. Highly magnetic, one can suggest that the Jamaican commune is to a Bobo Shanti what Rome would be to a devout Roman Catholic, if I may use such a simile. Therefore, as the foundation of the EABIC movement, and the place more likely to have respected and knowledgeable elders, the Jamaican commune seemed to be the best place for my investigations.

The Bull Bay commune has also been chosen because it has set the structural standard for all EABIC communes throughout the world. The structure of the Bull Bay commune is the pattern followed by all EABIC communes throughout the world. Upon entering the commune, one can almost feel overwhelmed by the beauty of the red gold and green houses, sprouting from the hill covered with aloe vera, fruit trees and countless medicinal plants. Firstly, there is a bungalow where one is greeted and encouraged to leave all material possessions irrelevant on the commune such as money or weapons. It is in this bungalow that women are given EABIC “proper clothing” if they wished to visit the commune.

Higher on the hill is found the male quarters proceeded by the conference room and the office. On the right, lay the foundations of the *tabernacle*<sup>38</sup>, the building of worship, which needs to be rebuilt. Higher up, in the centre of the commune is found the *Universal* kitchen where food should be prepared for everyone on a daily basis. After the kitchen, and even higher on the left, are the women quarters composed of cosy bungalows all painted in red gold and green. Among these bungalows is the *visitor's gate*, composed of two bedrooms purposefully built to welcome female neophytes and visitors. I remained in the *visitors' gate* during the last week of my twenty-one day period of ritual seclusion.

The *journey gate*<sup>39</sup> where nubile women are to spend the greater part of their time, is nested in the middle of the female part of the commune. Fenced with high sheet metal, there are flags red or white, indicating if the empress inside was free to interact

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<sup>38</sup> Further information about the construction of the tabernacle and the controversies linked to it can be found in chapter four of this work.

<sup>39</sup> Compound where women go for about fourteen days for their menstrual *purification*. More information about the conception of the female body in EABIC worldview will be found in chapter three of this work.



with people or not. Even though many buildings are out of repair, the Bull Bay commune is still a beautiful place that one can imagine buzzing in its golden populous days. The impact of the death of the charismatic leader, King Emmanuel can indeed be observed in the general decline of the commune. However, the *Congress* has set the standards for all Bobo Shanti communes throughout the world, and this is very unlikely to change.

Another reason why this particular commune has been chosen is its academic history. Indeed, it is on the Bull Bay commune that Chevannes (1994a) and Lake (1998) declared Bobo Shanti women to be subordinated. These previous academic works allow me to have a valid counter-point to assess the nature of the principles regulating female activities on the commune.

In this study, several references have been made to EABIC members outside of Bull Bay commune. For instance, Empress Rachel, the former wife of King Emmanuel currently living in New York, has given us vital information on the early stages of the EABIC movement. For reasons of convenience, I have also interviewed converted Bobo Shanti living in London. I had the good fortune to live near a devout EABIC couple, who were able to introduce me to the EABIC circle of England. Working with these Rastamen and Rastawomen, gave me an opportunity to analyse how the women's regulations were regarded outside of the commune's context.

### **1.5.2. Collecting data: Direct Participant Observation method**

For a month and a half, I was able to live in total immersion on the Bull Bay commune. I chose this method because I believed that it would be the only means to truly understand the complexities of the EABIC principles. Having realised that most female scholars who studied Bobo Shanti women never remain with them on the commune, it was vital for me to enter the community, and be accepted as an unprejudiced researcher. My gender and ethnic background were effective assets in the process of data collection. As a woman, it was my duty to be among the women. I could therefore enter their world without transgressing any rules. Secondly, being a Caribbean of African Descent, people were comfortable around me. In fact, even if the camp opens its doors to people from all ethnic backgrounds, and would receive them with respect, a slight preference will be shown to people of African descent. This attitude is in line with

the EABIC's theory of *Black Supremacy* that is going to be further explained in the second chapter of this work.

After thoroughly explaining my objectives, access was gradually granted to me, yet the task had not been easy. Indeed, I was confronted by two different attitudes towards data collection. The first one was negative. The EABIC has grown suspicious of university students, eager to “study” their lives, their persons, their beliefs, or as one person told me: “You people are all up in my business”. In fact, if there are many articles on the EABIC way of life; few are actually recognised by the *Congress* as representative pieces and only one<sup>40</sup> has been offered to the *Congress*' records. Many objected that students only came to make a lot of money off Rastafari, and made clear that they would not participate to the interviews unless they could also get some monetary compensation. Operating on a very small budget and persuaded that bribery could not be an ethical way to conduct an academic work, I made clear that I was not interested in paying for information. Though disappointing, this attitude can be linked to the current morose economic climate of the commune. The impact of this decline on EABIC ethos will be discussed throughout the thesis, as it is clear that there may be a gap between the EABIC *Principles* and their application in the daily lives of its members. The second attitude, for the sake of this study was positive, and more common. I was fortunate enough to have the support of Honourable Priest Stéphane, and the Honourable Empress Esther. Very influential referrals, they believed that it was their duty to explain, and push forward the EABIC *livity*, to aspirant Bobo, sceptics, and scholars alike. Both informed me on several occasions that King Emmanuel himself had ordained to share information about their *livity*.

With regards to the importance of orality, and eloquence in Rastafari, and on the commune, a semi structured to unstructured interview pattern was the privileged means to conduct the interviews, in order to initiate *reasonings*<sup>41</sup>. In fact, it has been observed by all Rastafari scholars (Yawney 1989, Chevannes 1994, Lake 1998, Price 2009), that the *reasoning* is a privileged Rastafarian medium to communicate on their traditions,

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<sup>40</sup> This work is the master's thesis of Priest Israel, from Martinique also known as M. Harry Clairvoyant. His thesis dealt with the relevance of repatriation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>41</sup> Reasoning is a conversation through which Rastafarian carry a point across. See glossary

knowledge<sup>42</sup>, and I have amply made use of them in this work. This form of speech, informal or formal, might have derived from the propensity of Jamaican peasant community to value articulacy in an individual, in the sphere of alternative values federated under the word *Reputation* (Wilson 1995). It has been commonly observed that verbal jousts in churches or in rum shops dazzled and rallied the audience to one individual without necessarily convince it of a point. This use of the language has been identified to be a *play element* in resisting colonial oppression (Burton 1997: 169-171).

The connection between articulacy and the notion of *Reputation* can be observed in a very recognisable aspect of Jamaican popular culture: Dancehall. The controversial Jamaican deejay Vybz Kartel expressively defended his right to bleach his skin and promote his own skin care line called “cake soap” on national TV, in an impeccable rhetoric that left the show host, and myself speechless (Vybz Kartel in Gaza 2011). This trait of the Jamaican peasant society has also been underlined by Cassel (1987) while doing her anthropological fieldwork with her children in rural Jamaica, where it seemed that in any social gathering, several people have to make long and elaborate *speeches*. Even if one does not agree with the rather paternalist tone employed by the latter, it is possible to link this recognised Jamaican tradition to the depth and sophistication of Rastafari *reasoning*. It is nevertheless important to note that though the same taste for hyperbolic eloquence, with biblical or illustrious quotations are present in both Rastafari and secular discourse, the Rastafari approach mainly seeks to convince rather than to dazzle. Indeed, while the form is the crux of Jamaican oral jousts, Rastafarians do intend to prove their point.

As a result, the use of the semi-structured speech has enabled me to collect crucial data on particular themes in a manner familiar and valued by the informants. Indeed, following Patton’s advice: “to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined” (2002: 343) I have been able to initiate where the informant was comfortable enough to give his or her opinions, share values and prove a particular theological points. Being in immersion on the commune, I have been able to observe the discrepancies and harmony between the

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<sup>42</sup> Rastafarians do not believe, they know (hon. Priest Stéphane). Therefore the use of the word “belief” when referring to Rastafari worldview is not appropriate.

*reasoning* and the actual EABIC way of life. Indeed, I have had the privilege to live with the Honourable Empress Julie before joining the *journey gate*, where I was treated like any aspirant EABIC member. To lessen the uneasiness of having an outsider, intruding in their lives, I strived to be involved in the community, to engage in basic activities in order to justify my presence on the commune beyond my academic agenda, and be accepted. In fact, while doing feminist research, one cannot remain totally separated from the subject (Roberts 1981: 53).

In order to be part of the exchange process, I have offered to translate the choruses from English to French and Kréyol<sup>43</sup>. Indeed, many members of the French community do not understand English, and struggle during the Nyabinghi sessions. By translating the choruses, not only does one have access to a valuable source of theological data, but it is a means to express one's eagerness to be of service to the community: "If you are eating today and that your brother is not eating, you are doing a wicked thing" (Priest Karl, personal conversation, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2008). I have also been a non-official member of the WFL, and was even presented with a beautiful robe in the colours of the league. In March 2009, I had the honour of being invited to the Empress Menen anniversary, a gathering where Empresses of all mansion of Rastafari share ideas, food, and expertise above all build powerful networks to reach their common goals.

The interviews/*reasonings* were often impromptu. I may have initiated the reasoning only ten or fifteen times. I can separate these interviews in two types: in and out of the *journey gate*. Within the *journey gate*, I was fortunate enough to be in the company of Princess Jazmin, a Mexican Bobo Shanti aspirant in her twenties. She guided me through the *journey* of the goddess, and every day, we would have long conversations, lying down next to the *calaloo*<sup>44</sup> shrubs, and we would talk for hours, in Spanish, and in English, from the relevance of the ritual seclusion, the role of women in the EABIC, relationships, and non assisted home birth. Although I was very welcome to take notes during our conversations, and even read her documents on EABIC *livity*, she

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<sup>43</sup> I must admit that I did not get on very well with it and that I only manage to translate five of them.

<sup>44</sup> Calaloo is a name given to an edible plant in the Caribbean. Although the actual plant may be different from islands to island, the dish made out of it is always called calaloo. It resembles greatly what is called collard greens in the Southern United states.

was very reluctant to let me record her on my dictaphone, as she was not confident enough about her understanding of Rastafari, and often urged me to speak with an elder. Outside of the *journey gate*, interviews/*reasonings* came from everywhere, and all the time. I always had my Dictaphone, notebook, and pens ready. It is indeed the duty of the elders, to teach the neophytes about the ways of the EABIC, and as soon as I was out of the ritual/seclusion, numerous elders, men and women came to visit me in the *visitor's gate* to tell me about their understanding of Rastafari.

Even if it was possible to create durable links with the Bull Bay community, the short duration of the fieldwork has prompted me to maintain a “long distance relationship” with the camp. Electronic and telephonic personalised structured interviews have been conducted with Jamaican, Martiniquan, and French informants once back in England. Bryman explained that a structured interview is:

The administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer. The aim is for all interviewees to be given exactly the same context of questioning. This means that each respondent receives exactly the same interview stimulus as any other. The goal of this style of interview is to ensure that interviewees' replies can be aggregated ... Questions are usually very specific and very often the interviewee gives a fixed range of answers (this type of question is often called closed, closed ended, pre-coded, or fixed choice) (Brymanm 2001: 107).

The use of electronic mails and social media, such as *facebook*, and *myspace*, has enabled me to receive valuable information with EABIC members, in remote locations. For instance, I have received major information from Empress Rachel, and Empress Esther through this means. Introduction and referrals were key elements to access women that I did not personally know. For instance, in the case of Empress Rachel, I needed an introductory letter from Empress Berenice, in order for her to agree to speak with me. With my prior knowledge of Rastafari modes of communication, I still chose to keep the semi structured interview style. This way, I was able to receive a digital “reasoning” that I could compare with the testimonies of other men and women. Very often, the participant would volunteer to tell me about events, anecdotes or spiritual facts that I had not asked. This would allow me to verify the information with another participant, get another point of view, and use it for the purpose of this study. I was therefore able to sustain three, or four way conversations online, which very much reminded me of the *reasonings* back on the commune.

### 1.5.3. Contacts

As it has been mentioned earlier, my main contact, in order to enter the EABIC community, has been the Honourable Priest Stéphane, Royal Ambassador in Martinique. Thanks to his kindness, and his eagerness to see this thesis completed, he has put me in contact with Priest Akil from the Warf Trace camp in Trinidad, and it was this that I had the honour to visit, and to conduct several informal interviews. Jah Stéphane, and his wife, the Honourable Empress Saba, have also given me many contacts in London, and on the Bull Bay Bobo Shanti commune in Jamaica.

### 1.5.4. Training for the field work: Trinidad and France

On May 14<sup>th</sup> 2006, I had the opportunity to interview the Empresses *Madaf* and *Taza*, in Wharf Trace St Joseph, Trinidad. It was obviously enjoyable for them to talk about their choice of lifestyle. They appeared sincere and displayed openness to discussion, which I was not expecting due to their rather austere appearance. Nonetheless, I was not able to enter the commune because I wore trousers. In spite of this inconvenience, these women were kind enough to stay at the camp's gate, where we had a very pleasant and informative conversation. They were kind enough to tell me about their daily lives and promised to help me gathering information.

From June 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> 2008, I spent the Sabbath day with the French community in a wood near the city of Chartres. For this event, 17 adults were present, four women, three children, and around ten men. I was lucky enough to be in the right phase of my menstrual cycle; therefore, I was able to fully take part of the service. The Honourable Priest Jah Karl, who gave me many theological clarifications, through his *reasoning*, was the leading priest for the French Bobo Shanti community. Empress Bérénice, in spite of her young age, she was in her early twenties at the time, was among the first French members of the French community, and was extremely active within the WFL. She also gave me invaluable information on the *livity* of EABIC Rastawomen, and agreed to help me organising the field work to Lion's<sup>45</sup> Bay Jamaica. They informed me that there was a Bobo Shanti priest in Nottingham, who was about to crown<sup>46</sup> two

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<sup>45</sup> The name of the neighbourhood where the Bobo Shanti Rases are found is Bull Bay. Nevertheless, the Bobo Shanti renamed it Lion's Bay after the Lion of Judah, messianic symbol.

<sup>46</sup> To crown an aspirant Bobo Shanti is to welcome him to the EABIC *livity* by tying a turban on his head for the first time. Further details can be found in the second chapter of this thesis.

brothers. I was invited to this event. Once again, the Bobo Shanti community in France was eager to share their views with me.

From these experiences, I have realised that as a researcher, it was extremely important to abide by the Bobo Shanti *principles*. For instance, had I worn a long skirt, I would have been able to visit the Trinidadian camp. These previous experiences were a very good training period, to be able to access the Bull bay commune without clashing with the EABIC's ethos. In fact, even though I am not a Rastafarian, at the time I did not wear locks, and I am still a non smoker, abiding by the female regulations has granted me enough respect, and consideration to be generally very well received by most of the commune dwellers. After collecting data for the purpose of this study, I have proceeded to analyse them in the following manner.

### 1.6. Structure of dissertation

In the second chapter, I am seeking to establish how the EABIC has put a *resocialisation system* in place. Indeed, Leahy (1986) explained that in communist societies, after the revolution, a system of *resocialisation* was put in place, in order to deconstruct the previous gender biased perception of work. Within the EABIC context, I am going to look at the theological framework of the community, in order to assess the difference between the mainstream Jamaican one, and to identify the eventual roots for female subordination in this new system of value.

The third chapter deals with the EABIC conception and representation of the body. The analysis of these notions within the commune is crucial to understand how far the EABIC has broken away from the norms of *whiteness*. I will argue that in sacralising their bodies as *gods and goddesses of creation*, EABIC members are addressing the problem of *la blès*<sup>47</sup>, the trauma caused by the systematic vilification of the African phenotypes throughout the colonial era in the Caribbean, which has never been successfully addressed, in spite of the Black movements of the 1960's.

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<sup>47</sup> The Kréyol word Blès defines a deep physical or psychological injury that needs to be exorcised in order for the subject to heal. The concept is used by Chamoiseau (2002) in his monumental work: *Biblique des Derniers Gestes* where he associates the word with the atrocities of slavery lingering in the flesh of the contemporaneous Caribbean. Donatien Yssa associates it to the "colonial disease" in her work *Vaincre la souffrance dans Autobiographie de ma mère de Jamaica Kincaid* (2007).

The fourth chapter is dedicated to role attribution within the community and the notion of power. Indeed, even if gender roles can differ from one society to another, men would less likely fill a position connoted to women. This chapter will aim to analyse the decision-making entities of the commune, and from there assess how women are represented, and what type of agency they have within them.

The fifth chapter is interested in productive and reproductive activities on the commune. Momsen declares that whatever is regarded as a female activity within a developing country, will be less valorised and remunerated than a male one (Momsen 2004). I will argue, in this chapter, that the socialist concept of *Universal* has altered the traditional valuation of gendered activities, and that in this equalitarian community, women's work are as highly regarded as men's activities.

The sixth chapter is concerned with mating patterns and family. Are Bobo Shanti women merely the latent mothers of powerful sons, like the Punjabi women described by Pettigrew (1981: 64)? What is expected of a married Bobo Shanti couple? How do they organise their lives around the ritual purification periods? By analysing male and female interactions through the family within the commune, I argue that the EABIC has designed a family system where the commune is more important than the individuals.

The seventh chapter revolves around education. Indeed, it is important to assess how girls and boys are socialised, how their notion of gender is constructed, from the children stories to their schools' activities and subjects. After examining EABIC theology and philosophy, the commune economic and familial structures, I conclude with hopefully enough evidence to have a better understanding of the EABIC, actions against *Babylon/Whiteness*, and how this attitude impacts upon gender construction, and expectation. Nevertheless, before entering deeper into the EABIC *Livity*, it would be useful to have an overview on Rastafari.



## Chapter 2: When gods and goddesses worship

In the very brief portrait of Rastafari, drawn in the previous chapter, it was made quite clear that though sharing the same ideological base, the internal practices, and rituals of each *mansions* of Rastafari differ. As a radical community, the EABIC seeks to demarcate itself from the mainstream Jamaican spirituality, and as a *Priesthood Order*, it also breaks away from more well-known Rastafari branches. This special status is expressed within the complex principles, and ceremonial that punctuates the lives of EABIC members. The following is an attempt to reveal the manner in which these rituals play an important part in preventing this social movement to be dissolved into mainstream conception of the divine.

### 2.1. Enslaving theology: black the accursed colour

And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his Bredren. And he said, blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant (Genesis 9: 25-27).

This biblical account has been widely used to justify Africans' enslavement and quiet the cognitive dissonance<sup>48</sup> that European Christians could have felt when faced with the realities of this barbaric act (Degruy, 2005). If it was a geographical fact that Canaanites<sup>49</sup> and Cushites<sup>50</sup> presented African phenotypes, Ham's skin complexion was never revealed or hinted in the original passage. It was to be centuries later that this additional information was included in popular European exegesis, and brought an entirely different dimension to this passage.

Indeed, the *Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 108b, explained that the dark colour of the Hamites<sup>51</sup> was due to another curse placed on Ham, by God because he had had sexual intercourse, while in the arch (Sollor 1997: 87). These are among the first

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<sup>48</sup> Cognitive dissonance is a term used in psychology to describe the feeling of discomfort when simultaneously holding onto conflicting ideas, beliefs or values. Degruy uses the term in relation to her work on Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, regarding it to be the end of the numerous racist theories and works used to justify the atrocities of slavery. Rape, torture, murder when relating to the enslaved or people of African Descent could therefore not trouble the white elite, creating a dangerous lack of empathy in some people (Degruy 2005)

<sup>49</sup> Canaan and Cush were the offspring of Ham.

<sup>50</sup> Idem.

<sup>51</sup> Hamites: generic name given to the descendents of Ham. Cush Canaan and Egypt are the countries in which they dwelt, all found on the African continent.

occurrences describing the colour black as negative<sup>52</sup>. The darkening of Ham's skin was allegedly due to his sexual deviance. He was cursed, and compelled to a servile fate. The descendants of Ham founded powerful kingdoms; the first biblical king after the flood was the controversial Nimrod<sup>53</sup> a Cushite, yet, these kingdoms were often enemies of Israel. Hence, in the ancient Hebrew world, Genesis 9: 25-27, could be regarded as a convenient text to justify the countless wars opposing Israel and Canaan as expressed in Deuteronomy 20:16-17<sup>54</sup>. Even if the *Pentateuch*<sup>55</sup> is not taken here as an infallible historical source, it can be said that this passage of the *Torah* certainly shaped the vision that Hebrews had of Africans, and legitimised their claims to neighbouring lands.

In Christian's interpretations, Ham's black skin is directly linked with vice and inferiority of character. In fact, every negative or morally deficient trait, were conferred to Ham, and his offspring as illustrated below:

I saw the curse pronounced by Noah upon Ham moving toward the latter like a black cloud and obscuring him. His skin lost its whiteness, he grew darker. His sin was the sin of sacrilege, the sin of one who would forcibly enter the Ark of the Covenant. I saw a most corrupt race descend from Ham and sink deeper and deeper in darkness. I see that the black, idolatrous, stupid nations are the descendants of Ham. Their colour is due, not to the rays of the sun, but to the dark source whence those degraded races sprang (Anne Catherine Emmerich in Gowan 1998: 110-115).

The visions of *Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich* are not surprising for the time. Born in 1774, at the "Zenith of slavery" as Burton put it (1997: 48), it was in the economic interests of Europe to promote the "natural" inferiority of African people, since it was a sure way to justify the continuation of such a profitable business. These beliefs were supported by both the Church, and the "scientific" world. Numerous scientists were also working on the elaboration of the "theory of Races". Emmerich was indeed contemporaneous with Henri de Boulainvilliers and Johann Friedrich

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<sup>52</sup> Hood explains that negative western depictions of Africans can be found as early as the sixth century BCE, where Greeks portrayed their satyrs with Negroid features (hood 1994: 27). In their mythology, satyrs were half man; half goat. Unlike the centaurs; other half human creatures who excelled in the art of war; satyrs were only concerned with physical pleasure; as their constantly erected penises proved it. It is interesting to note that the centaurs were Caucasians, while satyrs were Negroids.

<sup>53</sup> See Genesis 10:8-10. See also the exegesis of Ibn Ezra, Abraham Ben Meir.

<sup>54</sup> Deuteronomy 20:16-17: " But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: 17: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

<sup>55</sup> Name given to the five books of the Torah attributed to the prophet Moses.

Blumenbach, scientists who scientifically established that the “Negroid race” was inferior to the “Caucasian race”. Like the Hebrews before them, Christians also used this particular text to justify their socio-economic objectives.

Another link between interpretation of Holy Scriptures and socio-economic context can be observed in the Muslim world. Islamic scholars did not associate the curse with particular skin complexion (Hood 1996: 6). It may be argued that this interpretation is probably due to the fact that the ethnic groups composing the Muslim world at the time were in great majority from the lineage of Ham, or in very close relations with the African continent. The fact that the colour stigma was not present in the original text was carefully underlined by some scholars who, as early as the 850 A.D., refuted the then largely spread racist European exegesis, and adamantly defended the moral and intellectual abilities of Africans<sup>56</sup>, linking the various hues of human skin to environmental determinism (Al-Jahiz 1981.)

As demonstrated above, a passage present in the Torah, the Bible or the Koran enabled some scholars to justify certain actions that would not have otherwise been acceptable in the ethos of their religions. Hood (1994) extensively analyses the social and religious image of African people in ancient Europe, and Asia up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrating that the European view of Africa has always inevitably been the result of a socio-political reality; always beneficial to the exponent. Therefore, Genesis 9: 20-25 justified actions like the spoliation of lands and riches, the destruction of family units, the dehumanisation and torture of human beings; actions that would have been inconceivable for the loving and meek God praised and feared by the members of these three religions.

Al-Jahiz’s writings over this particular matter are here to demonstrate that it is not because a worldview has been heavily promoted and widely accepted that it cannot be challenged. In institutionalised oppressive societies, counter values are invariably elaborated to respond to the interpretations and conclusions of the victors. In Jamaica,

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<sup>56</sup> Al-Jahiz was himself a renowned scholar and a prolific writer; evidence of his intellectual abilities.

before Rastafari and Marcus Garvey, right in the midst of colonial Christianity, men and women had already understood the link between religious exegesis and social reform.

## **2.2. Jamaica and its theology of liberation**

Religion and socio-political insurgence have always been tightly intertwined throughout Jamaican history. The Anglican Church as the official colonial denomination openly supported the plantation system (Diocese of Jamaica 2011); yet, the enslaved did not passively accept the colonial worldview. The Africans had arrived in Jamaica with their own religious systems identified nowadays under names such as Myal, Obeah, or Kumina. Myal can be regarded as spiritual institution providing spiritual solutions to social or behavioural problems, with healing as its main preoccupation. Schuler explained that:

Myalists believed that all misfortune, not just slavery, stemmed from malicious forces, embodied in the spirits of the dead and activated by antisocial people. The Myal organization provided specialists doctors trained to identify the spirit causing the problem, exorcise it, and prevents a recurrence (Schuler 1980: 32).

Unlike Myal, Obeah was not merely dedicated to restore physical, spiritual, and social balance. As much as it could be promoting positive endeavours, it could also be used to harm and distress. The powers of Obeah have been observed in many manoeuvres to gain freedom: “To find justice in the unjust world of slavery and emancipation, Jamaicans could turn to obeah practitioners, whose work was brought under scrutiny by the communal consciousness of Myal”. (Murphy 1994: 120).

Kumina could be regarded as the expression for both, Myal, and Obeah. As well as being a religious system with its deities, it is also a dance and musical genre. A Kumina practitioner while in trance induced by the ritual dance and music could, for instance, see the evil hidden amidst the community and address it. Kumina leaders are usually chosen by the spirit, and are rewarded for their obedience by spiritual and linguistic gifts (Lewin 2000).

Regarded as evil practices by the colonial authorities, African-Diasporic religions like Myal were discouraged and censured by the Anglican/colonial. Because of

the official persecution, these practices needed a Christian host and complex *play covers*<sup>57</sup> in order to survive, in and out of the plantation (Stewart 2005: 15-69). By 1784, in spite of the long established Anglican and Moravian Church, the Baptist Church managed to make more converts among the slave population than the latter: “took rapidly and in large numbers to the new religion, but in doing so absorbed it into the Myal framework (Chevannes 1998: 7). This syncretism led to the creation of the Native Baptist Church. This Church ran by African Jamaicans, for African Jamaicans, allowed its members to remain in “post-myal” groups, while openly attending Christian church services (Chevannes 1998: 8).

One might say that the Jamaican Baptist Church, or Revivalist communities were created in a syncretic effort to counteract the oppression of the colonial spiritual system. This spiritual hybridism created a space for cultural affirmation such as the *Jonkonnu*<sup>58</sup> processions and *Cudgelling* matches, where the non-initiated could never be sure of understanding the true meaning of the performance (Burton 1997: 47-89).

Chevannes (1998), Besson (1998), Burton (1997) and Erskine (2004) extensively discussed the crucial role that the Jamaican Baptist Church or the Revivalist Movement played in the fomentation of rebellions, and other resistance schemes that shaped the Jamaican society. For instance, the concept of the “free village” or “family lands”, where the newly freed slaves could buy land, and establish their families independently from the major white land owners (Besson 1998: 63-68), was a Baptist initiative. Many Jamaican heroes belonged to these “Black” churches. Men and women such as Tacki, Sam Sharpe, Alexander Bedward, or Imogene Kennedy, in addition to all of those unnamed by history, were the spiritual leaders and highly subversive elements within the Jamaican colonial system.

As noted by both Chevannes (1998) and Burton (1997) Rastafari is within a continuum of religious rebellion in Jamaica. In fact, as aforementioned, Rastafari is not the first spiritual movement to have interpreted the Bible to promote African awareness

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<sup>57</sup> See Burton’s study on cultural opposition within colonial boundaries.

<sup>58</sup> Jonkonnu is the name given to Christmas festivities organized by slaves, present in several Caribbean countries like the Bahamas or Belize. During slavery, what may have been a serious religious or secular ritual in West Africa was translated into a play in Jamaica with men wearing Cow head mask among other. See Burton (1997: 65-83) for more information on this fading tradition in Jamaican Folklore.

and challenge the authorities (Van Dijk 1993: 332; Seaga 1982; Orr1985). Along with Ethiopianism, Revivalism, Garveyism or Bedwardism, Rastafari followed a great tradition of liberation theology elaborated in different spiritual groups within the African Diaspora and in Jamaica<sup>59</sup>.

### **2.3. Bobo Shanti and its theological foundations**

As it was mentioned earlier, the spiritual life of an EABIC member revolves around a precise set of principles. The idea of dual membership as observed in the Native Baptist Church is not tolerated. A Bobo Shanti practicing Kumina or going to the Obeah-man<sup>60</sup> is unheard of, even though the links between the peasant spirituality and the EABIC theology are undeniable.

#### **2.3.1. Obeah, Revival, EABIC, mixture and departure**

Q: Are there any candles here?

A: You will not find candles on the camp, less the people think that we practice Obeah. (Princess Jazmin, personal conversation, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2008)

This dialogue, is an extract of a discussion that took place between princess Jazmin, and myself, in the Bull Bay Camp's *Journey Gate*. At the time of the conversation, it was close to 10.00 pm. There had been a power cut due to a storm, and the entire commune was plunged into darkness. With one weak lamp torch to brighten the room, I was getting wary of the darkness. Why could there not be candles to light up the place? I was surprised to learn that the use of candles could be associated with Obeah and detrimental to the EABIC reputation, hence, not allowed on the commune. Far from being a caprice, the absence of candle on the commune could be regarded as the result of a power struggle, which shook the Rastafari movement in the 1950's.

In 1949, with the Advent of the *Youth Black Faith* movement, a radicalisation of Rastafari took place. Candles had always been profusely used in Revivalist ceremonies, and special oils could be bought for various purposes under the prescription of Obeah-

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<sup>59</sup> Chevannes explains that though the name comes from the Christian Irish Great Revival, Jamaicans took then again the opportunity to include the spirit possession and the healing properties usually found in Myal, making the Irish phenomenon their own (1998, 8).

<sup>60</sup> An Obeah-man or woman is one who has mastered esoteric knowledge and is therefore able to work in the life of his clients.

men or for the *Balm Yard*<sup>61</sup> (Balantine 1926). These practices were well integrated in the Jamaican system of belief, and were present in the early forms of Rastafari. Founding figures like Howell, Hinds or Hibbert were known to have used candles, and oils (Chevannes 1998: 79). Nonetheless, the new generation saw these practices as injurious to the livity, and did their best to demarcate themselves from the “waywardness of the older leaders” (idem). A war against the Revivalist Movement influences had started.

The *Youth Black Faith* was not only about social and spiritual radicalisation of the Rastafari movement. Their reforms were also targeting the physical expression of the new faith and ideology. With the adoption of matted hair, called dreadlocks, in addition to the already existing beard<sup>62</sup>, they were visually breaking with the Jamaican middle class idea of respectability and appropriateness, erasing all ambiguities about their spiritual and ideological allegiance. Most scholars agree to the idea that woman subordination to men in Rastafari is due to the infiltration of the *Rude Boy*<sup>63</sup> attitude (Rowe 1998: 78) into the *Youth Black Faith* reforms<sup>64</sup>. Ironically, it is the wearing of matted hair or locks that finally gave women means to aesthetically express their adhesion to Rastafari. The dreadlocks gave them an agency as *Rastawomen*, which the beard denied them. By undermining the Revivalist influences in Rastafari, the *Youth Black Faith* movement created a mode of expression for *Rastawomen* while seriously restricting their activities within the organisation (Idem: 75-79).

These changes seriously challenged the existing views on Rastafari. Many, *beardmen* or not, adhered to this new string of ideas whilst a lot disbanded altogether (Chevannes 1998: 84). Prince Emmanuel<sup>65</sup>, who allegedly was among Howell followers

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<sup>61</sup> The Balm Yard is the place where a Revivalist believer would go to get miraculous healing. It was such a popular practice that mentos and calypsos were written about them. See for instance Everard Williams’ “Healing in the Balm Yard” on *Mento Madness* 2004.

<sup>62</sup> The very first Rastafarians were known for wearing beards, in contrast with the norm and fashion of the time that saw men clean-shaven. They were even called the beard men. Babylon. For more information on the significance of facial hair in Rastafarian male; see Chevannes (1994:145-170).

<sup>63</sup> The Rude Boys phenomenon grew in urban areas in the 60’s. A Rude Boy would be a minor delinquent trying to survive in an oppressive system. Jimmy cliff in Perry Henzell “The Harder they Come” (1972) is the perfect example of the Rude Boy. The term has faded nowadays to give way to the “Sufferer”, another urban victim, evidence of the shortcomings of the Jamaican social and urban politic.

<sup>64</sup> See Chevannes (1994); Lake (2000)

<sup>65</sup> The exact date after which Prince Emmanuel changed his title to King Emmanuel is not known with precision. Suffice to say that at the time of this study, he was generally referred to as King Emmanuel.

on Pinnacle (Merritt 2006: 3), somewhat integrated the strict ethos promoted by the *Youth Black Faith*, as he also wore his hair, and his beard matted into locs. Apart from these significant changes, one can wonder, if the Revivalist traditions still influenced the EABIC rituals and ethos.

Some similarities can effectively be observed between Revivalist, and EABIC attires, and customs, although EABIC members would vehemently deny them. Upon discussing EABIC mores with other Rastafarians, it quickly appeared that a small controversy existed about the person of King Emmanuel. In fact, the latter was allegedly believed to have powers that may not entirely be a result of his *Livity*. As a consequence of this, one can conjecture that the absence of candles, or anything that could be taken for *Obeah* paraphernalia, may also have been reinforced by the accusations made against King Emmanuel for practicing magic. Indeed it has been reported that the latter supposedly threw some powders and oils in the 1958 Nyabinghi fire, resulting in the police violent repression (Homiak 1998: 179). This incident was communicated by Ras I-Mes, a member of the *I-gelic*<sup>66</sup> Brothers, who claimed to have been closely acquainted with King Emmanuel. He explained: “Is de Dreadlocks youth rise and stamp out de neo-Revival ‘ting. Dat’s why Prince Edward (King Emmanuel Charles Edward<sup>67</sup>) couldn’t stay among I-n-I. De judgment was too stiff against dose (obeah) ting” (Homiak 1998: 147). This statement can be interpreted as follow: “it is the young generation with the dreadlocks that have started speaking up against the neo-revivalist practices. That is the reason why Prince Edward could not stay among us”.

This is interesting, as it summarises roughly the nature of the EABIC *Livity*: a mixture of rigidity, found in the numerous pre-established rules, and flexibility found in the notion of personal freedom. Indeed, one may argue that, though King Emmanuel founded one of the most radical Houses of Rastafari, he may have somehow kept intact the initial forms of Rastafari that he would have encountered on Howell’s commune. Clearly, from Ras I-Mes testimony, the then Prince Emmanuel adopted certain ascetic views promoted by the *I-gelic* brothers, in direct connection with the reforms of Rastafari engaged by the *Youth Black Faith*, but later created his own group where he freely added what he believed to be true.

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<sup>66</sup> According to Homiak, the I-Gelic brothers used to be an extremely radical group of Rastafarians.

<sup>67</sup> our addition



Another evidence of Emmanuel's independence of thinking is the conception of *Ital*, a way of life that is respectful of life. Indeed, Kes Tekle Ab, a Bobo Shanti priest on the Shashamane settlements declared:

No, that is not a problem what you are eating or drinking. If you want to eat, you are free, there is no judgment for what you are eating or drinking. The judgment rests in your heart... you eat and go to the toilet, and it pass out, and it's not there again... but the bad mind continues to be here [pointing to the heart] (In Merritt 2006: 5).

This attitude towards food taboos greatly contrasts with the ascetic ways of the *I-gelic Brothers*. While the latter lived through rigid *Ital* regulations, thus expressing the purity of their *livity* through rudimental clothing, eating and housing (Homiak 1998: 142-151), Bobo Shanti cultivated the concept of purity of the heart, and actions above the appearance of it, promoting personal freedom over institutionalised taboos. The very appearance of the current EABIC members also appears to have been influenced by ideas different from the *I-gelic* brothers. In fact, below on the left is a photograph of *Kapo*<sup>68</sup> Mallica Reynolds, a Revivalist leader and artist. He too, wears a turban that may not be similar to the Bobo Shanti fashion, but resembles it enough to consolidate the idea of vivid ties between Revival and EABIC.



Figure 7 Kapo Malika  
69

In a nutshell, these speculations conflict with the general image of this Rastafarian movement in Jamaican society. Indeed, according to Bobo Shanti literature, King Emmanuel was supposed to have founded his house, in order to break away from

<sup>68</sup> Kapo or Captain is the title assumed by Revival Church leaders.

the *slackness*<sup>70</sup> present in Rastafari, at that time (Freedom, Redemption and International Repatriation Now and Now, 2008, NP), in direct line with the puritan *Youth Black Faith*.

From Ras I-Mes' statement, the strict avoidance of candles on the camp, and the rather liberal approach towards food, one might understand that ideological conflicts existed between the *I-gelic* Brothers, and King Emmanuel due to his more “liberal” views on *Ital*. However, one cannot say that EABIC theology is merely a syncretised entity between ascetic *Ital*, and Jamaican popular spiritual beliefs. King Emmanuel and the other elders Rases managed once again to analyse the colonial bible with yet another twist.

### **2.3.2. Bobo Shanti and the rejection of spirit possession**

If *I-gelic* and EABIC members have different and sometimes conflicting *livities*, they nevertheless are both in open rupture with the spirit possession aspect of Revivalism, and other post-Myal religions. In fact, though promoting Repatriation, and claiming their *Negritude*, the EABIC frowns upon African Traditional religious structures. As expressed earlier, Rastafari, and particularly EABIC members, peacefully cohabited with Revivalist groups in various parts of rural Jamaica. These groups, mostly composed of individuals with the same peasant, or lower working class background, influenced the Bobo Shanti's ritualistic structure (Besson 1998: 63-68). For instance, drumming and chorus singing found in the EABIC, are also found in the Revivalist worshipping style. However, the belief in intermediary spirits between God, and humans through spirit possession, was discontinued. In fact, I never had the opportunity to behold anyone in trance during my sojourn on the Bull Bay camp, even during the long and intense Nyabinghi chanting sessions. Chevannes was nevertheless able to witness something approaching spirit possession, which may shed some light on the EABIC stand on the matter:

A Bobo not in the congregation, because he was not attired in his robes, fell into a near trance state... Occasionally he would shout out “Black supremacy” or “Revolution!” A member of the congregation came over and said something to him, but it produced no change either in his movements or utterances... At the end of the drumming Emmanuel

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<sup>70</sup> Slackness is very often used in Jamaican or Caribbean speech to define lack of moral or ethic.

asked, somewhat rhetorically, “Who can’t own God in the Flesh?” whereupon the semipossessed shouted “I”. (1994: 181-182)

In this occurrence, one can note in Chevannes’ account that the Bobo was not part of the congregation, a member went to calm him down, and that King Emmanuel jestingly rebuked him. From Chevannes’ information, one might suggest that this man was an aspirant to EABIC *Livity*, and not properly seasoned to its ceremonial patterns. In fact, neophytes rarely wear robes, and may not wear the turban unless they attain the *Prophet* title. Nevertheless these men are usually encouraged to take an active part in the spiritual and social life of the commune. As a presumed neophyte, one may even infer that this man may have very well been acquainted with Revivalist meetings where it is common enough to be *in the Spirit*. As an aspirant Bobo, this man may have not yet been very well inducted to the decorum of the commune, and had kept some Jamaican Revivalists influences in his worship style. The fact that another Bobo went to calm him down and that King Emmanuel jokingly mentioned the incident in his *reasoning* only confirms that spirit possession was never the norm in Bobo Shanti *Livity*, and is discouraged. This incident and the actual ban on candle burning are here to prove that some care has been put into separating Bobo Shanti practices from Revivalists ones.

Breaking with traditional Jamaican beliefs in its content but not totally in form, the EABIC principles, and values were carefully elaborated in order to create a spiritual and religious identity where the African continent and its Diaspora were the means and the way towards salvation. Chevannes sees Rastafari as “A more authentic expression of African Traditions as generally thought” (1991: 34). In the case of the EABIC, though spirit possession, which could be regarded as a significant trait of African Traditional Religion, has been rejected, there is no doubt in their minds pertaining to their identity. “I am an African, therefore whatever I do is African also” (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008).

Indeed, it is evident that EABIC selected and formed its own African traditions to fit its creole reality, continually challenging established concepts on race and identity. This audacious creative tendency led them to totally refurbish the accepted European form of Christianity, which was often used to dehumanise people of African descent. Beyond producing yet another interpretation of the Bible, Bobo Shanti theology defiantly claims that its notion of Christianity is the authentic one. While post-Myal

religions introduced African characteristics into European Christianity; Rastafari, and particularly the EABIC, relocated Christianity to Africa and stripped it of its Western symbolism, ideology and conclusions. Members of Revivalist groups used Christian traditions to host their ancestral practices; Bobo Shanti Rases bluntly took over the colonial Christian frame, and altered it to make it their own. If their ceremonies lack the traditional African spirit possession, their will to focus Christianity on Africa, ostensibly challenged the established colonial authorities.

Through the vision of King Emmanuel, Christianity had gained an African face. The biblical prophecies received other interpretations to suit the logical *overstanding*<sup>71</sup> of the Bobo Shanti man, and woman.

#### **2.3.4. EABIC Divine reincarnation**

Like other Rastafarians, Bobo Shanti Rases believe in reincarnation as: “The essence of man is knowledge, and if the flesh envelope is likely to disappear, the knowledge will live on forever” (Deliver us from Evil). For instance, if a person had a bad knowledge while living, this evil knowledge would come back into another corporal envelop. It has been written elsewhere, that Rastafari was merely expressing Hinduism beliefs, even attributing the *Back to Africa* movement, to the indentured workers’ *Back to India* cry (Mansingh 2000). Although this theory has been greatly challenged and criticised, it is impossible to deny the numerous parallels between Hinduism and Rastafari, such as the use of Marijuana, the growing of locks or , even the vegetarian diet all similar in form, but used for different ideological purposes (Chevannes1995: 94).

For instance, the concept of god and goddess in flesh may be understood from the gender dynamic of *Shakti*<sup>72</sup> in Hinduism. Indeed, if there are gods, there are also goddesses, as HIM Haile Selassie is commonly represented with his consort HIM Menen, but this point is going to be discussed further in this chapter. Going back to the concept of gods and goddesses in flesh, one may take for example the Hindu divinities Vishnu and Lakshmi. Both had a large number of partial, or total avatars to defend

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<sup>71</sup> *Overstanding* is a word often used by Rastafarians that can be translated by the English word understanding.

<sup>72</sup> See glossary.

Good or *Righteousness* against Evil. The idea of a deity coming to earth, as a human being in order to combat sin, may be linked to the EABIC concept of gods and goddesses in flesh. Indeed, since *good knowledge* is divine, a human manifesting this *good knowledge* will have to be a goddess, or a god in flesh. These Rastafarian gods and goddesses do combat Babylon in a spiritual social and economic war. If sincere in his or her livity, the devotee becomes god in his or her own right. Man of Right is god in flesh, while men of Wrong are satans in flesh (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, November 23rd 2008).

Here, one notices the singular form, and the capital *M* for the word *Man* and the plural form for *men*. Indeed, the use of the plural form when referring to males or females, always carries a negative connotation in EABIC jargon. Therefore, locutions like: *satans*, *sataness*, *men*, *babylon*, *battymen* are all written in minuscule. *Man* is associated with God. This is the reason why Bobo Shanti Rases will always use the word *Man* to indicate a righteous person or group, even when the use of the plural is required. This belief is so strongly anchored in EABIC rituals, that the commonly used *Amen* at the end of Christian prayers is replaced by *Aman*. It is interesting to note, that if these linguistic twists make sense in English, they are not easily translatable in French Amharic or Spanish. For instance, *Aman* is not translated by *un Homme* in French. Very often, the English play on words will be kept in the hosting language when it is regarding an untranslatable theological point: *Aman*, *Livity* or *Christ-mass*. The linguistic creativity can also be displayed in the other language, as long as the theological point is made, yet they are less frequent.

Bobo Shanti Rases believe in the Trinity, which is composed of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy one, which can be translated in HIM Haile Selassie, Marcus Garvey, and King Emmanuel, the Black Christ. Many of their beliefs are similar to other houses of Rastafari; nevertheless, they do have some unique interpretations that are going to be discussed below.

#### **2.4. EABIC Trinity**

Composed of Royalty, Priest and Prophet, the EABIC trinity is not dissimilar to other Rastafarian ones. Indeed, if the persons of Haile Selassie and Marcus Garvey are

highly revered throughout Rastafari, many refuse to grant the same importance to King Emmanuel. The EABIC is indeed composed of HIM Haile Selassie/HIM Menen, Marcus Garvey, and King Emmanuel. Understanding how these three heads work together can allow one to have a better *overstanding* of the EABIC Livity. The following has essentially been drawn from the Honourable Priest Wayne, and the EABIC book *Deliver Us from Evil*. Rastafari *livity* is extremely personal, and details may differ from each individual's special experience, nevertheless, this description of the Trinity is arguably one that most Bobo Shanti would agree with.

#### **2.4.1. HIM Haile Selassie, King Alpha: the male archetype**

HIM Haile Selassie, the former monarch of Ethiopia, is considered to be the Father of Creation. Indeed, according to EABIC, he is King Alpha, the one who, similarly to the Hindu concept of *Shakti*, cannot be separated from Queen Omega, the mother of creation, in order for the creative force to manifest itself. Together, this divine couple is believed to have peopled the world, and encouraged the development of science and metaphysic in the first humans in Africa: the Bobo Shanti people. According to the EABIC concept of *Man/Good Knowledge*, King Alpha was the perfect divine knowledge. This knowledge was transferred to HIM Haile Selassie as proven by his Divine title.

In EABIC theology, countless signs point to the Emperor Selassie's divinity. To begin with, he is regarded as the fulfilment of a prophecy, allegedly made by Marcus Garvey. The prophecy urged the African Diaspora: "Look to Africa where a black king shall be crowned, he shall be the Redeemer". Even if nowadays it is more and more accepted that this prophecy was a part of myth creation around Garvey, and was never uttered by him (Chevannes 1995: 10, Van Dijk 1997), Bobo Shanti Rastafarians never doubted its veracity. The titles that Ras Tafari Makonen took, upon being Crowned HIM Haile Sellasie<sup>73</sup> are also considered evidences of his divinity. Indeed from 1930, he was to be addressed by His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and Elect of God. Some of these honorific titles are also attributed to Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:16), are mainly alluding

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<sup>73</sup> Haile Selassie means power of the Trinity.

to the illustrious lineage claimed by the Emperor. According to the *Kebra Negast*<sup>74</sup>, he is from the Solomonic Dynasty, directly issued from the illustrious Queen Makeda of Sheba, and King Solomon. According to this account, the two monarchs had a son, Menelik I, who brought the Ark of the Covenant<sup>75</sup>, symbol of the alliance between God, and his chosen people, to Ethiopia. This action shifted the focus from the “children of Israel” to the “children of Menelik”, conferring to Ethiopia, and this particular dynasty a sacred aura all the way up to HIM Haile Selassie. In Bobo Shanti understanding, the presence of several foreign head of states, or their ambassadors at the emperor’s coronation, is the unmistakable evidence of his kingdom’s particular nature. A True King of Kings and Lord of lords.

The visit that the emperor made to Jamaica, also greatly contributed to his divine status. The fact that rain stopped falling when the imperial plane landed, was enough to banish any doubts existing on the emperor’s divinity. Some, Rita Marley<sup>76</sup> among others, even saw stigmata on his hands, confirming his salvation mission in these times. In a nutshell, these arguments, as few as they may be listed here, are just too powerful in Bobo Shanti, and Rastafarian minds to be overthrown by the contradictory and controversial facts about the historical rule of this emperor. In Jamaica, he was announced as the coming Messiah, and was received and remembered as such.

#### **2.4.2. Empress Menen, Queen Omega: the Female archetype**

Woizero<sup>77</sup> Menen Asfaw is the lifelong consort of the Emperor Haile Selassie. In EABIC understanding, she is therefore Queen Omega, Mother of Creation. Along with King Alpha, her husband, she worked to the enlightenment of the African people. Particularly revered by the Bobo Shanti women, her principles are the inspiration for the Woman Freedom Liberation League (WFL).

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<sup>74</sup> Can be translated by *Glory of the King*. The factual accuracy of these writings has been widely contested. Many think that it has been written to discredit the rights of the Zagwe rulers to the Ethiopian throne. Nevertheless it has been widely accepted by the Ethiopian population as the evidence of their country early conversion from “pagan” to Hebrew and Christian faiths.

<sup>75</sup> In the Old Testament, The Ark of the Covenant held the tables of the law dictated to Moses from God.

<sup>76</sup> In Timothy White’s biography of Bob Marley *Catch a fire*.

<sup>77</sup> Can be translated as the word princess.

Empress Menen has been remembered by her people as a benevolent, charitable and pious queen, even though she did little to bridge the social discrepancies between the aristocracy, and the rest of her subjects (Mickaël Bethe-Selassie, personal communication, September 24, 2009). Yared Gebre wrote a moving account of her life entitled: *A Memorial for Empress Menen Asfaw's Birthday*. The good deeds of the empress were carefully recorded by a Yared, who even called her “sacred” (1950: 2). This account surely comforted EABIC members in their faith, prompting them to venerate this monarch as the true Queen Omega.

Indeed, it is noted that she donated generously to the Church, helped building and restoring monasteries. She also promoted female education by opening the Empress Menen Girl's School, the first one to accommodate boarding, and day students. The open purpose of these schools was to “teach women to be equal participants with men in the sphere of knowledge and technology” (Yared 1950: 4). She morally and spiritually greatly encouraged her people under the Italian occupation. Her husband counsellor behind the scenes, she also directed the logistic support during the Italian invasion. Apart from Yared, many testified of the empress' good character and deeds. Her husband for instance officially praised her at her funeral:

She was devoutly religious and did not lose her faith even in the time of hardship. During the memorable days of Our companionship We never had differences that needed the intervention of others. As Sarah was to Abraham, so was she obedient to I. Our wishes were mutual until we were separated by the Almighty. Her assistance for the good of the young, the old and the needy requires no testimony for they are greater than thoughts and words. We have been extremely pleased to live long enough in the perfect union that enabled us to see our offspring, our grandchildren and our great grandchildren. We are thankful to the Almighty for having vouchsafed to us that long uninterrupted union which is not very common in the world today: There could be no more profound prayer for I to utter. (Selassie 1962).

From her husband's account, she was a benevolent and meek wife who made a “perfect union” with him. He talks about her as though they had merged into one being with “mutual wishes”. The idea of unity between the royal couple is very similar to the relationship that King Alpha and Queen Omega enjoyed. The emperor also compared his late consort to the Old Testament Sarah. In Hebrew tradition, Sarah was the wife and sister of Abraham, father of Isaac, the son promised by Yahweh. By drawing a parallel between the empress and Sarah, the emperor, as Yared hinted before him, moved his wife to the realm of the sacred.



In Bobo Shanti understanding, King Alpha cannot be separated from Queen Omega. Therefore, instead of seeing them as two distinct branches of the Trinity, together, they represent the Father/Mother creational head. Alpha and Omega are part of one entity who lived in Ethiopia.

### **2.4.3. The Prophet: Marcus Garvey**

Marcus Mosiah Garvey is one of the most charismatic national heroes of Jamaica. So popular was he among his people that while he was still alive, mystical powers were conferred to him (Chevannes 1991:123-130). As it has been aforementioned, several myths developed around him; with one of the most popular one hinting to his ability to prophesy.

In fact, before the Rastafarians, the Bedwardists<sup>78</sup> had declared Garvey to be the incarnation of Moses, while Alexander Bedward was Moses' elder brother Aaron. As a result, Garvey's speeches, utterances, acts, officially recorded or not were considered to be prophecies, and mysteries by many (Chevannes 1991: 123). For instance: "Look to Africa where a king shall be crowned, he shall be the redeemer", was understood by many Bedwardists to be a reference to the Emperor Haile Selassie, crowned in 1930. With his charisma and legacy in the collective imagination and sense of identity (Colman 2005), Marcus Garvey is present in most Rastafarian pantheons. In the Bobo Shanti trinity, he is a John the Baptist figure, the prophet announcing the king.

Mostly remembered for his involvement in the pan-African movement, Garvey's works towards the promotion of Black liberation theology is undeniable. The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) sought to break away from the norms of the racist colonial system of the time. Indeed, besides encouraging African-Diasporic entrepreneurship, promoting African/negroid physical features has acceptable and enviable standards of beauty (Assata 2008). It also sought to boost the African-Diaspora's self esteem and sense of worth by helping it define a pro-African theological frame.

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<sup>78</sup> Followers of the seditious Alexander Bedward.

Indeed, Garvey understood the damages caused by Western Christianity vectoring a white male representation of the divine. To eradicate these deeply rooted ideas, he campaigned for equality among those of the human family, and the necessity for Africans to identify God as a black entity. This revolutionary theology or situational theology (Gordon 1991: 140) was decorticated in the *Universal Negro Catechism*:

Q: If, then, you had to think or speak of the color of God, how you would describe it?

A: As black; since we are created in his image and likeness.

Q. On what would you base your assumption that God is black?

A. On the same basis as that taken by white people when they assume that God is of their colour. (Quoted in Potter 1991: 149).

This concept of a black God has been largely utilised by the EABIC, who took it to another level. Not only do they believe that God is black, but he is also a black man who lived in Jamaica.

#### **2.4.4. EABIC Trinity: King Emmanuel, the Black Christ**

Emmanuel Charles Edward, also known as the black Christ, is the charismatic founder of the EABIC. Indeed he was at the origin of the first Rastafarian convention that ended up in violent altercations with the police in 1958. Object of various controversies, he is venerated as the black Christ within the EABIC Trinity. As a Christ-Like figure, the details of his life prior to his divinisation are not readily available. The oral EABIC tradition describes him as being without parents, Amharic native speaker and ageless. Hardly anyone knew him from his childhood years as most of the elder pioneers passed away. Even his wife, the honourable Empress Rachel, does not have much information on his childhood or what one may call here his “secular life”. She explains:

King Emmanuel declares to the world who he is and that he stands for repatriation for all sons and daughters to return home to Africa where they belong. He was born in Saint Elizabeth. He did not talk of his mother and I did not question it. He told me of when he was a child and when his parents used to send him to tie out the donkey, and the donkey would run away with him down the hill. Also he would refer to Christ going to school and they would look at Christ as a science person<sup>79</sup> because he could do things that would marvel the other children, so their parents did not want their children to be friend with Christ. He told me that when Christ was at school he and another child was flying a kite on the roof and the boy fell off the roof and die and they accused Christ saying that he have done it and Christ came down and wake up the boy and ask did I push you off the roof and he say no and die again another child and Christ was friend but is mother tell her

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<sup>79</sup> A “Science person” is a euphemism to refer to someone who has psychic powers.

son not to keep friend with Christ so when Christ stop at his home to ask if he was ready for school his mother tie him up in the goat pen and tell Christ that he left already I believe he was talking about himself in parable and I know that he is the same person only he never say it was him Christ... (Empress Rachel, Personal communication December 19<sup>th</sup> 2009).

From this account, one can conjecture that King Emmanuel was a lonely child living in rural Jamaica, who went to school, and had very few friends. When asked about King Emmanuel's siblings and extended family, most informants quote the book of Hebrew chapter seven verse three, where it is written that a priest, after the order of Melchisedec, without father, mother or descent will be priest forever. Since King Emmanuel represents the priesthood in the Bobo Shanti livity, it is therefore understandable that such mystery should be attached to his person and life. One may come to the conclusion that these facts have been forgotten, in order to facilitate the establishment of his divine status. The obliteration of siblings and extended families appears to be the path to divinisation. Indeed, Beckford (2006) demonstrated that the Jewish family of Jesus, a rather large one consisting of "four brothers and at least two sisters", has been almost erased from biblical accounts. Beckford argued that this was done in order to accentuate, or establish a divine dimension to the historical Jesus, and made the new Christian religion appeal to the masses. This pattern can be observed in King Emmanuel's life, as practically nothing has been recorded on his previous life. The longest published biographical passage on his person has been gathered by Van Dijk:

Prince Emmanuel, whose real name was Smith, was born in Black River, St Elizabeth in 1909 or 1911, but like so many others later came to Kingston. When he settled in the ghettos of the capital in 1933, the first Rastafarian preachers had just emerged. Prince Emmanuel worked as a painter and delivered bread for a bakery, but in 1943, by his own account, he had a vision of the emperor, who told him to start to work for the liberation of his people. As 'the Lord's Servant, the Black Shepherd as the fundamental leader of the black people by sovereign right (1993:117).

Van Dijk's biography is contested by the members of the EABIC. Indeed, it has been pointed out that King Emmanuel's grandchildren answer to the name "Edward" at the roll call<sup>80</sup>. Moreover, his wife, the honourable Empress Rachel refutes Van Dijk's account:

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<sup>80</sup> Every morning, after the morning devotion, the roll is being called. The names and titles of all registered members residing on the camp are called. If one is not present during the devotion, he or she must have someone to account for them.

Everyone in Jamaica knows Emmanuel and that is name king Emmanuel Charles Edward they even call him Brother Eddy so this person that is saying that his name is Smith does not know what he is talking about. They always come up with some false saying that is negative towards Rasta when they are to tell the world that is their generation that takes black people out of Africa King Emmanuel has been going to the Jamaican Government asking for freedom for the slave children who were taken away from their homeland even before he started his congress so for him to come with that statement, he is a liar. (Empress Rachel, personal communication November 15, 2009).

In all cases, like Empress Rachel, most scholars and Rastafarians agree on the fact that he has been a prominent Rastafarian leader, “champion of human rights and human justice” as it is commonly heard on the camp. Indeed, King Emmanuel throughout his life never ceased to agitate for what he believed was the only way to peace and salvation: Repatriation of the African Diaspora to the African continent. Even if the records are not very explicit, it is commonly believed that King Emmanuel was among the first Rastafarians on Howell’s commune. From the account of the *I-gelic* brother Ras *I-mes* , one can also deduct that he was also involved in the radicalisation of Rastafari through the *Youth Black Faith*, as he adopted the dreadlocks spiritual and social statement. Nevertheless, it is from 1958 that the accounts of his deeds become somewhat more precise and certain.

In March 1958, King Emmanuel organised the “first and last Universal Rastafarian convention”. Even if Barrington Edmonds demonstrated that it was not the first Nyabinghi session of the island, it was certainly the most mediatised one. Journalists from *The Gleaner*, and other Jamaican newspapers were commenting, some sarcastic others quite worried; on this huge event that attracted Rastafarians from all parishes of Jamaica. This event was to unite all houses of Rastafari to put pressure on the Jamaican government, and allow immediate repatriation to Africa. Some people sold their lands and belongings, as they were certain that Africa was at hand (see Chevannes 1991). This event, and the violence that followed, resembles very much the Millerite *Great disappointment* in 1844, when hundreds of people sold their lands and possession expecting the second advent of Jesus Christ on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1844, in the US (White 1870: 310). In addition to being ridiculed by the population, Rastafarians ended up being further persecuted by the police. Nevertheless, this event demonstrates the charisma that King Emmanuel had in the Rastafarian community since 1958, prior to his divinisation.

King Emmanuel was the first Rastafarian to have sent a telegram to Queen Elizabeth the second, demanding immediate repatriation (Van Dijk 1993: 118). If the telegram did not get the answer expected, the British authorities did enquire about him, and Rastafari as a whole. This telegram may have triggered the 1976 British report, declaring Rastafari as a “West Indian mafia... an international crime ring specialising in drugs, prostitution, subversion and blackmail” (Cashmore 1995).

In 1982, along with Amanuel Foxe of the Imperial Ethiopian World Federation, King Emmanuel campaigned to have Rastafari recognised as a religion by the Jamaican Council of Churches (JCC) (Van Dijk 1993: 304). In 1988, he launched a legal battle against the Jamaican government on the ground that: “Everyone has the right to a nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality” (Universal Declaration of Human Right, article 15). Empress Esther was sent to represent the EABIC before the Jamaican Supreme Court.

That same year, hurricane Gilbert hit Jamaica, causing millions of dollars’ worth of damage in Jamaica. King Emmanuel’s commune was of course severely struck by the disaster. Nevertheless, in spite of the losses, he firmly refused all help coming from the government, and even from Rita Marley, representing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, stating that: “I refuse what they offered. I do not want those things. I want seven, nine or thirteen miles of high water ships to take my people to our rightful home in Ethiopia” (King Emmanuel in Jamaica Record, 09/88; in Van Dijk 1993: 326).

All of these radical actions against the identified oppressor the government, contributed to the uncompromising, and almost puritan image that the EABIC holds today. This conscious and radical image of Rastafari is contrasting with that of the tamed dreadlocked men, promoted by brands like Irie Blue, present in most Caribbean souvenir shops. Van Dijk (1993) and Barrington Edmonds (2003) demonstrated that since Bob Marley’s rise to stardom, Rastafari rapidly became a welcomed part of the Jamaican cultural landscape; nevertheless, one believes that the Bobo Shanti house, and its principles cannot easily be part of the welcome pack of Kingston tourism office. They may be tolerated, and even accepted in their local communities, yet their unyielding drive to battle *Babylon* is too radical to be integrated on the same level with the accepted hippy-like conception of Rastafari.

## 2.5. The EABIC and the written word

Rastafari wisdom is generally passed on orally. Indeed, *reasoning*, as it was mentioned earlier, is one of the main activities, in and outside, the Bull Bay camp. *Reasoning* in Rastafari jargon, is the act of explaining or debating on a spiritual matter with someone. As Chevannes pointed out, the importance of the spoken word is almost overwhelming in Jamaican, and Rastafari traditions (1998), adding glory or eternal shame to a historical fact or character.

On top of these unavoidable effects, Bobo Shanti Rases have added a spiritual dimension to words: “Speech has a mystical nature as the world was created with the Word” (Priest Wayne). Nevertheless, in this Priesthood Order where everyone has the opportunity to *reason*, the word can be reinterpreted and adapted to the speaker. *Reasoning* with different members of the EABIC, this researcher had the opportunity to observe how greatly facts could vary from one person to another. This phenomenon is amplified by the absence of the charismatic and spiritual leader, King Emmanuel, whose word would have been final. After his death, or *the beginning of his voyage*<sup>81</sup>, the organisation of the camp was questioned, and altered as without a strict leading figure, people tended to slightly digress from the original *principles*<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, what keeps the EABIC ethos together without too many alterations is the dynamic connection between the oral and the written word. Indeed, three major books are kept as references in the EABIC community: The *Bible*, with a predilection for the King James’ Version, *The Black Supremacy* retracing King Emmanuel acts and *Deliver us from Evil* by an unknown female author<sup>83</sup>. There, one can note the gender parity in the delivery of the written world. While most current sacred texts have been mostly written by men, the EABIC has revolutionised the genre by including the work of a female author in their canonical books.

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<sup>81</sup> Remember that Rastafarian do not believe in Death. According to Bobo Shanti Rases, King Emmanuel did not die, but started a voyage.

<sup>82</sup> See chapter on economical activities and camp administration.

<sup>83</sup> Apart from her gender, nothing is known of the author of *deliver us from evil*. It is generally understood that she chose to remain anonymous as she is seeking no credits for her work.

### **2.5.1 Deliver us From Evil**

Circa 1986, an unnamed woman and her family allegedly spent several months on the camp. She had the opportunity to converse on a regular basis with King Emmanuel, and fully immerse herself in Bobo Shanti *livity*. The outcome of this sojourn is the book: *Deliver us from Evil*, which freely circulates on the Internet, but has recently been printed by the Honourable Priest Karl from the French Congress in Nantes. This book is greatly recommended by Bobo elders, and is available to buy or borrow in the camp's library. The style is very elaborate. The narration is tightly intertwined with countless biblical references and quotations. It is a book that transmits, justifies and explains the essence of EABIC doctrines. *Deliver us from Evil* can be divided and analysed in three main axes:

The Evils of European civilisation.

The African spiritual heritage.

Judgement day and hope of the Black nation.

#### **2.5.1.a. The Evils of European civilisation**

The first notion brought forth in the book is that the African Diaspora has been brainwashed by the numerous centuries of slavery, along with Africans on the continent whose integrity has been altered by colonialism and neo-colonialism: "The white man then, as now, understood that if a suggestion is fed to the human mind over a sufficiently long period of time, and if the suggestion fed, is accompanied by sufficient and agonizing pain, the tortured mind will eventually accept the suggestion as its own" (1986: 3).

Therefore, in order to protect its life and avoid more torments, the physically and mentally enslaved people forgot its heritage and embraced the false teachings of their masters. After making that point clear, the author explains why the Europeans "whitewashed" African history and "ancient religion". According to her, the Europeans did not understand the subtle duality material/spiritual of life. Their understanding was purely pragmatic and physical, making them obtuse to greater knowledge, the idea of God. Fascinated by their exotic appearances, the Africans soon befriended them and

inter-married. It is important to remember here that EABIC strongly reproves inter-racial marriages. In their worldview, it is the cause of Africa's decadence:

With the persistent inter-marrying and inter mingling of peoples, the nation soon became weak and divided...no more concerned with exploring the higher realms of mind, and attaining unto the wisdom and knowledge of man and life, the black man now took pleasure in the purely sensual and the base (1986: 39).

Slavery and the triangular trade were to be the outcome of this "abomination" (1986: 38), a divine punishment. Inter-marriage is still considered to be sinful in Bobo Shanti settings. Whilst on the camp, I was told that she could not marry with a white man, that I should be careful to choose a *Bredren* (pronounce bredren) with a complexion as dark as myself. If slavery was a direct consequence of inter-marriage, spiritual corruption was also to be counted in the Africans' misfortunes.

According to the author, Europeans whitewashed history and ancient books like the Bible. Indeed, because they could not fully understand African spirituality, they altered African Traditional religion to turn it to their advantage, and proceed with the brainwash mentioned above. In the author's opinion, the false teachings implemented by the European churches and social systems are to be found in mainstream Christianity. The white representations of a perpetually crucified Christ, saints, the belief in a life after death, and the superiority of the white race over the black one, are all declared anathema ideas used to tame the *African man*<sup>84</sup>.

In a nutshell, Europeans, dissatisfied with their cold territories, went to Africa in order to benefit from the riches of the continent, and the refined civilisation. They distorted Christianity and its symbols, reinterpreted the Bible and re-wrote history, causing the Africans to forget about their own spiritual and material heritage. If the author denounces the "White evil", she thoroughly expends on what one may call the "pre-white history".

### **2.5.1. b. The African Spiritual Heritage**

Throughout the book, the author emphasises the difference between the European and African's views of humankind and the world. The term man itself has a

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<sup>84</sup> See de EABIC definition of man farther in this chapter.



very deep signification in EABIC jargon. The following is the definition given by the author:

The story (Genesis story of Adam and Eve) seeks to elucidate, for the first children of man, the essential nature of man and woman such that the two are an indivisible whole and together make up the being, which is known as 'man'. Man and woman together represent one whole unit of life. As life in its fullest sense, is both spiritual and physical so, man as a reflection of whole life, is also two-fold creation. So that the being called 'man'- is in fact, the man and woman together. The woman represents physical and seen life, whereas the man represents the spiritual, which clothes and dignifies. One without the other, is therefore as incomplete as is the body without the soul. (1986: 29)

Following the author's thread of ideas, this example is typical of the difference of philosophy between the Europeans and the African. Because Europeans did not grasp the other dimension of things, they also misunderstood Christianity, and the Trinity. Indeed, instead of the conventional "Father, son and Holy Ghost" the author talks about "God the Male, God the Woman, God the Man":

In the beginning therefore, there was God the male, who is Infinite knowledge made flesh; and God the woman, the female potential within the whole, made flesh. But in manifesting as two physical beings alone, an imbalance would exist. Because God the male is all Life, he is the whole made flesh; but God the woman however, was only the physical female part, and therefore symbolized a purely physical reality. Yet, the whole being of full life, should be both spiritual and physical. So whereas God the male, embodied full life for he, of himself alone, is an infinite entity - God the woman remained a purely physical entity. In order that the female be a full representation of Life, she required the companion piece, as It were, of potential/spiritual. (1986:34)

It is interesting to note that the EABIC trinity comprises a woman. The author seems to take a particular interest in describing the function of the female entity of the EABIC Godhead:

God the woman bore the title, the Holy One, because she was necessarily the first love of God the Father, as she was his natural mate from before the world was. Through his love for her, Love itself, become a reality in life and among man. Through God the woman therefore, Life was able to receive and know the ultimate gift, the gift of love. And Love is chief among the commandments of God. In consequence, God the woman, as the symbol of God's love for his creation, was sacred and holy, and as part of the Godhead, she is described as God the Holy One. In addition, whereas the title 'God', is in fact the descriptive title of the male being, the woman who is nonetheless God, is clearly not the male of the specie, and therefore not God in physical fact but God in spiritual fact, for she is a part of the whole which is the Trinity and Godhead. Hence she becomes God in spirit. Thus the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy "Spirit", or the Holy One the same who is God the woman (1986, 34).

This passage underlines a crucial aspect of EABIC theology: love. Indeed the materialisation of God's love for his creation is done through the female entity. God the woman concrete earthly form is Queen Omega, loved by King Alpha, her other half, together physically representing God the Father, the infinite knowledge. The female aspect of the Trinity is greatly underlined by the author, and receives more attention than the other figures of the Trinity. In this passage, one can count thirteen occurrences of the word *female*, fifteen of *woman* against twelve of *male* but twenty three of *man* with three occurrences in association with the white man. Considering the fact that there is only one female aspect of the Godhead, one may say that the author is decidedly underlining the fact that there is a female pole in EABIC Trinity, and her functions. Compared to the all male mainstream Trinity, the EABIC definitely has a revolutionary stand.

The true nature of *Jes-us* the Christ is also meticulously examined. Firstly, one has to note the hyphen between the syllables *Jes* and *us*, breaking away from the more common spelling: *Jesus*. Like the orthography, the semantic of the word has been altered. Prophet Jimmy explained that *Jes-us* simply meant God with us, with the *us* being the pronoun of the first person of the plural form. This is very similar to the concept of *I and I*, emphasizing the connection between the human body, and the Divine as God is *I*. *Jes-us* is yet another instance where a word's orthography has been modified to suit the particular Bobo Shanti world view.

Consequently, one may understand that the spelling of *Jes-us*: God with us, has directly to do with the name Emmanuel, also meaning God with us according to the bible (Matthew 1:23). From *Jes-us* along with the Hebrew semantic of the word *Emmanuel*<sup>85</sup>, one can argue that this linguistic revision served the purpose of justifying the divinity claims of king Emmanuel Charles Edwards. Therefore, not only does the godhead comprise a female entity, it also encompasses a living black Christ in the person of King Emmanuel. After the establishment of the *truth*, as far as the godhead is concerned, the author develops on the creation story:

To each peoples there was a land, and all peoples in creation were granted their own place of domicile. And Europe was the white man's inheritance. Every nation dwelt

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<sup>85</sup> Emmanuel literally means God with us.

within its own borders, and each nation gave birth to beliefs, customs and traditions peculiar to itself. Every nation worshipped their own god, and each created the life and living that most suited them and the land which was their birthright and their heritage (1986: 36).

Further in the text, one is to understand that the Bobo Shanti were the first inhabitants of Africa, Zion, the heaven of the world. This fact gave them a privileged position among the creation, paving the way towards what King Emmanuel understood to be the *Black Supremacy*. Interestingly, the author underlines the fact that every nation had its own conception of God, and was free to worship as better understood. Therefore, one can conclude that the idea of freedom in Bobo Shanti livity goes as far as tolerating other system of beliefs, and regarding them as legitimate in their own context. This concept breaks away from mainstream Christianity, which does not leave room for any other type of worship. Indeed, in Bobo Shanti eschatology, salvation is more a geographical and social matter than a metaphysic one.

#### **2.5.1. c. Judgement day and hope of the Black nation**

Repatriation in its millennial sense is an undeniable aspect of EABIC theology. Indeed, *Deliver us from Evil* is clear on the fact that if the African Diaspora does not get back to its original land, a *Judgement* will be called on the European nations with destructions and pestilences on an apocalyptic scope, sparing no one:

And as the white man has done, so shall it be done unto him. The hand of God is even now upon a vile and careless world, and His wrath will be placed where, and upon whomever, He wills. He is the Lord of hosts, and the host of creation does his bidding, be it for good or for ill. The hand may be the hand of man, but know that the author of the act is the Lord, who is the living God. (1986: 68).

Repatriation is therefore the ultimate goal of the Bobo Shanti livity, and must be obtained at all costs in order to avoid the great *judgement* to come. With every nation on its original continent, the original peace on earth can be restored and perpetuated. One can note here, that Bobo Shanti does not promote felicity in an afterlife. Zion is Africa, world peace through the repatriation of all ethnic groups to their countries of origin is the state of Heaven on earth. Failing to do this will bring about destruction.

#### **2.5.1.d. Conclusion**

*Deliver us from Evil* is a small book that has been written by a woman in 1986. In an attempt to explain the particular theology of the EABIC, the author has done an

extensive exegesis of the Bible, promoting the African continent, and its original inhabitants. If the African Diaspora is not returned to its original land, which is Africa, great destructions and calamities are to hit Europe, and the rest of the world. Reincarnation, the Trinity, Repatriation are themes thoroughly discussed in the book. Even though it is freely circulating in the EABIC world, it does not bear the stamp of the congress. In fact, it is yet again the reasoning of one individual, which can be challenged by another member of the EABIC. Most Priests and Empresses questioned on the validity of the book are generally in agreement with it. Nevertheless, there is another book that is unanimously accepted, and bears greater authority. It has been written by King Emmanuel himself and explains the core doctrine of the EABIC: the Black Supremacy.

### **2.5.2. Black Supremacy**

The Black Supremacy of the EABIC is a collection of official letters written by King Emmanuel, authentic witnesses of his social activism and agitation for *Repatriation* and *Reparation*. This publication is the evidence that King Emmanuel repetitively wrote to the UNO, and several heads of States such as Andreas Papandreu, the Greek Prime Minister of the time, Queen Elizabeth II, as well as numerous members of the Jamaican government. Along with establishing the character of the charismatic leader of the EABIC, this book is also an opportunity to witness the activism history of the EABIC, from the 1960's when they were located at 54 Spanish Town Road, to the 1980's, at 10 miles Bull Bay. Although the theme of this book is essentially the activism towards repatriation and reparation, as the cable sent by the *Congress* to the UNO, in 1967, could attest (King Emmanuel 2009: 25), the *Black Supremacy* is also about the proclamation of the EABIC ideals and worldview. The book is indeed composed of letters to head of States, addresses to the Jamaican people, and the explanation of several EABIC theological points.

There are many short messages that one would believe were originally flyers, which aimed to invite the population over to celebrations. For instance, in an invitation to celebrate the Ethiopian Christmas on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1988, the Messianic Character of King Emmanuel is firstly stated: "I have gone to prepare a place for you so that there I am thou shall be also: Hold fast till I come: Behold I come quickly said Jes-us: Keep

them in remembrance” (King Emmanuel 2009: 57). Then, importance of keeping the Sabbath is enforced: “...Remember the Sabbath is a covenant between you and the Lord Jahovia. The covenant of Red Gold and Green: Red Black and Green and the five pointed star...” (idem: 57). After asserting the divine roots of the EABIC by associating the *Congress*’ colours with the Sabbath day, black pride is reiterated: “Give thanks for being Black: Give thanks for the Black Christmas...Two full weeks of joy and happiness: Peace and Love and prosperity to all Black sons and daughters” (ibidem: 57). The rest of the invitation consists of a description of the programme.

From this flyer, one can identify a ceaseless desire to promote the EABIC Livivity on all occasions. The rest of the book is dedicated to the vulgarisation of the *Congress* theology. In fact, on page 11, one can read the Ethiopian Royal Cree, were their claims to repatriation is justified by the famous biblical passage: “Princes and princesses shall come out of Egypt, we Ethiopians stretch forth our hands and hearts unto God, O Thou God of Ethiopia...” (Ibidem: 11). The history of the EABIC from Biblical times to the 1990’s is explained in the very last section of the book. The concept of *Black Supremacy* opposing White Supremacy is explained:

The end of the white supremacy reign is now before God and the rise of Black Supremacy is now. Come all people of the Earth, take witness, especially the Black Ethiopian sovereign nation: the sins and evil ways of the white world can’t save them. All their governments are falling and can’t keep them up. Wrong and evil could not help anyone; especially the Black Ethiopian. Righteousness is mightier than sin and will exalt the black Ethiopian nation whose God is the God of Righteousness, Holy Emmanuel I, Selassie I, Jah Rastafari. (King Emmanuel 2009: 83).

Black Supremacy in EABIC understanding stands for peace and righteousness, and promotes the redemptive aspect of repatriation and reparation as a way to establish justice and balance. The African people as the chosen people are to be compensated and restored in their former glory as a prerequisite for the world, to achieve peace and harmony (idem: 83-84). Before the anthem, the book concludes with the affirmation that:

All Apostles and Priests and **Prophetesses**, Gods and Goddesses of the Ethiopia Africa International Congress in Divine Churchical Oder of Holy Melchisedec Priesthood of the Royal Rainbow Circle Throne in dignified power of Black Supremacy bring good news to the world of people in all races, tribe, tongue and language. The Black Christ of Salvation stand to land every man and woman under his or her fig tree with righteousness and salvation. Peace and Love is our song in righteousness of salvation of Black Supremacy in flesh. He made the sun to rule by day and the moon to rule by night, for his mercy endureth forever. Let your light so shine that man and men may see your good works and glorify our father in Zion.

The mission undertaken by the EABIC therefore includes everyone regardless of gender, as the use of the word *prophetesses* implies. Whilst on the camp, the word has never been used to qualify a female member of the EABIC. Women are indeed usually called Empresses, goddesses or daughters. The title of *prophetess* here exemplifies the paramount importance of the mission that both EABIC Rastamen and Rastawomen have to fulfil, regardless of their gender. While researching the EABIC *Black Supremacy*, I came across another book with roughly the same title, published in Jamaica almost sixty years before the EABIC's one. In fact, a book titled *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy*, by Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh was published in Jamaica in 1926. The tone of Balantine may appear unusually obscure and some of the expression nonsensical, but the themes tackled were clearly pertinent to the socio-economic and spiritual state of the Jamaican society in the beginning of the 20th century. Comparing the two works, one can suggest that similar themes could be found in both of them:

The critic of *Obeah*.

Importance of women in the spiritual struggle

The critic of the white colonial power.

Indeed, Balintine appears to have been a *post-Myal* revivalist leader: "REVIVALISTS<sup>86</sup> are not common people, if some individuals of the lower order in the dung heap happen to get into the fold by mistake he or she will soon go out and hang him or herself" (1926: 11). This point is of interest to this section as there is evidence of the EABIC ties with the Revivalist movement as discussed earlier. Consequently, one can notice the similar aversion for *Obeah*: "You will not Bline, give big foot or sore, or turn any child ACROSS the Woman's Belly, and kill her baby when it is born or any time after" (Balintine 1926: 15). Nevertheless, the methods used by Balintine and

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<sup>86</sup> All capitalizations in Balintine are present in the original text.

Emmanuel are very different. While Balintine combats *Obeah* with its *Poison NO. 666* (Balintine 1926:15), King Emmanuel merely advocates renouncing any questionable practices, and uses the natural forces of the *Nyabinghi* chants to uproot supernatural and political evil out of his community.

In both organisations, both leaders made a point of granting women an important place within the cosmogony. *Queen Omega* is indeed present in both Balintine and EABIC representation of the divine as a benevolent and powerful being. In the particular case of Balintine's *Black Supremacy*, along with various doctrinal parallels, one can identify the constant will to establish divine potency as gender complementary affair. Balintine's work is composed of several addresses, which are all signed by himself and his wife: "His and Her Triumphant Dynasty, Queen Lula May Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh, Owner of the Black Supremacy, K.A.Q.O.K.O.K.A.B.C.S.J.W" (Balintine 1926: 13) or "His and Her majesty King Alpha and Queen Omega and Lady Pettersburgh, King of Kings"(Balintine 1926: 29). Every matter discussed in the book is indeed sanctioned or censured by both Lula and Fitz Balintine. The reference to Ethiopia and King Alpha and Queen Omega could not come from the Ethiopian Imperial couple as the book was published four years before the coronation of HIM Haile Selassie in 1930. One is therefore tempted to suggest that the concept of Queen Omega and King Alpha ruling over the creation, is not a Rastafarian belief emulating the Ethiopian Royal couple, but a revivalist tradition, probably rooted in ancient African traditions where the divine is both male and female.

Balintine's determination to destabilise the white colonial power ruling over Jamaica at the time is matching King Emmanuel's activism for Repatriation and Reparation. In vigorous terms such as: *Adam the Leper*, *Abraham the Lunatic*, *Adam-Abraham-Angle-Saxon*, Balintine accuses the white colonial authorities of moral, social and spiritual corruption. The Jamaican society is turned into a Manichean world where the members of the Black Supremacy confront the authorities:

The Officers and Soldiers at Camp that has power and influence are WELL POSTED. Their names you will not know. Ever Police Department is out there. K.A.Q.O.K.O.K. LEGISLATORS SAID ONE MAN CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS...Abraham the Historian SAID DISPISE the both of them and follow him. Lawyers said, you have to find a fault with them. The judge said, LEAVE the ALPHA and OMEGA out because they are Black and, SKIN FOR SKIN. (emphasis from the original text) (1926: 42)

Though the authorities are castigated and that sometimes some high officers' names are mentioned, there is no evidence that Balintine actually sent letters, or was a real threat to the public order. Similar to the EABIC, inter racial marriages are discouraged because the African heritage could be lost:

That is why they want to kill you in your Mother's Belly. Have nothing to do with the anarchy: Do not allow Black Supremacy to marry any one from the white supremacy. For there is a Rock BOTTOM OFFENCE, CALLED SLAVERY in the heart of White Folks that will come up in one NIGHT"(Balantine 1926: 39).

Marcus Garvey is praised:

Pilot Marcus Garvey, warrants the Black Slaves at Nationality to leave for the Ethiopian's Yard Limit. Through the instrument of (Lady Astonishment). PHILOSOPHICAL COMMON SWITCH. The EUROPEAN LONG-DISTANCE ITALIAN-JEWISH-ANGLO-TORPEDO Called the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African League" (idem, 40).

Like the Rastafarians after him, *Repatriation* is regarded to be a solution to the problems of the Jamaican-African population at the time. Note the honorific "pilote" title granted to Marcus Garvey, who was not yet divinised, but was definitely surrounded by the hero's aura as the leader of the African-Diasporic people.

From all these extracts, one may suggest that the *Black Supremacy* written by King Emmanuel, is a manifesto and a creed where all the aspirations of the EABIC are explained and justified. King Emmanuel concretely conducted a spiritual reform along with targeted activism. Indeed, countless cables and letters testify of the intense campaigning towards the repatriation, and reparation of the African Diaspora. The similarities with Balintine's work are regarded here as evidences of the EABIC revivalist roots, and as such, a possible explanation of the importance of women in the EABIC theology. Preaching, ministering, testifying are the constant duties of the priests, prophets and prophetesses, who must use every occasion or celebration to do so. From the negative answers of the UNO and the Jamaican government, one may argue that King Emmanuel did not make much gender distinctions as far as doctrinal agitation was concerned. Elevating women to the rank of Prophetess, just as it was done in the Revivalist traditions was a means to increase the voice of contestation.



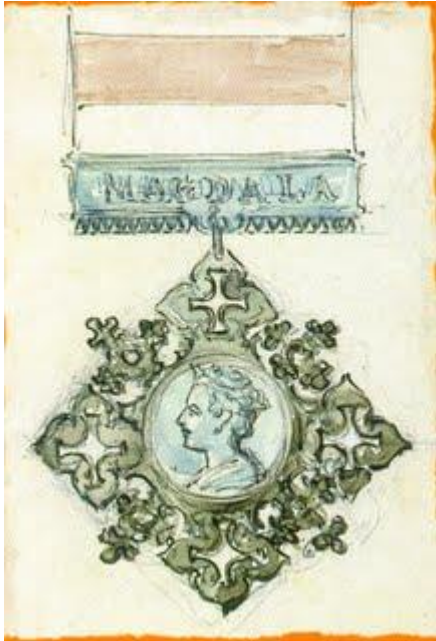
## 2.7. Symbolic banners

Upon entering the camp, one's eyes are automatically drawn to the long line of flags. EABIC defines itself as a government within a government. As such seven flags encapsulate what they stand for spiritually and philosophically. The most recognisable one that has gone "mainstream" through countless souvenir products selling Jamaica and the Caribbean at large, is the red, gold and green banner. Bobo Shanti Rases are very insistent about order of the colours on this flag. The red has to be on top of the gold, which is over the green. This is extremely important for them as other houses of Rastafari often display the green on top, resulting in a flag similar to the current Ethiopian one. This is an abomination according to EABIC symbolism. Priest Wayne explains that the red represents life, therefore cannot be under the green, which corresponds to the land. Red under green or life under the land means death, while red over green is life on land and stands for prosperity. With this specific arrangement of colours, the EABIC government acknowledges one of the earlier versions of the Ethiopian flag.

Indeed, the colours have been reversed in the nineteenth century from red, gold and green to green, gold and red. All members from the EABIC would claim that it was a malicious deed from Queen Victoria aiming at the destruction of Africa by implying the notion of death in one of its first national flag<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> The colours of the Ethiopian flag have always been red gold and green that could be found in various sequences or even with additional colours. Under the reign of the Emperor Tewodros II, Queen Victoria did send troops that looted and destroyed the city of Magdala, but there are no indications that the flag was changed then under British influence. This researcher has had the opportunity to witness flags with the gold or the red on top of the other colours on several XVII century paintings. Most historians agree on the fact that the actual setting Green Gold and Red was settled by the emperor Menelik after the Adwa Battle, in an effort to unify the country.



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**Figure 8 The Medallion of Magdala**



**Figure 9 early representations of the Ethiopian flag.**

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Historically proven or not, this is the official reason that the EABIC uses to justify this sequence of colours from red to green. A crowned lion holding a banner is often featured on this flag. The latter represents HIM Haile Selassie, God in his kingly

<sup>88</sup>The Magdala Medallion awarded to British soldiers after their victory in the Magdala Battle. Note that the red is featured on top of the gold and the green, evidence that Queen was not the one designing the current sequence of the Ethiopian flag. The image is an illustration from Simpson (2002).

<sup>89</sup> This book cover represents the Ethiopian colours as used in military campaigns. The last king to have used it this fashion was HIM Menelik.

form. The EABIC interpretation is not too far from reality as the flag with a Lion holding a spear on a green gold and red background was used by Haile Selassie during his reign. When he was deposed, the lion was replaced by a blue pentagram with sun rays coming out of it.

Another prominent flag is the red, black and green banner with the letter R, and a five branched star. The red, black and green are the colours of the UNIA's flag, and general pan African colours. The letter R stands for Rastafari, Redemption, Repatriation, Reparation, Royalty, Righteousness and Respect. Note that there are seven Rs, seven being a sacred number in the EABIC, similarly to numerous Eastern and Western traditions (Blavatsky 1880). The star with five branches stands for the black man and woman.

There is also a flag with all the colours of the rainbow. This flag has been directly inspired by the biblical story of God sending a rainbow to his people after the flood, with the promise of not destroying the earth by water again. To remember this promise EABIC members have assigned a day to each colour. Red is for Sunday, yellow for Monday, Tuesday is green, Wednesday is purple, Thursday is blue, Friday is black, over white and the Sabbath is white. It is not mandatory, but EABIC members are trying their best to wear the colours of the day, no matter where they could be located.

This flag represent the Bobo Shanti Trinity and philosophy, with Marcus Garvey, HIM Haile Selassie, and King Emmanuel representing the black *Man and Woman of Right*. The other flags are more representative of the repatriation actions, and initiatives instigated by the EABIC. Indeed, among these flags can be seen the light blue flag of the United Nations. This flag is symbolic of the core profane text on which they base their claim to repatriation. Indeed, as mentioned before the EABIC government insists that article 15, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights justify their plea to repatriation. Therefore the UN flag floats on the commune to remind the onlooker that repatriation is not merely a theological point, but also a political and humanitarian realisable claim.

The red, gold, green, black and white flag is very similar in meaning to the first one described in this section. The additional Black and White are there to support the

idea of Black Supremacy according to the EABIC government. The colours black over the white are there to re-affirm the abolition of African-diminishing ideas and institutions. Bobo Jimmy states: “the white men have been on top of the black man for too long. The time has now come for the black to be on top” (Electronic correspondence with the Honourable prophet Jimmy 2010).

A green, white and green flag with black stars on it, is also among the colours of the EABIC. This particular flag is found here because Nigeria is among the first African countries to have fought against the white men (Prophet Jimmy 2010). Nigeria is also one of the first countries where King Emmanuel sent emissaries, in order to develop the EABIC thought and prepare the universal repatriation. Similarly to the “Ethiopian” flag before it, the black stars representing black men and women can also be found on the Nigerian one. There is also a black flag, which is the symbol of the EABIC Black Supremacy.

Together, these flags compose the colours of the EABIC government. Upon them are expressed the theological and ideological aspirations of the Bobo Shanti mansion. Themes such, as Black Christian Trinity, and Repatriation are ever present. The flags of allied institutions and countries can also be found. The presence of the black stars on these flags is interesting because it expresses the will of the EABIC to rewrite history and redefine who they are, and where they long to be. The absence of black stars on the UN flag is also very significant. It may express the mistrust that EABIC has for political institutions. If the millenarian aspects of repatriation are fading out (Chevannes 1994), EABIC is nevertheless not ready to constitute a definite political coalition to achieve this particular goal.

## 2.8. Time

The element of time is very important for the Bobo Shanti as it regulates their ceremonial lives. The following is an account of the daily routine of an EABIC prophet. As a woman, and also due to unfortunate circumstances<sup>90</sup>, I did not have the opportunity to partake in all the festivities happening during my week of *freedom*. Nevertheless,

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<sup>90</sup> The gathering celebrating the crowning of HIM Haile Selassie and Empress Menen could not be attended as I was desperately looking for a stolen camera.

what I failed to physically observe has been provided by various prophets and priests eager to help.

Ideally, a typical day on the camp starts with prayers at dawn on the tabernacle ground. It is called the Roll Call. The Daniel Number One Band<sup>91</sup> usually accompanies the assembly already chanting and clapping. As a rule a priest officiates, leading the assembly in chorus, chants and biblical verses. The last activity of the worship session, usually at the first rays of sun, the names of every single registered members of the camp are called going from leading priests, priests, prophets, empresses, princes and princesses. While the names are being called, the abeng<sup>92</sup> is usually blown. At that moment, those who had stayed in their house may pray, facing the East. Prayer will start back again at noon in a rather similar fashion to the morning one, and again at sunset. It is important to note that attendance is not mandatory. Many EABIC members just remain in their quarters, and pray whenever the abeng is blown. Due to this flexibility, indisposed members, men and women in purification quarantine, or those already working in the fields, can still have their share of the devotional moment, while respecting the camp's regulation.

Along with the daily prayers, there is an appointed time for fasting. Indeed, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, one must not eat any food from sunset the previous day to the mid-day prayers. Indeed, Bobo Shanti Rases have organised their lives around the biblical definition of the day, which is from sunset to sunset<sup>93</sup>. They also fast in the same manner for the entire duration of lent, and without intervals. Women also go through the same worship routine, unless when in the *journey gate*. Indeed, for the first week of their menstrual cycle, they must not fast, pray or touch a Bible. After this, they can still pray facing the east; the left hand on the heart, and the right hand on the forehead, while bowing. When *free* they can attend all the worship session that she wishes.

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<sup>91</sup> This is the generic name given to the group playing the Kette, the funde and the Basse Drum, the core instruments of the Nyabingi.

<sup>92</sup> Abeng is the name given to the horn of a cow or the shell of a conch that one would blow to alert the community.

<sup>93</sup> See book of Genesis chapter one verse five where the first day is defined as being an evening and a morning. Jews or certain Christian denominations also use this pattern to determine when starts and finishes the Sabbath day.

### 2.8.1. The Sabbath day

For both men and women, the Sabbath day is the most important day of the week, the day of rest. On that day, men cease all activity, and wear white garments. Sabbath service attendance is not mandatory. Service starts on the Friday evening at sunset, and lasts as long as there are members attending. On Saturday morning sunrise, the worship session starts again, and lasts almost for the entire day, except for a pause at around midday for lunch. At sunset, the service is ended.

The Sabbath service in itself, is ideally led by seven priests on the altar. If the number of priests is not reached, the service will still proceed, but the officiating priests will always underline that they will always be expecting the other priests, to reach the ultimate number. The congregation is segregated by gender. Facing the altar; the men will stand on the left, while the women will remain on the right. In front of the male section is the *Daniel Number One Band*, setting the rhythm for the chants, songs, scripture reading and predications.

At every entrance; the *Bannerman*<sup>94</sup> patiently wave their flags for the entire duration of the service. Ideally, the worship space, the tabernacle, would have four entrances guarded by four *Bannerman*. King Emmanuel himself had laid the foundation of this principle. Nevertheless, at the time of the field study on the camp in 2008, services were held in the camp's conference room with only two doors. The tabernacle was yet to be rebuilt after being hit by hurricane Yvan, in 2004. Some refuse to worship in the conference room because it does not meet all the requirements described in the book of Exodus 25: 24-40, and remain in their gates. Most would flock in the conference room, and proceed with all celebrations and services without any sense of guilt. The latter group is not necessarily in a feud with the former because, "I man free".

This spirit of freedom is largely present in Rastafari, and in the EABIC government in general. Most scholars agree on the fact that as an acephalous Rastafari sprouted in many directions, leaving the individual responsible for his acts, and his conception of the Divine. EABIC on the contrary, had a charismatic leader, King Emmanuel, who led his flock with more uniformity and stability than other Houses of

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<sup>94</sup> The Banner man is in charge of waving the colours of the EABIC at the four corners of the earth. The Bobo believe that the waving of the flags at the cardinal points is a sure way to reach the entire earth.

Rastafari, such as the Nyabinghi House with its schisms described in Chevannes (1994). If the presence of King Emmanuel helped the stability and the uniformity of the practices still present years after his death, the instinct of freedom, the concept of being a god in flesh, leave room for adjustments.

Indeed, the high adaptability of Bobo Shanti practices and principles to a hostile or inconvenient environment is blatant. This can be farther observed in the EABIC community in Great Britain. Being out of the camp, the organisation of the worship sessions around an EABIC conception of time can be quite a challenge. In Great Britain, most Bobo Shanti Rases gather in Leicester, where a house has been transformed into a tabernacle. There, two priests are leading the small community. Their names are priest Nyah, and Priest Iwah, and they are both from Montserrat. Most make the effort to come to Sabbath service as often as possible. For instance, on November 7<sup>th</sup> 2009, a special service had been held for the commemoration of the coronation of HIM Haile Selassie. Fifteen men and two women, including this researcher, attended the service, which format is strikingly similar to the Jamaican one. The hymns are sung on the same tone complemented by the *Daniel Number One Band*. The congregation faces the east. Women stand on the right, and men on the Left. In Leicester, one banner *man* guards the only entrance ceaselessly waving the red, black and Green EABIC flag.

Unsurprisingly, slight differences can be observed in the Leicester congregation. The service starts at 2pm, and ends at around 6:30pm. When questioned about the late start, priest Nyah underlined the fact that the Sabbath day was a day of rest, and that everyone should get the opportunity to rest their *temples*. Moreover, fasting is not mandatory. On arrival, many have asked this researcher if she would like something to eat or to drink. As there is no *universal* kitchen, everyone is expected to bring food, and share it. The atmosphere is very relaxed and friendly.

There again, attendance is not mandatory. Together with his empress, the honourable Empress Nyah, Jah Whishborn Sanctify tries to keep the standards of the EABIC high in a busy London context. Because of lack of funds, and the obvious periodical restrictions, they do not go to Leicester for every Sabbath service. Jah Whishborn explains that, a typical Sabbath would start with him cooking on Friday for the next day. By sunset he would settle down, sing psalms, and go to bed. On Saturday

morning he would wake up late have lunch, sing with his empress, and quietly enjoy the rest of the day. Sensing the researcher's surprise at such a indolent day, Jah Whishborn stressed the fact that the Sabbath was a day to rest, and not necessarily a service marathon.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

For centuries, West European religious institutions sought to justify and support their economic interests by denigrating African people into the Christian Church aesthetic. By convincing Europeans and Africans alike that the colour black was evil, they greatly contributed to the complex identity and spiritual issues that have been observed and analysed by many Caribbean scholars such as Nettleford, or Rodney (1982).

Many Jamaican worshippers would be involved in both colonial established churches, and outlawed practices coming from West Africa (Leo Erskine 1998: 67). Others would embrace syncretistic religious systems such as Revivalism, where African traditional religion would adopt Christian forms to soothe the authorities, and the practitioners (Chevannes 1998). In an effort to challenge the spiritual Jamaican status-quo of acceptable and tolerated denominations, the EABIC Church boldly offers its own interpretation of Christianity.

The Congress has indeed established the concept of black supremacy, where the black man and woman are the parents of creation, the chosen people, and as such deserve respect from the other "races". The main point of the EABIC Black supremacy, is that the entire African Diaspora has to be returned to Africa, in order for world peace to be reached. Creole practices such as Obeah, or Myal are greatly frowned upon. When confronted to the paradox of rejecting African spiritual forms while promoting Africanity, the EABIC argues that the Christianity was in fact an ancient African religion distorted by destructive (white) minds. Christianity through the EABIC perspective has therefore become the original African Traditional Religion, and practices such as Myal are regarded as European heresies.

Once these facts are established, they carefully elaborated practices, rituals and dogmas complex enough to justify their claim to be a priesthood order. The Sabbath



Day, for instance, is particularly revered and respected. This particularity would usually demarcate EABIC members from other mansions of Rastafari. In spite of these clear worship guidelines, there is no rigidity, and one is free to attend assemblies as often as he or she pleases, without risking censure. This flexibility allowed the movement to extend, and develop on an international level, without losing its objectives of: *Repatriation* and *Reparation*. Because of the open activism of the community, men and women are encouraged to preach, and minister as King Emmanuel himself called them *priests, prophets* and *prophetesses*, able actors in the promotion of the EABIC. One may suggest that the EABIC does not have, in its cosmogony, and theology, any precepts promoting the incapability of women, or their spiritual inferiority. Supported by its close Revivalist background where women are seen as powerful healers, and the example of HIM Haile Selassie, and HIM Menen Asfaw, the Bobo Shanti Rastawoman is intrinsically accepted as a powerful asset to the development of EABIC. As gods and goddesses of creation, men and women are spiritually equal through the taboos of their divinity as King Alpha and Queen Omega.

As a *Churchical* organisation, the EABIC order has established a spiritual frame, where the colour black is glorified, and revered, and where women are not responsible from the original sin. From this theological foundation, the community has developed peculiar conception about work, the family, and education. But before I can go to these sections, it is important to explore the EABIC's conception of the *divine body*.

### Chapter 3: Restoring the African body

From the names of the streets to the various languages spoken in the Caribbean, the impacts of colonialism on the cultural identity of the “West-Indians” have amply been discussed, described, and even psycho analysed (Lamming 1992, Rhys 1966, Fanon 1965). The previous chapter exposed how African rooted spirituality has been diabolised to favour more *respectable* European forms as the *gold*, and *mud* Jamaican paradigm exemplifies (Chevannes 1994: 67). Numerous are the devout African-Caribbean Christians who would weekly go to church as members of the *gold* or acceptable spirituality, and who would secretly seek advice from the *mud* spirituality, embodied by the *Obeah*, or the *Orisha* priests for more efficacy (Henry 2000: 75). I previously argued that the EABIC elaborated a new exegesis aiming to eradicate this *mud/gold* dual system in promoting African agency and potency through Christianity. I am now suggesting that they also created an alternative conception of the body as a means to raise the self-esteem of people of Africa-Caribbean people, whose body has systematically been commodified.

As much as the colonial system generated a biased conception of Christianity and the divine, it also corrupted the notion of the body throughout the entire Caribbean. Fanon wrote extensively on the masochistic politics of self-hatred latent in the Caribbean. In *Black Skin, White Mask*, he analysed the disturbing desire of some to reject their African features, hair, colour, elocution, in order to conform to “acceptable” European norms (Fanon 1965). Sméralda analysed the political and obscurantist strategies used by the colonial powers to “denigrate<sup>95</sup>” African phenotypes. In a quantitative study on hair salons specialising in African hair in France, and in Martinique, she was able to demonstrate that African hair was regarded “respectable” and beautiful, only when processed by chemicals making them straight, and that its natural curl pattern was regarded as dysfunctional and sick (2004, 63). These physical sequels of colonialism can be described as a gangrenous *Blès* consuming the African Caribbean body. As it has been explained in the section 1.7 of the introduction, *Blès* is a Kréyol word and concept expressing the physical and psychological impacts of slavery

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<sup>95</sup> The use of the verb *to denigrate* is quite ironical in its redundancy here. The word itself comes from the Latin *denigrare* meaning to blacken, underlining the negativity associated with the colour black and by extension to African people.

on Caribbean people, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. I have chosen to privilege the use of this word in this work, as I believe it expresses adequately the complexity of the Caribbean aesthetic.

This chapter is therefore an attempt to uncover and analyse the strategies elaborated by a radical community, in order to create a new African holistic identity. Since it has already been observed that colonial corruption still plagued the understanding of “modern” 21<sup>st</sup> century Caribbean people, I am eager to analyse how this corrupted conception of the body has been dealt with in Jamaica. Can the reinvention of the body within the EABIC be a way to deal with *la Blès*?

### **3.1. The canons of a profitable body in the early years of slavery**

The slave trade was a minutely organised and lucrative business. It was meant to be profitable and planters sought to get the maximum benefits from their investments. As a consequence, the bodies of the enslaved were of paramount importance to the colonial economy. Official documents of the time revealed that, age was an important factor in estimating the price of a slave: “Negroes from the ages of sixteen years, to the ages of forty years, at the price of ten pound sterling per head.”(Donnan, in Mathurin Mair 2006: 73). This statement is not surprising as it is underlining the pragmatism within which the slave business was conducted. It is a fact that a young and healthy body would be more profitable than an aging or ailing one. The same document specified that: “women should be as near as possible to be virgins” and also that they should be “very dark and handsome” (Ibid 2006: 73). This time, in addition to youth; skin complexion and physical beauty also appear to be prized characteristics of the enslaved body (Mathurin Mair 2006: 292).

It is rather interesting to note that “pure” and handsome Africans were preferred to mixed race ones (Ibid, 2006: 73). Unlike the militant cry “Black and Beautiful” of the 70’s, or even the “Dark and Lovely” marketing slogans; “Dark and handsome” was viewed as a label of good quality merchandise as opposed to light-skinned people, who were considered to be less apt to do hard work (Mathurin Mair 2006:74). One may suggest here that it is from these economic considerations that the basis for the current Jamaican colourist society was established. While the light skinned and near-European phenotypes were not always associated with hard labour, the traits “Dark and

handsome” have been, from these obscurantist times, associated with the notion of slavery, inescapable misery, poverty and resignation, slowly leading to the “Dark and ugly” cultural creation.

### 3.2. Colourism and European mannerism

In spite of the inhumanity of the colonial system, it has been proven that the enslaved never complied with their situation, and sought to regain their human status. If they have manoeuvred to sustain their spirituality and their worship patterns, their endeavours towards the restoration of their humanity also came through their physical appearance. White and White (1995) discussed the obsession that newly freed slaves had for clothes and accessories. Ross (2008) explained how the favourite slave, male or female would always be dressed in the latest fashion, contrasting with the common field slaves, who, from a European point of view, would wear the most eclectic items of clothing juxtaposed in abundance on their bodies. It is a proven fact that runaway slaves were in the habit of dressing and sometimes overdressing in European fashion to pass for manumitted Negroes. White and White presented numerous advertisements informing the population that a slave had run away, it is interesting to note with which care these fugitives would choose their outfits, in order to avoid suspicion (White and White 1995: 179). Rosemain (1986) on another note described the pride and the sense of style that slaves, male and women displayed during their balls. This sense of pride in the apparel was passed on to the following freed generations. In Martinique for instance, the famous necklace *grain d'or* or golden beads, has been proudly passed on from mothers to daughters. Even if these necklaces were originally given to devoted slave wet nurses as tokens of gratitude from their masters, and therefore a constant reminder of their servitude, the possession of such necklaces was, and still is an unmistakable sign of respectability for the family. One can suggest that the adoption of European standards, symbols and clothes, can be regarded as an *Anansy*<sup>96</sup> strategy for the enslaved to play with the images, deceiving the other or themselves of their physical *respectability*.

After the abolition of slavery, the possession of jewels, clothes and accessories became an important social notion to the African-Caribbean population. Because the

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<sup>96</sup> Anansy is a mythological character of the Caribbean folklore. He is the trickster, usually a spider, using his cunning skills to take advantage of larger and more powerful animals. See Mc Farlane's analysis of Anansy and Caribbean creation of knowledge (1998).

*plantocracy* did not grant them the *respectability* required to readily climb the social ladder, the display of wealth through clothing became therefore a way to assert one's importance in the Caribbean dual system of value (Burton 1997). The following are plates representing enslaved and newly freed African-Diasporic people of the Caribbean. On the first one, a brown-skinned woman (to use Jamaican nomenclature) with her slave are depicted. If both women are barefooted, the jewellery, the elaborated dress and headpiece denotes a certain standing in society, contrasting with the half nakedness of the enslaved woman. The later years of slavery witnessed the increase of a "coloured" middle class, essentially constituted of freed brown-skinned people, determined to have a say in the political and economic life of the country. Mair affirms that: "The original Creole matriarch may not have been black but brown" (2006: 292) recognising the influence of this ambiguous group. The "Mulattoes" woman of the painting below could well belong to this emerging middle class.



**Figure 10 Mulattoe Woman and her Slave**

Indeed, the same brown women who were not considered fit enough to work on the plantation in the early years of the triangular trade, had very often become the influential concubines of planters. They were sometimes manumitted with their children, and were able to open small businesses, becoming relatively well to do for

non-white people at the time. Even if they were not considered as respectable as white women (Mair 2006, 292), (maybe the reason why the mulattoe woman of the plate is portrayed barefooted) they still held a very enviable position in this racist/colourist society, and this position is expressed by their skin complexion and the sophistication of their clothes.

The second plate represents free people of African descent. Their outfits are beautiful, clean and well adjusted. They are all wearing shoes and jewellery. Note that in spite of the tropical weather, the outfits are mostly European inspired, from the hats to the stockings. Their apparels and accessories express ease in a decidedly bourgeois way. This plate illustrates very well the social dynamic of the Caribbean at that time. Even if these people were not considered respectable as non-white people by the colonial authorities, among them the adoption of European mannerism values, and even fashion were undeniable evidence of their free status.



**Figure 11 Free coloured people of Dominica**

From both plates, one can gather that the assimilation to European mores, fashion and beauty standards indicated freedom. On both plates, in spite of the colour of their skins, the free characters are all wearing European inspired clothes. The enslaved body remains crude and semi naked. The europeanisation of clothes and phenotypes appear therefore to be prerequisites to access social recognition among the non-white

inhabitants of the island. This strategy did not, however, guarantee social acceptance from the white elite, which still did not consider them as equals.

Indeed, the post slavery era of Jamaica saw the elaboration of a plural society (Smith 1965). The plural society is a geographical area where ethnic groups live peacefully side-by-side, but do not intermingle socially, or even geographically. In Jamaica, class was tightly connected with race and even skin complexion. White Jamaicans represent the upper class; poor whites and brown-skinned people composed the middle class while darker skinned, the former “Dark and handsome” citizens made up the poorer working class. This segmentation of the population by skin complexion or colourism, led to the stigmatisation of a dark skin and Negroid features.

These colourist foundations are so deeply incrustated in the Jamaican society, that in spite of the advent of the Black Power and Rastafari movements, it appears that a light-skinned Jamaican could have better job opportunities, or even enjoy more romantic success than dark skinned ones (Chevannes 1998: 63). Charles observed: “The images of success that are portrayed in the Jamaican society are of persons who are White, brown, and fair” (Charles 2003: 715). Colourism has indeed taken over racism, and even if the plantocracy has theoretically disappeared, it is evident that the race/class system has remained anchored in the psyche of “respectable” Jamaican people.

### **3.2.1. Skin bleaching and the image of success**

A consequence of this uneasiness to darker-skin can be detected in the phenomenon of skin bleaching. Equally the nightmare or the goose that laid the golden egg, of Jamaican dermatologists, skin bleaching is a serious issue. The past ten years has seen an increase of serious skin problems related to skin bleaching (Dr. Neil Persadsingh, quoted in Merrick 2002). Merrick reveals that young and older men and women alike are bleaching their skin under the impression that they will look more glamorous and desirable. At first, one could think that a typical bleacher is someone with a very low self-esteem, prompted by the lopsidedness of the past colonial system. Nevertheless, it appears that the causes of this habit are not to be painted in such a simple Manichean way.

After questioning a group of teenagers, Charles (2003) demonstrated that self-hatred or low self-esteem were not systematically the reason why youngsters bleached their skin. Cooper describes the process as an *Anansy* strategy, employed to trick the society with its own discriminatory values. Indeed, without denying his or her identity, a “bleacher” is tricking the community at large and makes existing stereotypes work in his or her favour (Cooper 2004: 137). The vulgarisation of skin bleaching has steadily been enforced by extremely popular Deejays such as *Vybz Kartel*, who openly promotes the use of skin bleaching products, and goes as far as to launch his own product: “cake soap”.



**Figure 12 Deejay Vybz Kartel before and after his skin "treatment"**

Kartel does not hesitate to blame the colonial past of the island to justify his behaviour, yet, he claims having recycled the meaning of the practice turning it into a trend that all fashionable people, regardless of their social class should follow. Grounding his argumentation on the importance of the appearance in the consumerist Jamaican society, he readily associated skin bleaching to the trendy, the sophisticated, and the festive realm of the Dancehall scene. Anansy strategy (Cooper 2004) or fashion fade (Charles 2003), many Jamaican men and women keep on using these damaging products because: “It’s your [my] face, it’s your [my] body, and [I] you can do anything with it. I will stop bleaching when I want to stop. I know what I am doing,” (Merrick 2002). Similar to the discourse of a smoker aware of the dangers of the cigarette, a bleacher feels in control of his or her body, denying the possibilities of addiction and complications.

The topic of skin bleaching is controversial. One is tempted to suggest that some people may go to such extremes because of a perverse satisfaction derived from the agency that they can exercise on their bodies. They bleach because they can, as one of



Merrick's interviewees defiantly stated. This body that once belonged to a master, and was later controlled by a prejudiced religious system is now free. Free to destroy itself at will and call the process fashion. This idea of control/transformation/fashion can be recognised in the dancehall queens shows.

### **3.3. Body reclamation by Jamaican women: Dancehall Queens versus Bobo Shanti Empresses**

Jamaica can be regarded as the land of artistic and social innovation. It is indeed, the country of Flavin Dan, Fagan Garth, Bob Marley and Marcus Garvey. In such a creative country it is therefore almost not surprising to encounter extremes such as Dancehall and Bobo Shanti Queens.

#### **3.3.1. The Dancehall Queen**

In a Caribbean context, Dancehall queens are usually women who will “get on bad”, dancing provocatively and suggestively in parties, in addition to being particularly scantily clad. Their *wining*<sup>97</sup> abilities are phenomenal, and they generally attract both male and female attention on the dance floor. If Amy Garvey did urge black women to neglect the European long garments and fake prudery to emulate their African sisters in wearing much less clothes with higher moral standards (Garvey quoted in Assata 2008: 46), the Dancehall Queens appear to have applied the advice and taken it to another level. In addition to the shortening of the clothes come wigs, weaves, elaborated make up, fake gold teeth, tattoos, manicure and pedicure. The beauty of final result may be argued, but the effect is certain: the Dancehall Queen attracts the attention in the *reputation* sphere even if she may still be invisible, and insignificant in the agendas of the Jamaican policy makers.

The dancehall floor seems to be the only arena left for some of these women to exist in this society. Some have regarded them as helpless victims of a patriarchal system, brainwashed to believe that their curvaceous physic was the only gift that they could bestow on their community (Lake 1998: 127). Others saw their gyrations and dress codes as a “self-conscious female assertion of control over the representation of their person” (Cooper 2004: 125). In either case, their hair pieces, accessories and physical abilities are the weapons that they would use in order to seduce, captivate,

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<sup>97</sup> To wine is a Caribbean term depicting a circular motion of the lower body.

impress and gain recognition and respect in greatly impoverished and violent frame of Kingston's inner-city which only favours the *Baddest*<sup>98</sup> (Tafari-Ama 2006).

The title of Dancehall Queen is nowadays internationally coveted. Leaving the sphere of the ghetto and stripped of its original purpose, the phenomenon has received so much publicity that competitions of Dancehall Queens are organised all around the world. For instance, the 2002 Dancehall Queen was a Japanese dancer called Junko. Italy and Germany are becoming preponderant scenes of Dancehall expression, vectoring the music, fashion and attitude without the social desperation that prompted the trend. From its humble beginnings in the inner cities of Jamaica, the phenomenon Dancehall Queen has become a sound business, from which its original setting, the poorest spheres of the Jamaican society, does not benefit. Similarity to the fashionable freed Negroes discussed earlier, the Dancehall Queens' apparels can be regarded as a default medium chosen by some men and women to proclaim their power over their own bodies when faced with their impotency and invisibility in the administration of the city.

In the neo-liberal Jamaican society, skin complexion is no longer an indispensable criterion for respectability. Social class and the ability to engage in the consumerist society are now the important factors. In a society that has historically associated race/complexion and social class/wealth, the alteration or adornment of the body can be regarded as a radical way used by the poorest urban Jamaicans to make a social statement, to exercise agency in an unexpected way. I may suggest that the extravagance of the accessories and outfits is a social statement, as powerful as the one made by the freed Negroes a century earlier through their adoption of European clothes. Nonetheless, instead of translating a will to belong to the dominant culture, the paraphernalia of the Dancehall scene in its artificiality rejects the established norm, setting a trend as many sub-cultures have done before them, irritating the concept of respectability without really challenging it (Clarke et al 2006:6).

Dancehall Queens and skin bleachers are not the only ones to use their bodies to express the social distress present in Kingstonian inner-cities.

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<sup>98</sup> Referring to the image of the "bad man" in Jamaican inner city context. See chapter 6.



Figure 13 Dance Hall Queen Junko and Empress Esther

### 3.3.2. Bobo Shanti Empresses

Sprouting from the slums of *Back- a-Wall* in Kingston Jamaica, EABIC has been conceptualised in an environment similar to the *South Side* described by Tafari-Ama (2006), where violence, corruption, murder and rape are daily occurrences in the lives of its inhabitants. It is in this context that both Dancehall and Bobo Shanti Queens were born. It is fascinating to see that such diametrically different philosophies could have been born from the same milieu. It is clear that in Jamaica, both Dancehall queens and Bobo Shanti are making a statement about their bodies. On one hand, are Dancehall Queens, extroverts, overpowering men with their sexuality and sensuality on the dance floor, while on the other hand are the modest Empresses of the EABIC. According to their principles, the latter should at all times wear long flowing robes, skirts or dresses that would cover their ankles and shirts that would cover their wrists. The wearing of shorts, trousers or jeans is unheard of. They do not *attend Pasa Pasa Thursdays, Dirty Fridays* or any other Dancehall events, but are eager participants of Nyabinghi sessions. Nevertheless, in spite of the flagrant disparities in their modus operandi, these women of the Jamaican African Diaspora both sought to break away from a hopeless milieu and expressed their state of mind through their bodies, clothes and accessories. To voice their dissatisfaction over the current Jamaican social organisation, the Dancehall Queen and *bad man* can be said to cover their persons with manufactured body parts while the EABIC Empress and Lord chose to make a statement through the natural expression of their selves.

### 3.3.3. Role Model: Empress Menen Ethos

As it was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Bobo Shanti is the only mansion of Rastafari that gives equal footing in worship to the Empress Menen Asfaw, consort of HIM Haile Selassie. The royal couple has become King Alpha and Queen Omega, the Divine pair making one head of the EABIC trinity. The historical Empress Menen was a pious and wise woman who worked actively towards the development of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the education of Ethiopian children. She appears to have been universally loved by her people. She was a devoted wife and unlike the headstrong empress Taitu, her elder; there were no sexual scandals with younger men attached to her name (De Jugnac 1978: 75). This august historical character can be regarded as the archetype of Bobo Shanti Empresses.

In the following, I will refer to three main informants: The Honourable Empress Esther, authorised ambassador for the Women Liberation League Federation (WLLF), the Honourable Mama Julie, one of the elders on the camp who took me in her “gates” during my stay on the foundation, in Jamaica, and the Honourable Priest Wayne, on the foundation in Jamaica.

### 3.4. I and I: interpreting Roman 12-3

Through the concept of *I and I*, the body becomes taboo, sacred and divine. *I-and-I* is the conviction that the creating force, the divine, what is usually understood by the word God, lives within one’s flesh. United in this manner people are therefore forming one through their divinity. As the *I* recognises the divine *I* of the other (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, November 24th 2011, McFarlane 1998). The body is therefore considered as a temple through which the agency of God is manifested. As a result, with such meaningful bodies, EABIC members seek to maintain their *temples* in the best state of health, and as close as to nature as possible. I suggest that as a counter-culture, the conception of the body is the praxis of the counter-values that the EABIC has elaborated. As a result, the physical appearance of its member will be radically different to that of the Dancehall sub-culture.

The body of an EABIC member is therefore a holy and sacred temple, which needs to be treated as such. Their attitude towards their bodies is justified by the biblical passage: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you,

whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body” (1Corinthian 6:19-20). If most Christian denomination would read this verse as an admonition for followers to refrain from immorality as their bodies do not belong to God (Richardson, SDA commentary), in Bobo Shanti understanding, this biblical excerpt must be applied to the letter. Not only is the body used to glorify the divinity, but it has also become divine. In order to arrive to this conclusion, the EABIC has departed on several important dogmas from traditional European Christianity.

Firstly, the idea of an omnipotent and omniscient God, yet invisible and untouchable is dismissed. Priest Wayne explained that EABIC members do not believe in an abstract God. The fact that the mainstream Christian church would represent God in heaven, and that angels or the Holy Spirit would revolve around him without a human body is anathema. Inasmuch, Zion<sup>99</sup> is not a distant city in Heaven, but the concrete African continent, God is not an abstract entity, but a *Man* with a real body in the persons of King Emmanuel, HIM Haile Selassie, HIM Empress Menen or any Man or Woman of Right<sup>100</sup>. Their argumentation is based on the book of 1 John 4:2-3: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already”. If one can presume that this text has been written to legitimise early Christianity as a valid religion against Judaism or other more established worldviews as the time, the Bobo Shanti are also using it to legitimise their concept of Christ in a hostile or incredulous religious environment. By proclaiming King Emmanuel to be the Christ in flesh, they go directly against the traditional Christian views. This biblical passage also seems to support their particular views of the human body. As a consequence, all EABIC members true to their *Livity* are considered to be gods or goddesses. The body is thus called a temple and the temple would witness the tremendous activities of the divinity within.

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<sup>99</sup> In Christian understanding, the word Zion is often employed to mean the promised city of gold that the Righteous will inhabit in the afterlife.

<sup>100</sup> See section 2.3.4. in the previous chapter.

### 3.4.1. The temple commanding Nature

It appears that if one is living according to the EABIC principles, he can do marvellous things such as controlling nature. Mama Julie once recalled that upon witnessing an injustice done to her adopted son, she became so overpowered with emotions that she went out of her house, faced each cardinal points and called: “earthquake, lightning and thunder” on the malevolent people. One hour later the earth shook and a great storm swept the camp. People marvelled at this, as it was regarded as a sign of her true *livity*<sup>101</sup>. As she was vividly remembering the story, she was covered in goose bumps that she pointed out to me as a sign of her sincerity.

Priest Wayne also told us about the story of Empress Rachel, the wife of King Emmanuel, who, soon after the funeral found a young man playing profane music on the commune. Horrified by such disrespect, Empress Rachel allegedly called on thunder and lightning, and that thunder bolts came very near the young man who got scared and left the commune.

Even if I did not witness thunderbolts striking anyone while on the camp, I can nevertheless remember to have seen lightening on numerous occasions. The phenomenon was rather puzzling, as they appeared most of the time when the weather was clear. Not at all versed in meteorology, and the mysteries of the tropical weather, I will not attempt here to explain this particular climatic condition. Nevertheless, these occurrences were rather disturbing and when interrogated about it, all informants would see this meteorological phenomenon as a direct proof of the potency of their words. Verbal and physical abuse is strictly forbidden in the EABIC *Livity*. Priest Wayne argues that as gods and goddesses, the use of curse words would be satanic acts as the potency of their words would definitely empower the curse and cause misery. Therefore, using words such as *lightning thunder* or *judgment* is a relieving expedient used by some to vent frustration and anger. Considering the powers vested on their persons, even the pronouncements *lightening, thunder, earthquake, fire burn*, are solely reserved for the doom of *Babylon*. These abilities are given to the wise and initiated ones who will not abuse it: “Bobo Shanti is about preserving life, not destroying it. We

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<sup>101</sup> *Livity* is a Rastafari term referring to one’s way of life and spirituality. Since Rastafarians do not draw a line between their spiritual and their secular lives, one can safely say that *livity* is the sacred way of life chosen by Rastafarian. Once again see Jan van Dijk *Jahmaica* or the Bobo publication *Deliver us from evil*, for more information about *livity*.

lead a spiritual war, not a physical one. Destruction is left to God who will come and judge everyone” (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008).

Only once, was I able to hear someone cursing in the “traditional” manner using the F... word among other local profanities. When I enquired about the incident, I was told that this person was not in total possession of his mental faculties. I was told that people often brought mentally deficient family members to the commune. Because of their handicap, they cannot be held responsible for their actions, and as such could not be considered to be a true Bobo Shanti (Empress Esther, personal conversation, November 20<sup>th</sup> 2008). It is interesting to say here that anyone caught in a deviant act contrary to the EABIC *livity* is declared, if not mentally deficient, a phoney Bobo Ras or Empress.

### **3.4.2. Sickness in the temple**

To be able to host God in his or her body, and therefore become a god or a goddess, an individual has to live the *Right* life as King Emmanuel put it. Priest Wayne explained that the brothers or sisters wearing a turban and a robe should not fool me. If anyone can wear a turban and a robe, the sure way to point out a true member of the EABIC is through his actions and his or her exceptional health and longevity.

Indeed, EABIC members have a peculiar attitude toward sickness. An ailment also called affliction, is seen as a divine punishment. A sick priest cannot officiate on the altar and a sick woman cannot mingle in the congregation of *free* members. *Free* would usually refer to members of the EABIC who are healthy, and are not under a purification process. Ailing men and women are both advised to remain in the privacy of their homes until complete restoration to health. For instance, I witnessed the case of Priest Moses<sup>102</sup> who, in an altercation outside of the commune, was stabbed in the eye. Even though he did miraculously heal and fully recovered his eyesight without undergoing surgery, he was still not allowed to officiate among the other priests. At sixty-eight years old, Mama Julie is the epitome of health. She could lift a leg and touch her toes with her fingers, do more than twenty double jacks in a row, and she would have demonstrated push-ups in a boot camp circuit style, if the floor had not been

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<sup>102</sup> The names of the actual persons have been altered throughout this work.

muddy. Her amazing physical condition was according to her, due to her faithfulness to the *Principles*. Jah Lion, who is an elder, suffers from an accumulation of corn under his feet. This causes him to limp and occasions severe pain at times. In spite of his knowledge and status as an elder, he is still not allowed to officiate because of this “affliction”. An informant gossiped about the fact that his feet would not heal, and that it was the proof of his wickedness. Even though we are aware that this information is definitely biased, since the said informant made clear his dislike of Jah Lion, one cannot bypass the belief that sickness is seen as an unbalanced *livity*, while health is a label of harmony and *righteousness*.

This particular severity towards illness can be explained by the EABIC’s claim to the “Priesthood order”. Indeed, because of this particularity, Bobo Shanti Rases abide by the precepts regarding the Royal priests physical condition, as described in the Biblical book of Leviticus (21:1-24). As such, a Bobo Shanti priest cannot be injured, deformed, ill nor “cut” in a surgical procedure. This can explain why Priest Moses refused to get surgery for his eye, and why the limping Jah Lion cannot officiate. Nonetheless, sick people are not ostracised by the community at large. Even if EABIC encourages its members to use preventive methods against ailments, the elders are in possession of powerful herbal medicines that can be administered as cures if necessary.

Because of their sacerdotal functions, men are extremely careful to remain healthy in order to be able to officiate on the altar. Circumstances are different for women. Indeed, in addition to the limitations due to an eventual sickness, they also have to abide by the law of twenty-one days of ritual purification.

### **3.4.3. Pollution in the temple**

“Pollution” in Bobo Shanti semantic would refer to anything making one impure, hence breaking the special bond within *I and I*<sup>103</sup>. For the purposes of this section, I will only refer to the physical aspect of pollution. Pollution affects both men and women, and there are established methods to deal with it. This section is therefore an endeavour to document and analyse why, and how EABIC members make the dynamic pollution/purification an intrinsic part of their lives.

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<sup>103</sup> See section 2.5.1. of the previous chapter.



If the Bible only comprises impurity, or pollution, to sexual secretions (Leviticus 15: 1-18), EABIC principles include cuts and sickness and all body secretions except for sweat and urine. Male pollution would refer to any unusual bodily discharges, emission of semen or any injuries or cuts causing the blood to flow (Priest Wayne, personal conversations November 25th 2008). As such, men are also subject to purification rituals before interacting with the rest of the community. To purify himself from his pollution, a priest, a prophet, or a male neophyte is to take a bath, wash his clothes, and remain within his quarters for the entire day. He cannot officiate on the tabernacle. Unlike the menstrual cycle of the women, the occurrences of male pollution are not predictable, and it is left to the priest's judgement and conscience to respect the ritual purification period.

Female pollution encompasses all menstrual or postnatal secretions, as described by the Leviticus rules of purification for priests and women (Leviticus 15: 18-29). The purification process of the female body from normal menstrual blood flow requires that a woman remains secluded, or separated from the rest of the community for at least twenty-one days per month. It is interesting to note that the EABIC purification period lasts seven more days than the period recommended by the principles of Leviticus (15:19-24). Indeed, according to the biblical reference, women from the beginning of their menstruations were regarded as impure for seven days, and it would take them another seven-day period to be purified, and go back to their usual activities. These laws of purification were applied to the letter in the EABIC premises, until the 1980's. It is believed that it was an Empress from the WFL who suggested lengthening the purification period from fourteen to twenty-one days for what I would call revolutionary reasons.

In fact, I suggest that to the spiritual need for ritual purification was added the notion of birth control. Most gynaecologists agree that from the twenty-first day of the menstrual cycle until the beginning of a new one, a woman's fertility is at its lowest point (Dr Owen 2006). Consequently, sexual intercourse during that period of time is less likely to produce children. According to EABIC principles, for fourteen days, women are not to see, touch or talk to any *free* members of the community including her husband and male children. Seven days after the purification period, when she would usually ovulate, a woman can speak to people and run small errands but still cannot be

touched by men and women. On the twenty-first day, she is free to do as she pleases. Sexual intercourse is therefore possible only during the unfertile section of the cycle. If a child is desired, a woman is free to go to her husband after the fourteenth day, where she is most fertile and likely to conceive. This contraceptive method, according to Mama Maize is extremely efficient. The later explained that before joining the Bobo Shanti commune and philosophy; she bore eight children in ten years. When she moved on the commune with her husband, she only had two more children in seven years. The last two children were the fruits of a conscious decision between herself and her husband (Mama Maize, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008). She therefore considers the principle of twenty-one days of purification to be a means through which women exercise agency over their bodies, by controlling their fertility in a natural fashion<sup>104</sup>.

Ritual isolation is also the norm for new mothers. Though inspired by the book of Leviticus 12, King Emmanuel has extended the post-partum purification period. The book of Leviticus prescribes seven days of impurity and thirty-three days of purification for a male child and fourteen days of impurity and sixty-six days of purification for a female child. King Emmanuel doubled both impurity and purification periods. The reasons why the purification periods are longer for a mother who brought forth a female child have been widely discussed elsewhere. After comparing and analysing original Hebrew texts and theologians' positions about that matter, De Troyer (2003) concluded that: "The concept of blood purification and the doubling of the purification periods in the case of a baby girl are traces of a perceived threat from other religions and other gods" (De Troyer 2003:63). Indeed, she argued that the patriarchal figure of God monopolises the life-giving capacities of the woman through the instauration of a purification period in order to take the focus away from the mother. In the case of a female child, a prospective life-giver, the time has to be doubled.

Applied to the EABIC, the life giving capacities of a woman are not to return to a masculine conception of the divine. A goddess of creation by her own rights, I suggest that doubling the ritual seclusion period can be regarded as an acknowledgement of the potency of her body. In fact, the seclusion period required from the mere mortal of

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<sup>104</sup> See chapter 7 on education for a fuller account of Mama Maize experience with child rearing and the respect of the principles.

Leviticus can only be doubled for women who openly claim a divine status. In any case, the mere fact that King Emmanuel so obviously changed the scriptures to suit the EABIC ideology, is an illustration of their rejection of the established order, and in this case the reaffirmation of their will to govern their own *temples*.

EABIC mothers are therefore encouraged to remain in the *journey gate* and be attended to by the community. Unfortunately, at the time of the fieldwork, there were no new mothers in the *journey gate* thus making the documentation of the rituals around the new mothers impossible. The testimonial of Mama Maize was the only one available as there were no other women present at the time of the fieldwork, who had given birth on the commune and followed the principle of ritual purification. Her memories of the entire process were altogether positive. She assured me that she received a lot of support from her eight children, her husband in addition to the other members of the community. Apart from nursing her newborn baby and taking care of her nubile daughters, her days in the *journey gate* did not differ from that of the other women in their purification period. She admitted that she was very proud when she came out looking “fresh” with her new baby (Mama Maize, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008). It would have been extremely interesting to witness how the community organised itself around the mother and child. Though the testimony of Mama Maize is reliable, being able to compare it with that of other EABIC mothers would have been perfect for the purpose of this work. This was unfortunately impossible at that time.

#### **3.4.3.a. In the *Journey gate***

The ritual seclusion of twenty-one days can be regarded as the most controversial principle of the EABIC, as it has been criticised by Rastafarians and non-Rastafarians alike. Newland (1994), a Rastafarian anthropologist, considered this ritual to be a strategy used by the male members of the community to discourage women from remaining on the commune (in Tafari-ama 1998:93). Tafari-Ama, a Rastafarian scholar, regards it as an excessively patriarchal practice, limiting female economic independence (1998:93). It is interesting to note that the women actually practicing this ritual, the Bobo Shanti Rastawomen, were silent in all Yawney (1989), Newland (1994), Tafari-Ama (1998), Lake (1998) works, which questioned the validity of their way of life, and

even their judgment. It is therefore the object of this work to gather the narratives of these women, to discover what really lies behind the walls of the *journey gate*.

When I arrived on the commune, I was very anxious about the twenty-one days of purification. I had calculated my trip in order to be *free* for at least four days before the due date of my menses. Although I expressively wanted to experience the *journey*, I could not help but dread the idea of being confined somewhere, away from other people. I had had no briefing on the actual state of the *journey gate*, or what I was expected to do in there. In spite of the fact that I deplored the attitude of my predecessors, who refused to enter this gate, upon arrival, I could not help but think that there might have been valid and hygienic reasons why they refused to do so. In the midst of all my apprehensions, I was really surprised when the women on the commune considered me extremely lucky to experience the ritual purification. “Ritual purification” is my way to describe the process for the purpose of this work. The EABIC women called it either *the journey*, or *the vacation*.

A special compound is indeed dedicated to this period of the month: *The Journey Gate*. It is interesting to note that in the seventies and the eighties, the *journey gate* was referred to as the “sick house” as Chevannes (1994a) reports it in his account on Bobo Shanti. This evolution in appellation can be regarded as characteristic of the influence of the WFL in the female affairs of the camp<sup>105</sup>. Nowadays, the entire community is endeavouring to remove the negative connotations attached to the ritual seclusion period. Women undertaking it are not regarded as pariahs, but as true goddesses fulfilling a crucial sacrifice through their bodies. As such, there are several instructions to follow once in the *journey gate*. These actions are taken extremely seriously as special emissaries are to prepare the woman before she enters the special compound. These women are called *ministering angels* and see to the needs of the one who has undertaken the *journey*. In my case, Mama Julie, Empress Monica and Princess Jazmin were the benevolent *angels* for which I am very grateful, as it would have been impossible to complete the *journey* without them. Indeed, my first four days on the commune were dedicated to learning what was expected of me, once inside. Mama Julie

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<sup>105</sup> See section 4.2.2.a. on the Woman Freedom Liberation League

told me what to eat and drink, how to communicate with the outside world, the meaning of the flags and the delicate process of making the “sacrifice”. At the end of these days, I felt ready to do what was required. The following is a detailed account of what happens inside of the *journey gate*.

Unlike anything that I had imagined, the journey gate is a large compound composed of one bungalow with two large bedrooms, one external kitchen, one external shower, and one dry toilet. Medicinal plants, flowers and fruit trees can be found all over the grounds. At the back of the bungalow, between two tall mango trees hung extra-long washing lines, and underneath it all laid a solid table to wash the clothes. The journey gate is under the special care of the WFL and everything was designed to make women feel at ease and comfortable<sup>106</sup>. I was instantly pleased with the appearance of the compound and the good condition of all the installations. I was expecting darkness and confinement; I met with light and comfort. It was therefore with a mind at rest that I bravely started my journey.

Firstly, it is important to know that the period of seclusion is divided in three. During the first phase, for the actual menstrual flux, a woman must hoist a red flag, indicating that her purification period has started. During that time, she cannot pray, fast, read her Bible nor drink roots, which is a popular herbal beverage on the commune. On the first day of her menses, she is to drink a full pint of Aloe Vera pulp, which is considered to be a great help to the purification process. The menstrual flow is seen as an external sign of the body cleansing itself, and a woman must consequently help this process by drinking the right herbal teas and beverages. My journey mate, Princess Jazmin, took my alimentation in charge and forbade me to cook, clean or do any chores around the compound. I received daily gifts of food, juices, words of encouragement, from the entire community. Some actually brought me roots and gave me clear and precise indications on when and how to drink it. Apart for the compulsory Aloe Vera drinks, I thoroughly enjoyed it. My duties were mainly to drink detoxifying beverages, eat nourishing foods; sleep and most importantly conduct the “sacrifice”.

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<sup>106</sup> Details on the involvement of the WFL in the commune’s infrastructure and pictures of the *journey gate* are available in section 4.2.2.a. of this work.

As goddesses of creation, women are expected to return their menstrual blood to the earth. The process is called the “sacrifice”. Every woman on the journey is expected to dig a small hole on the compound and rinse the blood off the cloth in that hole. Once properly rinsed, the cloth may be washed with soap and dried in order to be re-used. The use of tampons or sanitary pads is not encouraged, as it would interfere with the proper completion of the “sacrifice”. Hence, upon entering the journey gate one is given clean pieces of white cloth to be used to this effect. In EABIC ideology, conducting the “sacrifice” is extremely important. Mama Julie directly links the violence, the murders, and the wars to the fact that women do not return their blood to the earth. She said: “Since women do not do it, the earth has to take it back by any means necessary” (Mama Julie, private conversation, November 5th 2008). Returning the blood to the earth is therefore regarded as an action reinforcing the sacralisation of the body, and its supernatural abilities due to its mystical connection with nature. For instance, after the completion of my purification period, a heavy rain started to fall, and I was told that this rain was the sign that nature had accepted my sacrifice.

The use of cloth instead of disposable sanitary pads or tampons is not a Bobo Shanti original initiative. Before the apparition of sanitary pads and tampons, women have used numerous reusable devices to collect the menstrual blood. My grandmother used what she calls “rad kaben”, which are folded pieces of cloth, during her menses. Sobo explained that in Jamaica, women used “clat”, pieces of folded cloth, to collect their menstrual flow and prevent them from smelling “raw” (1993, 234). The latter also described that in Jamaican peasant tradition, menses were regarded as a natural purification process, where the female body could get rid of the sperm from previous sexual intercourse that did not get her pregnant, and could therefore make her sick (Sobo 1993, 235). Due to the strong influence of the Jamaican peasant tradition in the EABIC ethos, the current use of “clats” in the journey gate and the emphasis on the consumption of detoxifying beverages during the menses can be directly sourced from these local beliefs. However, the EABIC departed from these practices when it sacralised the body and connected it directly to nature. Instead of associating the menstrual flow with “nastiness” or “rawness”, the menstrual blood in EABIC understanding has become a primordial way to revitalise the earth and sustain the flow of life.

After the first seven days, one enters the second phase of the purification period. During that time, a woman can begin praying again, reading her bible, cooking or making small artefacts to be sold at the end of the entire purification period. Indeed following the principles to the letter, what she produces during the purification period is not to be touched until she herself can be considered free. At the end of the second phase, the woman must wash her hair with Aloes Vera or another succulent plant colloquially called raklette. The pulp of the plant is added to water and shaken until it forms a slimy lather. The lather is then applied to the hair to be washed. This action, comparable to the ritual washes described in Leviticus 15, symbolises the end of the period of purification. The woman is restored to the perfect communion between I and I and can then slowly be reintroduced to the community.

During the third phase, a woman may leave the journey gate to a special compound dedicated to ministering angels. A red and white flag is hoisted to show that although she has completed the purification process, she is not yet able to mingle with the community or visitors. Male visitors especially are not encouraged to remain in her vicinity. She becomes, per se, a ministering angel able to assist any woman undertaking their journey by offering food and words of encouragement. In fact, the duty of the ministering angels is to see to the needs of the secluded ones. Because a woman undertaking the journey is not allowed to speak to people from outside, she ought to write down her needs on paper and place the note in the letter box at the entrance of the Journey gate. The letter is usually picked up by one of the ministering angels, and the items requested would be purchased or prepared accordingly. Another means to communicate is the clapping code. When asked a direct question, a woman is to clap once to say yes, and twice to say no. Ministering Angel is not a function reserved to females. During this fieldwork, there was no running water on the camp due to a broken main. Every morning, a *Bredren* would come and pour stream water in an ingenious system consisting of a pipe cut in half connecting the entrance door with the journey gate's water barrel as portrayed in the picture below<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> The barrel is not present on the picture, as I had already removed it to use the water at the time this picture was taken.



**Figure 14** Water device in the journey gate

Thanks to these dedicated *Bredren* the women undertaking the journey are never lacking water in this crucial moment.

At the end of the twenty-one days a white flag would replace the bicoloured one, indicating that anyone is free to talk and interact with the community. The work that she has produced will also be free and ready to be sold. Completing the journey of twenty-one days is generally highly praised by the elder empresses, priests and prophets. Indeed, at the end of the ritual, one is still treated with special care and pointed respect. Men and women would go out of their way to take the newly "returned voyager" out and about the country, visiting museums and other cultural places in Jamaica, praising them as true goddesses of creation able and willing to do the much needed "sacrifice". The journey is recommended to all nubile females, and because the seclusion is not always materially possible outside of the commune, sexual abstinence and the proper disposal of the blood during the menses is the sacrifice usually required. These were the advice that I was given at the end of my fieldwork.

This section has strived to describe, in detail, the various ritual of separation usually associated with women. Regarded as the epitome of patriarchal restriction (Newland 1994, Lake 1998, Tafari-Ama 1998), I will argue that within the radical context of the Bull Bay commune, this practice becomes a powerful way to gain respect



from the community. Newland rightly said: “This principle will never, I think, be favourably viewed from within the paradigms of modern gender role differentiation” (in Tafari-Ama 1998: 93). It can be suggested that as a radical movement specifically seeking to break away from “white” or mainstream paradigms, EABIC’s appreciation and understanding of the female body should be evaluated by its own principles, and challenged by the women involved<sup>108</sup>. As a radical movement challenging the capitalist and individualistic mainstream society, the issue of female economic independence raised by Tafari-Ama may not be as relevant within this commune, supported by the Universal, and where economic independence is not a male, nor a female priority<sup>109</sup>. The ritual separation of twenty-one days can therefore be regarded as a way to sacralise the body in an open departure from the general view of the commodification of the bodies of the Jamaican lower classes (Tafari-ama 1998).

#### **3.4.4. A Body that dies**

As it has been mentioned before, EABIC members have a peculiar attitude towards death. According to them, the body is “everliving”. Mama Julie explained that she does not have anything to do with death. Death is not for the righteous but for the wicked living in Babylon. When asked about the death of their leader King Emmanuel in 1994, she adamantly explained that he did not die, but chose to quit his flesh. Rumour has it that after the burial, a whirlwind suddenly appeared over the tomb, and one of the elder empresses swears to have seen him going up in the sky<sup>110</sup>. Mama Julie went on to claim that once repatriated to “Ethiopia Africa<sup>111</sup>”, they will be able to live forever in their bodies, and at peace with the other nations and race.

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<sup>108</sup> See interview with Empress Joya section 6.5.5 of chapter 6 on family.

<sup>109</sup> See section 5.2 of the fifth chapter on economical activities on the commune.

<sup>110</sup> This widely diffused anecdote was challenged by Empress Esther: “Yes there was a world wind of which I and I are witnesses, but to say one say that they saw Dada ascending in the sky! It is a lie and an imitation of the old Christian sayings of the ascension of Jesus Christ. I don’t think that we need to tell lies on Emmanuel to make him any greater or less great than he is, because his stance against Babylon injustices, his words and works have already prove him to be what he is, championing the cause for Human Rights and Justice”. Her intervention is very enriching as it exemplifies the theological debate on the camp.

<sup>111</sup> Ethiopia Africa does not merely signify the actual country. It refers to the entire African continent. Eabic members argue that Ethiopia is the real name of the continent, since it is referred as such in the Bible.

There are two generally accepted causes of death. Priest Wayne claimed that as long as one has a true *livity*, death is not an issue. Men and women should be able to live thousands of years, just like certain trees. The fact that they cannot live for that long is mostly due to a sinful lifestyle adopted from Babylon/*whiteness*. Empress Esther added:

A temple that is over worked, battered and brutalized from dispensation to dispensation will wither, decay and perish and if the soul is worthy as Maat would terms it, being light as a feather; such a soul will live on in another dimension on another plane in another flesh. Man of Right is God in flesh and we all know that God cannot die; if Jah is dead we could not have life as Jah is the spirit of life in flesh! (Empress Esther, personal conversation, March 10<sup>th</sup> 2009)

Consequently, a true *livity* leads to life but sin brings on death. This belief is so strong that in the unfortunate event of a Bobo Shanti death, the use of euphemisms is a must. One may “leave the flesh” or “Make a move”, but one never dies.

The idea of death is so complex that it is rare to find two concordant explanations on the camp. Nevertheless, this is not an issue in itself since the idea of unalterable dogma does not exist in EABIC theology. As gods and goddesses, they all have and trust their own understanding on any technical point of their ethos. The *livity* being such a personal journey, with the idea of freedom so incrustated in it, that Mama Julie finds these slight divergences normal. To her, it is evidence that the EABIC is not a sect, where uniformity and obscurantism reign. Such diversity of testimonies, theories and point of views can be difficult to process in the doctoral thesis framework yet, from all the interviews conducted, the constant idea concerning death is that an early death definitely comes from an unbalanced lifestyle. One may stick to the EABIC principles of righteousness in order for his or her *temple* to last as long as an iroko tree. The body and the *livity* are therefore tightly woven together. EABIC members not only accept as true the concept of *I and I*- god lives within them- but they are also confident in the assurance that as men and women of Right, they also become gods and goddesses “in the flesh”. The glorification of the black body has the obvious purpose to inject pride in a body that was not regarded as beautiful or important for centuries. Like the dancehall adepts, they reclaimed their bodies through their attire and lifestyle. From enslaved bodies EABIC members have elaborated a *livity* that grants them divine *temples*. Since sickness and death are taboo, the *livity* includes an elaborated system of maintenance to protect the *temple*.

### 3.4.5 Maintenance of the temple: The importance of being Ital

Maintenance of the temple is one of the most important aspects of the Bobo Shanti *livity*. Since life and the preservation of life are paramount notions on the commune, their diet is therefore designed to this effect; it is called *Ital*. If *Ital* usually means “vegetarian” for most non-Rastafarians (Owens 1976), it can also refer to a way of life where the notion of life preservation is paramount. *Ital* food is indeed a Rastafarian concept that emphasises the relation between life and nature. Always aspiring to a natural and pure way of life, one can nevertheless observe drastic differences in the application of the notion throughout Rastafari. For instance, the house of the *I-gelic* brothers described by Homiack (1998)<sup>112</sup> can be considered to be a group where the views on *Ital* can be regarded as the most extremist within Rastafari. This group would indeed not only refrain from eating meat of any sort, but also embrace the idea of *naturality* above that of *created* (Homiack 1998: 145).

Consequently, processed food, may it be a can of sweet corn found in shop and bought with money would be considered anathema. *Ital* food, from their perspective was usually consumed raw in its natural state, and if something had to be cooked, it was imperative that someone trustworthy prepared it. These regulations around food preparation and consumption were regarded by Homiack to be tactics to enforce patriarchal values in Rastafari by removing women from the traditional Jamaican peasant role of cooks and carers (1998: 145). For these raw-vegans, *Ital* paradoxically means to lead a natural life, detached from *Babylon*, yet this natural life also meant an unnatural quasi rejection of women and their various states of *pollution*.

*Naturality* for EABIC members is not to be understood in the *I-gelic* brothers’ manner. If men are likewise required to do the cooking in the *Universal kitchen*<sup>113</sup> for similar concerns over female ritual purification, *free* women cooking is an acceptable notion. Indeed, after undergoing the ritual purification period, a woman is free to cook for her children and her *Kingman*. Eating from one’s wife can be considered to be an act of love and trust, as EABIC priest is not able to officiate if *contaminated* with polluted food. Beyond the idea of marital felicity, women’s cooking has been sanctioned by the EABIC principle as necessary for the well being of the children. Indeed, with an

<sup>112</sup> The *I-Gelic* brothers have been compared with the EABIC in the previous chapter

<sup>113</sup> See the second section of chapter four for more information on the concept of *Universal*.

increasing children population on the commune, and the growing habit of sending children to school outside of the camp<sup>114</sup>, the *Universal Kitchen* was at times late in serving food for the younger ones. In order to palliate to the occasional tardiness, mothers have been allowed to cook in their own homes for their children, male and female. This principle is proclaimed every morning during the *Roll Call*, enforcing the acceptability of female cooks. EABIC members sometime eat out. Indeed, several Bobo Shanti male cooks have opened restaurants where Rastafarians from many different mansions will eat. Women, due to the ritual of purification, cannot be cooks in these establishments. Yet, they are most welcomed patrons.

*Ital* in the EABIC livity, and Rastafari at large, is not restricted to foodstuff has it has been demonstrated elsewhere (Owens 1976, Homiack 1998). It is indeed a diet, a way of life very respectful of nature and its rhythms. Nature is at the core of Rastafarian beliefs, but understanding what it is to be in a natural state varies from Rastafari mansion to mansion. The antagonism between *naturality* and *created* present in the *I-gelic* house is less marked in the EABIC livity. As it is natural for a Man to *create*, Bobo Shanti people do not hesitate to bake bread, cook porridges and even eat fried fish as long as it remains within the boundaries of their *Principles*. In this section, I will refer to *Ital* as “living food for the living” as expressed by Mama Julie that both men and women can cook, eat and enjoy (Mama Julia, personal conversation, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2008).

#### **3.4.6. The Nazarene Vow**

Priest Israel explained that while the EABIC had its own *overstanding* of *Ital*, the fact that they all made a Nazarene vow, also affected their diet (Priest Israel, personal conversation, August 3rd 2007). The Nazarene vow goes back to biblical times where chosen people refrained from consuming certain food and beverages to consecrate their person to the service of God, and accomplish a specific mission. An example of it can be found in the book of Judges 13:5, in the story of Samson. The scriptures say that Samson had been consecrated in his mother’s womb, and that she was given special instructions concerning his diet: “For behold ... no razor shall come

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<sup>114</sup> Chapter seven is dedicated to the EABIC children education and the challenges that the commune and its principles faced to keep up with theses changes.

upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb” (Judges 13:5). Applying these principles to the letter, Bobo Shanti Rases do not eat anything growing on a vine such as pumpkin, yams, watermelons, courgettes etc. No matter how tasty these vegetables may be, vine fruits would not be found on a Bobo Shanti table. Another peculiarity in the EABIC understanding of *Ital* is the tolerance of small fishes in the diet. Indeed, if every Bobo Shanti recognises the use of living products as the best food for the nourishment of the *temple* and the mind, the occasional consumption of small fishes is common practice on the camp. When questioned about the decision to abstain from yams, or watermelon but relishing on dead fish, Mama Julie destroyed all my attempts to challenge the idea in a flamboyant: “You know, if Jes-us ate fish, I do not see why as his followers we should not”. (Mama Julie, personal conversation, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2008). Silenced by this authoritative argument, I went to Priest Wayne, in order to get more explanations. The latter explained that Bobo Shanti only eat small fishes. Special care is taken in choosing the fish as scavengers are not acceptable according to the teachings of the biblical book of Deuteronomy on clean and unclean animals (14:9-10).

Ras Anta Merritt brings an even more revolutionary notion on Rastafari food consumption when he interviewed the Honourable Kes Tekle Ab. His view on food will be reported bellow:

No, that is not the problem-what you are eating or drinking. If you want to eat it (meat) you are free, there is no judgement for what you are eating or drinking. The judgement rests in your heart, if you are only giving the word and not the fullness [actions] that is the judgement. You eat, and go to the toilet, and it is pass out, and it's not there again... But the bad mind continues to be here [pointing to his heart]. So the Bobo Shanti House has a certain difference from most Rastafari Bredren”. (Honorable Kes Tekle Ab in Merritt 2006: 5).

It is important to underline that not all Bobo Shanti eat fish, and that meat could not be found on the camp. Nevertheless, the idea of freedom is stronger than mere food taboos. Kes Tekle Ab insists that EABIC people are more concerned with actions than the appearance of sanctity manifested in a diet. If food is important in the Bobo Shanti *Livity*, it is not the only way of substantiating the temple. In fact, as a priestly order, EABIC members pay great attention to spiritual food in the form of Nyabinghi prayer.

### 3.5. Nyabinghi

Maintenance of the *temple* goes beyond the rituals of purification and the diet. The war against *Babylon/Whiteness* is not merely physical and spiritual; it is also a cultural struggle. Bobo Shanti Rases<sup>115</sup> consider reggae and all other type of music as evil. They ground this belief on the biblical book of Daniel where the Hebrew prophet and his friends refused to bow to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian king at the sound of several music instruments. This story is interpreted to mean that this music disturbed the *one two order*, the special frequency connecting the individual to the Divine.

The only rhythm that has been recognised as promoting this special link is the Nyabinghi rhythm, played on special drums. Originally coming from the *Burru drums* that were used to give a tempo to slave work, both drums and rhythms have evolved to constitute the rhythm of Jamaican musical expression such as Mento, Ska, Reggae and also Nyabinghi (Reckord 1998: 235). The *fundeh*, *Kete* and the base drums coming from the *Burru drums* inheritance are the instruments played by the *Daniel Number One Band*<sup>116</sup>, an EABIC formation that always plays during all EABIC ceremonies, festivities and services.

The Nyabinghi rhythm is based on the beatings of the heart. Once the base line has been established, the *fundeh* will keep the *one two* rhythm or *lifeline* while the *Kette* can improvise at will within the lifeline of the latter (Reckord 1998: 233). As it does not destroy its natural rhythm of the *temple*, Nyabinghi is therefore regarded as the only *Ital* musical style in accordance with EABIC principles. One can underline here that the *I-gelic* brothers would not even play Nyabinghi the sacred rhythm, on a drum made of dead animal skin (Homiak 1998: 140).

#### 3.5.1. The Sabbath, day of Rest

The Sabbath can be said to be the paramount of Bobo Shanti livity. Indeed, following the teachings of the book of Exodus 20, EABIC members will cease all forms

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<sup>115</sup> The Ethiopian aristocratic title *Ras* is increasingly used nowadays to refer to a member of Rastafari. The word is going to be used in this work as it is, in my opinion, more meaningful and coherent than the word Rasta.

<sup>116</sup> See the previous section.

of work from the sunset on Friday to the sunset on Saturday. On that day, everyone will wear white. Mama Julie will even cover her furniture with white cloth. One can either go to service or remain at home.

Sabbath is extremely important because it allows one to rest his or her *temple*. The resting period is considered to allow one to weave a tighter relation with *I and I* as the restless lifestyle of *Babylon* is directly linked to death: “The wicked do not have time to talk with God that is why they perish” declares Mama Julie when explaining the significations of the Sabbath day (conversation with Mama Julie 2008).

### **3.5.2. Fasting and purging**

Along with prayers, fasting is also a very important part of the Bobo Shanti *livity*. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays are fasting days. From six in the evening until noon on the following day, a devoted Bobo Shanti would not consume any food on these days. As Priest Wayne puts it; “it [fasting] allows the *I* to be in closer contact with the *I*” (conversation with Honourable priest Wayne 2008), permitting harmony between the divine and the flesh. It is also a way to purge the body of anything impure. The concepts of purity and purgation are very important in Bobo Shanti *livity*. They are both symbolical and practical. On one hand, Jamaica is seen as a purgatory land where aspirants to repatriation must improve themselves, mentally and physically in order to be able to enter Africa, the Promised Land. On the other hand, the body/temple requires to be frequently purged of impurities, belief which can also directly be linked to the Jamaican folk tradition of body purification and sickness (Sobo 1993).

Aloe Vera, almost omnipresent on the commune, is often used for purging purposes. As described earlier, the pulp is usually mixed with water and limejuice is added in order to attenuate the bitter taste of the plant. This beverage does wonders for the intestinal problems as it is often used to prevent constipation. The Aloe can also be used on cuts, or on skin irritations. Aloe Vera is used for all sorts of purposes; Priest Moses used Aloe Vera to help the recovery of his injured eye (Priest Moses, personal conversation November 26<sup>th</sup> 2008). Indeed in addition to their medicinal virtues, one

believes that they greatly enhance the camps scenery; beautiful walks and alleys are complimented by tight rows of Aloe Vera plants.

On top of the Aloe Vera, a drink called *roots* is also widely consumed. *Roots* is an herbal elixir designed to purify the blood. Its proprieties are declared to be so powerful that Mama Julie was adamant about the fact that one should not drink roots from anybody: “Plants can heal, but plants can kill too” (Mama Julie, personal conversation, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2008). In the *journey gate*, one is to drink the Aloe Vera juice at the beginning of the menstrual flow in order to help the *temple* cleaning itself, and afterwards *roots* is to be drunk in small quantity everyday to regain strength. The purgatory effects of the Aloe Vera and the purifying virtues of the roots contribute to the fitness of the body to accede to the Promised Land. Nothing about the body is left unregulated, even the hair has a special significance and therefore abides to certain principles.

### 3.5.3. Maintenance of the Dreadlocks

Dreadlocs or knotty dreads are a serious affair in the Bobo livity, which is trying to demarcate their own hair from the other styles en vogue. In fact, the highly symbolical Rastafarian *hair statement* has become a very fashionable hairstyle. Stéphanie Thalmensy, an “à la mode” loctician in a trendy African hair salon in London took the time to explain the process of starting what one may call “fashionable locks”:

While dreadlocs are obtained without manipulation of the hair, locks are cultivated by a loctician who starts your locks with a pattern and grooms them regularly. Every type of hair can loc but curly hair is more able to form locs. Indeed, the more the hair is curly, the quicker the hair locks. There are many ways to start locs. Here a few:

- Comb twists,
- Two-strand twists,

The regrowth needs to be retwisted often at the beginning. The use of shampoo should be spaced.

- Interlocking, a crochet is used to create nodes
- Back combing, perfect for Caucasian hair

Starting with these two techniques is easier to manage: the locs should be retwisted/interlocked every 4-6weeks.

- Sisterlocs

The use of beeswax or gel is not required to form locs. Organic oils are recommended to apply on the scalp and the locs. It leaves the hair shiny and lightweight. (Stéphanie Thalmensy, personal conversation, December 12<sup>th</sup> 2008).



Bobo Shanti Rases also consider their locks to be symbols of their spiritual powers. In accordance to the Nazarene vow, their hair is to be left in its natural state, unshaved and untrimmed. The woolly texture of African hair also gains a spiritual dimension. Indeed, its spiral structure is associated with the shape of life as represented by the DNA, emphasising the belief of the African body's divine character, as divine life bearers of humanity (Empress Nyah, personal conversation, June 16<sup>th</sup> 2009).

### **3.5.6. Robe and Turban, way of life**

Because of the sacred dimension of the hair, Bobo Shanti men and women will always wear a turban or a fall in public. The neatness of their turban and of their clothing in general confers to them an air of royalty directly clashing with the ragamuffin image that Rastafarians usually carry (Chevannes 1994). According to Priest Israel, the turban is the symbol of the crown promised by the black Christ (Bible 1 Peter 5:4). When asked why women wore “falls” instead of crowns, he pointed out that it was an Ethiopian tradition, and that even Mama Mega is seen on some pictures wearing it. On this topic, an elder asserted that women ought to wear “falls” in order for them to remain humble. The latter opinion is widely forwarded by external observers, who argue that the EABIC's attitude towards women is one of oppression. It has been declared that men wore turbans as divine reminders of their sacerdotal mission while women wore the “fall” in order to conceal their sexual appeal, reserved for the sole enjoyment of their husbands (Scott 2003).

This argument on the notion of modesty, and hair display is reminiscent of the debate around the necessity of the Purdah, in Asian culture, and its impact on Muslims around the world. Many, feminists and legislators, do see it as a sign of female subordination, and a deprivation of their personal liberty (Utas 1983, Ahmed 1992). If the Burqa, a garment often associated with the notion of Purdah, has not yet been banned in the United Kingdom, since 2011, and in the name of “laïcité” or secularism, French Muslim women and girls are no longer allowed to wear the Burqa or the Hijab in official civil settings such as schools, administrations and public transport. This law has sparked virulent debates and prompted acts of civil disobedience, as women are willing to go to court and even jail in order to protest (Allen 2011). Even if Bobo Shanti women

have been criticised for their falls (Lake 1998, Scott 2003), the Jamaican government has not yet seen the necessity to ban it. Moreover, women of the EABIC are themselves very vocal about their right to wear this hair cover.

When questioned about the negative connotations attached to the female “fall” Empress Esther explained that in the early years of the movement, women used to tie their hair with their locks tied in a bun, similarly to a turban shape. She was unable to exactly tell when and why the “fall” was adopted, yet she virulently opposed the ideas that it is a symbolical means to diminish female agency as Rastawomen:

If we are representatives of our Father and Mother Royal Ethiopian King and Queen, as Royalties, why wouldn't I and I wear a crown? After all, we are King and Queen in our own right. Our headwear represents Black divinity in our royal way of life as king and queens, princes and princesses our identity of who we are and where we are coming from as a Royal Nation Wealth Kingdom of People (conversation with Empress Esther 2009).

From a device to keep women humble, to a symbol of female subordination (Scott 2003), the fall in 2009 has merely become an Ethiopian tradition in women's clothing. It is important to mention that the “fall” is by no means obstructing the idea of power conveyed by the hair of these gods and goddesses, as Empress Esther eloquently expressed. One may suggest that women sport different head ties than men because of the EABIC's particular dialectic of gender. Because there are clearly defined male and female social functions, male and female representation of the divine, male and female bodies, the sacralisation of these bodies would therefore take a different form for both men and women. A man would therefore wear a turban because he is a man but also as a symbol of his divinity, a woman would wear a “fall” because she is a woman, and as such as a goddess of creation in her own rights. The crux of the matter is that whether worn in a turban or under a fall, the hair of Bobo Shanti men and women is regarded as the evidence of their spiritual strength and divine identity.

If the hair, regarded as spiritually potent, needs to be covered; the body also endowed with divine powers is carefully attired. On days of celebrations, EABIC members usually wear beautiful robes with colours befitting the occasion (white for the Sabbath day, gold for the celebration dedicated to children etc...). On ordinary days women would usually wear long and ample skirts with long sleeve blouses, while men

would wear trousers with long sleeve shirts. There again, special care is placed on their item of clothing, as it is primordial to appear “Royal” at all times. The attitude of the Bobo Shanti towards their personal appearance contrasts with the representation of the rural Rastafarians described by Tafari-Ama, whose lifestyle and rugged appearance is allegedly: “incompatible with the impetus to command respect through self-representation” (1998:102). From the same economic circumstances and in their Royal attire, EABIC members are undeniably commanding respect, in and out, of the commune through their appearance. One can also suggest that the dress code of the EABIC serves as a social class neutraliser. Indeed, because it is one’s duty as an EABIC member to dress in the “royal” manner, clothes are freely available on the commune for the use of everyone, regardless of their income or origins. This uniformity grants them a divine status no matter what their social background was before entering the commune.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

One may say that the EABIC *Livity* has been designed to create a distinct identity for the poorest classes of the Jamaican society: the *sufferers*. Not only have they deconstructed the *Babylon/whiteness* interpretation of Christianity to their own interests, they have also created an entirely new conception of their bodies, elevating them to divine status. The detailed and precise regulations attached to the *temple* exist to indicate its sacred and mystical nature. While Dancehall Queens and skin bleachers use *Anansy* strategies to survive in a society whose norms are still largely influenced by prejudiced colonial stereotypes, Bobo Shanti overtly make a stand against it by setting their own standards of living, their own conception of the divine, their own understanding of the body. Living by their conception of a natural way of life or livity, Bobo Shanti Rases seem to have found peace within their flesh.

These first two chapters have established the fact that EABIC is a radical community that seeks to escape from the norms of *Babylon/whiteness*. In the EABIC *livity*, Bobo Shanti women are represented on an equal footing with the men. Female subordination is advocated neither in their theology nor in their conception of the body/*temple*, unlike the overtly negative portrayals found in what one may call mainstream Christianity. In the light of this unusual philosophy, the following chapter’s aim is to assess female agency and female representation within the commune’s administration.

#### Chapter 4: Camp administration

*Fanm se Chaten, nonm se foyapen dou*<sup>117</sup>, is the Kréyol proverb which inspired Thomas' work on gender construction and female agency in French Caribbean fiction works (1975). This proverb, along with Thomas' analysis, underlines perfectly the paradox of political power and gender in the Caribbean, at large. The capacities of women to financially *make do* to care for their family in what is often called matrifocal societies have been widely acknowledged (Senior 1990, Mulot 2000, Confiant 2005). Yet in Caribbean psyches, women are not normatively associated with public decision making positions. For instance, the head of a Caribbean state would readily be associated with a male figure rather than a female one. If one can define power as being the measure of an entity's ability to control the environment around itself, including the behaviour of other entities, Caribbean women are undeniably exerting it, but their scope is not as prestigious and valorised as the male one.

A *respectable* woman has to be active essentially in the private spheres of reproduction, while a man has to be dominant in the public and production area to defend his *reputation* (Burton 1997) regardless of his or her character or ambition. Indeed, transgressing these social designations would be challenging the society's norms in terms of masculinity and femininity. An example of this can be found in the polysemy of the Kréyol word *makoumè*. Originally, the word was used to refer to what can be translated in English to be "godmother". It has evolved to mean a woman's good friend or best friend, and now fundamentally defines a man seriously involved in female spheres. The *makoumè* usually cannot drive properly and lacks physical or technical skills in sports. Whenever a man would fail in a "male domains", he is to be called a *makoumè*, as though his manhood has been denied, and that the word "man" temporally cannot define him. Note that the term is never applied to a man who impregnates a woman without taking care of his offspring, or a man who abandons his family. The French Caribbean *makoumè* is the direct antithesis of the Jamaican *Bad Man*, the violent essence of maleness in Jamaican impoverished urban areas (Tafari-Ama 2006).

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<sup>117</sup> "Women are Chestnuts, men are breadfruits". In this proverb, men and women are symbolised by fruits of the same family but with different abilities, the breadfruit and the chestnut. Indeed, once fallen, chestnuts can sprout while breadfruits merely rot.

A *malfanm*, literally translated from Kréyol as “male woman” is someone who is successful. She can be considered to be a woman who has entered the male *reputation* sphere. Hardworking and enduring, a *malfanm* has earned the respect of her peers, both male and female, in a domain that one would not expect a woman to succeed. The archetype of the *malfanm* would usually be a woman who has managed economic or political success. In Confiant’s work, the word is associated with women particularly assertive in the sexual domain. They do not fear the labelling attached to their presence in the *reputation* spheres of the community in entertaining overt promiscuous habits. The *malfanm* of Confiant unashamedly imposes her sexual desires on men in a way wholly disconnected with the traditional *respectable* female attitude to sex (Confiant 1999).

Bold, assertive and fearless, a *malfanm* is not cantoned to sexual prowess, it is someone who has *transcended womanhood* to use the terms of Mr. Compton, the late Prime Minister of Ste Lucia, when he tried to describe Dame Eugenia Charles’ power and charisma (Barriteau 2006: 10). Indeed, the latter was the first (and the only) female Prime minister of Dominica, from 1980 to 1995. Extremely shrewd and assertive, she was often referred to as the “Iron Lady” of the Caribbean. Deeply involved in her political career, Charles has never complied with the traditional idea of a woman in entering wifery or even motherhood (Barriteau 2006). Because of all these characteristics, Charles can definitely be regarded as the archetype of the *malfanm*.

Both feared and admired, these women nevertheless tend to lose their claims to femininity and become unsuitable for traditional ideas on respectable relationship. Indeed, if Charles never married, Confiant’s fictitious *malfanms* are either widows (Confiant 2005), or can only get married to men outside of their communities, alien to the relationship regulations of the group (Confiant 1999). Indeed, by stepping into male oriented functions they tend to lose their femininity and can no longer fit in their community as women but as *malfanm*. I may suggest that men and women outside of their defined social attributions lose the social recognition associated with their gender to become either *makoumè* or *malfanm*. Many are not willing to challenge the social status quo. This could explain the low number of women in leadership positions in politics, and the ease with which men can elude or undermine their nurturing obligations to their families.

#### 4.1. Caribbean women in politics

In fact, the ineluctable masculinisation of female politicians factors has been identified as one of the factors inhibiting women from senior functions in decision making institutions (Barriteau 2006:10). Dame Eugenia Charles, Barriteau's subject, was regarded as very masculine with her authoritarian, bold and assertive ways. Either intrinsic to her character or the result of her political engagement, these masculine attributes greatly assisted Charles in her political career. One can here identify the dilemma of the "double yoke" observed by Luciak (2007) where Charles' brilliant career as a lawyer and head of the Dominican Government could hardly be compatible with the traditional family achievement. According to Barriteau: "When women are involved in politics, the convention is still to evaluate their public performance, and relevance against the values, and virtues of women in the private sphere" (Barriteau 2006: 6). Motherhood, and/or, *wifery* are key concepts cemented to the archetype of a "feminine woman". Without the status that these notions procure, some women are at the risk of losing their "respectability" in society. I would suggest that the traditional idea of Caribbean femininity is therefore either incompatible with political power, or the very understanding of the word "power" needs to be challenged and redefined.

Consciousness of *respectability*, and the desire to remain within the norms of the dominant culture, are usually what deter women from even attempting a political career. Indeed, out of these structures, they are vulnerable to aggressive male intimidation. Senior (1990) and Leo-Rhynie (2003) both described how men, when threatened in their *normal* spheres, elaborate particularly vicious operations of slander and intimidation against their female opponents. In fact, Senior through the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) assessed that women chose not to fulfil leading role in their political parties because of the *dirty*ness of a campaign. If the possibility of slander for their person is mentioned, many would not bear to have their children, partners or other relatives drawn in an eventual scandal and would rather not engage in politics.

Ten years after Senior's observations, Leo-Rhynie focused on the election of the student guild at the University of the West Indies in Mona Jamaica, and arrived at the same conclusions. Female students were discouraged from campaigning for the function of president or treasurer while they could easily aim for the secretary mandate (Leo-Rhynie 2003). The same *dirty* campaigns of intimidation and the same results described

by Senior a decade earlier could also be observed in Leo-Rhynie's sample of students leading female students to very often give up aspiring to the "male functions". After Leo-Rhynie's case study, the situation has not really evolved since 2009, this researcher could not identify one female candidate for the student guild presidency on the same Jamaican campus of UWI.

In concordance with Senior and Leo-Rhynie's identification of male and female functions in politics, it has also been observed that women have very often been ceremonial heads of State throughout the Caribbean (Vassell 2003: 8-9). Vassell explained this fact by the growing campaigns for gender parity in governments worldwide. This clever compromise to forward the presence of a woman in political functions allowed more political visibility to women like, dame Hilda Bynoe, Dame Nita Barrow, Dame Yvy Dumont, Dame Pearlette Louisy, or Dame Minita Gordon, while executive power remained solely in the hands of men.

Taking a glance at the Caribbean political landscape, one can argue that women, in spite of their undeniable abilities, are rather absent from the exercise of executive or legislative power. Expected to remain attached to *female* functions in the decision making spheres; they are regarded as unfeminine and unnatural when they achieve high positions within a government. Once in power, they would still have to work harder than men in the hopes of being justified in their positions and decisions (Barriteau 2006: 10). It would appear that their legitimacy as female leaders is under constant scrutiny, and their abilities forever questioned and challenged. Interestingly enough, in Cuba, gender parity in political spheres appear to be more attainable than in its archrival country, the USA.

In direct opposition with the United States' economic and democratic models, Cuba has the highest ratio of women elected in parliament for the American Region. In fact, they constitute 36% of their government (Inter Parliamentary Union 2005). In this controversial communist island, famous for its cigars, and its overwhelming male figure of a leader with radical ideas and course of actions, women have been actively involved in the making of their country. Indispensable supportive forces of the revolution, these "invisible" women were noticed as fearless warriors and even respected leaders (Luciak 2007). Cuban women have nowadays to struggle with the freedom of their revolutionary

past, and the traditional machismo latent in post-revolutionary Cuba. In spite of this however, they have the full support of the government to achieve their potential and follow their aspirations as much as men.

For instance, the 1970's saw the emergence of progressive gender egalitarian laws such as the *Código de Familia* (Family code) insisting that household chores be divided between partners, and children. Institutions such as *La Federación de la Mujer Cubana* (Federation of the Cuban women) do have a real power to influence policies in order to optimise the chances for women to come out of their traditional roles of homemakers, without becoming *malfanms* as it has been previously discussed. As a consequence they represent 66, 1% of the professional technicians, 51% of the doctors, 43% of the scientists, 33.1% of the managers, and 70% of the bank employees of the country (Cuba solidarity 2011). It can thus be said that by aiming at overthrowing an oppressive economic and political system, the Cuban revolution has become the ideal space for women to break away from the Catholic and capitalist norms of the 1950's. The Cuban government overlooked gender stereotypes in order to constitute a government that would be able to serve, defend and maintain an ideology under the pressure of an alien power (the USA), threatening its sovereignty.

It would appear that an ideological and economic revolution opposed to a greater counter-power can therefore be regarded as a fertile soil where female empowerment and agency becomes more visible. This assertion is enforced by the fact that both Guyana and Grenada ranked second, and third in the region with respectively 30.8%, and 26.7% of women in their government (Inter Parliament Union 2005). Both Guyana and Grenada experienced communism in the post-independence period. Considering the radical nature of the EABIC *principles*, and its stand against *Babylon/Whiteness*, this section will be dedicated to female agency in the decision making spheres of the commune. I would suggest that beyond the creation of a space for women to exercise agency without risking losing their female status and privileges, the radical stand of the EABIC has altogether created a new approach to gender and power, where both male and female statuses are valued and desired. In order to support this statement, I will look at the structure of the camp's government, evaluate its function, and assess the very understanding of the word power in Bobo Shanti parlance and entendre.



## 4.2. Structural Power on the Bull Bay commune

Standing for the letter *C* in the word EABIC, the Congress traditionally represents all members, may they be male or female, of the Bobo Shanti community. The honourable priest Morgan is the leading priest of the Committee of elders of totalling thirty three members. This Committee represents the official legislative and executive power on the camp.

### 4.2.1. The Committee of elders or Parliament

As mentioned above, the Committee of elders is an institution that bears much weight in the affairs of the commune as it contains the legislative power of the commune. One may qualify the EABIC mode of organisation as a paradoxical *Weberian* bureaucracy. I have used the word paradoxical because the notion of personal freedom is as valued as the necessity of having a coordinating institution. As much as a Bobo Shanti is *free*, his or her public actions or endeavours need to be sanctioned by the Committee, or an equivalent authority. For instance, Priest Wayne complained against the Committee of elders for not respecting the meetings schedules. Indeed, in order to develop his *roots* business under the auspices of the EABIC, he needed to convince the elders about the viability of his project: “The Elders are not even meeting on Wednesdays anymore, decisions cannot be made, the situation is very frustrating” (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008).

In spite of the human failings, the institution is extremely well defined and organised. The following is an extract of the EABIC constitution, describing the functions of the Parliament. In a similar fashion to the general mission statement explored in the second chapter of this work<sup>118</sup>, the definition of the Parliament’s function are available on paper on the commune, and widely published on the internet so as to reach the international community and the aspirant Bobo Shanti. The following has been extracted from an EABIC website:

**TRUSTEES<sup>119</sup>, POWERS, DUTIES ETCETERA**

(iii) **The Trustee or Trustees shall be appointed by the President and Head of the Association The Most Right Honourable King Emmanuel Charles Edwards after a**

<sup>118</sup> As discussed in the section 2.6. of the second chapter.

<sup>119</sup> The original format of the constitution has not been altered. Therefore the words and passages in bold are not my emphasis.

meeting of Parliament.

(a) The Trustees shall have power and duty to carry out the administration of the Association; to incorporate the Association and to be responsible for add duties and matters incidental to the incorporation; to receive sums of money for the Association; to be a part of the decision to make investments for Association; to be part of the decision to purchase or sell property for or belonging to the Association.

#### REPLACEMENT

The Trustee can be replaced by the President after review, a hearing in which the Trustee will be given an opportunity to be heard (if the Trustee desires) by the Parliament and President. (black-King.net 2009)

(Emphasise in the original text)

The first three articles are giving some insight on power hierarchies on the commune. Indeed, one can note that there is a President, a parliament and trustees to look after the commune's affaires. King Emmanuel, in addition to his divine nature and priestly functions, is also the President of the Congress. Far from being regarded as an autocratic regime, the fusion of both legislative and executive powers in the person of King Emmanuel merely accentuate the fact that King Emmanuel's power were not merely ceremonial. For instance, a pre-requisite to become a member of the EABIC, is the acknowledgement of: "one President and Head of the Association, The Most Right Honourable King Emmanuel Charles Edwards, who is Melchizedek the High Priest of Salem".

Assuming both divine and temporal authority on a group, a commune or a movement is not unprecedented. Other leaders of *nigrescent*<sup>120</sup> communities have done so before him (Price 2009: 100, Barnett 2006). Indeed, Barnett identified a similar ethno-genesis with Rastafari, and the Nation of Islam, with similar aspirations and challenges. Within a Jamaican context, one can say that Wallace Fard Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam, or the Jamaican Alexander Bedward, were divine leaders of their non-conformist congregations. This double status often led to controversy, power struggles, schisms and even to the dissolution of the said movement after the death of the charismatic/divine leader. In the EABIC's case, King Emmanuel, god, priest and president still remain at the head of the movement even though he is no longer physically present on the commune. In fact, even though the honourable Priest Morgan is nowadays leading the EABIC government, King Emmanuel has retained his executive powers as all letters are signed with his name on top of the signatories.

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<sup>120</sup> *Nigrescent* is a neologism created for the purpose of this paper, out of *the Nigrescence theory* of William Cross Jr., which is the process of building a full cultural, spiritual, political and in this case gender identity on the African ethnicity.

Because of the EABIC views on the irrelevance of death, King Emmanuel has gone from active to ceremonial head of government.

The fact that members of the Committee are appointed and not elected has caused great uneasiness in the handover of power after King Emmanuel's death. In spite of his particular status, an acting President had to be designated and it is the Hon. Priest Morgan who currently holds the highest position in the EABIC government. The fact that the President can only be appointed and not elected has caused some issues of authority on the commune. Priest Morgan's authority has been challenged, and questioned by some. In fact, uneasiness around the leadership of the Committee of Elders is palpable as one of the sons of King Emmanuel, Jesus, has attempted to claim the position of President for himself, but his petition was dismissed (Priest Stéphane, personal conversation, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009).

Tensions coming from the current power struggle are confirmed by the testimony of the Honourable priest Wayne who explicitly declared that: "As we are all sons and daughters of the Most High, in the Parliament, the succession cannot be done like that of the King, who would pass the kingship to his son" (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2009). In spite of his privileged blood ties, the son of King Emmanuel is not very likely to succeed his father in a near future, as he has not yet earned the trust of the community. EABIC is not a monarchy, and authority and respect is to be earned through irreproachable conduct and actions. Nevertheless, in spite of his merits, Priest's Morgan's authority though effectual, is not to be compared with that of King Emmanuel. The peculiar status of King Emmanuel and the "government" that he elaborated can therefore be regarded as a two faced drum. On one hand, his timeless authority and his system of appointing elders has allowed the commune and the movement to philosophically survive his death, and its leaders to be universally respected. Yet on the other hand, the system of appointment does not allow an easy renewal of the leadership core. King Emmanuel's overwhelming authority will always weigh on any following leadership team as no one could possibly surpass the prestige and charisma of the *founding father*.

Nevertheless, in spite of minor frictions around succession and administrative issues, the EABIC remains a self proclaimed government, and as such, decisions cannot be taken without consulting the Parliament. Indeed, as though foreseeing the control

problems associated with his death, King Emmanuel elaborated a constitution stipulating that anyone occupying the presidential functions still had to consult the Parliament in order to put in effect his or her motions. The use of the official seal of the EABIC exemplifies the president/parliament dynamic:

#### **THE COMMON SEAL USE AND CUSTODY**

The **Common Seal** shall be in the custody of the **President**. All documents pertaining to and emanating from the **Association** shall be stamped with the **Seal**. The **President** shall name a **Committee**, the members of which are authorized to use the stamp on condition that all documents or copies stamped will be filed by the **President**. (black-king. Net 2009).

A symbol of authority, the seal of the *Congress* is used to officialise any document coming out, or approved by the commune. There, one can perceive the *Congress's* eagerness to protect its ideas and decrees, as it would be done in any other internationally recognised governments. As it was mentioned earlier, only Committee members are authorised to use the seal, as the action will have to be filed by the president for records. Therefore, the people authorised to use the seal actually hold the executive power of the commune. The constitution states that the President has to appoint another Committee whose access to the seal is granted; nevertheless, the gender of the members of that Committee is not mentioned. One can therefore assume that theoretically, both men and women are eligible to access the executive power on the commune.

#### **THE MEETINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

The Association shall hold a General meeting every Wednesday. A Committee or Cabinet meeting of the Association shall be held every Sunday.

#### **THE GOVERNING BODY, THEIR APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL AND POWERS**

The Governing body of the Association is the Parliament consisting of the President and Thirty-two members. Each Member of the Parliament is appointed by the President. Upon his appointment a meeting of the Parliament is called and the member is informed of his or her duties and principles of the Association. The member pledges loyalty to those principles and to his of her duties and to the President. If there is evidence of dereliction of duty and disloyalty to principles or to the President and or Association there shall be a meeting of Parliament termed 'a reasoning' in which the member shall be given an opportunity to be heard. The matter shall be reviewed and only then can the member be removed. The duty of a member shall be to carry out the daily administration of the Association; to participate in the decision making process and to carry out tasks assigned to her or him on order of the President of the Association.

While the fifth article establishes the frequency of the meetings held by the community as a whole, the sixth article informs the reader about the composition of the *governing*

*body*. Indeed, one can read that thirty three men and women have to be expressively appointed by the president to carry out administrative tasks and functions. One can note there that the Committee is not elected, and that it is composed of both men and women. Unlike the *Twelve Tribes of Israel's* constitution which is very precise on the amount of men and women that the governing body should have (Chevannes1994), the EABIC leaves the concerns of parity and functions attribution to the President's discretion.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS, KEEPING OF ACCOUNTS

Subscriptions and other contributions are collected at the Headquarters of the Association at Ten Miles, Bull Bay, Saint Andrew, Jamaica, West Indies (formerly headquartered at 54B Spanish Town Road in the Parish of Saint Andrew).

All funds shall be paid to a special Committee of the Association appointed by the President. This Committee shall be responsible for the disbursement of the funds of the Association and the keeping and auditing of the Accounts of the Association.

#### THE PRIESTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Priests and Representatives, (the latter meaning those who represent the Association outside the precincts of the Church) are appointed by the President and Founder, The Most Right Honorable King Emmanuel Charles Edwards, Holy Melchizedek. The Priests and Representatives shall be documented and certified by the President and must take with them at all times their Identification Card which will bear the stamp of the Association's seal.

The seventh and eighth articles describe the functions of the treasury and the embassy under the direction of the President. Appointed members of the Committee are to attend to financial affairs while Priests, and Representatives are designated to represent the Congress out of the Bull Bay Camp. The Seventh article is an evidence of the centralised nature of the EABIC executive power. Indeed, all money raised from activities has to go to the headquarters' specially appointed Committee, which is also accountable for it. A branch of the EABIC cannot take the responsibility to raise funds on behalf of the EABIC without handing over the totality of that sum. Hence decision making, even on the international level is the prerogative of the Jamaican headquarters, granting to the members of the Jamaican Committee tremendous executive power.

The *Congress* is also very careful regarding the attribution of its representatives. Indeed, if a Prophethas to be crowned by two priests out of the Bull Bay camp, a priest has to be appointed by the President on the Jamaican commune. Representative, which can include women such as Empress Esther, also have to be officially recognised by the camp. When her authority is contested, Empress Esther does not hesitate to show her

EABIC documents identifying her as the only authorised ambassador for the WFLL, and the secretary of the Committee, appointed by the President King Emmanuel Charles Edward in person.

#### **DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATION**

All documents and communication touching upon the **Affairs** of the **Association** shall be filed in and emanate from the **Office** of the **President**.

#### **POLICY AND PHILOSOPHY**

The **Association** shall not participate on or with any organization or in any activity demeaning to or non-beneficial to the upliftment of **Black people** of **Africa** and the **black nation universally**.

The ninth and tenth articles also reaffirm the centralised nature of the executive power of the EABIC with regards to its image. Indeed, one can read that all communications must come from the President's office. The Congress has the obligation to guard its image from non Panafricanist associations, or any equivocal organisations. Being so protective of its moral status and intellectual properties, the *Congress* has managed to keep intact the publication of its tenets on an international level. Nevertheless, these obligations are not always beneficial to the members living outside Jamaica. Indeed, Jah Wishborn Sanctify, from the English chapter of the EABIC, has been obliged to publish his book, *The Carry Beyond*, without the official seal of the Jamaican quarters. His wife, the Honourable Empress Niyah, who designed the logo for the English production of *Roots*, was also frustrated not to have had the official stamp. Indeed, both of them sent their projects to the headquarters, and were disappointed and discouraged by the slow pace with which their applications were being processed. One can therefore say that though the *Congress* has established strict rules in order to protect its philosophical integrity, the centralised power can greatly hinder spontaneous laudable initiatives outside of Jamaica.

One may therefore argue that the EABIC has a gender mixed centralised government, which aims are to promote *Repatriation*, and *Reparation* endeavours, and to protect the principles. Members of the governing Committee are usually appointed by the president of the EABIC. Priest Morgan is currently the President of the association. In spite of organisational problems or political cabals, this researcher could observe that the governing body was still active in issuing administrative letters organising conferences, or ritual celebrations such as HIM *Haile Selassie's earthday*:

**THE ETHIOPIA AFRICA BLACK INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS  
CHURCH OF TRUE DIVINE SALVATION**

Which Stands with Our Worthy Founder, Leader, President, God & King, the Most Rt Hon King Emmanuel Charles Edwards send This Open Invitation to One & All Royal Ethiopian Sons & Daughters to come and join with Us with Unity & Love (Psalms 133) in sharing this moment of Grand Celebration at Our HeadQuarters, E.A.B.I.C.C.S. 13 Marcus Garvey Drive, 10 Miles "Lion" Bull Bay, Saint-Andrew, Jamaica, W.I. as we are Celebrating the 118th Earth-Strong Celebration of Our Divine Monarchy of Black Supremacy, the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I JaH Ras Tafari ! Celebration Service continues from July 22nd at downsetting for 7 (Seven) nights of Nyahbinghi Order against the walls of babylon to finally and permanently bring down all wicked elements and forever rise the "R" Man Kingdom. Equal Rights & Justice Now ! saith the Black I Am Holy Emmanuel I John Marcus I King Selassie I JaH Ras Tafari !

**JULY 23rd 2010-2011  
118th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION  
OF EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I  
EARTHDAY. ISAIAH 9:6,7**

**FREEDOM,  
REDEMPTION,  
INTERNATIONAL REPATRIATION  
UNIVERSALLY NOW & NOW !!!**

**FREE WATER WAY  
TO BLACK  
AFRICA/ETHIOPIA**

Nyahbinghi  
Drumsound by  
Daniel Band,  
the Number One  
Band in The  
Land

**VICTORY OF GOOD OVER EVIL**

Figure 15 EABIC event invitation

The Committee is therefore an important ceremonial and administrative structure, which organises the ceremonial life of the commune. Its authority is felt in cases of urgent decision making. In fact, while in the *journey gate*, this researcher has had the opportunity to appreciate the effectiveness of the president's authority in crucial internal matters. It happened that one of the male members of the camp was very inclined to voyeurism, and decided to peep while I was confined in the *journey gate*. After trying to get my attention on several occasions without success, he decided to climb the fence surrounding the *journey gate* to have a proper look. Very afraid, I called Empress Esther who immediately contacted Priest Morgan.

In less than five minutes, guards were posted around the compound. An investigation was launched and the deviant *Bredren* was identified and punished. He could no longer carry his turban. The magnanimity of his punishment was prompted by the fact that the latter was not mentally sane. Another instance of the authority of the Committee governing body can also be witnessed in case of theft. A visiting priest's laptop had been stolen while on the camp. After investigations, it was assessed that the robbery had been conducted by someone living out of the commune. Bull Bay, is a semi rural area where the criminality rate is fairly high considering its proximity with

Kingston (Nation Master 2010). An uncertain number of malefactors are allegedly living in the outskirts of the camp, and have the reputation to be dangerous. In spite of the actual danger, Priest Morgan spoke to them, demanding that the laptop be returned. As a respected elder, he was quickly obeyed. It is interesting to note that both deviant acts were targeting visitors of the camp. Although there are other local victims of theft, visitors are regarded as rich privileged targets. Acting quickly in these occurrences may express a will to protect the camp's reputation to visitors and locals.

Nevertheless, the authority of the President is less obvious as far as internal EABIC matters are concerned. For instance, there is a small snack shop open on the premises of the commune. The existence of this shop is clearly against the EABIC *principles*<sup>121</sup>, yet it is regularly restocked without fearing any disciplinary action. Arguably, it can be said that because of the concept of personal freedom essential in Rastafari, the Committee is not to be regarded as a coercive organisation enslaving the commune dwellers in the letter of the *principles*. Consequently, from these observations, one may argue that as the commune's governing body; the Committee has essentially ceremonial, administrative or legislative powers. Matters regarding the protection of the EABIC image, and ethic on an international level are dealt with while its authority can be questioned on the domestic affairs of the camp. The President is expected to render justice. Robberies and assaults perpetrated on the camp are investigated and punished; the services of the police are never required. Beside this gender mixed assembly, the EABIC also has another governing body in the Woman Freedom Liberation League.

#### **4.2.2. The Woman Freedom Liberation League**

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1980, King Emmanuel created the Woman Freedom Liberation League, to look exclusively after women affairs. Consistently with the rising of the female discourse in Rastafari during the decade leading up to 1980 (Maureen Rowe 1998), the WFL was created to enable women to negotiate a more visible space within the EABIC. Because it has been established by the charismatic leader himself,

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<sup>121</sup> Money is not supposed to be used on the commune. Selling goods on the camp's premises is therefore unlawful.



the legitimacy of the WFL has never been contested, nor its utility questioned. The following is a list of their general duties and rights as members of the WFL:

- 1) To honour and love the 10 commandments
  - 2) To fulfil faithfully our daily duties
  - 3) All Empresses must be present at our Royal International Roll Call.
  - 4) No coming and going in the Holy Tabernacle, especially on the Sabbath Day.
  - 5) No bad talking, no false testimony, no gossips.
  - 6) Upright words from one to another.
  - 7) No slender, no harassment nor theft.
  - 8) Upright clothing. Robe and Turban principle.
  - 9) No loud talking in the Royal Court.
  - 10) Humility and meekness belong to the Virtuous Woman.
  - 11) The Empress must work in unity, loyal to HIM and contribute to the Universal.
  - 12) The Empress must be available at the International Gate House to welcome the international visitors.
  - 13) On the 21st day of the International, a white flag must be at the gate show the availability.
- Consciousness embodies the acquisition of knowledge and a drive to action-the elements of empowerment (Babb, 2006, 152)

This list may be divided in three sections: articles 1-4 pertain to devotion, 5-11 define the acceptable behaviour; 12-13 explain the ceremonial duties of the Empresses. These thirteen points describing the attitude expected from the empresses are minutely reminded to any female visitor on the camp.

Unlike the Committee, which can be described as quite a bureaucratic and almost impersonal institution, the WFL's articles appear to be solely concerned with the behaviour and action of its members. From these points, one gathers that a good member of the WFL must be soft spoken, hardworking, respectful of her body and proficient in theological matters. This impression is emphasised by the WFL publication edited at the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Woman Freedom Liberation League in 2010. The pamphlet, written by the Honourable Empress Esther, develops the thirteen points stated above in addition to various utterances of King Emmanuel such as the following: "In-House is where Empress live (sic). Two or three Empress can live together if the need arises, say Our Leader of this Foundation, the Black Congress" (in Empress Esther 2010: 24).

From the WFL publications, one may suggest that the WFL has been created to particularly define the EABIC's notion of *respectability* in the Bobo Shanti woman, as a way to contrast her behaviour with that of the mainstream Jamaican one. This point is particularly interesting as there are no such explicit and detailed behavioural

regulations in the Committee's constitution that would relate to the *Bredren*<sup>122</sup>. If everyone on the camp, may they be male or female, is expected to have an exemplary demeanour; particular care is put into ascribing an appropriate female line of conduct. One can suggest that this particular care to write the standards of EABIC women was necessary because there are no EABIC initiations designed for women. Indeed, if men go through ritual exams to pass from uncrowned neophytes, to prophets, acting priests, priests and leading priests, women merely have to wear a fall and invoke the name of Queen Omega in order to become a Bobo Shanti Empress. The presence of these rules can therefore be regarded as the initiatory guide line or an educative edict to fully access the goddess status.

#### **4.2.2.a. WFLL a true female guild**

In spite of the absence of constitution, and clear definition of a line of action, as it is the case for the *Committee* the WFLL is a very active association. Female Rastafarians in general have already been recognized for their fantastic capacity to raise funds and support projects (Chevannes 1994: 260-261), and in this line, the Empresses of the WFLL are not undeserving. Indeed, the appendix of the WFLL principles states that:

All empresses must contribute to Empress League Fund. When she does Cultural works such as sewing, knitting, weaving mats, she must tithe at least one tenth of her earnings to the league (WFLL 2010: 16).

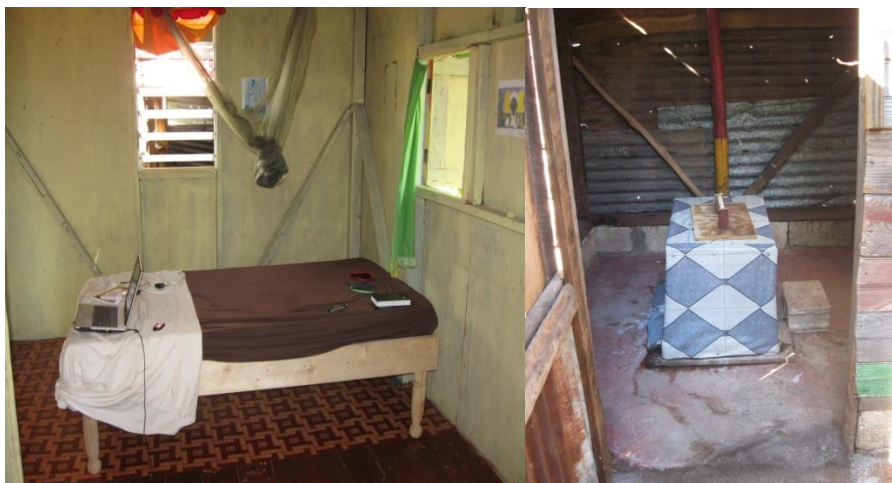
Juxtaposed with articles pertaining to the notion of socially expected behaviour for empresses, this appendix confers to the WFLL political and economic agency. The WFLL is not the fashion police of the camp, but a fully fledged feminine guild. The league is clearly financially independent from the Committee of Elders as women ought to pay economic allegiance to the *League* itself. The fact of owing tithe to the *league* indicates the level of organisation of this association. If seniority is definitely a criteria to acquire more prestige within the *league* in a similar fashion to the female guilds in West Africa (Oyewumi 1997) the network structure of the WFLL welcomes anyone to work in accordance with the association's aims and vision. This inclusivity makes it a dynamic and extremely productive group. Female elders will always have to be

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<sup>122</sup> Men's behaviour is regulated through the general *Principles* read every morning on the commune.

consulted in order to have the full approval of the league, yet the bureaucracy is not as heavy and rigid as that of the *Committee*. There is usually one leading empress per country who is to report to the leading Empress of Jamaica. The international leading Empresses have the duty to act as they see fit to promote the objectives of the EABIC, yet they have to report to the Headquarters in Jamaica.

Indeed, in charge of all women affairs, the WFL is responsible for the funding of all activities initiated by any member of the WFL. In addition to this, they are accountable for the maintenance, and development of female infrastructures. For instance thanks to the generosity, and the spirit of solidarity of the members of the league, the structure has been able to rebuild the visiting Empresses gates and *Journey Gate* in Bull Bay. They also activated the construction of the women quarters in Shashamane (Bonnacci, personal conversation May 10<sup>th</sup> 2008). Below are the photos of the *Journey Gate* restored after the hurricane. As it was mentioned above the construction was entirely funded by the WFL and made by skilled Bobo Shanti carpenters and builders from the commune. The result is a very comfortable bungalow with a kitchen, dry toilets, and kitchen:



**Figure 16 My bedroom and the dry toilet in the Journey Gate**



**Figure 17** The kitchen in the journey gate and me trying to light a fire.

Concerned about the wellbeing of the *Sistren*, the WFLI activities mainly revolve around investing in comfortable infrastructures, as well as organising clothes distribution for the needy. Sole organisation responsible for this aspect of communal life, the WFLI treasurer is liable for any eventual irregularity found on their fund raising network. For instance, as an honorary member of the WFLI, this researcher was asked to report to the French chapter, any evidence of fund mismanagement in the construction of the female gates. The accounts records must be available at all time, and any contributing member has the right to access them.

These accounts are of course independent from the ones of the Committee. As a matter of fact, the WFLI is very autonomous in the funding and organisation of its activities. Empress Maize, the treasurer, jokingly observed that if the WFLI was exclusively in charge of the reconstruction of the tabernacle, which is under the jurisdiction of the Committee, the building would have been designed, and concluded in no time. This remark underlines the efficiency of their organisation, and the pride that these women have to be part of such a dynamic international network. Another important activity carried out by the WFLI is, as mentioned before, clothes distribution. Very remote from the *SATC*<sup>123</sup> stereotypes about women and fashion, female clothing holds a particular value on the commune. Indeed, regular gifts of cloth and clothes are made to the WFLI headquarters in Jamaica. The empresses, regardless of their income,

<sup>123</sup> *Sex and The City* is a TV series about the lives of bourgeois women living in New York. The clothes worn by the protagonist have set the trend for numerous women *à la mode*.

need to be properly attired. As self-styled royalty, they must have regal clothes to wear for the various occasions on or out of the commune. Beautiful colours and original styles of robes are usually greatly admired on the camp. By allotting clothes to all female members on the commune, revenue differences from household to household are not visibly perceived. One may suggest that clothes distribution on the commune is one of the means of the EABIC to prevent the formation of social classes within the commune<sup>124</sup>, which is in accordance with the endeavours of the *Universal* principle.

The EABIC style of clothing is so important that robes and falls are readily available at the entrance of the camp for visitors of any size and shape. If it is not necessary for non Bobo men to wear a turban upon entering the camp, women, due to the special potency of their bodies, have to cover their hair with a fall and wear long flowing skirts. Mama Julie takes particular pride into washing the garments allocated to the eventual female visitors. According to her, she always chooses the nicest apparels in order to make the visiting female feel welcome. If some researchers saw this clothing requirements as signs of subordination (Lake 1998, Scott 2003), one may suggest here that the immediate allocation of EABIC styled garbs to the visiting, or neophyte female is characteristic of the *female power* discussed by Leo-Rhynie (2003).

In fact, while wearing a turban is a distinctive mark of hierarchical progress in the male vertical conception of power, women in abolishing the head-tie discrimination, re-affirm the network-based structure of their power. If both men and women are required to comply to the camp's regulations as far as clothing is concerned<sup>125</sup>, only the WFL has an organised network catering for this important need. The WFL therefore plays an active social, and spiritual role in the running of the commune, contrasting with the more ceremonial aspect of the Committee. This researcher was given a beautiful fall and a magnificent green robe that she kept ever since.

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<sup>124</sup> See section 3.5.6 of the third chapter.

<sup>125</sup> Men are expected to wear long sleeve shirts, turbans and pants at all time, when they are not wearing robes.

#### **4.2.2.b The WFL as an international association**

The WFL also organises various conferences and other events to promote their *livity* as Rastafari women in the EABIC. Their spirit of entrepreneurship is realistic and relevant to the reality of their market. Many empresses do not hesitate to use the latest technology in order to promote their ideas or business<sup>126</sup>. For instance Empress Rachel organised a charity concert in New York to raise funds for the reconstruction of the tabernacle in Jamaica. One of the songs that she sang during the event is currently available online and can be purchased to the benefit of the tabernacle construction work<sup>127</sup>. The promotion of this song is made on all social networks giving the EABIC great visibility through the work of their women.

#### **4.2.2.c. The WFL and recreational sex**

The WFL is of course very concerned with the menstrual regulations styled as the laws of Mama Omega. As an intrinsic aspect of EABIC womanhood, the WFL also had a hand in the elaboration of the twenty-one days period of purification. Indeed, as Empress Rachel recalls, women were required to remain *in house* only for fifteen days. With the creation of the WFL in 1980, one empress suggested to King Emmanuel that a longer period of purification could be beneficial to those willing to abide to some forms of birth control. After the twenty-first day in a woman cycle, fertility is at its lowest, allowing a space to recreational sex. The purification period is what has particularly outraged most female researchers in Rastafari studies, Lake (1998) being one of the most virulent. Without denying the tedious aspect of this ritual period of seclusion from an outsider's point of view, one can nevertheless argue here that in negotiating an extension to the fifteen days purification period, WFL women exercised agency over their own fertility and sexuality. Firstly, they elaborated a routine allowing them to take control of their fertility in a natural manner then; they institutionalised the idea of recreational sex formally taboo in Rastafari philosophy (Chevannes 1994: 259).

#### **4.2.2. d. The WFL home of the Rastawoman**

The WFL is therefore a powerful female organisation, which was able to create a reliable international network, in order to promote the EABIC *livity* from a female

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<sup>126</sup> In the following chapter, one is going to meet Empress Jodi and her stationery business.

<sup>127</sup> The following is a link to the video where Empress Rachel exhorts WFL and EABIC members to give money towards the reconstruction of the tabernacle <http://vimeo.com/1875028>

perspective. Posing as genuine Rastawomen<sup>128</sup>, these women go against the assertion that a woman of Rastafari is a *Rastaman woman* (Lake1998, Yawney1989). In fact one does not have to be in a relationship with a Rastaman in order to be part of the WFL, and an active Rastawoman. From the genesis of EABIC, the monastic rule of celibacy then prevailing in the community prevented the traditional *growing of daughters* process observed by Yawney (1989). Most women joining the camp at that time were single and had no hopes of getting a partner. Therefore, one can assume that if a woman joined, and remained within the EABIC *Livity*, for whatever reason she may have had, it was strictly as an active Rastawoman. I suggest that this particularity of the EABIC accentuates the spiritual credibility of its women, establishing a meritocracy from which both men and women can access prestige and recognition.

#### **4.2.2.e. The WFL and its limitations**

In spite of its great range of action and versatility, the WFL leadership structure can be problematical. Indeed, the direction team is composed of an authorised ambassador, a treasurer, and a secretary in the persons of the Empresses Esther, Maize and Sharon. Arguably, the fact that core members of the association are appointed instead of being elected is going cause problems in the handing over of power. For instance Empress Maize, the treasurer, often adds to her function that of ambassador for the *League* (Empress Maize, personal conversation November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008) despite the fact that Empress Esther is the appointed ambassador. Sanctioned by King Emmanuel himself, Empress Esther's mandate as the authorised spoke person for the EABIC, and the WFL is a lifelong one. Even though she fully supports Empress Maize's endeavours for women empowerment within the EABIC, she nonetheless insists on the fact that she is the only legitimate and liable ambassador for the *Congress* and readily agreed to show me her official recognition and many certificates:

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<sup>128</sup> Using the plural Rastawomen would devalue the meaning of the word, as *women* are associated with evil.





**Figure 18** Two of the many certificates held by Empress Esther

Because of this situation, tensions can be felt within the association's leadership, occasioning minor disagreements and rifts that are usually breached for the organisation of major celebrations. Indeed, these frictions are always transcended, and the Empresses of the WFL will always unite to prepare for ceremonies, or other charitable actions. Nonetheless, one can foresee succession struggles in the absence of Empress Esther, as it is the case with the Honourable Priest Morgan succeeding King Emmanuel.

#### **4.3. The Committee and the WFL working together**

The WFL and the Committee of Elders are therefore working independently towards the same goal: the promotion of the EABIC *Livity*. The Committee can be regarded as a host for the WFL, which can be considered the fuel of the Congress. On the one hand, the Committee with its detailed constitution is a highly centralised system, which has been stagnating due to the numerous power struggles that occurred after the death of King Emmanuel, the charismatic leader. The Woman Freedom Liberation League is on the other hand extremely active and dynamic.

Due to its international network, decision concerning infrastructures, businesses, charitable actions, event organisation and logistics are dealt with directly by the local chapter association. A project in the female sphere of the EABIC will be carried from the beginning to the end by the funds, and vision of the women of the WFL. The Committee of Elders enjoys a more rigid structure composed of both men and women, even though the text of the constitution does not make provision as for the number of women that ought to compose it. Seniority and prestige seem to be determining criterion to access the decision making spheres of the community.



Instituted by King Emmanuel, the WFLL enjoys the same legitimacy as the Committee of Elders. Women involved in the WFLL, and the Committee activities do not have to renounce part of their femininity, as do *malfanms* in other Caribbean spheres of official power. Indeed, both entities constitutionally require the presence of women, with the WFLL exclusivity and unapologetically catering for female needs, creating a true *will to power* (Barriteau 2003: 63). Male involvement in the WFLL affairs is unheard of. One would suggest that should it be the case, this man would be the one losing his social status of manhood to become a *Makoumè*, as the WFLL constitution does not cater for the latter.

The question of authority sharing in the governing institutions of the camp is quite an interesting one. The Committee of Elders has decidedly been defined as a decision making institution, able to rule over the Jamaican commune, and the international chapters of the EABIC. This overall authority does encompass the WFLL as a part of the EABIC. One can only assume that its current importance had not been foreseen from its creation. Indeed, the WFLL does not have an actual constitution, and the texts referring to it are mainly about the dress code, behavioural and menstruation taboos. Consequently, one may argue that because of the lack of leadership brought forth by the death of King Emmanuel, in the 1990's, and the constant expansion of the EABIC attracting women of various backgrounds and experiences, the WFLL was able to negotiate a wider space in the decision making area of the EABIC. Yet, this could only be possible due to the theocratic nature of the EABIC. In fact, the fundamental principle of EABIC theology is based on the notion of *I and I*. As gods and goddesses of creation, both male and female members of the EABIC are equal to one another. In this context, it would be easier for the goddess to *naturally* access political and leadership position within the community than in a society where she is regarded as intrinsically evil.

Consequently, from a small female organisation concerned about establishing the rules of EABIC *respectability* in Bobo Shanti women, the WFLL has become a powerful guild that grows independently from a weakened Committee of Elders. It is currently the most active component of the EABIC. Resourcefulness and the ability to function in network, traits traditionally conceded to *chestnut* women in public sector (Senior 1990, Barriteau 2006), have allowed the empresses to maintain and develop the

WFL. Because of the cobweb structure of the WFL, similar to Leo-Rhynie's *Female Power*, opposed to the vertical hierarchy type of the Committee of Elders, the Woman Freedom Liberation League has been able to survive the loss of the Charismatic leader.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

One may therefore suggest that the constitution of the EABIC provided a platform for both men and women in the mixed Committee of Elders, and the Woman Freedom Liberation League. The Committee of Elders as the governing body is to rule over the camp and the WFL is to define the female code of conduct. Nevertheless, with the death of King Emmanuel, the Committee and its hierarchy has been weakened. Thanks to its network structure, the Woman Freedom Liberation League has strived to become the most effective group of the two. Currently, one may say that the Committee of Elders is now the ceremonial head of the EABIC, while the WFL is its active arm. Power within the EABIC is therefore shared by both men and women, whose actions go in the same radical direction. In both associations, seniority prevails over gender. The EABIC has been radical enough to allow women an active and genuine role in the ruling of the commune without having them lose their femininity. The following chapter will analyse the commune's *genderised* productive and reproductive activities, and how they could be read from the EABIC radical focus.

## Chapter 5: Work according to the Universal

In effect, structural adjustment plans mobilize women's unpaid labour as domestic nurturers and economizers to subsidize costs for international capitalism and to guarantee the debts incurred by poor states. At the same time, the tightened economic conditions that result from economic restructuring programmes diminish the security of formal wage employment and increase dependence on informal means of income generation. (Mills 2003: 47).

In her article “Gender Inequality in the Global Labour Force”, Mills pertinently underlines the fact that the socio-cultural reality of a country, or a community, influences greatly the effects on gendered labour inequality in a capitalistic system. In the following section, will be the question of gendered division of labour within the EABIC, and an opportunity to assess the pertinence of Mill’s statement. It has been discussed in the previous chapters that Bobo Shanti people had to create their own philosophical discourse to counteract the mainstream narrative of spirituality, and the representation of the physical body. To manifest this radical stand, they have created a new language, a new conception of Christianity, a new perception of their body, and the notion of power. In order to sustain this new philosophy and lifestyle, it would appear logical that they would also define a new distinctive economic network.

In the previous section dedicated to political power, it has been demonstrated that women were institutionally involved in the decision-making spheres of the community. One could also notice that tensions related to leadership hand over were plaguing the camp ever since the disappearance of their spiritual leader King Emmanuel Charles Edward. These directorship issues have had a direct effect on the camp population, even corrupting some practices of the *Jerusalem School*<sup>129</sup>. By focusing on the value of work, I am eager to discover the dynamic between economic success/failure, and gender within the EABIC. What are the traditional labour divisions? What are the measures taken by both Empresses, and Lords to tackle the post King Emmanuel crisis, threatening the camp’s integrity? Can they resist the prominent Jamaican neo-liberal patterns?

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<sup>129</sup> *Jerusalem School* is the name given to the commune as a training centre for Bobo Shanti aspirants and elders. This aspect of the commune is going to be discussed further in the following chapter.

### 5.1. Jamaican gendered division of labour: the value of female work

In this chapter, I am going to adopt the Women in the Caribbean Project's (WICP) definition of work. Here, the notion of work has not been limited to remunerated labour. In fact, the following classification has been regarded to be the most judicious manner to assess female work. Therefore, through the censuses organised by the WICP throughout the Caribbean, women were said to be part of the *Home service* sector when their activities revolved around homemaking, and child care activities. *Home production* comprised women engaged in *home service* work complemented with income earning activities, in and around the house on a regular basis. The WICP also identified women *employed by family members and receiving wages/salary* and those *Employed by others and receiving wages/salary*. There was also the self explanatory section *employed in one's own business/farm*. The term *unemployed* was allocated to women who declared not to make any sort of contribution to the household, and just "sit at home doing nothing" (Massiah 1982 in Senior 1991:112-113). From this classification, one assumes that various combinations are possible as women, apart from the *unemployed* ones, are all engaged to some degree, in the *home service* sector. Arguably, it is because this sector is not valued, or esteemed in neo-liberal societies that great social unbalance such as female subordination can be witnessed.

Jamaica, like most developing countries, had to face major financial crises throughout the end of the twentieth century. Indeed, in the nineteen eighties, the country experienced a major one, within the context of radicalised domestic politics, and international debt crisis. In the mid nineteen nineties, another crisis was associated with liberalisation, and the speculative behaviour of weakly regulated financial institutions (Atkins 2005: 3). To canalise the impact of these financial catastrophes, the Jamaican government, under the influence of the IMF, effectuated major cuts in the public service. These cuts coupled with the privatisation of essential services, were widely criticised by feminist activists and theoreticians (Barriteau: 1996).

In fact, the government strategy endangered the already fragile position of the new middle class, tightly connected with the working class, causing women to use their traditional *unconventional trading networks*, in order to face the situation. The critics of these cuts argued that shifting the IMF attention from the market to the household units

was necessary, in order to get an accurate, and just reading of the socio economic reality of the Caribbean (Barriteau 1996: 150). The latter argues that policy makers should realise that it is the economic behaviour coming from the household that affects the market, and not systematically the contrary. Considering the fact that an average of 37%<sup>130</sup> of households are female headed throughout the Caribbean, failing to ameliorate public services benefiting the household will inevitably affect the market in a negative way:

For example, when SAP<sup>131</sup> create widespread unemployment, households have less disposable income. Yet they still have to meet the basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing... When through SAPs the state restricts the public sector, it is women within households who take up the slack (Barriteau 1996: 150).

Indeed, women have to *take up the slack*, and sacrifice “self” in order to face the difficulties of the household’s finances (Senior 1991: 52). Barriteau suggests that by having a microeconomic approach to the gender realities of households in this region, appropriate policies could be made, greatly improving the socio-economic realities, and benefit an internationally competitive market (1996). Arguably, one may suggest that because there is little value and prestige attached to the various aspects of *female work*, it will be difficult for these eventual new policies to be created, enforced and accepted.

In fact, the value, or the lack thereof, of *female work* is something that had been deeply inscribed in the Jamaican psyche. Despite male underachievement figures recorded in primary secondary and tertiary education, translated in the *Male Marginalisation theory* (Miller 1994), it is now a well-established fact that male students are predominant in subjects leading to the best income generating positions on the job market. In spite of an equal access to school programmes and institutions, female students appear to stay away from courses leading to very lucrative careers, and, despite their excellent results, they get little gratification for their academic efforts (Isaacs and Poole 1993). This lack of female presence in the prestigious course curricula has had a direct impact on the type of positions occupied by women. Statistics have demonstrated that a majority of Jamaican women are employed in the categories such as

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<sup>130</sup> In Jamaica, forty two percent of households are female headed (Barriteau 2001: 6)

<sup>131</sup> SAP: Structural Adjustment Policies.

*Private Households with Employed Persons or Education*, which correspond to the less remunerated jobs on the market (STATIN 2009).

Jamaica is from this perspective a country where women appear to be cantoned to specific sectors, which are sensibly less profitable, thus less prestigious than others that may be regarded as male. If, they are not officially prevented to access positions traditionally regarded as male as the election of the seventh prime minister of Jamaica the Most Honourable Portia-Lucretia Simpson-Miller portrays; there are nevertheless some unofficial pressures that tacitly prevent them to even consider aspiring to *male* functions (Leo-Rhynie 2003).

On top of the timid presence of women in the most lucrative areas of the Jamaican workforce, it has also been observed that women constitute the greatest portion of unemployment in all industrial sectors, and across all age groups (STATIN 2009). The issues of female unemployment, and their awkward position in the labour force of Jamaica is a recurring one as twenty years earlier, the WCIP had made the same observations, and drawn similar conclusions (Senior 1991, Barriteau 1998).

In addition to the career choice influences, it appears that: "...activity where ratio of workers in particular jobs may become so overwhelmingly female that the job themselves become feminized and so of low status" (Momsen 2004: 173). This statement can be verified in the example of the teaching profession, which became under valorised as it gradually welcomed more females (Barker 2005). The principal issue attached with female labour is therefore the lack of remuneration, thus recognition and prestige attached to it. In a capitalist society where money is the principal means to reward and value work, the observations of Barriteau (1996) and Momsen (2004) are therefore perfectly justified.

One may conclude that the traditional Caribbean work place, or the site of economic production, is fundamentally female unfriendly. With the Structural Adjustments Policies disastrous influences (Barriteau 1996), and the general observations regarding women's work (STATIN 2009), one can relate to Momsen when she stated that: "women's employment is predominantly in the informal sector and in

the lowest-paid, most insecure jobs...” (Momsen 2004: 173). In the EABIC *livity* where female subordination is allegedly rampant (Lake 1994), could there be a connection with the very explicit sexual division of labour? Within this particularly difficult economic context, it will be interesting to analyse how the Empresses and the Lords value each other’s work.

## 5.2. The Universal

Every morning, at the *Roll Call*, the *Principles* of the EABIC are being read for everyone to hear and remember. Among these rules, the concept of the *Universal* is the one on which the herald draws the most attention. The *Universal* can be considered to be a philanthropic system that allows the sustainability of the EABIC *Livity*, by preventing the formation of social classes within the community. Priest Wayne explains that:

The Congress is organized around a collective cooperation, therefore I n I suppose to work along that line. But it doesn't happen that way all the time, therefore some of us have to work **alone**<sup>132</sup> at times. However whatever you achieve you must know that it is our obligation to give something to the house. The Universal setting is for everyone so it is our responsibility to work, that it can be maintained. In truth, it comes first. The universal setting is the representation of the family of GOD MOST HIGH SELASSIE I JAH RASTAFARI.

Where tithes is concern, once you are earning you should give 10 percent, but at the same time it is not something that is enforce by law upon anyone. It is left to your conscience for you to do so. The tithe is for the church therefore everyone should make it their point of duty to pay tithes once you earn. (Priest Wayne, personal conversation March 10<sup>th</sup> 2009).

In the absolute, one should not need money to live on the camp as money transactions are not allowed on the commune. In fact, thanks to this system, the EABIC community ought to have been able to fully operate without ever using cash within its walls. Ideally, anyone could freely join the *Congress*, work, eat and sleep without the worries of paying bills or buying food and clothes.

In practice, the Universal could be observed through the strong values of sharing and generosity present on the commune. The fantastic work of the WFL towards clothes distribution, and renovation that was mentioned in the previous chapter, can be noted here as well. According to the EABIC ethos, every men and women must wear

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<sup>132</sup> Emphasis in the original text.

descent clothing, regardless of the consequence of their income. These clothes are particularly important as they are linked to the spiritual notion of the body/temple. Because they are all gods and goddesses, they all ought to wear regal clothes. The *Universal* would ensure that everyone is dressed in a regal fashion, without worrying about money. With the *Universal* help, class distinction based on clothing apparels is therefore not possible<sup>133</sup>.

Cooking was, and is still to some extent the *Universal kitchen's* special prerogative. During the time of King Emmanuel, the *Universal kitchen* provided *ital* food for everyone and every day, except on the ritual days of fasting. Cooking in one's personal house was strictly forbidden. It is only with the massive arrival of children in the commune population, that women were expressively granted permission to cook at home, in case the *Universal* food should not be ready in time for the little ones going to school. If the *Universal kitchen* is not as efficient as it used to be, some priests exclusively eat there. This researcher has had the opportunity to enjoy a *Universal* meal on the Sabbath day. It was composed of homemade bread, fritters and coconut pone<sup>134</sup>. These breads and cakes are all baked in a traditional coal oven. The skills and the patience of the bakers, and cooks are universally admired throughout the camp.

In the early years of the commune, all revenues were returned to the *Universal*. For instance, the profits made from the broom factory, and for the craft production went directly to the common funds. The crops cultivated outside of the camp went straight to the *Universal kitchen*. Everyone on the camp worked for the *Universal*. Those living outside of the camp or engaged in other activities were required to offer tithe, in order to contribute as well (Empress Rachel, personal conversation January 20<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Nowadays, the *universal* is not functioning as it used to do. Priest Wayne underlined the fact that he has sometimes to work alone. Working alone was unheard of in King Emmanuel's era. One was supposed to get help from able men to till the ground, plant and reap for the *Universal* so as one person alone could not be responsible

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<sup>133</sup> This notion has been discussed previously with an emphasis on the WFLL to achieve this goal. Section 4.2.2.a of the third chapter.

<sup>134</sup> Coconut pone is a sort of pudding made with coconut and sometime sweet potatoes. This desert is extremely filling.

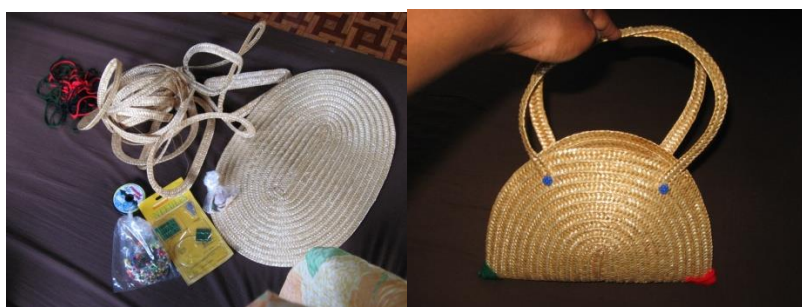


for the subsistence of the commune. The Universal Kitchen is not functioning too well, and many are cooking in their own houses regardless of the prohibition to do so. The revenues from the broom factory and the craftwork do not seem to suffice to the sustenance of such a system. This may be due to the fact that members are not returning tithes as faithfully as it used to be done. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficult financial position of the commune, both Lords and Empresses are organising their activities to maintain the spirit of the *Universal* alive.

### 5.3. Working on the commune

*Princess, can you sew, can you make craft? I am going to bring something for you tomorrow you hear?* Those were the words of the honourable Priest Joshua, who after the seventh day of this researcher's confinement in the journey gate, enquired about the way she could contribute to the camps' economy. Indeed, one may say that the camp's economic activities turn around: craft production, broom manufacturing, and roots production. These activities are of course gender delimited.

Women are essentially involved in *house service*, and craft production systems. Craft is a very important part of the commune's economy, and all women are expected to take an active part in it. Some members of the commune have been complaining about the fact that nowadays, less and less women are engaged in craft production. Indeed, during their *journey*, women are expected to produce EABIC merchandises that could be distributed by *Bredren* or themselves once they become *free*. For instance; Priest Joshua approached me to make some craftwork. Even though I told him that I was not proficient, at all, in art and manual things, he took the time to explain to me how I could make a bag out of raffia and yarn. After a few trials, I was able produce this:



**Figure 19** Raffia bag produced on the commune. Before and After.

Another prominent activity on the commune is production of brooms. Regarded as a trademark of the EABIC, the *Congress* is the only Rastafarian mansion to have specialised in the broom manufactory. Indeed, EABIC brooms are very popular in Jamaica. The factory on the commune is run by men only, who take care of the production, and the distribution. This business venture is relatively organised as a specific set of Priests, or Prophets would be in charge of getting the correct tall grass and the proper sticks to make the brooms while others would only take care of the fabrication of the brooms. Three types of brooms are made on the commune:

\_indoor brooms

\_outdoor brooms

\_dusting brooms

Even if Empress Rachel mentioned that in early years, the commune used to produce sandals, broom manufacturing is nowadays the only industrial activity still running.

*Roots*<sup>135</sup> production is a relatively new venture within the EABIC. Indeed, the tonic beverage is very popular in Jamaica, and in Europe although some people are concerned about the components, and the skills of the brewers. Nonetheless, propelled by its *Livity*, EABIC appears to be a byword for quality, and its *roots* has the potential to become a successful business enterprise. The tonic *Roots* is also essentially produced by men. Male and female work has been organised around these major activities. The following section endeavours to analyse how gendered work division is perceived on the commune.

### 5.3.1. Empresses at work

Because of the ritual purification period of twenty one days per month, women living on the camp are usually not employed outside. It is therefore in the Empress' duties to: clean their houses, and assist cleaning the houses of the *Bredren* when necessary, wash their clothes, help them in mending robes, and produce craft work to be sold. The range of their activities is to be measured according to their freedom of movement, directly linked to their age, and the prestige that they acquired through their *livity*. The following are the cases of several Empresses living and working on the camp.

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<sup>135</sup> See the use of this beverage in the second section of chapter two dedicated to the body.

The first example of EABIC working woman is that of Empress K<sup>136</sup>, an Empress in her sixties, whose movements are no longer limited by the ritual purification period and who can be considered to be an active member of the WFL. When she is not involved in WFL duties, Empress K holds a little shop in her house where she sells snacks, homemade juice that she refrigerates in one of the very rare refrigerators of the camp. She also sells herb and on rare occasions food. Children and grownups seeking snacks, refreshments and marijuana always visit her house. She is the only person on the camp to have a shop, and also the only one to sell herbs along with Jah Tiger. She frequently goes to town in order to re-stock her shop. In tending a shop on the commune premises, she openly defies the *Principles* set by King Emmanuel by encouraging the circulation of money on the commune. Nevertheless, as she is an elder, and because of the magnanimity of the Honourable Priest Morgan's leadership, her business is growing and she continues her activity without serious legal disturbances or competition. In addition to this, Empress K does not pay tithe to the *House*, which is quite understandable. In fact, she explained that she would not pay a tax for a business not recognised by the government. Very independent and argumentative, Empress K does not fear anyone. She is indeed well connected with family members, and friends in the United States, who support her financially from time to time. For these reasons, she lives slightly above the average household of the camp, as she owns a television set, a refrigerator and a comfortable double bed. She also has the use of a private little garden where she grows sugar cane, sugar apples, bananas, golden apples and all sorts of fruits from which she makes the juices that she sells.

Before moving in the Bobo Shanti commune, Empress K had a shop in Kingston, which would explain the ease with which she can take care of her account books. Never married, she did not have children, except for a son that she informally adopted<sup>137</sup>. She dedicated her life to the EABIC and abandoned her comparatively comfortable profane life to care for King Emmanuel, and retire to the commune. She explains: "Before Emmanuel quitted the flesh, I was the one taking care of him, washing his clothes, cleaning his house, and cutting his nails. He was such a great Man.

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<sup>136</sup> Because several aspects of the female activities that are going to be mentioned below are not all positive, I have decided to keep all the cases anonymous in order to maintain confidentiality.

<sup>137</sup> In the Caribbean it used to be common for a family member to take a nephew, a niece or a godchild from its blood family and take charge of the child's education when the actual parent could not. See the work of Byron and Condon (2008) on the subject of migration and child rearing in the Caribbean.

As soon as I was *free*, I would go to him and serve him” (Empress K, personal conversation November 9<sup>th</sup> 2008). Empress K is much respected on the camp. As an elder, who has conversed with King Emmanuel himself, she has gathered enough prestige to openly defy the authority of the Honourable Priest Morgan in running her business.

The second example would be that of Empress S, a middle aged woman who lives a few meters away from Empress K. As a former schoolteacher, she is the secretary of the EABIC. She shares her time between writing letters to various governments around the world concerning the EABIC repatriation plea, and giving particular reading and mathematics lessons to adults. In spite of these various activities, she also finds the time to make beautiful handbags to be sold outside of the commune.

Before joining the EABIC, Empress S was the headmaster of a secondary school. She was married, but never had children. Her former profession and her actual position within the EABIC are commanding a lot of respect from men and women alike. Indeed, before meeting her, this researcher was briefed in the following manner: “And this is Empress S, she is a big head you know, she used to be a head master!” Her former profession and the fact that she lives according to the EABIC principles grants her a lot of prestige within the community, even though she joined the commune after the death of King Emmanuel.

Commended for her work in the EABIC office, she is extremely praised for her crochet bags. As mentioned above, craftwork is an important part of the camp’s economy. EABIC Craftsmanship is much valued in Jamaica to the point that some people can deviate from an upright livity, and succumb to the temptation of making a quick profit. For instance, while I was on the commune, Empress S had left for the day to attend a press conference with other EABIC members. While she was out, her house was burglarised, and all of her bags were stolen. This unfortunate incident was one of the many occasions for which I was admonished: “It is not because you see someone wearing a turban that he is a true Bobo”. Also not limited in her movement by the twenty one days of ritual purification, Empress S is a respected member of the EABIC. Her craftsmanship, her secretarial and teaching skills have granted her a lot of prestige on the commune even though she does not generate as much money as Empress K.

The following case is that of Empress M who has recently undergone menopause thus is now recently free to move as she pleases. Nevertheless, she is still considered too young to be called an elder. In her late forties, her endurance and talent are commendable. Empress M is a talented seamstress. When she does not have a lot of robe orders, she makes bags in batik that she decorates herself. She is also a painter, and her work is extremely original and beautiful. In lieu of the traditional red gold and green patterns usually found on EABIC merchandise, she would paint roaring lions, peaceful sceneries with HIM Menen and Haile Selassie. She is also known to make female staffs that she usually decorates with much taste. She has a large garden that she cultivates herself. From time to time, one of the *Bredren* would come and help her with the heavier loads, which is not always necessary as she is endowed with phenomenal strength and stamina. Empress M is indeed able to clear the vicinity of her compound, and often would clear altogether one to two hundred meter square of bush, with only a cutlass in a few hours. On such occasions, men would usually come and give her a hand, while praising her strength and her sense of initiative. Though respected and in spite of her talents and physical abilities, Empress M has not yet reached the level of prestige attached with the status of elder. Seniority appears to be a determining factor in the acquisition of general regard.

The next case is that of two female elders, Empress B and Empress X, who live together. Empress X being rather ill, it is Priest Y who takes care of her even if she is attended by Empress B to a lesser extent. Priest Y is the one who washes their clothes, clean the house and cooks for them. These empresses own a gas cooker, which is also a very rare object on the commune. Very discreet, they keep to themselves, unless required at a press conference or promotional event for the EABIC. These Empresses are indeed very eloquent and their age commands respect. Arguably, their authority may only come from their age as Empress B and Y are the only women known to this researcher who do not have an activity on the commune. A priest undertakes the functions usually attributed to women in Jamaican peasant traditions. This cross gendered situation does not seem to place them in the awkward position of the *malfanm*, as they enjoy enough prestige as goddesses to figure on almost all the videos and documentaries dedicated to the EABIC.

Another case is that of Empress N who does not live directly on the commune although she is a daily visitor. Empress N is also a middle-aged woman who has undergone menopause and is free of her movements. She is not old enough to be considered as an elder. Very concerned about the welfare of the empresses, she is often seen conversing, making notes of what needs to be fixed, painted, rebuilt and she uses her wide international network for fund raising purposes. Very industrious, she is deeply involved in the work of the WFL. Mother of a large family, she would see to her family welfare in gardening and sewing, but more usually enjoy her children's attentions as they are now working adults. At the time of the research, she was not known to produce craft to be sold on behalf of the EABIC. Although she is not old enough to be considered an elder, and does not produce craftwork or services for the community, Empress N is a very prestigious member of the EABIC due to her involvement in the WFL. Compared with Empress K, who is in the same age group, she is generally better considered and regarded. Being an active member of the WFL may therefore be a determining factor in the process of acquiring a prestigious status on the commune.

In spite of the majority of elder women on the commune, there were also a few pre-menopause women present on the camp at the time of the research, in the persons of Empress V, R and F. Assessing the number of younger women proved to be a difficult task, as they never went to the *journey gate* nor attended service. When this researcher enquired about this flagrant double standard, she was told that these women were not following the livity and lived as they pleased. Because of the principle of *I man Free* they are left to the torment of their conscience.

Empress F was particularly at the centre of gossips, because she gave birth to another child very quickly after the birth of the previous one. This indicated that she did not respect the postpartum purification period, and conceived her second child when sex was still taboo. Empress F essentially takes care of her children, who all go to school, and is rarely seen outside of her house. Her husband is one of the rare Bobo Shanti employed by a company outside of the commune. They regularly receive barrels of groceries, clothes or shoes from the United States where the Empress has relatives. The arrival of the barrels is always an occasion for gossip, as Empress F is known for not sharing her goods.

Empress V, and her husband are generally known to be petty lawbreakers and are suspected of small robberies, in and outside of the camp. Empress V does not go to the *journey gate*, nor attend service. Always dressed with the EABIC care, she is often seen asking for financial support usually known as *strength*. She is not known to produce craft. On the positive side, all of her children are going to school and always look clean and properly dressed. She receives some commendation from many members of the EABIC because: *she only breed for one man*<sup>138</sup>.

Empress R lives on the camp with her large family. Like Empress F, she remains in her house and takes care of her children, keeps to herself and does not go to the *journey gate*. Similarly to Empress F and V, she is not known for her craftsmanship. People gossip about her because she listens loudly to Irie FM, one of the most popular reggae music radio stations in Jamaica.

Too young to be regarded as elders, and defiant to the point of not respecting the *Principles* related to EABIC female ritual purification, the younger women residing on the commune are not really regarded as EABIC members. All involved in the *house service* sector, they can be compared to any other women living in the neighbouring area to the difference that they are all in stable relationships.

Other young women are present on the commune, yet the most of them are from other Caribbean countries, Central and South America, Europe or Canada. They are the visiting Empresses. These Empresses are the ones who truly carry out most of the traditional tasks required by the *principles*.

Indeed, Princess J and C were very often seen washing and sewing for the *Bredren* when they were *free*. Princess C is well known for the beautiful jewels that she makes out of seeds and threads. Her craftwork is universally admired on the camp, and the Prophet who was in charge of selling them abroad appear extremely satisfied, and are eager to trade with her. Princess J is trusted to the point that she is often called upon to prepare a special balm for Priest Joshua's wounded eye. This researcher had the

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<sup>138</sup> Having children from different fathers is very common in Jamaica. Having children with only one man is highly regarded. For more information on the dynamics between child bearing and social and economical status see Tafari-Ama (2005) and Goode (1960).

pleasure of going to the river to wash some of the French *Bredren's* clothes, sew the hem of Priest Joshua's robe and decorate several brooms, and staffs for Priest Wayne. The Princesses, who regard them as parts of their apprenticeship as EABIC women, undergo these tasks with pleasure.

In spite of these demonstrations of trust and appreciation, the younger empresses nevertheless hold a subordinated position relative to the female elders. Indeed, these women are in charge of the EABIC, training for females and are meticulous about the impeccability the princesses' actions and behaviour. The princesses were never rebuked harshly, yet when they were reprimanded, the female elder would usually bring some tokens or snack to make the younger ones understand that everything was said and done out of love. Men do not take part in the apprenticeship of the young Empress. On the Jamaican camp, it was made clear that the referral persons for the studying princesses were Empress Esther, Mama Maize, Mama Julie and Empress Beth. These women never withheld their counsels and admonitions, to the point that some could regard the princesses as being over sheltered. In fact, there was an instance where one of the princesses did not want to go right away to the *journey gate*. She had a couple days of freedom before her menses and desired to remain in the female guesthouse with this researcher. Unfortunately, one of the female elders had kept close track of her menstrual cycle, and demanded that she confine herself immediately in the *journey gate*. This was done with so much ardour and passion, that other empresses came to plead on behalf of the princess, underlining the fact that she had not actually started her cycle. Soon, the discussion turned into a very heated dispute, and the princess felt compelled to oblige unless the first elder loses face. Being discredited in front of junior empresses or anyone on the camp is indeed regarded as a major instance of shame and discomfort.

The visiting princesses are usually very appreciated by the community. Both men and women would praise them as virtuous women, goddesses of creation, because of their attitude toward the purification rituals and their contribution to the welfare of the community. In spite of their exemplary behaviour, they are not as prestigious as the female elders of the commune. Seniority in this particular case would therefore determine the amount of prestige that these women could enjoy.



To summarise the situation, one may suggest that the Bobo Shanti commune of Bull Bay is composed of three categories of women. The first category comprises women who underwent menopause and whose freedom of movement does the community accept. Due to their age, they are not expected to do any physically demanding tasks for the community, but they contribute to the production of goods, which are sold outside of the camp. The second category refers to the pre-menopause women residing on the commune. Interestingly enough, at the time of this research, none of them abided by the policies of female ritual purification. They were frowned upon and did not usually participate to the camp's life, or to the WFL activities. The third category comprises the visiting Empresses and princesses who are generally eager to fully take part in the communal life, but are constantly checked by the elders of the first category.

From these observations, one can deduce that seniority and the respect of the ritual principles are the main factors determining the amount of prestige that a woman may have on the camp. Although craftsmanship is important, seniority and the respect of the EABIC principles would usually command admiration, praises and invitations to major gatherings and *reasoning* sessions in and outside of the commune. *House service* work, though necessary to the wellbeing of the family, is not recognised in the public domain if the said services are reserved to the circle of one's own family or compound. A woman would clean her house while a goddess would contribute to the spirit of cleanliness of the community in helping the *Bredren* and the incapacitated ones.

### **5.3.2. Lords at work**

As a woman, this researcher was rarely around the *Bredren* out of the celebration and ceremonial settings. The male population of the camp is much larger than the female one. From my observations, the young priests, prophets and neophytes are very active in physically demanding jobs while elders choose to remain in less exhausting, yet important activities. Without mandatory monthly rituals of purification, freedom of movement is not an issue for men. The following is an analysis of typical

days in the lives of several EABIC men. Priest Wayne<sup>139</sup> has been kind enough to send us the details of his daily routine:

I normally wake up between 3 and 4 O' Clock most mornings. As a Priest I do not work for anyone but the BLACK CHRIST AND MYSELF, at times I give Hon Priest PAR a strength<sup>140</sup> at his cook shop until half way three. I am accustomed to be self-reliant because that way I and I can remain a free man to do CHRIST WORK.

In addition to these activities, Priest Wayne, is also taking turns at the *universal* kitchen, where he bakes bread, roasts breadfruits and prepares fritters with talent. Very industrious, he is also very involved in the broom business. One could notice that he was not using the same facilities as the other *Bredren* working in the broom factory. Nevertheless he assured us that he was faithfully giving tithes to benefit the *Universal*. Priest Wayne would usually sell his brooms by himself and charge according to the financial means of the costumer. When asked about this apparent injustice, he claimed that:

A broom is essential in a house. You could have a big house, full of material, but if you do not have a broom in it, you are not going to feel comfortable in it. As Bobo it is our responsibility to provide brooms for the rich and the poor. Everyone have to eat. The rich can give a bit more, the poor a bit less and it creates a balance. (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, November 24<sup>th</sup> 2008).

*Roots* preparation is also one of his many activities. Not content to sell the beverage near the vicinity of the camp, Priest Wayne is in the process of getting a licence, and the approval of the health ministry to sell his products on a larger scale. Yet, he is still very concerned about his business to remain a Bobo Shanti affair:

Concerning the roots, it has the potential to do well but because it is not legal in the system it is at a slow paste...The thing is I do not want to borrow money from any financial institution, I would prefer to find investors from amongst my own. ... Honestly, I want it to be a Congress business rather than a personal one. I just want to be a shareholder. I want the congress to own 50% or more of the shares.

Here again, the concern about profit redistribution is reinforced. Unlike traditional neo-liberal practices, Priest Wayne's business venture is elaborated to benefit the entire community, and not merely a few shareholders.

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<sup>139</sup> In this section, real names will be used as none of the participants were involved in controversial activities.

<sup>140</sup> A *Strength* is a Rastafari word referring to the word help. A *strength* can be financial moral or physical.

Most Bobo Shanti on the camp smoke the *holy herb*, marijuana, yet this researcher has been surprised to learn that its production was not part of the commune's activities. When interrogated on this apparent aberration as the cultivation of this plant could generate substantial profits and benefits to the commune, and the promotion of Rastafari at large, Priest Wayne quietly answered: "Do you want the police to come and arrest all of us?" Indeed, even for religious purposes, marijuana remains an illegal plant that could jeopardise the existence of the commune. King Emmanuel did not list marijuana production and distribution as an acceptable profession and in the Bull Bay community; and up to the time of this study, people cautiously refrain from cultivating it.

Priest Wayne is an ambitious young Priest who has a vision for the commune and the EABIC at large. His craftwork, his regular *strengths* to various members of the community and his cooking are admired and praised on the commune. Nevertheless, as he still is in his thirties, he does not have the seniority necessary to be respected as an elder.

Priest Joshua is also a very active and young Priest of the EABIC. Very outspoken, he is often present in the international EABIC delegations. When he is not travelling to promote the Congress, he is a very prolific craft maker. Indeed, he can leave the camp for days looking for shells, pieces of woods or any material that would allow him to create staffs, rattles, and *guidances*, the EABIC broaches. These objects are essential parts of the EABIC paraphernalia.

Every Bobo Shanti regardless of gender owns a staff. These wooden batons come in different shapes and sizes, and are carefully decorated with symbols and the colours of the EABIC. Very important, the staff symbolises the mission of spiritual leadership that the EABIC has undertaken as a *Priesthood Order*. It is also a mystic weapon that is brandished in case of spiritual, and physical trouble. This researcher was given a small staff when left alone in the *Journey gate*.

The *guidance* is also a very important feature of the Bobo Shanti attire. These broaches come in various shapes and usually represent the members of the Trinity: HIM Haile Selassie, HIM Menen, King Emmanuel and Marcus Garvey. They can be very

basic to extremely detailed and decorated objects. The *Guidances* are used to immediately inform of the spiritual allegiance of those who wear them. They are also worn to trigger the interest of the public and guide them into the *Right* direction (Priest Stéphane, personal conversation, August 8th 2007). The rattle is used to emphasise something that is said. One usually shakes his or her rattle when *chanting down Babylon*. With the tambourines, the rattles are an inherent part of a Nyabinghi chanting session.

The *guidances*, staff and rattles are usually ordered by Bobo Shanti members. If they are sold, they are usually bought by other members of Rastafari. The secular craft products are reserved to more touristic markets. Priest Joshua is one of the *Bredren* in charge of selling the craft production of the camp. As far as remuneration is concerned, he explains that there are various methods that can be applied. Firstly, when he provides material for an Empress or another priest to work on, he would usually buy the bulk from them, and keep the entire profits from the sale. He can also be entrusted with a stock and would usually take a commission on the sale. There are no fixed rules regarding the distribution of the camp's crafts. The profits are not entirely given to the *universal*, but tithe ought to be paid. Priest Joshua is a really popular young Priest who is essentially in charge of the production and distribution of the craftwork of the camp. Very eloquent, he is one of the spokespersons of the Congress, and is much respected by the community in spite of his notorious belligerence<sup>141</sup>.

Priest Daniel is the only white priest living on the camp. Originally from the United States, he first dwelled on the Trinidadian camp before joining the Bull Bay commune. Extremely hard working, priest Daniel is building his house and can be seen *going bush*<sup>142</sup> every day in one of the trucks of the EABIC. Priest Daniel's harvests are mainly redistributed on the camp in the *universal* kitchen. Very helpful and amiable, he would closely follow the principles and rules by asking the empresses if they need something to be repaired, water to be fetched or any physically strenuous job to be done on a daily basis.

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<sup>141</sup> His wound to the eye was caused during a fight outside of the commune.

<sup>142</sup> *Going bush* is a Jamaican expression used to describe the agricultural work usually on an inhospitable or untilled piece of land.

In spite of the impeccability of his work and his amiable character, Priest Daniel is faced with two issues that hinder his access to prestige and recognition. The first one is his age, as he is merely in his late twenties. The second factor would be his ethnicity. Indeed, although the EABIC commune of Bull Bay is not promoting racial hatred, the general opinion does not understand why a man from European descent would permanently reside on the commune. People from non-African descent are most welcome on the commune as visitors, but non-African settlers are usually faced with general incomprehension. Priest Daniel, who has been on the commune for five years, is aware of the questions raised about his presence on the camp. Yet he is determined to remain longer as he does not consider himself to be ready to take back EABIC teachings to Europe<sup>143</sup>.

Priest Francis is one of the tailors of the camp. Tailoring is a very important activity on the camp as Bobo Shanti would not wear common manufactured clothes. Indeed, living by the robe and turban principle, they would only wear trousers and long sleeve shirts to work on the camp or go to their fields. Generally fashion conscious, the male Bobo Shanti would wear matching robe, and turban whenever outside the camp, or for the Sabbath celebration. New designs, for men and women, are always welcome and sought for, as long as they remain within the boundaries of the EABIC dress code. Considering the colour codes and details attached to a robe or a turban, Priest Francis is usually a busy man.

Along with his function as a tailor, he is also an electrician. In spite of the human hazard generated by the camp's electrical installations, he has managed to maintain an efficient electrical network on Bobo Hill. Indeed, apart from the punctual help of other electrician *Bredren*, he is the only one on the camp to be able to tap correctly from the governmental electric lines. If theoretically, it is not legal to do so, the authorities tolerate these minor abuses, as many people of the area are too poor to afford electricity. As a middle aged Priest, and an essential element to the wellbeing of the Congress, Priest Francis enjoys the status of an elder. In his case, both seniority and community work were united to grant him a rather enviable status on the commune.

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<sup>143</sup> Even if Priest Daniel was born in the United States, his mission as a person from European descent is to go to Europe and spread the EABIC teachings of love, black supremacy and repatriation.

Priest John is the librarian of the camp. Very jovial, he often assists Empress Sharon in typing letters and researching texts of law, in order to further legitimise the EABIC claims to repatriation. Working in the EABIC office is a rather prestigious function. Members of the office are usually the spokespersons of the camp, and are much respected as such. In addition to his prestigious work, Priest John is also a man in his late sixties, age that fully grants him the status of an elder.

Among the *Bredren* are some younger men who do not wear turbans. Those men are neophytes who are *seeking Rastafari* through the EABIC *livity*. Akin to the apprentice princesses, these men are very eager to please the elders, male or female, to whom they are subordinated. Obedient and humble, they usually work, talk and act according to the directions of another *crowned Bredren*. Extremely hardworking, they undeniably contribute to the wellbeing of the entire community, and are treated with respect.

The presence of these young neophytes on the commune exemplifies the social function of the EABIC among the wider Jamaican community. In fact, on the camp, anyone desiring to join is not asked about his or her past. In the absence of prerequisites to enter the commune apart from the necessity to leave money, weapon, and jewels at the entrance of the Congress, a newcomer is not required to talk about his personal life. Very often, some turn out to be wanted criminals. I was greatly shocked to learn that the police had arrested one of the neophytes, who had helped me the day before with my chores, the following day on suspicion of murder. The police do not usually come and raid the camp as it used to be the case, in the 1960's, nevertheless, they sometimes go as far up as Bull Bay in order to capture a wanted person. Even though blatant discrimination does not exist on the commune, the rest of the community is usually condescending towards these newcomers. Suspicion is high on the camp, and this researcher was urged to be extremely careful, because there may be *wolves in sheep clothing* around the camp (Mama Julie, personal conversation, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2008). In order to be fully accepted as EABIC members, these neophytes would have to prove their devotion to the camp, and to its principles for several years.

Agriculture, craftsmanship, broom and roots making are the main sources of revenue for the camp. There are clear demarcations between masculine and female

activities. However, with the principle of the *Universal*, money does not determine the worth of an activity, male or female, as its use is prohibited within the Congress' walls. Prestige, respect and acceptance are the true reward of work within the community. To work within the Bull Bay commune, is therefore conceptualised to support the community, rather than the individual. The EABIC can be considered to be a privileged space where gender based division of labour does not support an individualistic/patriarchal system.

In fact, working for the *Universal*, both female and male labour is equally valorised when they both benefit the commune. In this radical non-consumerist community, home *service* activities are as well regarded as the traditional idea of employment with a salary. Consequently the traditional opposition between remunerated and unpaid labour cannot exist on the camp. Bobo Shanti women are undoubtedly expected to remain in traditional unpaid reproduction categories such as *house service*, or *employed in one's own business* that have been devaluated in mainstream neo-liberal societies (Momsen 2004), yet the value attached to these tasks afford as much prestige than the remunerated ones.

Prestige, respect, acceptance and authority are the rewards for work, even though seniority plays a major part in the acquisition of these privileges. This can be readily observed in the treatment of the neophytes of either sex. Although there are no explicit social class on the camp, a devoted and hardworking neophyte would enjoy much less consideration than an established elder with faults.

This segment is essentially concerned with key EABIC members living on the Bull Bay commune. Nevertheless since a majority of Bobo Shanti now live in individual homes, outside of the camp, observing their conception of work will be an opportunity to assess the sustainability of the *Universal* on an international level.

#### **5.4. Working outside of the camp**

Many Bobo Shanti now live outside of the camp setting. There are countries like England, Martinique, France, where the commune structure itself is impossible either for a lack of space, or because of the State's unwillingness to have a full-fledged Rastafari commune on its territory. Bobo Shanti Rases are therefore obliged to work in

conditions alien to the original setting of their faith. Can the neo-liberal setting affect their traditional view on work? In capitalistic societies where principles such as the EABIC *Universal* are not regarded as serious alternatives, and where living separately from ones wife, and children is considered to be a social dysfunction, EABIC members definitely have had to adjust themselves. In the following, it will be the question of members living in: Jamaica, Martinique France and England.

#### **5.4.1. Empresses working outside the camp**

Empress Esther has been living out of the commune for at least fifteen years. She currently resides in Montego Bay with her family. In her mid-fifties, she is an elder of the EABIC, as King Emmanuel has particularly singled her out as the leading Empress of the WFL. Faithful to the Rastafarian ethos, she is self-employed. Before entering the EABIC *livity*, she used to be a receptionist in a hotel, and then she became the ambassador for the EABIC, a position in which she was able to build a large network of people from all types of *livity*.

Indeed, the functions of ambassador are extremely important, and grants considerable prestige to the one officially holding the title. All EABIC members are supposed to be acting as ambassadors, in order to promote the *principles* of the EABIC on an international level. Nevertheless, some members, due to particular abilities or education, are granted the official title. Empress Esther is a well-spoken woman, well read with a lot of understanding. Like many Rastafarians, she was involved in craftsmanship and used to own a craft shop. Nowadays, she uses her talents as a seamstress. Very creative, she makes beautiful robes and turbans, which are extremely sought after. Her husband, Ras Ikah, is a beekeeper, but not from the EABIC mansion. This couple have two children going to school, and a son in his early twenties, who is unemployed. With these expenses connected to the fact that they do not live on the commune, money is often a preoccupying theme within the family. When discussing the future of her children, Empress Esther confided that she was very concerned about the school fees, and that she really hoped that the children could get a scholarship. In spite of the financial difficulties, one can notice that Warren is not reproached because of his state of unemployment. When the question of work is raised, he would say that he would want to be involved in the lucrative construction business, as a truck driver, or



open his own restaurant. Even though he is no longer a Rastafarian, the necessity of being self-employed is nevertheless a major concern for him.

Empress Esther, a respected elder, and a fantastic seamstress, genuinely has all the prerequisites to enjoy the highest degrees of prestige and respect on the commune, unfortunately, these qualities are not palatable in Montego Bay as she needs to face her own expenses, and those of her children's education.

Another young Empress living in Montego Bay is the honourable Empress Jody. In her late teens, Jody wants to go to the University of West Indies, to study Business. The latter has newly joined the faith, and is very ardent to the pursuit of EABIC ideals and *principles*. In 2008, she spent a short time on the camp, but returned to her father's house, because of health problems. She is currently employed in a printing company where she works in the customer services department. She does not see herself working very long in this company as she has greater plans for her future. Indeed, working in this printing company has inspired her to start her own EABIC stationary company.

In order to do so, she has already produced key rings, calendars, posters, car stickers and pens with the Bobo Shanti symbols. Financially supported by the WFL, Empress Jody has already started the distribution EABIC merchandising on a small scale. The WFL sanction is vital to her business, as many other businesses have started to expand on this particular market, yet without the EABIC stamp, making them unauthentic. Empress Jody can be considered to be one of the first to have successfully established an EABIC brand. This business venture is profitable for both the commune, and herself. The WFL holds shares in it and will therefore partake in the profits, while the Congress can still expect to receive tithes from her. One does not know how much money has been invested by the WFL in Empress Jody's business, yet, if successful, she could expect to have acted in the interest of the commune and remained in "Christ Work" to borrow Priest Wayne's expression. In spite of her youth, Empress Jody has been particularly singled out during the *Empress Menen's Earthday*<sup>144</sup> celebration, in 2009. Indeed, Queen Mother Moses, the president of the EOZ<sup>145</sup> (Empresses of Zion),

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<sup>144</sup> *Earthday* is the term used by Rastafarians to refer to what Judeo-Christians would traditionally call birthday. *Earthday* is preferred because Rastafarians believe that one was already born, and that the day on which he or she was brought back on earth again should be celebrated.

<sup>145</sup> Empress of Zion is an international, cross Rastafari female association. Queen Mother Moses is very respected among her peers, male and female.

mentioned her business idea to illustrate the agency of female networking and sharing of ideas to the promotion of Rastafari in a universal effort to repatriation. Being publicly recognised at such an event, granted both Jody, and the women of the WFLL a lot of respect and prestige from the other Rastawomen of various mansions of Rastafari present for the occasion. All the Bobo Shanti female elders present at the event came to congratulate her. From that day, Empress Jody went from the neophyte, who did not have the spiritual strength to remain on the camp, to a very promising member of the WFLL. The approval of the female elders, usually so hard to obtain, was granted to her on that day.

Still in her teens, Empress Jody is nonetheless a prestigious member of the WFLL. Although her business venture is not generating much profit at the moment, the fact that she was able to obtain praises from an eminent woman leader, has brought prestige to the WFLL and the EABIC at large. In consequence, she is very well respected, in and out, of the camp, even though she has not the status of an elder.

In Martinique, Empress Saba is a EABIC member in her mid thirties, who manages to care for a husband, and an infant while doing a PhD at the Université des Antilles et de la Guyane (French Caribbean University). In earlier years, she used to live in London where she got acquainted with Rastafari. From that time, she was already very concerned about the importance of repatriation and used to send African oriented badges, books or pieces of clothing to her future husband so he could sell them, and start a retail business in Martinique. This practice is quite similar to the one observed on the Bull Bay camp, where women produce items that the *Bredren* sell outside. Even if this is not a camp setting, the sale of crafts, or African oriented products remains an important activity within EABIC. When she arrived in Martinique, Empress Saba got married and helped her husband in the production and distribution of vegan foodstuff. She stopped her activities after her pregnancy and decided to resume her studies. She is currently actively involved in the production of *Konsyans*<sup>146</sup>, a politico-cultural magazine promoting Rastafari and African-centred ideas.

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<sup>146</sup> *Konsyans* is a Kréyol that can be translated by the word conscious in English.

Empress Saba is a mother, a student and the editor of the pan-African magazine. In spite of all these activities, she can still be placed in *home service* category although she is currently devising with her husband, a business plan that would allow her and her family to relocate to Africa. Although she does not live on the commune, her work towards repatriation and the magazine has granted her a lot of prestige within the Jamaican commune. Members of the WFL indeed always mentioned her in positive terms.

Another interesting Empress is the honourable Bérénice, whose work, like that of Empress Saba, has high visibility in the commune. She is currently deeply involved in the promotion of the EABIC on the Internet. Along with Jah Karl, she has started a documentary series about the Bull Bay camp, in order to educate the wider public on the EABIC *livity*, and allow the neophytes from other countries to be better acquainted with the elders that they would eventually meet during their necessary initiation on the camp. While Jah Carl does most of the fieldwork, Bérénice is in charge of editing, and subtitling the documents in French, Spanish and Standard English.

Apart from being the leading Empress of the WFL in France, she is the editor of the magazine *Mabraq*, and also the president of the association FANA<sup>147</sup> (Fans of Africa), which helps sending orphans from an Ethiopian village plagued by HIV, to school. In addition to these activities, she is also a student and has started a Master in Development Studies. Eventually, Bérénice wants to become a Social Worker in Africa. Within the concept of Black Supremacy<sup>148</sup>, she considers all her activities to be part of her duty as a European. As a child of the African Mother and Father of Creation, she wants to help breach the economic and ideological gap between these two continents. In her mid-twenties, Empress Bérénice is not yet regarded as an elder, although her countless actions to promote the French chapter of the EABIC are highly commendable. To the French neophytes who never went to Bull Bay, she is an example, and on the commune, she is highly praised for her work and endeavours.

Empress Niyah, in England, is also a young empress in her mid-twenties, who lives with her mother, in an upper class neighbourhood of London. Born of a Ghanaian

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<sup>147</sup> Fan d'Afrique in French.

<sup>148</sup> See the chapter on EABIC theology, where it is stated that according to EABIC beliefs, the Africans were the parents of humanity and as such, deserved respect and support from all the other *races*.

mother and a Vincentian father, she has built her black identity, in a similar fashion to Cross' theory of Nigrescence (1995). This identity quest led her to the EABIC's *Principles*, to which she is genuinely attached. The empress is currently unemployed as she wants to go to a design school. Because of her knowledge in design, she is the one elaborating the book covers of her husband's books, and she has also designed the label for the first EABIC *roots* production in the United Kingdom. Apart from her design works, she also occasionally works part-time in a hardware and decoration shop. She really dislikes the fact of working for someone else, and she used to call it her slave job. Even if she is studying design, her ambition in life would be to move to Ghana where she could open a vegan restaurant with her husband, where people could discover the taste of wholesome food.

Very devoted and thorough in her knowledge of the EABIC *livity*, Empress Niyah often counsels, educates and supports other female or male members of the EABIC English chapter. As such, she is well loved and admired in England, even though she has not yet made herself known to the Jamaican commune. Indeed, she first wants to go to Ghana before taking the journey to the Jamaican *Congress*.

#### **5.4.2. Lords working outside of the camp setting**

The well-known Reggae deejays Sizzla Kalonji, and Capleton have kept privileged links with the EABIC *livity*, and the Bull Bay commune. One will use the adjective "privileged" because as reggae artists, their actions are directly in opposition with the EABIC views on music<sup>149</sup>. Nevertheless I will still mention them in this study, as they are universally regarded as Bobo Shanti, and are often welcomed on the commune.

If Sizzla has recently experimented with *slackness*<sup>150</sup> in his lyrics, Capleton has remained close to the *roots reggae*, as his songs are all concerned with *Righteousness*. Capleton would indeed emphasize traditional Jamaican sexual taboos<sup>151</sup>, praising the

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<sup>149</sup> One should only listen to Nyabinghi music, which enhances the meditation. Any other rhythm preventing meditation is regarded as satanic.

<sup>150</sup> In direct opposition with traditional roots reggae, slackness is a genre usually attached with Dancehall deejays who would talk about sex, women, and the acquisition of material properties. See Henry (2008) for more on the roots/slackness discourse in reggae music.

<sup>151</sup> Oral sex is taboo in Jamaica as much as homosexuality is.

spiritual facet of marijuana and advocating the urgency of repatriation. As international artists, their activities are very lucrative, and with the amount of tours and albums available in stores, and on I tunes, one may safely infer that in spite of internet piracy, they both earn a very comfortable living. They do not give tithes to the EABIC, although occasional donations are made. On the camp, many would deplore the fact that these artists chose reggae over Nyabinghi, and all would blame money in distracting these artists from the true EABIC path.

In 2008, Cappleton visited the camp. Mama Julie reported that the entire community was in uproar. From her account, people surrounded the artist, calling him *Dada*, title usually associated with King Emmanuel himself, and asked him to bless them with money. As she spoke, one could read the disappointment on Mama Julie's face. She was clearly disapproving the attitude of the *Bredren*. She even related that one well-known elder along with her husband, went to Cappleton for financial favours. The latter rudely dismissed them, causing the couple to be quite ashamed. This incident is mentioned here to underline the fragility of the *universal* principle after the death of King Emmanuel, its chief supporter. Both Cappleton and Sizzla are no longer official members of the EABIC, yet whenever they visit, they enjoy as much prestige as King Emmanuel may have had. In their case, money appears to be a great short cut to the privileges of seniority.

Indeed, the influence of money has been reported to trouble the better judgement of several EABIC members. A member working outside of the commune, and whose name will not be mentioned here has been at the centre of a controversy, which nearly jeopardised the unity of an EABIC chapter outside of Jamaica. Indeed, this *Bredren* was secretly having a relationship with a European Empress. This relationship could be censured by the EABIC as it went against the *principle* against miscegenation. Once the couple were discovered, several members demanded that disciplinary actions be taken against them. In cases as weighty as this, it is only the Congress in Jamaica that has the authority to arbitrate. To the great disappointment of some members, the controversial couple were not disciplined. Unclear reasons were given to justify this leniency, causing the resentment of many. In a private conversation, one was told that it is because the *Bredren* in question had a lot of money that the camp feared losing such a generous donator. Within weeks, the argument was settled.

Beside the pecuniary argument, one could read this incident as an evolution in the EABIC *principles*. Cultures and traditions are not static, and this internal challenge of the principle can be regarded as evidence of the dynamism of the EABIC culture. Moreover, even if the couple disobeyed to the letter of the principle against interracial couples, one may argue that both remained faithful to the spirit of the law, as they are deeply engaged in the promotion of the EABIC *livity* around the world, which is one of the primary duties of EABIC unions. In both Cappleton, and the unnamed *Bredren's* case, very clear *principles* have been rearranged to suit the financially powerful persons. Prestige in this case is no longer granted to *principle* abiding people, but to mere financial superiority. These *Bredren* are nevertheless very rare. There are far less illustrious Bobo Shanti Rases who live out of the camp setting and keep the *principles*.

Jah Stéphane is the first Bobo Shanti interviewed for the purpose of this study. His attitude to work has changed over the past five years, but the importance of being self-employed remains his course of action. Indeed, a graduate from Mc Gill University, Jah Stéphane was an English teacher in a secondary school in Martinique. Additional to this full-time employment, he also sold fruit juices and *dhals*<sup>152</sup>. When he got married, he decided to quit his job as a teacher to fully focus on his small food business. He was fully supported by his wife in this decision. Two years ago, his wife became pregnant and he felt that he ought to go back to teaching, in order to provide for his son. Along with his teaching activities, he decided to start a business of *roots*. Nowadays, Jah Stéphane is still teaching and is preparing for the highest competitive exam in the teaching profession, the *agrégation*. He is indeed elaborating a subversive curriculum that would allow him to teach his pupils about African and Caribbean history, while respecting the governmental guidelines. Access to this new level would give him more opportunities to conduct his research in the education sector. Eventually Jah Stéphane wants to open his own school.

Very respected on the Jamaican commune, and in the Martiniquan chapter, Jah Stéphane has recently become a priest of the EABIC. His status in Martinique may be associated to that of an elder, even though he is far too young to be considered as such

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<sup>152</sup> Dhal is the name given to pastry filled with potatoes, lentils or chick peas. In Trinidad, they would call it Aloo or chana pie. Bobo Shanti Rases in Martinique are very much influenced by the Trinidadian camp.

in the Bull Bay commune. Nevertheless, he belongs to the most prestigious international *Bredren* on the camp.

Jah Karl is the acting priest of France. His entire economic activity revolves around the EABIC. Indeed, assisted by Empress Bérénice, he has started documenting on a video support of life on the EABIC headquarters in Bull Bay. From this video production has arisen a controversy. Several of the elders interviewed complained that they did not receive enough money from the sale of these videos. Mama Julie is particularly adamant: “He came, everybody talked to him, yet, look how I live! I do not even have a gas stove to cook my food. He is making big money, he took advantage of me” (Mama Julie, personal conversation, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2008). This controversy is the illustration of the changes of values happening on the camp. It transcribes the debilitation of the *Universal* to the increasing influence of money on the commune. Questioned about this subject, Jah Karl replied that he was one of the most generous benefactors of the commune, and that he was in peace with his conscience. In addition to the monthly tithes, he is also known to give great sums of money toward the reconstruction of the tabernacle.

Apart from the controversial videos, Jah Karl produces *roots*. This *roots*, different from the one found on the camp, is fizzy and sweet. This (festive) *roots* is sold to anyone, Rastafarian or not. Jah Karl has also a website where one can buy Ethiopian clothing, Rastafari books, and the aforementioned DVDs. Very active in the French Chapter, Jah Karl ceaselessly works toward the promotion of the EABIC. In spite of these minor controversies, he is also a very well-known priest on the commune, and enjoys the status of elder in the French chapter in spite of his being only in his early forties.

Jah Sanctify lives in London and is married to Empress Niyah. He currently works in a health shop. Like his wife, he is very unhappy to be employed by someone else, and is actively trying to open a vegan patisserie, and establish himself as a lecturer and a writer. He has already written a book, the *Carry Beyond*, where he gives his understanding of the colonial past of the region, with an emphasis on the spiritual consequences of it. He currently lives with his mother-in-law, but has the intention to move to Ghana, and remain in the health food sector.

With the imperative to remain self-employed, some *Bredren* will sell their sacred herb marijuana to non-Rastafarians. This activity, very lucrative, is not publicly acknowledged. This researcher has been in contact with such *members*, who seemed to live very comfortably off their business. Indeed, very ambitious, one of these *Bredren* has set up a transportation business in Ghana, where he bought a house, and is quietly settling down among the Bobo Shanti community over there. Very dutiful, he has not forgotten the principle of the *Universal*, and is faithful in giving tithes, and occasional substantial donations. Even if the Congress does not officially support his activity, his help is nonetheless welcomed on the camp.

From these observations, one may say that outside the camp setting, EABIC members will favour self-employment. Although living in neo-liberal countries where money is the accepted measure to value an activity, many members would rather occupy a part-time job, as they all have to pay rent, mortgages and utility bills, and be able to do “Christ’s Work”. All of our informants, male and female were involved in businesses that they were striving to successfully develop. In fact, their activities are all connected with the WFL, or the Congress itself, which create a genuine economic network.

### **5.5. The Congress and the WFL as economic networks**

To raise money solely for the realization of the aforesaid aims and objects and to satisfy obligations or liabilities and not for any personal gain of any member of the church of his or her aggrandizement. (EABIC constitution).

Standing for the letter C of the word EABIC, the *Congress* represents all members of the Bobo Shanti *livity*. With its headquarters in Jamaica, this institution functioned as a centralised economic system. Every working member of the EABIC ought to give tithes. Collected by *the Congress*, this money is then invested on the camp infrastructures, or in the promotion of Bobo Shanti businesses. One of the functions of the *Congress* is therefore to maintain a cash flow to the benefit of its members. An instance of this is the 2009 fundraising concert organised in New York, by the EABIC community living there for the reconstruction of the *tabernacle*. Both the Congress, and the WFL are authorised to conduct fund raising events in the name of the EABIC.



The WFL is the female organisation that would collect funds toward specific women needs. Its administration and account books are totally independent from the Congress. For instance, Mama Maize, through numerous campaigns, has managed to rebuild the *Journey Gate*, where women can comfortably spend their ritual purification period<sup>153</sup>. In her endeavour, she did not require the help of the *Bredren*, and used funds and material coming from female inputs. Empress Esther has also been collecting funds and has successfully rebuilt the female guesthouse, where female visitors can enjoy their stay on the camp. Similar to Mama Maize, she did so without involving the Committee<sup>154</sup>. Regular collections are being organised in order to gather clothes for the sisters in need, and their children. This researcher has had the opportunity of witnessing a clothes and stationary distribution coming from EABIC France.

Along with all the other activities directly contributing to the camp's welfare, donations and fund raising events are an important part of it. Nevertheless, even in the organisation of these donations, there is still a gendered separation. Women would mostly give towards the advancement of female causes but, they would also gladly contribute to fundraising activities to benefit both sexes as it could be observed during the charity concert in New York. Men will give towards the global welfare of the camp, but are not required to give to the WFL. This gender separation even in the donation sector creates an atmosphere of competition as this researcher has been able to hear some women gloat about the effectiveness of the WFL, compared to the apparent disorganisation of the gender mixed Committee, which is yet to complete the construction of the tabernacle.

The EABIC is therefore a space with definite gendered division of labour. Women are expected to do the traditional house chores, and house related activities comprised in the WICP classification *home service*, and *home production* like any other Jamaican women. These activities have been defined to be the least lucrative and prestigious ones within mainstream societies in the developing world (Barriteau 1994, Mills 2003, Momsen 2004). Douglass declared:

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<sup>153</sup> See previous section on political power within the EABIC.

<sup>154</sup> Idem.

The higgler<sup>155</sup> is viewed as a comical character, a caricature of a woman, whose reputed strength of character contrasts to her lack of power. Indeed, although she is highly independent and self-sufficient, women like the higgler possess little of Jamaica's economic and political power (1992:248).

Nevertheless, this cannot quite apply to the case of the EABIC. This community's activities are indeed delimited by a clear set of *Principles* defining the function and activities that its member ought to fulfil, in order to become respectable Bobo Shanti. Indeed, in this theocracy, the economic activities of men and women are not entirely dictated by personal aspirations or economic necessity. The spiritual aspect of work, the need to do "Christ's Work" is a recurring concern observed in all of my informants. This spiritual obligation adds to rigidity of the labour distribution within the EABIC international community.

In fact, most of the works analysing the issues linked to gendered labour division have been conducted within capitalistic settings (Senior, 1991, Douglass 1992, Mills 2003). The EABIC, in its battle against the oppressive norms of *Babylon*, has elaborated a system akin to communism, where money is not the ultimate means to value an activity. Indeed, throughout the testimonies of the lords and empresses regarding their economic activities, money is much less important than the need to repatriation, and to carry the message of EABIC around the world.

The *Universal* is the system ruling the economic life on the commune. Indeed, EABIC members not only work for themselves to support their families, but they are also entitled to care for the entire community. This anti-individualistic conception has allowed camp dwellers to fulfil their primary needs for food and shelter. Indeed, the *Universal* kitchen has the obligation to feed everyone on the camp, while large barracks are to shelter them free of charge.

The economic activities, in which the camp as a whole is engaged, are to sustain this charitable system. It is therefore according to the *Principles* that men are assigned to farming, broom factoring, cooking, crafts production and distribution. Women are ascribed to home making, with an emphasis on nursing, laundry making and the domain of caring. Women are also expected to be dominant in the crafts production area. Their

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<sup>155</sup> A higgler is a street vendor.

production is then sold by the *Bredren*, and the benefits are redistributed to both production and distribution agents as well as the *Universal* treasure.

Because money is not directly linked to these activities, work is therefore valued with the gain of prestige and respectability within the Bobo Shanti world. In fact, members respectful of the *principles* throughout their economic activities will be recognised as legitimate EABIC members, and will be respected by everyone. The problem of gender hierarchy developed by Mills (2003) is not a relevant factor here as both men and women are expected to fulfil their duties towards the *Universal*, in order to gain recognition, the true value for their activity. For instance, even though the influence of money is slowly increasing, the *Bredren* who is employed by a printing company, but does not directly contribute to the camp, is not as highly regarded as priest Joshua, who earns less than him, but whose contribution to the promotion of the EABIC *livity* is undeniable. In the same spirit the Empress who dutifully but exclusively cares for her house and children, will not be as highly regarded as the visiting empress who occasionally will help around.

Out of the commune setting, in neo-liberal societies, EABIC members, male and female, tend to prefer the self-employed status as it has been mentioned earlier. Indeed, most of them have created their own activities usually revolving around the promotion of EABIC. Of these activities, they are also required to pay tithe to the Jamaican headquarters. Prestige will usually come with the success of the endeavour. Once again, money is less important than visibility. Indeed, Empress Jodi's business venture is not as successful as Jah Karl's *roots* business; nevertheless as she has been noticed by a prominent member of the EOZ, she will retrieve more prestige from her activity than Jah Karl.

Donations in this particular setting, grant to the benefactor considerable popularity even if the activities are not approved by the Congress (for example, as with the cases of Sizzla, Empress K, or the *Bredren* selling marijuana). In spite of this obvious corruption of the system, the imperative to contribute to the *Universal* remains. This, therefore, justifies the consideration of the members on the Bull Bay commune.

## 5.6. Conclusion

Gender inequality in the spheres of production and reproduction is an issue that has been amply discussed in feminist literature. Some liberal feminist went as far as to demand “Androgyny, male style” in a society where reproductive labour transformed in purchasable services could be the key to free women from their subordinated roles (Bergmann 1998), emphasizing the importance of a greater female involvement in productive labour to achieve gender equality (Boserup 1970, Charusheela 2003:288). Nonetheless, the empowering virtues of work have been questioned as it has been argued that the satisfaction derived from work was unfortunately dependant also on ethnic, social and cultural background of the worker (Barker 2005) In this context, instead of focussing on the institutional inability of EABIC women to engage in the most rewarding positions available in the Jamaican production spheres, I have endeavoured to assess the satisfaction that they derived from their activities.

Indeed, from my observations, I may say that EABIC women are more than ever engaged in *home service* activities, and have little opportunity to be employed outside of the commune in the most rewarding jobs as underlined by Barker (2005). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the *home service* activities of the commune are not perceived as they would be in the mainstream liberal Jamaican society, impacting greatly on the “satisfaction” attached to them.

I argue that the EABIC has successfully placed equal value on male and female activities, consequently granting equal satisfaction to both gender. Baker argued that: “The difference lies not in the nature of the work but rather in the representation of the labouring bodies” (Baker 2005:2201), I suggest that the EABIC’s radical epistemology facilitated this equalitarian conception of work, the praxis of it being the *Universal* economic system.

Indeed, as gods and goddesses of creation, all activities conducted by EABIC members promoting the *Livity* are equally welcomed and praised. Money is not used as a means to value an activity on the commune. Praises and prestige are the satisfying principles that are usually derived from the notion of EABIC work. This has been made possible by the *Universal*, which the purpose of monopolising productive labour, freely providing the inhabitants of the commune with food, shelter and clothing. Reproductive

labour is therefore shared by both males, and females though divided in gendered activities, which are also equally valued, and in this sense satisfactory.

Acquiring prestige on the commune can consequently be compared to the need to earn money in a liberal economy. In this endeavour, seniority is more important than gender. An EABIC elder would enjoy more prestige than a neophyte, regardless of the activities they are involved in. With the weakening of the *universal* however, money is slowly gaining more importance on the commune as a means to earn prestige (for example, as with the cases of the famous singers). Nevertheless, members are still usually eager to remain self employed, and to use their energy and talent to do “God’s work”. If the *Universal* principle is not currently applied to the letter, the spirit of the command still remains paramount, in and out of the commune.

These last two chapters focused essentially on the notions of power, and work within the EABIC commune, with a comparative approach to tackle the work section. This approach was judged necessary in order to measure the extent to which the EABIC *Principles* could survive the daily influences of the norms of *Whiteness*. If these principles can survive, they need to be taught and enforced by a particular family unit, and educative system. This is the reason why the following chapter will be dedicated to the family, in the EABIC setting.

## Chapter 6: Family and sexual revolution on the commune

“The Man is the head of the household” declares the Honourable Priest Wayne, when discussing family patterns. He justifies this claim by the numerous biblical passages implying or clearly enforcing patriarchal values in family matters. This belief is indeed solidly anchored in Christian societies where wives are urged to be submissive to their husbands as the divinely appointed head of the household (Ephesians 5: 22-30, 1 Timothy 2:11-15, 1 Corinthians 11: 3-10). Nevertheless, 42% of the Jamaican households were found to be headed by women (Barriteau 2001: 6), making Priest Wayne’s claims rather alien to the current Jamaican reality.

The nuclear family pattern promoted by the Jamaican upper class since the post emancipation period has failed to find a large number of emulators in Jamaica. In fact, from the dismantlement of the family unit necessitated by the exigencies of slavery, the nuclear family pattern was enforced by the colonial authorities in order to suit the new organisation of the island’s production (Reddock 1984: 197). This new notion of *respectability* in the family, long denied to African-Jamaicans, was finally to be acquired by marriage and legitimate children. As Wilson demonstrated, the respectable nuclear family was bound to contend with the counter-values of *reputation* deeply rooted in the Caribbean community, where a man is proud to have multiple sexual and emotional partners (Wilson 1995).

The notion of family from the *reputation* value system was considered to be deviant by early scholars of the Caribbean family (Pettigrew 1964, Katz 1969), who regarded it as an obstacle to the development of the Jamaican society. Nevertheless, a new wave of Caribbean researchers pointed out that:

Different societies organize their production and reproduction in different ways. This is usually determined by historical precedents, coupled with ongoing social, economic, and political circumstances which characterize a society’s development (Mohammed 1999: 172).

In the Caribbean context, the plantation and the neo-colonial capitalistic system has greatly influenced the moulding of the mating patterns based on *reputation*. The

matrifocal structure is, for instance, the most common one due to the socio-economic reality of the environment (Handa 1996), while marriage remains a very bourgeois, and *respectable* type of relationship (Burton 1997, Erskin 1998). It is therefore interesting to note the paradox between the social reality of mating patterns and the social expectations dictated by the official Judeo-Christian spiritual base of the Jamaican society.

Family patterns in the Caribbean have traditionally been divided into five categories of relationships:

- (a) Christian Family: based on marriage and a patriarchal order approximating that of Christian families in other parts of the world.
- (b) Faithful Concubinage: based on a patriarchal order, possessing no legal status, but well established and enduring for at least three years.
- (c) The Disintegrate Family: consisting of women and children only, in which men merely visit the women from time to time, no pattern of conduct being established. This type called Visiting Relationship.
- (d) Maternal or Grandmother Family: the grandmother usually usurps the function of the father and at times that of the mother. In this case, grandmother cares for her grandchildren; her daughter may or may not live in same household.
- (e) Keeper Family or Companiate Family: a man and woman live in temporary union. If the union persists over a period of two years, it will come under the heading of faithful concubinage. (Schlesinger 1968:137)

As a radical social movement within Rastafari and Jamaican society at large, the EABIC has therefore its own conception of *respectability*. Indeed, in the previous chapter, seniority has been established to be the determining factor that would grant authority to an EABIC member. By focussing on the Bobo Shanti family, I aim to analyse its *respectability* and *reputation* dynamics, and how they are translated and applied as far as gender is concerned. What were the *historical, social, economic, political*, and I will add spiritual *precedents* that influenced and shaped the concept of the family within the Bobo Shanti commune of Bull Bay?

### **6.1. The evolution of the EABIC family and the commune structure**

Observe the Holy Day and fasting, restrain ourself (sic) from the flesh by not sleeping with a man, neither Bredren sleeping with their Empress we were fighting a spiritual battle so everyone make themself (sic) a living sacrifice to win the battle against a system who wants to destroy us ( Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 18<sup>th</sup> 2010).

From Empress Rachel's testimony, one may argue that the conception of the EABIC family was greatly influenced by the hostile environment in which it evolved. Indeed, in

the 1950's and early 1960's, Rastafari was seen as a dangerous separatist movement threatening the freshly independent Jamaican nation and social cohesion (Price 2009: 76-77). In fact, there is a plethora of testimonies describing the violence of the persecutions directed towards Rastafari by the authorities (Merritt 2006, Van Dijk 1993). In this context where one could have his head shaved and his house bulldozed on the same day, I may suggest that the EABIC developed a family system allowing the protection of its member and of its *Livity*.

During this troubled period, the EABIC had not yet established its quarters on Bull Bay hill, and was still located in the infamous neighbourhood of *Back-a-wall* in downtown Kingston. Sexual abstinence was regarded to be the key to spiritual and even physical survival. During the rigid regulations on celibacy coinciding with the general persecution of Rastafari, the children that would have been found within the EABIC community could not have been conceived from Bobo Shanti parents. One can conjecture that mothers or fathers who were interested in the *Livity* came with their children. The EABIC *family* was more of a monastic type with brothers and sisters than a milieu where the *mother father children* structure could develop. The EABIC established a mating strategy that promoted abstinence in order to resist an extremely hostile environment.

From the violent social persecutions of its first three decades, Rastafari has gradually integrated the Jamaican cultural landscape. This progression into the Jamaican public opinion was initiated by the endeavours of Rastafari elders, such as Mortimo Planno, Bongo Wato, Ras Sam Brown, and the academic interest of the University of the West Indies resulting in the *Report on Rastafari Movement in Kingston Jamaica* (Nettleford, Smith and Augier 1960). These endeavours were later greatly enforced by the popularity of Rastafari music, such as Reggae, on a local and international scale, propelling Jamaica as one of the most vibrant cultural scenes of the Caribbean (Van Dijk 1995). It was around this time that the EABIC established its quarters on the hills of Bull Bay, and that marriage was allowed. One can therefore suggest that the evolution of the Rastafarian image in Jamaica affected the mating patterns within the EABIC. An illustration of this can be found in the camp infrastructure, which has been designed to cater for the EABIC conception of the couple.



### 6.1.1. Camp infrastructure and family needs in King Emmanuel's time

Empress on the foundation live just as a man and woman are suppose to live. Having intercourse is a part of our way of life only we are not living together in the camp because we have a separation in every month. The bredren (sic) have his own gates and the empress have their own gates so living together is not likely because the empress takes her journey every month but if she is with child, she is freer around her bredren (sic). Not seeing a bredren (sic) coming out of his empress gates is important. It is not like outside of the camp where a man sleeps with is empress and still lying in bed well relaxed. On the camp, it's not like that. They do things in a way that your private affairs have to remain private. Sometimes it's only you and your partner who know what's up. It's like a respect because it's a churchyard. (Empress Rachel, personal conversation May 18<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Empress Rachel testimony is eloquent on the EABIC's awkward attitude towards sexual intercourse. Indeed, even though marriage was allowed and it was understood that a married couple would engage in some sort of sexual activity, men and women still could not live together. The obligations of the community, in this case of the monastic family, greatly prevailed on the privacy of the couple. To make such arrangement feasible, one may point to the efficiency of the *Universal*. One can argue that because the *Universal* could take care of the primary needs of the devotees, there was no financial need for a married couple to live together. Indeed, the European image of the husband/father/provider was totally overruled by the competence of the *Universal*. Kingmen<sup>156</sup> were not considered the sole providers for their wives and children, as the *Universal* was to feed, clothe and shelter all the inhabitants of the commune. A man and a woman could therefore unite and have children, but not in the close and private unit of the nuclear family. With these notions in place, the monastic ethos of the commune could easily be translated in the housing pattern.

Until today, the Bull Bay camp is divided into two sections: the male one, near the main entrance of the commune, and the female quarters farther up on the hill. Large houses have been constructed to accommodate prophets, priests and neophytes together, while the Empresses gather in cosier bungalows hosting one or two of them at a time.

### 6.1.2. Summary

In the early days of the EABIC when King Emmanuel was physically present, and the *Universal system* running to the maximum of its potential, the camp's infrastructure reflected the *Priesthood* ethos of the EABIC. The commune was in fact a

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<sup>156</sup> Kingman is the Rastafarian word for husband.

monastic-like community, where man and wife co-habitation was strictly regulated. As it has been mentioned before, this arrangement was made possible because of the important influence of the *Universal* in catering for the primary, and even secondary needs of its members. By enforcing these frugal values, the EABIC has created its own family pattern, distinct from those found in the mainstream Jamaican landscape, and Rastafari.

### 6.1.3. Family and camp structure nowadays

Nowadays, during the post-King Emmanuel era, the commune's infrastructure has definitely been altered. Although ritual separation is still highly regarded and encouraged, and while the EABIC still promotes the *Priesthood Order*, the notion of the family has greatly evolved:

As times goes by King Emmanuel, is away for a while so people do their own thing. Bredren (sic) and their empress live out the camp, live together in one house. They still live in principle even if they live in the same house. He is not going to leave is empress alone by herself because she is going through her issue. He is there only he will not come to service until she is free. It's a way of life for every one living to the principle of God. We are here to multiply, building our nation (Empress Rachel, personal conversation May 18<sup>th</sup> 2010).

In this new organisation of the family, men tend to remain with their wives and undergo the purification period with them rather than leaving them on their own. Even if Empress Rachel seems to disapprove of the new attitude towards the *Principles*, she still notes that the ethos of the EABIC regulation was respected. Empress Rachel currently lives in New York and mainly referred to couples that lived out of camp structure. On the Bull Bay commune, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a “revolution” in the couples' organisation. Nowadays, husbands and wives live together following a nuclear family pattern.

For instance, Priest Daniel, in preparation for his marriage, has started building his house. Priest Wayne also has plans to build his house, but in the meantime he focuses on his garden, a way to produce crops that would benefit the *Universal kitchen*, and his future family. From the testimonies of several empresses, one can assert that after the purification process, an Empress rejoins her *kingman* and her male children in their own house. Indeed, while single *Bredren* and *sistren* live together in barracks or

bungalows, individual houses have also been built to accommodate the couples and their offspring.

The new generation of empresses and Lords who do not follow the twenty one days purification period or the *Baby mother's purification principles* openly live in their houses with their *kingmen* and children on the commune. Although they do not live by the WFLP *principle*, the fact that they are allowed to live in a house with their husband indicates the importance of personal freedom for the EABIC. This evolution in the commune's infrastructure making allowance for wedded couples with children is in competition with the monastic-like original organisation of the commune. In 2008, not one couple permanently living on the commune functioned according to the *principles* on the Bull Bay camp. The commune was entirely composed of single members living together in gendered houses while three families lived in their own houses according to their own understanding.

This change of attitude towards the original patterns of the EABIC family can be explained by the declining strength of the *Universal*. One can argue that because the vital needs of the EABIC members are no longer guaranteed by the *Universal*, the responsibility of family welfare has shifted from the commune to the couple. If unisex barracks and bungalows have been constructed to cater for unmarried and married EABIC members, who would live together in a coenobitic style, since the late 1990's, the lifestyle of the camp has drastically changed. Nowadays, in the prospect of forming an alliance with an Empress, a *Bredren* usually builds a house where he can be reunited with his empress, and children at the end of his wife's twenty one days or post-partum purification process. In 2008, the only couples observed simply lived together all the time, in spite of the regulations of the EABIC and the general censure.

## **6.2. Sex and Mating patterns within the EABIC**

Polygyny is not an alien notion to Rastafari, and it does not leave any Rastawoman indifferent. Various opinions exist on the topic. Empress Tsahai in a *reasoning* online gave her thoughts on the matter:

For context, it is important to note that the "one flesh" verse itself of Genesis 2:24, which the Lord Jesus was re-quoting, was written by Moses. And Moses married (was

“one flesh” with) two wives: Zipporah (Exodus 2:16-21 and 18:1-6) and the Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:1). The term, “one flesh”, could not otherwise allegedly mean that a man could not be “one flesh” with more than one woman because three things did indeed happen: 1) Moses did marry two wives. 2) Moses did author such other verses as Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15.3) Jesus Christ did not speak against Moses being “one flesh” with two wives. Hence, the Scriptures reveal that Jesus and Moses knew what “one flesh” meant when Moses authored Genesis 2:24: a man may be “one flesh” with more than one woman<sup>157</sup>. “If a man have two wives...Deuteronomy 21:15 (Tsahai, 2007).

After establishing the biblical validity of having two wives, Tsahai continues her argument by demonstrating the *Africanity* of the practice. Indeed, she quoted the Hon. Jomo Kenyatta’s explanation of the ideal relations between the *nyakiambi*, first wife, and the *Moirou* co-wife, companion of the first one (Kenyatta, in Tsahai 2007). The *Moirou* is supposed to be the helper of the first wife by contributing to the economic and social development of their husband’s lineage. At the end of her demonstration, Tsahai emphasised the fact that HIM Haile Selassie was from a polygynous lineage, even if he did not choose to take other wives (2007). With such authoritative arguments, polygyny and the notion of having another woman, is therefore accepted in several mansions of Rastafari. Prominent members of the movement, such as the icon singer Bob Marley, or the renowned poet Mutabaruka, are well known for having had *other women* in the case of the former, or having practiced serial monogamy, for the latter. These facts are known to all and seldom suscite censure.

Prominent Rastafawomen such as Judy Mowatt have underlined the fact that in Jamaica, many men promoting polygamy are not doing it in the African way, as defined by Jomo Kenyatta. Many of these women have rejected the idea and blame their spouse for following the already established Caribbean pattern of having *another woman*, under the guise of *Africanity* without taking into account the financial and emotional duties of the arrangement (Nyavingi Brinda 2006). Some would accept a co-wife in their household as long as the new wife would be willing to live in peace with them as a true Rastafarian sister. The *Kingmen* of these conciliating women would be expected to maintain the same financial and emotional support to all of his wives. The issue of polygyny is controversial within Rastafari. Having several wives is conveniently regarded by Caribbean Rastamen to be a means to come closer to an ancestral African family tradition, even though some are not capable of endorsing the responsibilities

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<sup>157</sup> Our emphasis

linked with such a family arrangement (Lake 1998, Nyavingi Brynda 2006). It is interesting to note that polyandry does not generate the same passionate debates.

Polyandry or the presence of *another man*, is highly censured in both Rastafari and mainstream Jamaican society. Across Rastafari, the tenets of the *virtuous woman*<sup>158</sup>, faithful to her husband and working for the wellbeing of her household, are widespread. While numerous Rastafarian literature and websites dedicate large justification space for polygyny, polyandry within Rastafari is so unthinkable that it is not even under discussion. In spite of the fact that the Maasai ethnic group is both polyandrous and polygynous (Dawson 1932), the *Africanity* of polyandry has not found justification enough to normalise it in Rastafarian milieu. All scholars of Rastafari seem to agree on the fact that the Rastawoman must be faithful to her *kingman*. Any infringement to this rule would end up in severe censure and even banishment from the community (Yawney 1982, Lake 1998). The rejection of polyandry and the tolerance of polygyny do not really demarcate Rastafari in from the mating patterns found in the wider Jamaican society (Senior 1990, Burton 1997). This arrangement forces women to achieve financial independence to raise their children as men are not always dependable providers. The claims of being head of the household by men in these conditions may therefore easily be challenged, in spite of the surviving belief that women, Rastawomen are inferior, and in need of constant spiritual assistance from a male figure (Nyahbinghi elder in Nyavingi Brynda 2006).

### **6.2.1. The socio cultural implications of sex within the EABIC and the importance of monogamy**

In spite of the general Rastafarian leniency towards polygyny, monogamy is the norm within the EABIC *livity*. This arrangement might be explained by the importance of the divine pair King *Alpha and Queen Omega* within the EABIC theology. Following their monogamous example, it can be regarded as fulfilling a duty as gods and goddesses of creation. When questioned about the subject all of my informants were adamant that the only pattern to follow was that of HIM Haile Selassie and Menen.

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<sup>158</sup> See section 7.2.1. of the chapter on education.

If Tsahai regards polygyny as a means for Rastawomen to put their resources together for the physical and spiritual welfare of a common family, these arrangements may infer that men are inconsequential members of the family, as women would then be the real ones responsible for the children family maintenance. The existence of the *Universal* in the EABIC context of the commune renders therefore these female strategies of survival irrelevant. Moreover, caring for a wife is indeed among the duties and aspirations of the Bobo Shanti priest or prophet. Being at the head of the family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in EABIC understanding is providing security, emotional and financial support to one's wife and children. The decadence of the *Universal* has placed more pressure on the biological fathers to take care of their children and wives. The mere fact of building a house in the expectancy of an Empress is an evidence of the acknowledgement of the EABIC man's responsibilities as a provider. From this perspective, being the head of several households would be too much of a time and money consuming endeavour. Monogamy is consequently the only convenient, acceptable and practiced matting pattern on the Bull Bay commune.

One can also attribute the EABIC preference for monogamy to the particularly radical world view of this community, which considers the *way of the flesh* a hindrance to spiritual matters. In this *Priesthood Order*, spiritual matters are undeniably more important than sensual ones. An EABIC marriage or union simply means that a man and a woman present their relationship to the elders and the other members of the community. Sex, or becoming *one flesh* with someone, is what socially and spiritually binds the couple together, making sexual activity or abstinence sure indicators of one's relationship status within the EABIC. There is no such thing as casual sex on the commune. With such importance placed on the sexual act, having several wives would certainly break with the *Priesthood* claims of the congress. As a *Priesthood* order, sex is therefore regarded as a vital activity that should not hinder the spiritual vocation of both men and women.

### **6.2.2. Attitude towards sex**

These rather opposite approaches to sex could be explained by the historical foundation of the EABIC livity. In fact, in this coenobitical commune, under constant pressure from the police, procreation was not in the EABIC priorities. The *Bredren* and

*sistren* were urged to remain celibate and live in holiness as *living sacrifices* (Empress Rachel, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2010). Sex was regarded as a practice impeding on the state of sanctity that this community sought to achieve in order to fight *Babylon*. Celibacy was considered to be the justification of the appellation of *Priesthood order* and demarcated EABIC from other Rastafari mansions. As it was discussed in the first section of this chapter, the 1960's saw the tolerance of sex within stable and serious EABIC relationships. This change of policy swelled the camp's population with children. The Empresses at the time were going through a fifteen-day purification process. During this additional week with their husbands, women were more susceptible to conceive, which naturally boosted birth rates on the commune (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2010). Nevertheless, in spite of the multiplication of unions within the community, sexual intercourse was still regarded as something slightly reprehensible. Empress Rachel explains:

King Emmanuel's foundation is a camp yard. People from all over the world come to the camp. Some will leave their home to live in the camp because they want to live amongst the congregation but the camp lifestyle is different from the outside world. It's a man and woman kingdom but the livity is with a lot of principles like if a man wants to sleep with his empress he is free, but in his heart he knows he doesn't want a bredren (sic) to see him coming out of her dwellings because he knows it's a church yard so if he does that it's he and his empress know because he is not going to let anyone see him coming out there so you have a lot of them (empress) living outside the camp. Most of the bredren (sic) that live on the camp do not have an empress or they may have one but the empress only comes to service and go home.

From Empress Rachel's information, one can gather that though it was natural for a married couple to live together as such, sex was still considered to be something of a taboo. From Empress Rachel's testimony, a man could not be seen coming out of his Empress' house without feeling embarrassed. One can suggest that this arrangement was detrimental to the full integration of the married woman within the community, corroborating Newland's conjectures on the undesirability of female presence on the commune (in Tafari-Ama 1998: 93). The sexual discourse on celibacy and sexual abstinence appeared to be a decidedly male preoccupation. Women appeared to have had a more passive role as they were the ones who welcome their *Kingmen* in their houses.

Living on the commune was therefore easier for a celibate woman. If married; she still had to fully apply the ritual separation regulation to her married, and when *free*,

still had to remain very discreet about her relationship. This uneasiness toward sex has been noted by Chevannes, who recorded the case of a prophet who since he became Bobo Shanti, did not sleep in the same room with his wife: “Whenever he wants, he has sexual intercourse with her and then leaves. Women, he says, distract from the meditation” (Chevannes 1994:177). Many other priests and prophets boasted on the length of time that they could abstain from sex, in spite of having a partner (1994: 177). In an attempt to conciliate both their spiritual and social lives, many women remained on the outskirts of the commune, in order to enjoy their relationship with their husbands. Mama Julie warned this researcher that the *way of the flesh* was detrimental to her studies: “You cannot have sex all the time like those girls who do not know what to do with their temples. If you are interested by the spiritual, you should refrain from having sex anytime.” (Mama Julie, personal conversation, November 9<sup>th</sup> 2008)

From these accounts, one can gather that the appearance of having an active and intense sexual life is more frowned upon than the actual sexual act. If men seem to be more concerned about the appearance of celibacy than women, both are extremely concerned about the necessities and demands of their family and spiritual life. If it is tacitly understood that men would have some sort of physical relations with their wives, the signs of these relationships are to remain hidden. This attitude towards sex is reminiscent of that of the Catholic Church, chastising husbands for lusting, thus committing adultery with their wives (Pope John Paul II 1983).

As a *Priesthood order* and a camp yard, a priest or a prophet having sexual intercourse with his wife, would also have to go through the purification process, as the ejaculation of sperm is also considered a pollution<sup>159</sup>. Although the purification process is not as lengthy as the female one, a man who has had sex with a woman would be required to remain in doors and not to participate to the daily ceremonies of the camp. This impediment could be regarded as a major encumbrance to his functions as priest or prophet, which represent the principal rewarded activity attributed to a man. Being active around the altar as a priest, or a prophet, is indeed fulfilling the idea of a Bobo Shanti manhood. A Bobo Shanti Rasta who cannot fulfil these functions is considered incomplete. Consequently, one may argue that sex, though accepted and tolerated; is not

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<sup>159</sup> See section 3.4.4 of the third chapter.



a means to obtain prestige on the commune. This particular mating arrangement left women without a negotiating span on their sexuality and family. Regarded as *distractions*, at the time of Chevannes' research, women appeared to have but little agency on their sexual lives.

Nonetheless, one cannot declare that these women remained isolated, solely waiting for their husbands to grant them sexual favours. If the amount of prestige that they received as faithful wives living near the community is not clear from our information, one can suggest that living on the outskirts of the camp with other empresses, must have helped them to build strong networks with other women of the vicinity, promoting the tenets of the EABIC. Even though our principal sources about EABIC in the 1960's and 1970's, Empress Rachel and Chevannes (1994), are not very specific about the lives of these women living outside of the commune, I have been able to witness, in 2008, that the community living in the outskirts of the camp, had kept very close relations with the EABIC. Other sources informed us that many former priests or empresses no longer being fulfilled by the EABIC principles, left the commune, but remained in the area, building an EABIC aware community (Priest Stéphane, personal conversation, March 15<sup>th</sup> 2009). Along with the commune's popular ceremonies, one may suggest that the presence of these Bobo Shanti Rastawomen outside of the commune contributed to the propagation of EABIC *livity*.

In all cases, it was difficult for Bobo Shanti wives and mothers to negotiate a space within the monastic structure of the EABIC commune. If the same pressure was felt by the husbands, as they had to be discreet about their private lives, they could still follow their sacerdotal vocation, and enjoy the prestige derived from it, while having their wives living on the outskirts of the camp. Women were left with the choices of celibacy, extremely discreet unions on the commune, or a removal from the same commune. However, this dynamic was to change. In the 1980's, the Woman Freedom Liberation League was created and among the rules and the duties pertaining to the archetype of the woman of *Right*, this female organisation, supported by King Emmanuel himself, integrated the notion of recreational sex as opposed to sex for procreation purposes.

### 6.2.3. The importance of recreational sex in women integration to the *Order*

The WFLM manifesto states: “If you are concerned with the size of your family, attain unto these principles of Right, living 21 days purification principles, a natural self-control method” (Empress Esther 2010: 12). The last seven days of a woman’s menstrual cycle are supposed to be the period where she is the least fertile. By encouraging women to use this particular time in their cycle as a natural means of contraception, the leading Empress of the WFLM clearly encouraged her fellow women to take control over their sexuality and fertility, making allowance for a totally revolutionary idea on the commune: recreational sex.

For instance, upon seeing me walking with a young prophet on the commune, Empress Beth mischievously enquired: “Has the separation made the heart grow fonder?” mistaking the visiting single prophet for my husband. As an elder, Empress Beth clearly sanctioned with this statement the necessity of emotional and romantic attachment within a married couple. It was not the first time that an EABIC woman mentioned the positive effects of the monthly separation between husband and wife as a positive impact on the emotional life of the couple. Empress Madafa, from the Trinidadian camp, explained in 2006 that the week of freedom was there to be enjoyed both emotionally and sexually, with one’s *kingman*. According to this empress, the ritual separation was the secret for the longevity of monogamous households: “You never get tired of him and he never gets tired of you. It’s just like a prince charming, the love remains strong” (Empress Madafa, personal conversation May 25<sup>th</sup> 2006).

One can therefore consider the additional week allocated to the purification process to have enabled EABIC men and women to negotiate a sexual space within the heavily ritualised life on the camp. Thanks to the twenty one days of purification, women are now able to control their fertility (Empress Esther 2010) and partake to recreational sex. This female attitude towards sex contrasts with that of the *Bredren* who only talk about sex in reference with procreation, at least in the presence of a foreign female researcher. The easiness with which women discussed their marital lives with friends or trusted outsiders contrasted greatly with the reticence that some men had on the subject. This particularity has been discussed elsewhere, extending this distinctiveness out of the EABIC range (Proulx et al., 2004). If abstinence can be regarded as a means to increase male *reputation*, women are not affected in a similar

way. As it has been observed in this work<sup>160</sup>, female *reputation*, or the acquisition of prestige for a young woman, is boosted by a strict obedience to the ritual purifications and their fertility. Therefore, because their sexual lives are already meticulously guarded, the discussion of their sexual life comes easier than the *Bredren* under fewer regulations.

Love, brotherly love, is a very important notion within Bobo Shanti and Rastafari at large, but is rarely mentioned in the marital context. The introduction of the additional week within the woman's monthly purification *journey* was a great step taken towards the acknowledgement of the couple's emotional needs. If it the negative connotations attached to sex have not totally been erased, it gave women a voice in the Bobo Shanti sexual discourse, largely dominated by male values of *abstinence=reputation*. From strict celibacy to mere tolerance and finally to full acknowledgement, the EABIC views on sex have certainly greatly evolved in the past fifty years.

#### **6.2.4. Sex and abstinence, a potent weapon and a shield**

Indeed, more than twenty years after what one can call the sexual revolution of the WFL, sex is still not a casual topic on the commune. The following is the testimony of Empress M<sup>161</sup>, who shared her experience with visible emotional distress. In fact, she used to be in a relationship, and has three children. She is currently no longer with the father of her children yet, she has been entertaining for some years an exclusive but *visiting* relationship type with a Rastafarian not of the EABIC. To her great anguish, her eldest son was murdered about two years before the interview. This event impacted greatly on her spiritual and personal life, as she decided to stop sexual intercourse with her partner, and live a life of strict celibacy on the commune. When questioned about this drastic choice she explained:

I rather live alone and stop living by the flesh. My son was killed, so I could not keep living by the flesh. I told my kingman that I would no longer deal<sup>162</sup> with him. We are still together, but I no longer deal with him. He can have another woman if he wants. I

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<sup>160</sup> See section 5.3.1 of the fifth chapter.

<sup>161</sup> The real names of the informants have of course been altered.

<sup>162</sup> To *deal* with a man or a woman is having sex in Jamaican parlance.

think that I am going to stop the relationship (Hon. Empress M, personal conversation November 26<sup>th</sup> 2008).

In her grief, Empress M somehow associated sex with a form of disrespect to the memory of her son. Abstinence, the original state of the EABIC member, appeals to her as a way to deal with the terrible loss of her beloved son. Living a life of celibacy, exactly in accordance with the *principles* of the EABIC can be regarded as a strategy to deal with her grief. Abstinence is in this case emotionally protecting her from other traumas.

On the same topic, another Empress declared: “In the state of poverty in which I am, I’d rather be alone. I cannot deal with a man and still be hungry, you understand?” (Empress X, personal conversation November 20<sup>th</sup> 2008). This Empress, that is not going to be named here, places sex within an emotional as well as a financial partnership. Clearly her partner could not provide her with a home, or bring improvement to her comfort, hence her provocative statement. One is here encouraged to understand the pointlessness of a mere emotional and sexual affair. This Empress can be said to have adopted a strategy that is not unlike the one observed by Handa (1996). Indeed, the latter argued that in Jamaica:

The poor economic conditions in the region and resultant high rate of male unemployment make financial reliance on a male partner a very uncertain proposition. The presence of an unemployed male in the household restricts a woman from receiving support (both monetary and child care) from her consanguine and other male partner” (Handa 1996: 795).

With grown up children and living on her own, this woman chose the commune for shelter and protection as well as spiritual fulfillment. The EABIC replaces in this case, State welfare and family support. One may therefore argue that with the debilitation of the *Universal* system, the expectations placed on a male partner in a relationship are not different from those of the mainstream Jamaican working class. If male celibacy is a source of pride as an evidence of one’s dedication to the *priestly* function, female celibacy apart from the spiritual gratifications, can denote financial and emotional independence.

### 6.2.5. EABIC sexual education

Sex and the desirability of a black woman's body is also something often discussed on the camp. As goddesses of creation, Mama Julie finds it natural and almost compulsory that all men of any ethnic background be attracted by the black female body: "How can you be so naive, of course they want to have I and I, all of them" (Empress Julie, personal conversation, November 20<sup>th</sup> 2008). Going decidedly against Kanazawa's scientific conclusions that women of African descent were less attractive than any other women (Kanazawa 2011), and the general assumption that mixed race women, called *browning* in Jamaica, are socially more desirable than dark skinned women (Mohammed 2000); Mama Julie insufflates pride within the dark bodies as well as placing a spiritual power on sexual intercourse with the said dark body. As a consequence to such potency, a woman and a man, ought to use sexual self-control. Self-control is indeed encouraged in all the visiting empresses, whom are guaranteed to find a *kingman* if they abide by the rules. This has been particularly made clear to me as I was neither Bobo, nor even Rastafarian, but single.

Countless examples of women who could not restrain their sexual desires have been given to me. In all cases, these women have lost their minds, and tragic accidents have happened to their partners as a punishment for the breaking of the camp's sexual regulations. For instance, Mama Julie recalled that a Chinese Empress was on the commune some years ago. As she went to wash her clothes in the river nearby, a man attempted to rape her. Because of her sympathetic attitude to the EABIC, the legend says that she was granted the strength to fight off her assailant, and even wound him badly. In this story, the one who showed lack of self-will: "because he wanted to taste Chinese pumpum<sup>163</sup>", was the one who got punished.

Mama Julie also gave the account of the daughter of a famous reggae artist who remained on the camp for a short time in her house. During that period of time, this young woman got involved with a prophet on the commune, and the two indulged in an

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<sup>163</sup> *Pumpum* is a Jamaican Patwa word for vagina.

intense sexual relationship. Upon discovering this, Mama Julie threw the girl out of her house and never agreed to take her back, even though the alleged sexual intercourse did not happen in Mama Julie's compound. As a direct consequence of this, the male culprit underwent a *judgement* as he was badly wounded in an accident shortly after the propagation of the scandalous news. The girl went back to the United States where she allegedly lives a very dissolute life. These stories, with or without their embellishments, are used for the edification of the young princesses. In a similar fashion with the morals of 17<sup>th</sup> century fairy tales like *The Little Red Riding Hood* which states:

Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf," but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all (Lang 1889: 51-53)

These EABIC illustrations are used to warn young women about their own sexual attractions as goddesses of creation, and the control that they must have over their powerful body/temple.

It is interesting to note that the *sex appeal* attached to the black woman is similar to the sexually potent bodies of Muslim women, which unveiled could bring their community into *Fitna* (Hirsi Ali 2007: 83). By keeping their body covered and maintain sexual self-control, women protect themselves and their community from divine *Judgement*. In the first story for instance, the woman was assaulted because of her exoticism, yet was strengthened as she was acquainted with EABIC tenets. She was vindicated as the culprit suffered greatly from his wounds, because of his lack of restraint. The other story relates to a black woman, who did not control her sexual urges. Because of the seriousness of the matter, she was stricken by shame and had to go back to *Babylon*, while her "partner in sin" also discredited by the community was physically wounded.

In the latter case of sexual transgression, both culprits were mystically punished. This cross gender penalties are not always present in Jamaican society where men would not usually be held responsible in cases of sexual misconduct (Schlesinger

1968, Nettleford 1970, Senior 1991). An old Kréyol proverb says: *Séré pouz zot, cok mwèn dewô*, hide your hens, my rooster is out, meaning that men shall not be held responsible for any sexual misconducts. The consequences of such behaviours, often an unwanted pregnancy, ought to be borne by the girl and her family, perpetuating the matrifocal cycle so common in the Caribbean (Mulot 2000).

Sexual agency is commonly granted to men and it is left to the girls' parents to protect their daughters by keeping her in ignorance, or bear the consequences (Schlesinger 1968, Mulot 2000).

#### **6.2.6. Summary**

More than forty years after Schlesinger's study, sexual education is widespread in Jamaican schools thanks to intensive governmental campaigns such as the *Reform of Secondary Education* (ROSE) to tackle issues like teen pregnancy, or the transmission of the HIV virus (*Sexual Education a Must*, Jamaica gleaner 2006). Nevertheless, even if ignorance is no longer the accepted attitude toward female sexuality, women are still often the ones responsible for any children produced during an unofficial relationship (Barriteau 1996). Contrary to the wider Jamaican society, Bobo Shanti priests and prophets are thoroughly responsible for their offspring. Having children and passing down one's name is highly gratifying. To some priests, sex is essentially about procreation, which is in line with their priestly functions. Sexual restraint as husband and wife is widely inculcated to youngsters and neophytes in graphic stories, where both deviant male and female are punished. If ritual physical separation between husband and wife is required by the *principles*, couples are left free to obey these laws as all the couples with children living on the camp reside in the same house, challenging the original radical structure of the EABIC community/family. The establishment of these rules and the freedom to abide by them has shaped the mating patterns within the camp structure of Bull Bay Jamaica.

#### **6.3. EABIC Courtship**

Love is an omnipresent concept on the camp. Any conversations, may they be trivial or serious would usually begin by a *Blessed Love* greeting, and concluded by *love love*. If fraternal love was intensely promoted in the early years of EABIC, romantic

love has also been integrated to the EABIC *principles* with the efforts of the WFL. Courtship for instance has to follow specific rules.

In fact, as a *priesthood order* the EABIC does not encourage its members to be too forward in their quest of a wife. Men are suggested to leave the princesses alone. King Emmanuel allegedly said that one should not harass the *dwatas*<sup>164</sup> but seek to convert women from the outside (Priest Stéphane, personal conversation, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2007). Although they are urged to marry within the EABIC, or at the very least serious Rastafari Empresses, courting the women living on the commune is not regarded as the only way to get a wife. Following an exogamous pattern, the prophet or the priest have more opportunities to spread the EABIC livity. This practice of *Growing a Dwata* identified by Yawney (1989) does not have the same application in the EABIC *Livity*. Growing a Dwata in Rastafari parlance means literally to convert a woman, to encourage her to grow in Rastafari. Yawney argued that this process is paternalistic, as women are thus always considered as rastaman-woman. Although, Bobo Shanti men would try to convert/charm a non-Rastafari woman in order for him to marry her, the commune does not rely on their evangelistic powers of seduction to boost its female population.

Moreover, pressing one's suit with too much ardour is regarded as a *distraction* to the meditation of both men and women. Within the same perspective, it has also been reported that in the eventuality of an attachment between a man and a woman of the EABIC, it is the woman who ought to go to the *Bredren*, in order to take the relationship further (Prophet Jimmy, personal conversation, November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008). Women need to show modesty yet some bravery, as they are to make the first step, while men must respect their choice in terms. In this case, men are the ones with a more passive role, whilst choice remains in the hands of the princess. Forced marriage is unheard of on the commune. One does not know exactly when King Emmanuel's statement about courtship was uttered, but it surely has granted women legitimacy as Rastawomen, full EABIC members able to meditate peacefully on the commune and

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<sup>164</sup> Dwata is a Rastafarian term referring to women. See the various nuances of the word in Yawney's *Growing a Dwata*.



choose their life partners. Choosing a partner is such an important endeavour that both women and men are not allowed to get married before the age of twenty one: “Before this age, a youth is not mature enough in his or her mind and body to make such an important decision. It is preferable for them to wait to enjoy the fullness of the relationship” (Empress Madafa, personal conversation, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2006).

Currently on the commune, most couples are composed according to King Emmanuel’s advice. These priests all sought their wives outside of the commune. For instance, there is the beautiful love story between a prophet and a visiting princess from England who fell in love. Even if the young woman had to go back to England, the relationship was kept alive in spite of the distance. Upon leaving the camp in 2008, this researcher was told that the British belle was soon due to return permanently to the commune. The prophet had prepared a beautiful blue house on the eights in order to welcome her, while the entire community supports the union as she is regarded as a “woman of Right”. Indeed, the Empress was allegedly primarily interested in the EABIC, and then met her husband to be. As it has been mentioned in another section of this work, visiting princesses interested in the Bobo Shanti *Livity* are highly sought for. On top of her piety, the belle happened to be of African descent, making the alliance perfectly in line with the *Principles*.

As it has already been mentioned, in order to form an alliance, both parties have to be of the same ethnic group. Since pious visiting princesses come mostly from South America or Asia, the chances of them to get married to an African-Jamaican EABIC member are very slim. Most couples residing on the commune are indeed of African descent. The typical marriageable empress would have to be of this ethnic background. The woman would usually follow her partner on the commune and live more or less according to the principles<sup>165</sup>.

On the commune, the process of wooing an empress is essentially done on the veranda. Indeed, it is mentioned in the principle that a man should not be inside the

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<sup>165</sup> One has been able to observe that one Empress was not wearing locks and that she regularly cut the hair of her children.

house of a woman after a certain hour of the night. Since the days are fairly busy, the evening after service is the ideal time to engage a princess into a *reasoning*. The suitors would usually bring small presents like juice, food or even manufactured products like shower gels, which are considered luxury items. Then the pair ought to remain outside and *reason* while they may both enjoy a meditation through the sacred herb. The Empress may show her preference by washing her suitor's clothes when she is *free*, and the suitor will make sure to drop little presents while she remains in the *Journey gate*.

### **6.3.1. Summary**

Courtship is therefore a quite solemn affair where both parties have to be mature enough to partake in it. Men are encouraged to seek their partners outside of the commune. The woman has to be willing to live at least outwardly according to the EABIC *principle* and if already a Bobo Shanti Empress, has to show interest first to the *Priesthood order* for the union to be sanctioned by the community. Miscegenation is frowned upon and couples are encouraged to remain within their ethnic group in spite of feelings that may have developed between them.

Because marriage was not originally within the EABIC world view, one may argue here that the protocol attached to courtship is there to promote the lasting quality of the Bobo Shanti *principles*. Unlike many East, and West African patterns where the production of children and strengthening of the lineage are the expected outcome, and even the supreme purpose of marriage (Bascom 1942, Fortes 1950, Manuh 1997, Oyewumi 1997), marriage within the EABIC gladly welcomes children, yet the alliance is mainly regarded as a mean to propagate the EABIC *Livity*.

### **6.4. Motherhood and fatherhood within the EABIC**

A woman has more chances to be courted if she goes in the *journey gate*. This act gives valuable indication on both her devotion and fertility. While conversing with a *Bredren*, I have had the opportunity to hear the praises of a middle-aged empress, who was believed to still visit the *journey gate*. Upon hearing this information, one prophet warmly expressed his admiration of her, impressed by the fact that this empress could still be able to produce a child.

Within the same ethos, a young priest was being criticised for the futility of his relationship with an Empress who had past menopause. Because the latter could no longer produce a child, the community has frowned upon the relationship. Although neither ostracised nor openly rebuked, the young priest, in question, is rarely conducting Sabbath services or engaged in any other priestly functions, the expression of the EABIC manhood. Being in my late twenties, I was warmly encouraged to start a family as I was told that: “If you and people like you do not make children, teenagers will keep on making children, as nature demands that children must be brought forth” (Priest Wayne, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008).

Similarly to the Jamaican inner city described by Tafari Ama (2007), having children on the commune is adding to the prestige of an individual, and establishes one as a man, or a woman, among his or her peers. In EABIC understanding, having children is considered to be the duty of the black man, in order to upset the plans of *Babylon* to wipe out the African *race* (Priest Wayne, personal conversation, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008). A woman is often attributed the title of *wombman* in glorification of her fecundity and ability to bring forth life. Most Empresses on the commune have had children, and submit to various purges, and drink special tonics in order to strengthen their reproductive system. Their *Kingmen* are also required to follow the dietary requirement in order to maximise their fertility. Aloe Vera and different recipes of *roots* are used to achieve this.

Men are often seen doting on their little ones on the commune. I have had the opportunity to witness proud fathers taking their sons to service, pointing out to friends how they could already keep the Nyahbinghi binary rhythm or chant the doxology. Although the circumstances have changed since the 1970's, one may still witness the universal affection towards the children that Chevannes (1994) described. Nonetheless, the precedence that male children allegedly had over their mothers described by Chevannes (1994: 176) seemed to have disappeared in 2008. On the contrary, it was very clear that children ought to respect their elders, may they be male or female. This is directly in line with the importance that the EABIC places on seniority.

However, the collective upbringing witnessed by Chevannes (1994: 174-176) and the testimonies of Empress Rachel (2010), which described the existence of actual co-mothers and co-fathers, has partly disappeared from the camp for several reasons. Firstly, *Dada* or King Emmanuel has not been replaced by another strong authority figure. Indeed, during Chevannes' field work, children could be reprimanded by any adult, yet the final referee was always King Emmanuel, who acted like the supreme father of the camp, over the authority of the biological parents. His death left the biological parents solely in charge of their children, thus ceasing the common motherhood and fatherhood that once existed.

Secondly, as fewer women on the camp actually abide by the twenty-one days of purification, the importance of having co-mothers or fathers is no longer justified. Due to this authority gap, it is the entire notion of motherhood, and fatherhood that has been altered. Nonetheless, in spite of these alterations, parenthood is still highly regarded among the Bobo Shanti. It remains the manifestation of one's divine nature through the power of creating life<sup>166</sup>.

In spite of the general anxiety about fertility, childless people are not stigmatised as it can be the case in some West African countries, or in Jamaica (Emecheta 1979; Sangree 1987; Pearce 1999, Tafari-Ama 2006). This particularity may be attributed to the original monastic settings of the EABIC, where sex even within the procreation boundaries, was not encouraged. Closely related with sanctity, celibacy and childlessness are not regarded as curses or misfortunes, though sterility is mentioned with pity.

The natural process of menopause does not automatically make a woman despair on her ability to bear a child. It is generally believed that if one lives *Right*, one can easily conceive in old age. For instance, Mama Julie, well in her sixties, still expects to get pregnant with the right man. Claiming to be the reincarnation of the biblical wife of Abraham, Sarah, she also expects to make everyone marvel at a miraculous late pregnancy. The childless elder Empresses would usually enjoy the presence of children,

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<sup>166</sup> Children education will be discussed further in the following chapter.

whom they would send on errands, scold, or give little tokens acting pretty much like dotting mothers, and grandmothers. Since Chevannes' visits, the camp population has greatly aged, with a great majority of elder women and single men. Childlessness is therefore the prevailing lot on the commune, and seems to have been accepted by all.

#### **6.4.1. Summary**

Children hold a particularly great importance in their parent's spiritual and social prestige. Nevertheless, I argue that because of the particular *Priesthood* approach to sex typical of the Bobo Shanti Rases, and the current ageing population of the camp, adults without children are not ostracised. Although fecundity is highly praised and sought for, childlessness is not a curse. This attitude towards children emphasises the dual perception of sex as a beneficial, yet not essential part of an EABIC couple.

On the commune, the patriarchal concept of the man, head of the household is present without tempering with women's agency over their bodies, and resources. Without the *Universal* support, a man must provide shelter and protection for his wife and children. If he fails to do so, the relationship can be threatened or even severed, which could not have been the case as the commune was designed to provide enough spiritual, emotional and financial support for celibate individuals, and families alike.

Celibacy itself is regarded as a noble state, even though child bearing is a great source of social prestige and satisfaction. The camp's infrastructure itself has been devised, in order to promote communal living above private nuclear families. The following is a study of the EABIC mating pattern out of the commune context. Indeed, most Bobo Shanti Rases now live out of the commune setting. By examining their families, I will be able to observe the sustainability of the *Principle* directly confronted to the norms of *Whiteness*.

#### **6.5. Sex and mating patterns out of the commune structure**

The freedom in applying and interpreting the EABIC principles is the reason why the movement was able to export itself in so many different countries. Indeed, when the camp structure could not be reproduced, Bobo Shanti Rases had to adapt the rules without losing the radical characteristic of the movement. For the purpose of this

section, I am going to look at the lives of EABIC members living in individual houses, in Montego Bay, and Kingston.

### **6.5.1. EABIC Family in Jamaica**

The EABIC household is not the inescapable site of patriarchy and female subordination. It constitutes a space in which women may have more control than is commonly recognized (Barriteau 1996: 152). Considering the socio-cultural and economic importance of the family (Creed 2000) I believe that women have a great role to play in the making of their community, and this can be applied to the Bobo Shanti household. The EABIC is making a conscious effort to distinguish itself from the ambient modern subjectivity of *whiteness*. This can be observed in the family patterns within the island. For this section, I have been able to collect data from two families. Here, I am not trying to transform this rather small sample into an archetype of the Jamaican Bobo Shanti families living out of the camp, but compared to the families located in other countries, I am confident that an “out of the camp” pattern could be identified here.

### **6.5.2. The Ika/Esther household. Montego Bay**

One prominent Jamaican household willing to share information about its internal organisation was that of Empress Esther, and her partner Ika. In 2009, the couple lived in a rural part of Montego Bay. The household comprises five members: mother, step father and three children. It is a recomposed family, as the children are Empress Esther’s sons from previous marriages. Ika, also has a daughter, who does not live with them. At first glance, nothing demarcates their household from any other Jamaican ones, with the same financial means. On living outside the commune settings, Empress Esther declares:

It is hard because one is not living in the community where we take care of each other or I should say the comm.[community] takes care of its people. However, because I have a very good family who loves me, I would receive assistance from them from time to time. Like my Mom and sisters in the States would send me a barrel with food and clothing for I and children; I also make my own garments and would sell crafts. I also plant my own food I eat what I plant etc... (Empress Esther, personal conversation, June 10<sup>th</sup> 2010)

As it has been observed earlier, the *Universal* and the commune structure are the spiritual and financial foundation on which the Bobo Shanti family grows. In Empress

Esther's case, it is her biological family that is performing this financial role, making her household decidedly similar to other rural Jamaican households, where relatives living abroad contribute to the wellbeing of their family remaining in the homeland, by regularly sending remittances (UN 2005).

When I first arrived in their home in 2009, I was told that: "We are going to country. Ika has a house there, which is very comfortable. I have my own house in Montego Bay, but it is not big enough to accommodate everyone, so we all live in the country, the environment is better for the children anyway" (conversation with Empress Esther 2009). Owning a house in Jamaica is quite a commendable achievement even for lower middle class Jamaicans. As early as 1936, the mal-distribution of lands has been an identified problem. Numerous public and private institutions have tried over the years to solve the problem, yet to no avail (Prendergast 2007). Owning a house in Jamaica remains a privilege as: "Home ownership for many Jamaicans is a means of self validation, empowerment and status" (Prendergast 2007: 2). In this case, however, being in possession of two houses can be regarded as an act of independence than an elevation to a bourgeois status:

I am not married, at least not yet. I only visit Ika at times as some times in the area that I am living is war torn and sometime the place get wicked; in the country is more peace full (sic) (Empress Esther, personal conversation, June 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

In other communications, the latter explained the fact that her house in Montego Bay was not rented. She had no intentions of selling either; this would only become an option if she permanently moved to Africa. Both houses are family inherited and relatively near their owners' respective kindred. Empress Esther clearly stated that the house was not only hers, but belonged to her brothers and sisters, who may one day be in need of a place to stay. This attitude towards family land, or house ownership can directly be linked to the concept of the free villages studied by Besson (1994), where the land could not be sold, and was to remain within the family.

Nonetheless, by moving into her partner's house with her children on a rather permanent basis, Empress Esther demarcates herself from the matrifocal local pattern of Jamaican household arrangements, where the male partner and the children remain in the house of the matriarch. Keeping her family house while living in her partner's home, is Empress Esther's own choice, as his house is in a safer environment. Her family

home in the heart of Montego Bay, is definitely as she described it herself, a *pied á terre*, a haven where she, and her other siblings can find shelter in time of financial or emotional crisis.

One would have expected Empress Esther to use her family home as a *journey gate* when menstruating, granting to the house a spiritual dimension, but it is obviously not the case. Empress Esther's family house acts as security, an investment in the future. She nonetheless explained how she would prepare for her purification process in her house and how she would advise me to proceed:

During those days I don't cook for my sons they do the cooking. We don't share cups or spliffs with the bigger ones. They rest and play in their own rooms until after 7 days, however on the foundation I would be separating myself from my sons and I and my daughter would journey as I would not leave my daughter out of my protection. My strength to the I is that you do what you can. whenever that time of issue comes, if u have two rooms you could separate until after 7 days, or if that is not possible just don't have sex while [having your] periods. Don't cook. Let him do the cooking because this is time of your spiritual rest being on your spiritual journey. don't wash your personal clothes [underwears] with his... I am entering my second year of menopause so I do not have to undertake this any longer. (Empress Esther, personal conversation, June 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

In her late forties, the Empress is going through menopause, and therefore no longer needs to separate herself from her husband and sons. In the electronic conversation quoted above, she mainly gave me advice on how one should approach the ritual purification without the proper facilities, and infrastructure. Physical separation for the first seven days of the cycle appears to be very important, as she would not even share a cup with her sons, or her *kingman*.

The mere avoidance of sex during these seven days is the very last resort to keep the concept of purification if separation is impossible. It is interesting to note that she would not wash female items of clothing with male ones. These laundry and menstruation concerns are not inherent to EABIC. Actually, it is a deeply rooted Jamaican belief that a man can be rendered weak through the power of a woman's menses (Chevannes 1998, Brown 1993). Therefore, even in non Rastafarian milieus, women would not cook for their partners while menstruating, and would make certain to wash their undergarments on their own. These traditional Jamaican peasant beliefs appear to have influenced both Rastafari, and inner-city dialogue between men and



women, as it has enforced various Dancehall deejays, such as elephant Man, in his song *Bad Man ting*.

Going back to Empress Esther's adaptation of the ritual purification process, I noticed that she would entirely avoid visiting the camp when *unfree*. Indeed, it seems that the purification period makes more sense to her at home, rather than on the commune. In fact, in 2008, she was expected to attend an event on the Bull Bay commune, but she failed to turn up. She later explained that although she was going through the process of menopause, she occasionally saw her menses, and the celebration on the camp unfortunately occurred at that same time. Her attitude also makes sense in that, if she had gone to the commune, she would not have been able to mingle with the rest of the community.

This way of thinking was underlined once more when upon arriving at Empress Esther's house in 2009, I unexpectedly started my menstrual cycle. This became a nuisance, as I was supposed to attend the Anniversary of Empress Menen on the Bull Bay commune. Within these circumstances, I was invited to remain in the house with the children, and her husband, while she attended the festivities alone. This solution was possible because Ras Ika is not a Bobo Shanti, and did not appear to object to the proposition.

One may also attribute Empress Esther's preference to remain at home rather than on the camp during her menses to the fact that her children do not live on the commune. Although she travels a lot, remaining for twenty one days on the camp is not an ideal arrangement for her. Because of her functions as the leading Empress of the WFL, and her work load as a seamstress, Empress Esther is often travelling as the ambassador of the EABIC, or very busy with her clothes orders. Nevertheless, she is fully supported by her relatives: "My relation with my parents is very good and they do not have a problem with me or how I grow my children. As far as they are concerned, I am doing a pretty good job" (Empress Esther, personal conversation, June 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

### **6.5.2. Chores/economic activities**

At home, Empress Esther is not engrossed with household chores as her sons and Kingman usually take care of them. The traditional tasks attributed to women of the

EABIC, except for the cooking duties, are fulfilled by the males of the household. The children would alternate to do the cooking, and the cleaning. Very compliant, they do not needlessly argue to do what is required of them, and are even very proud when congratulated on their cooking or cleaning skills. Very industrious, Ika is a beekeeper, and also has experience in the field of electronics and computer science. During my stay in their house, I cannot recall Ika cooking once, yet, light cleaning of the house and garden work seemed to be his domain. As aforementioned, in addition to her functions as EABIC ambassador, which could take her as far as South Africa, Empress Esther is a busy seamstress sewing clothes for her household as well as for various patrons. When she is not travelling, lecturing or sewing, she devotes her time to her boys' education. In the Ika/Esther household, chores are not gendered, and are completed without major unwillingness. Time and availability appear to be major factors in chores attribution.

### **6.5.3. Private life**

Discussing sexual matters is delicate, yet, Empress Esther kindly accepted to share parts of her private life. She indeed underlined the fact that she accepted Ras Ika as her companion because he was willing not to *live by the flesh*: “I would have never been able to live with a non spiritual man” (Empress Esther, personal conversation, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2009). In fact, even though their private life is shielded from the rector's of the *principles*, the notion of sexual control has subsisted in this household. They appear to have reached an agreement where sexual intercourse would enhance both their spiritual and emotional lives.

### **6.5.4. Summary**

The Ika/Esther household is therefore a recomposed family living in a rural area of Montego Bay. Even though the entire family lives in the *patriarch's* house, Empress Esther has not severed her ties with her biological and spiritual kin. Indeed, living far from the camp structure, she receives financial and emotional support from her family, and great spiritual support from the Bull Bay commune. Having undergone menopause, she would no longer follow the ritual separation with her male relatives, even if she would advise nubile women to separate themselves for at least the first seven days of their cycle, from their male relatives. Chores are not gendered, as everyone is expected to participate to the well-being of the household.

### 6.5.5. Joya/Judah Household

Another Jamaican family that I had the privilege to meet was that of the Hon. Empress Joya Elisabeth, and Priest Judah Selassie. Both in their late twenties, they are also a recomposed family of four children in all. Empress Joya is originally from Detroit. She has travelled extensively, particularly in Kenya, where she adopted her first son. She has had her two daughters from a previous marriage. After the death of her first husband, she met Ras Judah, in 2007, on the EABIC commune, and they now have a little boy together. This recomposed family lives according to the nuclear family pattern. They currently reside on the outskirts of Kingston, and own an *Ital* restaurant. The following is from Empress Joya:

Although InI family does not live on the foundation will still base our lives on certain principles. I respect the set principles that govern Bobo Hill yet I strongly believe that some principles are misinterpreted and need to be modernized.

To begin with, the 21 day principle of purification is the only standard set for woman. I feel if I am going to be in the house for 21 days I need to be enlightening and educating myself. The 21 day principle limits a woman sphere of influence and opportunity in the world. How can we pursue our education in the house? Also, how can a person be polluted by hearing the voice of an un-free woman ... We both practice of crafts and we believe education is paramount. I feel that lack of education is the reason for any slackness and stagnation in the Rastafari movement. I also feel that we should free ourselves from the yoke of the white man's bible and version of Christianity. (Empress Joya, personal conversation August 20<sup>th</sup> 2010)

In this conversation, Empress Joya openly challenges the validity of the application of the twenty one days principle. Indeed, living outside the commune, she sees the ritual confinement as an obstacle for female education. In a neo-liberal society such as Jamaica, higher education is often synonymous with well remunerated jobs (Burton 1997: 121). Within a Rastafari perspective, education is acquiring the skills that would allow one to create a viable business venture. As it has already been discussed in this thesis,<sup>167</sup> self-employment is extremely important in EABIC *livity*, and since the Joya/Judah family is living without the support of the *Universal*, economic survival would depend solely on the financial performances of their business. Education is therefore a way to produce shrewd Rastawomen that the strict and uncritical application of the twenty one days of purification would jeopardise.

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<sup>167</sup> See previous chapter on Work in the EABIC.

However, if Empress Joya sees the twenty one days of purification as a threat to Rastafari, she does not question the purification process itself: “In my home after my issue I wait a week before I have sex. I don't during my issue”. (Empress Joya, personal conversation, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Although she does not come away from her husband during that time, sexual abstinence during the menstruation period is observed. It would appear that Empress Joya has gone back to the pre WFLC purification principle, where women practiced fifteen days of ritual purification. Even though she does not seem to reprove the purification necessity, total physical separation is not an option for her. Empress Joya’s strategy to live according to the EABIC out of the commune setting may simply be explained by impracticability of the matter. Indeed, she explains that: “We share a bedroom and raise our children together. During my issue we sleep in separate beds as there are two beds in our bedroom.” (Empress Joya, personal conversation, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2010). From Empress Joya’s account, it appears that household accommodation patterns are left to the discretion of its members. In fact, her husband could have easily gone to the commune, waiting for the end of his wife’s menses, yet, out of convenience, the couple chose to remain in the same house, in the same bedroom, but on separate beds.

In addition to the living and working space, household chores also appear to be equally shared: “We share in household responsibilities and support each other. We cook dinner together every night.” (Empress Joya, personal conversation, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2010). The action of cooking together, and, every night, is very significant, as it underlines the degree of adaptation, and interpretation present in this household. Indeed, a woman is not supposed to cook for a man when she is not *free* (Chevannes 1994: 177), yet empress Joya cooks every night in her husband’s company, defying once again the *principles*:

The principles set for the foundation are made by man, God and Goddess are made by Jah. I am not held by the confines of manmade religion, I am a spiritual woman. I respect myself and my kingman respects me. What draws me to the EABIC is the fact that I know I am a Goddess and I am an Ethiopian reincarnated here in the west because of slavery. I support the doctrine of black supremacy and I strongly agitate for reparations and repatriation for all displaced Africans in the Diaspora.

Above the *principles*, Empress Joya has set for herself objectives towards repatriation and reparation. Activism in the Joya/Judah household appears to precede strict obedience to rituals.

#### **6.5.6. Summary**

The Joya/Judah household is a nuclear family, and functions as such. Within the line of EABIC, they are both self-employed and apply sexual abstinence during the menstruation period, and even seven days afterwards. Though they do not sleep in the same bed during that time, Empress Joya does not separate herself from her husband, and children during that time and would even cook for them. She expressively criticised the traditional twenty one days of purification as an impediment to female education, and therefore to the development of Rastafari. She also appears to favour the activist aspect of the EABIC, rather than its ritual duties. I would argue that, without the assistance of the *Universal* and the reality of the society out of the EABIC norms, the Bobo Shanti ritual tends to give way to activism, and the promotion of EABIC activism and ethos.

#### **6.6. Conclusion**

Because prestige and *reputation* is granted to those who follow the *principles*, the EABIC had to design its own notion of the acceptable family structure. In fact, with the introduction of marriage consummation and children, a particular organisation of the family had to be designed to maintain the particularities of the *Priesthood Order*. The commune was therefore organised into a community/family, sustained by the *Universal* under the authority of King Emmanuel. With the notion of co-parenting, the then prosperous commune was able to conciliate the necessities of family life, children's education, and also, the notion of *Priesthood Order*. Within the community/family, dominant Jamaican family structures such as matrifocality and normalised gender roles “the wife nurturer and husband or male partner provider” (Sharpe 1996: 262) have been altered to promote the idea of gods and goddesses “not living by the flesh”.

The community/family could then be regarded as a nurturing space providing for the needs of all its members, male, female, adults and children. Monetary imperatives existing out of the camp were somehow less pressing on the commune's premises. As a

result, both men and women could focus on their spiritual lives, and gather prestige and respect while taking care of the children of the commune. The family was equated to the community, and all men and women were in charge of raising the children.

Nowadays, without the effective support of the *Universal*, the community/family struggles to maintain itself. As a direct consequence of King Emmanuel's death and the decadence of the *Universal*, couples organise their household in a nuclear family fashion. In fact, without the support of the *Universal*, husbands would usually engage in remunerated activities out of the commune, in order to maintain their families, causing them to unite in a nuclear fashion. The control of their wages and tithes offering is no longer exercised by the community. The wives would usually remain at home, engaging in *house service* and devote their time to the children. One is tempted to attribute their neglect of the ritual seclusion, fasts or contribution to the *Universal* to their new circumstances, thus creating a gap between the expectation of the community, and the economic realities of the families.

Indeed, one may suggest that the ethos of the *Priesthood* order has not disappeared with the decadence of the *Universal*. The disparity between the means (*Universal*) and the objective (*Priesthood Order*) has caused the camp's families to either desert the camp, or adopt family patterns alien to the EABIC original conception of the family. The static nature of the objective, and the disappearing means, has therefore caused Bobo Shanti couples living on the commune to lose the respect and the prestige usually attached to an Empress/mother, and a Priest or Prophet/father. In this context, one may suggest that the divine status of both men and women is jeopardised, placing them on almost the same footing with the working class neighbouring non-EABIC couples.

This chapter sought out to analyse the organisation of the family, and the sexual patterns on the Bull Bay commune. The following chapter will focus on education. The EABIC has designed a particular idea of the family, which is currently struggling to survive. Can this particularity be present in the socialisation of children?

## **Chapter 7: Education and gender agency: socialising princes and princesses**

In the context of the spiritual war that EABIC wages against *Babylon*, it is essential to investigate the socialisation of the younger members of the community against the economic dynamics present in and out of the commune. This chapter will endeavour to analyse the education of Bobo Shanti children during and after King Emmanuel, and identify the particularities that makes it radical within the Jamaican society.

### **7.1. The importance of radical education in the Caribbean**

Children socialisation and appropriate curricula are crucial notions to the orientation and development of a community. The control over the younger generation's formal education<sup>168</sup> is vital to the maintenance or the destruction of a social status quo. Erskine illustrates this point when discussing the Jamaican parish schools failure to encourage effective social and economic change for the newly freed African-Jamaicans during the post emancipation period. During that time the unwillingness of the colonial administration to share the control of the economy with people that were at the extreme bottom of the colour/class social ladder was made blatant (Erskine 1998).

#### **7.1.1. Education and the maintenance of gender and ethnic stereotypes**

In a different era and island but still in a revolutionary context, the plea for a more culturally relevant education was made by political figures such as Jacqueline Creft. The latter, member of the short lived Grenadian communist government criticised the Eurocentric orientation of the available curriculum, legacy of the colonial institutions, and agitated for a more Caribbean and meaningful system for the country envisioned by Maurice Bishop's government:

Comrades, ever since our party was founded in March 1973, high upon our list of priorities has been the transformation of this twisted education system that we inherited from colonialism and from Gairy<sup>169</sup>. We were determined to change a system which so powerfully excluded the interests of the mass of our people, and which also wove webs of fear, alienation and irrelevance around our children's minds ... whether it was Little Miss Muffet, the Cow That Jumped Over the Moon, William the

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<sup>168</sup> By formal education one understands education offered by institutions like schools, not directly provided by the family unit.

<sup>169</sup> Erik Gairy was the first Prime Minister of Grenada.

Conqueror, Wordsworth's Daffodils, or the so-called "Discoveries" By Christopher Columbus of the "New World". (Jacqueline Creft, Building of mass education in Free Grenada, 1981).

Creft's indignation against the inadequate education system of Grenada in the 1970's is echoed by Gillborn when he denounced the stigmatisation of male black pupils in the UK (Gillborn 2008: 40). This particular group of children failing in school raised such controversies that educators such as Dr. Lez Henry diversity consultant for *Nu-beyond, Learning by Choice*<sup>170</sup> and Neil Mayers (2008) endeavoured to set up special workshops in mainstream schools or write parental guides, to reverse the black boy/failing dynamics. One would tend to associate these problems with the fact that the British educational system had not been designed to deal with diversity, as these black boys belong to what is called an ethnic minority in the UK. These diversity issues have been recognised and several associations such as *Nu-beyond* or the *Positive Mental Attitude Community College*<sup>171</sup>, to only quote these, are battling on a daily basis to raise awareness and address these problems in the British society and educational system. Nevertheless, the situation may appear more preoccupying when self-discriminatory biases can be observed.

Drayton (1997) in her analysis of Caribbean English textbooks underlines the rampant sexism and the lack of African positive representation found in the children's compulsory reading material. She deplors: "the lack of perspective or critical comment in editors' introductions and presentations of the extracts" (Drayton 1997: 177). Indeed, without any criticisms, these teaching materials normalise nugatory sexist and racist stereotypes in young African-diasporic children's psyche, justifying the colourist arguments already latent in their own communities.

Beyond the content of the curriculum, it appears that the teaching methods are also encouraging gender biases. It has been recorded that a misbehaving male pupil would be more tolerated than an inattentive or rowdy female one (Pary 2004: 167-184). These facts which could here again be linked with Wilson's (1978) *Respectability* and *Reputation* theory:

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<sup>170</sup> More information on Nu-Beyond are available on: <http://www.nubeyond.com/eventsx.htm>

<sup>171</sup> More information on PMACC are available on : <http://www.pmacc.co.uk/>



If home and church are the key institutions of the respectability system, the focus of the reputation system is the street and its adjunct and extension the rum shop, where all-male “crews” forgather at every opportunity to drink, play games... If self restraint, even self denial, lies in the heart of the respectability system, self affirmation, even self dramatisation, is the be-all and end-all of the reputation system” (Burton 1997:158-159).

Economic imperatives may also be powerful factors that would shape the content of curricula. A current illustration of the political and economic dynamics in formal education can be found in Jamaica. In fact, tourism has been included in the State curriculum as a subject on the same level with mathematics or English. Pupils as young as four years old, may learn how to be effective agents in the lucrative Jamaican tourism industry (Jayawardena 2005: 124). This modification of the curriculum expresses the government’s vision for Jamaica. Tourism appears more viable and profitable than activities such as organic agriculture or the development of sustainable energies. If politics colour/class and economics undeniably affect the formal education system of a country, one can safely infer that it will also have an impact on children socialisation and the development of gender identity.

One may suggest that school curriculum definitely has a political and economic agenda. No matter how neutral one may wish formal education to be, factors like gender, race, colour, class and nationality will always make their way in the social and cognitive development of children. Education is therefore a medium to translate and maintain governmental policies or cultural clichés to the younger generation. Consequently, it would be expected that in order to break away from an established order, a revolutionary group must elaborate a reform of the educative system.

As a self-defined government, it is important for this study to understand in which way the EABIC influences the education of their young ones in order to offer a real alternative to mainstream formal instruction. Could the knowledge delivered at *Jerusalem School*<sup>172</sup> be efficient enough for the movement to go from ideological resistance to effective social subversion? How is gender taken into account in this specific context? In an attempt to assess these questions one is going to look at the manner in which the Bobo Shanti conception of education is applied in Jamaica, where

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<sup>172</sup> Jerusalem School is another name given to the EABIC Camp in Jamaica. Men, women and children are supposed to learn the way to salvation. Many Bobo Shanti from foreign countries go to *Jerusalem School* in order to be crowned as priests, prophets or to be officially registered.

princes and princesses have to be raised in order to become gods and goddesses in the midst of *Babylon*.

## **7.2. Bobo Shanti education in a camp setting**

The EABIC has never been a static community. In fact, it went through stages of persecution, division, theological adjustments and eventually reached a state of partial acceptance from the larger Jamaican society. I argue that similarly to the evolution of Bobo Shanti family organisation, the education dispensed to Bobo Shanti children

### **7.2.1. Camp education from the sixties to the seventies**

Until the independence period between 1958 and 1962, schools were the reflections of the colourist dynamics present in most Caribbean countries, and mainly catered for the white and lighter skin elites who had the means to send their children to these establishments. The larger African-Jamaican population, usually from the lower social classes, could not afford the school fees and other expenses related to education (Meditz and Hanratty 1987). During the independence period however, a genuine political will to develop the educational system of the island can be observed. Indeed, by supporting teacher training colleges and the development of free governmental schools (De Landsheere 1962), Jamaica was getting ready to enter the world as an independent and capable country. In the heights of this nationalistic enthusiasm for the education of Jamaican citizens, the Black Youth Faith and its radical had quite a different discourse.

As discussed in the chapter on EABIC theology, the 1960s saw the advent of the Youth Black Faith leading to the radicalisation of the existing Rastafarian movement. Agitating for “Repatriation over independence”, Rastafari influenced by the Youth Black Faith, was in open opposition with the political atmosphere of the time. Therefore this new radical and separatist orientation must have added to general prejudice from the wider Jamaican society: “At that time, a Rasta was portrayed as a black heart man. They say they [the Rastafarians] would kill you and cut your heart, so when school children see a Rastaman they would run and hide in” (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010). The EABIC Rases gathered in the slums of Kingston were not spared:

Living in Baca Wall, the tribulation began with the police. They would take away Bredren, lock them up for days without any charge against them and trim them. [They would] let us dig up the pit toilet which is (sic) full of shit stating that we bury a man there. [They would] break down the gate with bull dozers, heading straight to the tabernacle. We had to run out in timing or we would have ended up in the heap they bulldozer (sic) down our dwellings. We were left on the streets but we did not turn back because all the wickedness that they were doing to wipe out the teaching of Rastafari doctrine (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

In the hostile and precarious environment described by Empress Rachel, children were not conceived. Indeed, as discussed in the previous chapter, celibacy used to be the strict norm among Bobo Shanti Rases. Empress Rachel remembers that numerous women used to come on the camp with the hope of getting husbands. According to her, these endeavours met little success as the celibacy rules were strictly observed:

Keep yourself holy to inherit the kingdom of god. Don't sleep with your kingman make yourself undefile (sic) so that is how everyone was living. No sex, only a spiritual way of life and it was so powerful we were floating in righteousness giving Jah the glory 24 hours, fasting [from] 6pm Sunday evening until 6 Monday evening, then we breakfast with water in calabash cups. (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

This rather ascetic way of life composed of fasts prayer and sexual abstinence, could also be attributed to the direct influence of the Youth Black Faith. Indeed, it looked very similar to the *Livity of the I-Gelic Brothers*<sup>173</sup> described by Homiak (1994). One may therefore deduct that *Jerusalem School* was in those days mostly designed for adults' edification.

The EABIC new converts, with a profile not different from most Rastafarian neophytes (Price 2009), usually came from the lowest classes of the Jamaican society and needed financial, emotional as much as spiritual support:

Being with Emmanuel (sic) you find life, love, health and strength. He has changed a lot of youth soul with his teachment (sic). Many have put down the guns and stopped the killings, and got a born again spirit, way of life. His teaching, which is from Jerusalem school room, shall change a world of people from evil to good" (Empress Rachel, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

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<sup>173</sup> See section on EABIC theology.

The EABIC congregation acted therefore as a soothing force against the violent *rude boys* disappointed by the Jamaican political and social climate as portrayed in the fictional *The Harder they Come* (Henzell 1972). Long before the Jamaican government, the EABIC made the eradication illiteracy its priority. Indeed, within the EABIC *Livity*, the ability to read became a matter of spiritual life and death:

KING EMMANUEL supports education in every way. If a man can't read, he can't read the bible. Yet I see (sic) people came there who couldn't read. To be part of the priesthood order one has to read. One bredren came and he could not read at all. With other bredren around the alter telling him what to do he is one of our greatest readers now. (Empress Rachel, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

The EABIC commune was therefore a space where men and women learned how and when to pray and fast, when and why they should purify their bodies, how to decode the bible's true message, untainted by European malevolent revisionism. In spite of the precarious living conditions, the EABIC provided a milieu in which the misfits of the mainstream Jamaican community could attain a state similar to Maslow's idea of "self-realisation". It indeed allowed them to improve their self-esteem and acquire a sense of belonging that they may not have found in their own families or in the wider society. Empress Rachel explained how she felt when she first joined the EABIC in Kingston:

It felt like heaven to me. I had never seen anything like this before, everyone was happy living in the spirit of brotherhood while living at Greenwich Street" (Empress Rachel, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

In the late sixties however, the celibacy requirement was lifted when King Emmanuel asked Empress Rachel to become his wife. According to her, they were the first couple to conceive and bear children as EABIC members living on the camp. They were soon to be followed by other couples. The population of the camp quickly increased. This growth must have taken some spectacular proportions as some male members declared that there were too many children born on the camp (Idem). However, in spite of the quickly growing community, it was not until 1979 that a school was established (Empress Rachel, personal conversation May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Educating the young ones was nevertheless taken very seriously by the EABIC. All children were home-schooled or camp-schooled as this context required. Taking into account the ritual purification periods which all women had to undergo, children socialisation relied more on the entire community than the sole competence and availability of their parents:

Most of the time bredren (sic) were the teachers. Empreses could teach their children when they were on their journey when they were not free. When the child reached the age to stop going with his mother, that is the prince, at seven his father would take care of him until his mother became free. Everything was black and beautiful (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

With little interference from the government, the children were taught to read and write against a formidable theological background. Highly cherished by the community, there is even a day that is consecrated to them:

Bobo children have been grown in beautiful words of life so they can reason with someone with great wisdom. They have a particular day when they would have a banquet. They enjoy reading the bible, chanting, singing, declaring to people what they stand for and what they are defending. They will also be playing the drums. There are a lot of children players of instruments who can play even better than some of the Bredrens (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Another interesting notion was that the curriculum was the same for all. Children were educated regardless of their gender:

The same things that are taught to the prince also go for the princess. When their mother is free they go in the camp school. They are still in line because their parents receive the lessons that they would miss (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Nevertheless, the gendered definition of what an EABIC member ought to be was clearly enforced by the parents in their children's socialisation. Indeed, little *princesses* were clearly encouraged to emulate the portrait of the virtuous woman depicted in the biblical book of proverbs:

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates. (Proverb 31:10-31)<sup>174</sup>

Constantly present in *reasonings* and WFL publications, values attached to the *virtuous woman* such as piousness, generosity, ingeniousness, hard work, management, hygiene, self respect and wisdom; would ceaselessly be reminded to the growing young *princess*. These skills were expressively inserted in them because these princesses were to become goddesses of creation, able to set up businesses, speak to heads of States and nurture their own children in their future lives in Africa (Mama Julie, personal conversation, November 24<sup>th</sup> 2008). The importance placed on the little girls' education was such that in one of King Emmanuel's prophecies it is a woman who would actually go to the Queen of the United Kingdom and represent the EABIC in its struggle for Repatriation. Eloquence, articulation and politeness were and still are highly valued skills in a woman.

Contrary to the girls, explicit texts such as the proverb quoted above, are not to be found as far as little princes' education is concerned. Nevertheless much is expected of them. As Empress Rachel related above, being proficient in drum playing is regarded as a vital skill for the future prophets and priests of the EABIC. The *Daniel number One Band* of which they are all male Bobo Shanti are members, accompanies all the spiritual ceremonies that punctuates the lives on the commune. Indeed, as it is mentioned in the section dedicated to EABIC theology, *Nyabinghi* or the *one two order* is believed to have the ability to rid the world of evil forces. These purgative and healing functions are

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<sup>174</sup> It is interesting to note that the EABIC interpretation of this passage is quite literal. The fact that the woman described in this scripture is clearly from an affluent background, with a rich husband and house helps, was regarded as problematic for black theologians and feminists. How could women, especially black women from impoverish background relate to this rich woman? (Franklyn 2010). One may suggest that the idea of royalty imbedded in EABIC principles may make it easier for Bobo Shanti women to identify with this mythical woman.

to be conducted by skilled drummers able to keep the sacred rhythm for hours. Drumming is therefore an important duty of an EABIC priest, and is carefully taught to the little princes. Similarly to the girls, boys are also expected to excel in public speaking, in biblical knowledge and maintain an upright conduct at all time.

This researcher has had the occasion to witness a priest scolding a little prince because of his rowdy playing in a plum tree on the Sabbath day. On the same day, a little girl was reproached because she was too loud in her speech, which was considered vulgar in EABIC etiquette. Indeed, while little boys could often be seen playing outdoors, going to the river, climbing trees, picking fruits without much interference from the adults, this researcher had not been able to see little girls playing outside at all. This observation may be imputed to the fact that this researcher was herself mainly in the *journey gate*, yet it appears strange that while there were little girls on the commune, they were never witnessed to be up to mischief or running around. From these observations, it appears that on the EABIC commune a boy is expected to play outside, to be rowdy as much as he can, except on the Sabbath day, while girls are greatly encouraged to remain quietly indoors.

Throughout the sixties and the seventies, educating Bobo Shanti boys and girls consisted of the transmission of spiritual and philosophical skills necessary to attain salvation. These children were also taught essential values for the economic development and sustenance of the camp, which purpose was to facilitate the Repatriation effort to Africa. They did not attend public schools, as homeschooling was more relevant to them on a spiritual, philosophical and also economic level. In fact, a career outside the commune was not a prospect for these children. In this tense atmosphere where *Babylon* oppressed the *Righteous*, education was to prepare children to the ideological fight with the Jamaican authorities.

### **7.3. Education in the eighties: integration and new challenge**

From 1972 to 1976, the People's National Party (PNP) undertook major reforms of the state educational system. It is during their mandate that primary and college education became universally free. This period saw the rapid decline of the bauxite industry while the inflation rate went up, leaving the country in a bitter financial crisis (Meditz and Hanratti 1987). Education of the masses was in this context a foremost

priority as the economy was in great need of diversification and qualified people in order to remain afloat. Education policy of the time needed to be effective:

In the early 1980s, the government reoriented its development strategies for education, emphasizing basic education in grades one to nine and human resources training. The government's plan stressed rehabilitating and upgrading primary and basic education facilities, improving the quality and efficiency of basic education, implementing a full curriculum for grades seven to nine in all-age schools, and establishing an effective in-service training programme for teachers. Problems in secondary education were also identified, such as the existence of a complicated, secondary school system that produced graduates of varying quality and wasted scarce financial resources (Meditz and Hanratti 1987:np).

In spite of this crisis, Rastafari enjoyed a certain amount of recognition from the Jamaican population. Bob Marley, throughout the seventies, gave to the movement international visibility, which may be linked to the expansion of the tourism industry noted by Meditz and Hanratti (1987) at that time. From a “dreadful” and marginalised group of outcasts, Rastafarians became visible as assets to the Jamaican culture.

Indeed, Rastafari was no longer exclusively a mouthpiece for the lower classes of the population. Many young people from middle classes turned to the movement to their parents’ greatest despair (Van Dijk 1988: 1), accelerating the cultural integration of Rastafari to the wider Jamaican landscape. Overt persecution and abuse from the authorities were no longer taking place while Rastafari parlance even became widely adopted by the rest of the Jamaican society (Homiak 1993: 3).

In this context of financial crisis and tolerance towards Rasta culture, the EABIC adapted its policies to the changing economic and social climate of Jamaica by reinforcing its own education system. Empress Rachel recalls:

There was a school going on in the Bobo camp a long time ago. It was built in 1979 and they had teachers that were teaching in the outside school teaching our children in the BOBO camp. There were BOBO also teaching. Most of the people that came to this foundation are well educated. You have people that went to colleges but still they have to come to Jerusalem schoolroom to learn of what we are telling the world. School buses with children from different schools all over Jamaica come to the camp to hear the standard of what we are teaching even students from University College came up there sometimes the camp is full of students (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

If the implication of the government in the EABIC education system appears clear from our informant testimony one understands that the EABIC curriculum remained very



much independent from the State's. Educating the young ones was not the sole responsibility of the State teachers; this task was also incumbent on the community as a whole. In order to convey the EABIC message to the youngsters, Empress Sharon, the current teacher on the camp, informed us that the school was also run by competent volunteers. Unfortunately, these volunteers were not always available to do the work. Consequently, when teachers failed to complete the term, the children were once again in the care of their families (Empress Sharon, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008). Slowly, these families came to rely increasingly on the public school system (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010)

The eighties saw an increasing number of Bobo Shanti children going to governmental schools. This phenomenon may be due to the governmental incentives combined with a change in strategy by the EABIC. In fact, during the sixties, repatriation was a purely spiritual act of faith like fasting and chanting and abstinence as Empress Rachel illustrates:

Everywhere Jah army goes, satan follows. We were keeping service, living holy lives, observing the holy day and fasting. We were restraining ourselves from the flesh by not sleeping with man. Bredren did not sleep with their empresses. We were fighting a spiritual battle so everyone made himself a living sacrifice to win the battle against the system, which wants to destroy us. (Empress Rachel, personal conversation, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Contrasting with the 1960s ethos, the 1980s strategies to repatriation took the form of organised legal actions as demonstrated by the 1984 complaint launched against the government. This new strategy encouraged parents to send their children to school, in order for them to acquire skills that were not available on the commune, while keeping them firmly anchored in the EABIC principles. Empress Esther, while taking a visitor on a tour around the Bull Bay camp explained that nowadays (2008), education was too important to be carried out solely on the camp.

The young prince Abayomi who was eleven when interviewed in 1999 in a pamphlet promoting the EABIC *Livity*, is a living example of this new policy. From his account, he was at the time preparing for his Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exams:

I-n-I say come to Jah because Jah is the way, the truth and the life. We up there (Bobo Hill) are living in right. We got church and church is very fulfilling. I-n-I say to humble yourselves, don't eat vine foods, beans, mangoes, meat, and stop being vulgar and keep the Sabbath on Saturdays and don't commit adultery. (EABIC pamphlet 1999)

In spite of his young age and the external influences of the public school, food and sexual taboos are already deeply engrained in his mind, making the new EABIC strategy seemingly effective. The changing perception of Rastafari had a direct effect on the newcomers' profile. Indeed, along with marginalised individuals came large families. In fact, two of our informants joined the commune in the 1980s and they both settled with their large families. Empress Esther and Maize are nowadays prominent feminine figures of the Women Freedom Liberation League and they both agreed to tell us how they were both attracted to the commune with their children.

### 7.3.1. Empress Maize and her family

Empress Maize explains that it is her husband who, one day in 1979, decided to move his entire family to the Bull Bay commune due to a vision<sup>175</sup> summoning him to join the EABIC. He was so moved by this premonition that he decided to abandon their current lodging and settle on Bobo Hill within a week. They left so suddenly that they did not have the time to finish the meal that they were sharing. At that time, Empress Maize already had five of her children, and was pregnant with the sixth one. There were four girls and a boy of five, six, four, three and two years of age.

Mama<sup>176</sup> Maize gave a precise account of the logistic that was necessitated to rear her children on the commune. Being very young herself, she was almost twenty four, she had to abide by the *Principles* and go through the *journey gate* for the ritual purification seclusion. Nevertheless, the same regulation that required her to observe a ritual separation with the commune also demanded that from the age of seven, a little boy ought to live with his father in the male quarters. This meant that from the age of seven, her son was no longer allowed to remain with her, while in the journey gate. He mostly lived in the male quarters with his father and was only sent to his mother as a means of punishment.

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<sup>175</sup> Vision is the world usually used to describe dreams with mystic tones.

<sup>176</sup> The elder empresses respected by the community are also called *Mama*. *Mama* is a title also attributes to the Empress Menen, the mother of creation: *Mama Mega*.

Being included and associated with female settings as a Jamaican or a Bobo Shanti is considered a disgrace, very close to the stigma attached to the *Makoumè*<sup>177</sup>, who no longer fits the community's standards of manhood. In fact, clear gender demarcations seem to be very important in Jamaican popular culture. Chevannes described that during the seventies when the Afro, which is a unisex hairdo, was extremely popular men insisted on using different combs to women (1998: 106). On a more contemporaneous note, countless are the dancehall songs, from the eighties through the nineties, advocating clear gender demarcation in children's games and even in common activities such as doing the laundry<sup>178</sup>. In this context, one can understand the disgrace that it was for boys to be forced to be in their mothers' menstruating universe after the age of seven. Indeed, while greatly praising women for their faithfulness to their function as Goddesses of creation and readily assisting them throughout the *journey*, the males of the community clearly do not encourage ambiguous gender status *malfanms* and *makoumes* and clearly insist on the gender demarcation within the EABIC.

Empress Maize really emphasised the fact that her five girls always remained with her unless King Emmanuel specifically requested that they stayed out. These requests were regarded as a special compliment paid to her daughters and to the education that they received: "My daughters were always well behaved and nice. Dada would often ask them to sing for him" (Empress Maize, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008).

In spite of the ritual seclusion and its inconveniences, Empress Maize proudly declares that she took particular care in her daughters' education. Indeed, the EABIC ideal of womanhood is still founded on the archetype of the *Virtuous Woman* of the books of Proverbs. For this reason, Empress Maize proudly recalls that after the seventh day of total rest in the *journey gate*, she would teach her daughter how to write, read, count, sew, do embroidery, weave and cook because "the princesses have to become

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<sup>177</sup> The image of the Makoumè and the malfanm is discussed in the first section of the fourth chapter.

<sup>178</sup> Numerous *Bad man* anthems have been written by Jamaican Djs, from Shawn Storm to Vybz Kartel and Elephant man on dogmatic view that a *bad man* must not have his clothes washed with female garments, particularly underwears. *Bad man* in this instance does not refer to criminals, but to the ideal of manhood.

women” (Mama Maize, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008). From her account it is clear that this task necessitated treasures of organisation and dedication:

Before going back in house<sup>179</sup>, I would make sure that I had everything I needed because once inside, you cannot go out. I would clean my house, do the washing, the ironing and take my well-deserved vacations with my children knowing that I sought to the wellbeing of everyone” (Mama Maize, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008).

When her children reached fourteen, she eventually sent them to school outside of the camp and was proud of their results:

When I sent them now, they were no fools. They go out there and come first in class. The others were surprised because they did not get to go to school. They could not believe that my children were able to match up with the other children and even beat them (Empress Maize, personal conversation, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008).

Mama Maize is particularly proud of her last son:

Everything that my son takes part in, he topped it. He was a deputy head boy as a Bobo Shanti; vice-captain for the schools’ cricket team, passed his CXC exam in science, went to the O levels and got them all. Right now he was supposed to start university, but the lack of funds... He is working right now and hopefully he will start university next year (idem).

Now adults, Mama Maize’s children are doing rather well. The latter really insisted on the fact that all of them were free to pursue the career and the spiritual path that they chose with the support of both parents. Two of her daughters are currently craftswomen and sell their products in the down town Kingston craft market. Another daughter of hers is a fashion designer in the United States. One of her son is a priest, like his father, and the last one is currently enrolled at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica. Mama Maize is obviously very proud of her children, even if all of them did not remain in the Bobo Shanti livity. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that her girls are now often seen in town wearing trousers with their hair uncovered. Nevertheless, their early training in craft making allowed them to make a living for themselves outside of the EABIC community.

### **7.3.2. Empress Esther and her family**

Similarly to Empress Maize, Empress Esther arrived on the commune in the eighties with three young children. Unlike the former, she was a single mother from a Seventh Day Adventist background. When she came across Bobo Shanti, she was working at the reception desk of a hotel in Montego Bay. Despite having experienced

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<sup>179</sup> *House* or *journey gate* are all referring to the house in which women spend their purification period. Note that the appellation *Sick House* used by Chevannes (1993) is no longer in use.

the pain of child labour three times, she admitted that it is only when she joined the commune that she first seriously experienced the duties of parenthood:

As a single mother living with 3 children it was not easy, having children so young and care free, I was not paying enough attention as I should to them. My parents were always there to help me with them, in other words my children were their children so they took good care of them. In 1980 when I went to live on the Congress with them there was no grand-father or grand-mother, brother or sister to look over them so it was totally on me to do so. (Empress Esther, personal conversation, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2010)

Empress Esther's pre EABIC years of parenting were not remote from the general Jamaican rural patterns as observed by Schlesinger (1968) and Patterson (1982). Indeed, many Jamaican children have been raised by their grandparents, while the parent (usually the mother) was away making a living for themselves and their family abroad or in town. The transition from the family cocoon to the camp's life may have been rather difficult for Empress Esther, yet the spiritual motivation seemed to have overcome the first apprehensions:

I had no choice as the Black Christ desire of us to take good care of our children. He taught us that they are the heavenly children of God and that they were given to us to train them up in the right way so that when they grow up they will never depart. (Empress Esther, personal conversation, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2010).

As discussed in the previous chapter, children's education was a collective affair. The grandparents were therefore replaced by the elders, and the extended family by the *Bredren* and *sistren* of the community. The commune has been designed for single parents such as Empress Esther to settle with her children with as little inconvenience as possible. Unlike Empress Maize; who had the support of her *kingman* and whose principal activity was to care for her family, Empress Esther's circumstances were rather more hectic.

Her duties as the ambassador for the WFL led her to travel very often out of the commune, sometime without completing her purification period: "King Emmanuel would give me the freedom to go, because things had to be done you know, the case<sup>180</sup> was heard, I had to travel a lot" (Empress Esther, personal conversation, February 15<sup>th</sup> 2009). With this busy lifestyle, her children, male and female, were mainly taught in the camp's school when functioning. Unlike empress Maize's children none of the first

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<sup>180</sup> Empress Esther refers to the law suit opposing the EABIC and the Jamaican state in 1986. Indeed, she was the one chosen by King Emmanuel to represent the EABIC.

three went to public school. Following the EABIC educational patterns, her daughter was to learn how to emulate the *Virtuous Woman* standards in addition to the development of her natural talents:

My daughter got the same teachings (as her brothers) and more over she was taught how to be virtuous woman by studying proverbs 31, she was taught how to pray by studying the Psalms of King David. My children were brought up by studying and reciting the Psalms, selected speech and utterance of Marcus Garvey, hymns and Choruses to name a few. Princess Nadia<sup>181</sup> was very versed in her culture and had a good understanding of what she is defending even so that at the age of 9 she was on radio having conversation with radio moderators like Ronald Twaits, Rev. Sam Reid and others. (Empress Esther, personal conversation, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2010)

In addition to the EABIC standards of politeness, Empress Esther stressed the fact that her children were also taught to be independent:

My Sons were taught to love woman as all woman is their mother, sister which one day they will have a wife and so they must treat them equally with love and care. Self-reliance, self-awareness was taught to them from an early age. Mother have Father have, blessed is the child that have his or her own. All my children are taught about hygiene, how to take care of themselves, how to cook and clean (both my sons and daughter). (Empress Esther, personal conversation, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Nevertheless, this type of education did not go without any unfortunate consequences. Warren, Empress Esther's second son, was a toddler when his mother moved to Bobo Hill Bull Bay. Even if he admires greatly King Emmanuel, he is very bitter about the education that he received, even blaming his mother for bringing him up on the camp. This circumstance has, allegedly prevented him from having better prospects for his future: "I do not understand why someone would go to the camp and raise his or her children there. King Emmanuel was the only genuine person there, apart from him; I would not vouch for any of them" (Warren, personal conversation, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2009).

If Warren is still hesitant about his career, his siblings who received the same camp education are all settled with a family of their own. His elder sister is a music producer in the United States, while his brother is a chef in Montego Bay. Warren himself is an excellent cook and talks about opening his own restaurant or starting a lorry company, none of the first three follow the Bobo Shanti livity.

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<sup>181</sup> Nadia is the name of her only daughter.

Empress Esther also has two other sons that she did not raise on the commune. They are still in their early teens, and are both attending secondary schools. Both are doing very well academically and in sports. When questioned about this drastic change of education strategy, Empress Esther explained that nowadays, formal education is too important to keep home-schooling her children. New technologies and skills that she does not master are required in order to form the minds of the new generation destined to be repatriated to the African Continent. It is interesting to note here that she did not expect her children to live and work on the commune as the emphasis of their education is clearly placed on an imminent return to Africa.

Empress Esther seems very eager to see her sons study and travel extensively as she is herself required to do as the official ambassador of the WFL. Her last two sons are both very interested in science and she intends to send them both to university: “Jah willing” (Empress Esther, personal conversation, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2009). Of all of her children, the last two, both in secondary school, are the only ones still sporting locks and turbans. In spite of going to public school, the EABIC influences are obvious in their actions and speeches. After living with them for a few days, it was evident that they were both very independent young men. They would cook, wash their clothes, clean the house and do their homework without being told to do so. Empress Esther is very proud to say that all of her sons could cook because she did not want them to depend on someone to cook for them. This practice remains in line with the EABIC principles since, as a rule, men are the official cooks.

The orientation of EABIC education has therefore greatly changed. In fact, from preparing the children to their functions as priests and goddesses on the self-sufficient commune, EABIC education has the vocation to allow the children to enter the wider society and establish successful business in order to go back to Africa.

These changes in education expectations are compatible with the changes of methodology used to obtain Repatriation. Indeed, the EABIC mansion was founded on the millennialistic view that a terrible judgement was at hand. EABIC members, along with all other Rastafarians were physically persecuted by the police and experienced the scorn of the general population. In this dangerous atmosphere, the Jamaican education level was not very high. Bobo children were therefore taught the ways of *righteousness*

and *salvation*. To read and write were the only required skills, which put them more or less on the same level with the non-Rastafarian children of that time.

The eighties, however, saw the use of more worldly methods towards repatriation as exemplified by the case heard against of the deputy Prime Minister of the time, Hugh Shearer (Van Dijk 1993: 324-325). Indeed, the eighties were the post Bob Marley years, where Rastafari was no longer synonymous with social scum and shame, but objects of national pride, even described as “culture bearers” (Edmonds 2003). Amid the violence, poverty and frustration of the inner-city, Rastafarians are the ones offering a peaceful option to the ghetto life (Tafari-Ama 2006: 38). If many Rastafarians welcomed this recognition and endeavoured to seek “Liberation before Repatriation” (Barrett 1997: 172), the EABIC did not regard integration as a palatable prospect. Their methods to repatriation along with their educational system had to change.

In fact, in addition to traditional activism in the form of petitions and letters to head of States, the EABIC was and still is the first and only Rastafarian mansion to have sued the government for their unwillingness to cooperate with their repatriation effort. In order to go to a court of law, it had become evident to them that the mere skills of chanting, drumming and embroidering could not be sufficient. The political and social context changed and EABIC education adapted to it. From our informants’ testimonies, it becomes evident that the EABIC education thoroughly prepares its youth to become able priests, prophets and empresses in a rapidly changing world.

#### **7.4. Education in the twenty-first century**

“Every child can learn, every child must learn”, the Jamaican ministry of education’s motto, encapsulates the government’s will to make education accessible to everyone. With an increased budget of J\$ 47 billion, the education ministry heavily invests in a system in which every Jamaican, regardless of their *livity* is included. The pressure to get every child in schools is everywhere, jeopardising the independence of the EABIC education.

Apart from the governmental pressures, the *principles* of the EABIC are also threatened to be absorbed by the mainstream and global culture. In fact, as it has been mentioned above, the 1980s saw the rise of a more lenient attitude to Rastafari. The



movement is no longer considered to be a fancy of derelicts or a shameful end to the middle class youth. On a social level, it can be considered as a better alternative for the youth of the inner city of downtown Kingston (Tafari-Ama 2006). Rastafari has become a landmark of Jamaican culture, spreading throughout the Caribbean and the world (Edmonds 2003).

Undeniably, Rastafari philosophy appeals to so many people around the world that its symbols have now been merchandised. The colours red, gold and green can be spotted on many touristic souvenirs and have somehow become the unofficial colours of Jamaica (and by extension the Caribbean). They are connoted to such positive ideals that great corporate companies are using them as powerful branding tools to appeal to a wider market.



**Figure 20 Air Max "Jamaica"**

Rastafari is therefore being absorbed not only by the Jamaican but also by the global culture. EABIC, with its precise *principles* of life has not been spared. Reggae singers such as Miguel Orlando Collins or Clifton George Bailey III also known as Sizzla and Capleton contribute to the merging between Rastafari and Jamaican/global society as Bobo Shanti.

Indeed, enjoying local and international fame, these Deejays have entered a musical genre that can be qualified as *Righteousness*. This genre is directly in opposition with *Slackness*<sup>182</sup> promoted by many popular Deejays such as the very graphic Lady Saw, Patra, Elephant Man, Vybz Kartel etc.... *Slackness* songs would deal with mainly male and female agency in the sexual and material aspects of life; raising issues such as female promiscuity, deviant sexual practices, or male immaturity.

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<sup>182</sup> Very interesting information about the musical genre *slackness* and its social functions in Jamaica are available in C. Cooper (1993) and Tafari-Ama (2006)

*Righteousness* would mainly promote values linked with Rastafari in terms of African awareness and pride, brotherhood, sexual taboos or peace. These genres, both part of the Reggae mould, verbalise the eternal “sound clash” between the *virtuous woman*, as described by Warrior King (2002) and the *harlot of Babylon* portrayed in Lady Saw’s *Mi Hold You* (2010).

Even though Reggae is not recognised as an acceptable musical genre on the commune, the Deejays involved in the *Righteousness* movement are vectoring Bobo Shanti values to the wider public and are EABIC’s best ambassadors. In fact, these artists keep wearing the particular paraphernalia of the Bobo priest or prophet and even visit the camp on a regular basis. King Emmanuel referred to them as: “The Bredren with the good lyrics on the wrong rhythm” (pamphlet 1).

The recognition of Rastafari as an inherent agent of Jamaican cultural splendour is therefore evident. Nevertheless, the EABIC has not readily been included in this merging thrust. The twenty-first century is witnessing the threatening of EABIC radicalism due to the defection of an increasing number of its members to the secular and more lucrative musical genre to the benefit of powerful music labels. By doing so, some of the radical teachings of the EABIC are slowly diluted into mainstream culture and parlance, somehow losing the urgency of *repatriation* for the more accepted “liberation before repatriation” stand. One can suggest that the democratisation of the EABIC mores and values appears to be a more serious threat to its educative system than the hostile attitude of the Jamaican society of the sixties was.

During the field study in 2008, this researcher realised that the camp no longer had its own school. All children were going to governmental schools like any other young Jamaicans. When asked about this apparent aberration, Empress Sharon, a former secondary school headmaster, with her masters in development studies; explained that the discontinuation of the school was due to the very low number of children living on the commune. According to her, this situation is directly linked to the general depletion of the camps’ population. In fact, one is far from the time when the large families of the eighties described by Empress Rachel, Maize and Chevannes (1994) used to flock to Bobo hill. The days when two trucks were needed to cultivate the land, and when the

broom factory was flourishing are over. The camp is greatly impoverished and is struggling to maintain the *universal* system afloat.

### **7.5. Jerusalem school and its new students**

If large families are no longer a common sight on the camp, Bull Bay's camp attracts numerous visitors. Akin to the atmosphere of the sixties, when there were no children, *Jerusalem School* is still functioning to the edification of adults. Through the work of its numerous ambassadors, the EABIC is indeed, as indicated by its name, a true international movement.

Every month, pupils from neighbouring schools, prophets and priest candidates from South America, the United States and Europe, empresses and princesses; come to be initiated to the ways of the EABIC *livity* at *Jerusalem School*. During my sojourn on the camp, I had the privilege to meet with princesses from Chile and Mexico, four *Bredren* from France, who arrived exactly when I became *free* and who greatly helped me while carrying the various interviews. During that period, I had the opportunity to attend a conference held in the congress room of the commune that a bus full of schoolchildren attended, while Japanese TV shot a documentary on Empress Esther's household. As much as ever, one may say that the EABIC headquarters in Jamaica has caught the attention of an academic and international public.

The curriculum and teaching methods may well resemble that of the 1960s. It is composed of thorough reasoning sessions explaining and justifying the relevance of the *Principles* of the EABIC in the twenty-first century. This teaching is delivered according to the gender of the student. There are indeed specific initiations for men and women.

#### **7.5.1. Female initiation**

Women are mainly taught about their duties as Goddesses of creation and issues pertaining to their menses and childbearing. These feminine matters are Mama Julie's domain of expertise. She was the one who patiently explained to me what to do in the *Journey gate*, how to use the menses' cloths, how to dispose of the blood and which teas and roots to drink at various stages of my cycle. Akin to the abilities of a prophet or

priest to conduct correctly a service, these primordial actions in the life of a goddess are what would grant them prestige in the *reputation* system of the commune.

The empresses are also taught and encouraged to produce artefacts using their talents at sewing, weaving, carving or painting. For instance, I was extremely proud to fabricate a little bag that I had sewn under the encouragement of Priest Joshua, who had taken the time to bring me the material and detail the procedure on a piece of paper. Empress Jazmin upon sojourning three months on the commune has become a talented craftswoman as she can transform seeds and cords into beautiful jewellery.

Women are also taught how to move in ritual settings. The process of entering the tabernacle and the journey gate is deeply encoded and requires prior knowledge. For instance, when entering the tabernacle man and woman must salute the *bannerman* who officiates at the tabernacle entrance, with a bow and the left hand on the heart. Once inside, the worshipper must salute the officiating priest in the same manner, than turn to the congregation and salute the lords on the right and the empresses on the left. Then one must kneel facing the East or the North, similarly to the midday prayers, on a rug at the back of the congregation with the left hand on the heart and the right hand between the forehead and the ground and do a short prayer before being able to sit among one's gender group and take part in the service. Children are encouraged to execute these greeting rituals properly and are often an object of pride when they get the position and attitude right without help. With the form comes also deeper knowledge of the *livity*. Various priests and prophets make themselves available to *reason* on crucial concepts such as the divinity of the body, the power of the spoken word, the mission of King Emmanuel and his function within the Trinity and the mystic powers of women etc... Empress Esther really emphasised the fact that when questioned about a matter pertaining to the EABIC *Livity*, an Empress is expected to deliver an answer in a sensible manner. The Apostle Paul's admonitions encouraging women to seek spiritual guidance through their husbands rather than the Church (1 Corinthian 14:34) appear to have been overlooked here.

Other than *growing a daughter* into a suitable sexual partner as described by Yawney (1989), women initiation to the EABIC *Livity* in the twenty-first century, has allowed them to exercise agency in the propagation of Rastafari ethos in private and

public settings. Considering the crucial role that Empress Esther and Mama Maize play on behalf of the WFL, the importance of female theological education is undeniable. Women are therefore taught theological, spiritual and material subject in order to fully embrace their status as goddesses of creation, mothers and ambassadors of the EABIC. Male education is also very meticulous.

### 7.5.2. Male initiations

One has had the chance to be on the camp at the same time with three of *Bredren* from France, Jah Jimmy, Bobo Livio and Jah Cedric. All of them had come to get their *crowns* (turbans) as prophets of the EABIC. Their training invariably started as early as 5.30 am, time when the day is greeted with prayers, in the morning service. The *Bredren* were indeed encouraged to partake in the chants and hymns in the ceremony of the *Roll Call* either by holding the flags or trying their hands at the drums. On many occasions, they were asked to raise a song, take a psalm or add their take to the doxology, task that they accomplished in spite of their rather limited understanding of the English language. After the morning service, they usually spent the rest of the day in cleaning their quarters, washing their clothes, doing electrical work on site (both Livio and Cedric are trained electricians) before resuming their position for the six o'clock vespers.

For these French-speaking neophytes, who aspired to the responsibilities of prophets, countless hours of reasoning, were necessary. This researcher has had the opportunity to attend one of them in the gate of Jah Tiger, a venerable elder who particularly seemed to enjoy the buoyancy of young Frenchmen (and women). While smoking the sacred herb and drinking roots<sup>183</sup>, he would tell us about the benefits of the Sabbath day, about his life as a youngster within the EABIC or break into an impromptu Nyabinghi session with chorus singing. These *reasoning gatherings* proved greatly beneficial as the French speaking *Bredren* were able to improve their English in a spectacular manner as well as getting clearance about certain questions usually not discussed out of the commune. For instance most of the French-speaking *Bredren* were strictly vegans and were rather shocked to see the elders consuming small fish and

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<sup>183</sup> *Roots* is the name given to a drink made out of various medicinal roots, herbs and plants, which preparation requires knowledge and skills.

sometime cheese. Flexibility in the diet was decidedly a new concept to them as they spent long hours debating on the subject.

After three weeks of intensive preparation, Jah Jimmy, Livio and Cedric were judged ready to undertake the prophet examination. Although they did not wish to discuss the particulars of the questions with me, I could gather elsewhere that they had been asked about the Sabbath day and the protocol in the tabernacle. Indeed, the importance of the ceremonials in the tabernacle is as essential as themes such as the temporality of the body and the legitimacy of the repatriation process. In fact, after reasoning with different prophets and priests, one could observe that their teachings were not entirely similar. In fact, within the EABIC, one could find strictly vegetarian members advocating the avoidance of marijuana and fish, while another devotee would warmly promote the contrary.

One could attribute these non-uniformity beliefs to the principle of freedom, which allows every member of the EABIC *livity* to share their understanding of the divine based on their personal experience. Elders often disagree on theological questions, without having one necessarily right or wrong. Knowledge within the EABIC is decidedly not dogmatic. Apart from the essential principles of the trinity, the divinity of King Emmanuel, the necessity of repatriation, one is free to live according to his or her understanding of the *Principles*.

Nevertheless, great importance is placed on the uniformity of the rituals and protocols. The ceremonial is so respected that they are exactly the same in every EABIC tabernacles around the globe. It is the reason why they are greatly emphasised in the priest or prophet initiation: “You have to train and train again. We have to be prepared for when we go to Africa. This is the purpose of Jerusalem school” (Hon. Prophet Livio, personal conversation, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008). As far as men are concerned, faithfulness and precision in the completion of the ritual seem to be the main purpose of their initiation as they also have to go back to their country of origin and share the *Bobo Shanti* *livity*.

On a more pragmatic side, this international attraction appears like a providential manna for the complicated economic climate of the camp. Indeed, though *Jerusalem*

*school* does not require school fees, visitors are expected to contribute to the community's life with their skills and money. With the decline of the *Universal* these visitors appear to be essential to the sustenance of the commune.

In 2008 the camp population was around a hundred people, excluding the members living on the outskirts in Bull Bay. This desertion is due to King Emmanuel's departure and the lack of effective leadership. The loss of a charismatic leader and the impossibility to replace him affected greatly the economic life of the camp. Although the broom factory is still operating, it does not seem to generate enough profit to sustain comfortable living conditions for the camp dwellers. The houses, which seemed to have once been very beautiful, are now more or less decrepit and damaged, due to hurricanes and the lack of constant maintenance. The *universal* kitchen that used to feed the entire camp is now struggling to supply enough food for everyone on Sabbath. A resigned Mama Julie declared that these were the days announced by the prophecy, days which will be shortly followed by the judgement<sup>184</sup>.

Visitors are therefore seen as providers, whose foreign currency could detangle very complicated economic situations. One was told by a priest that:

King Emmanuel used to say that one should not depend on the visitors to live. One should not even ask him for money. He was supposed to give freely what he had. The broom factory and our own crops and craft were to be enough revenue to feed and clothe everyone. What is happening now is scandalous (Jah Tiger, personal conversation, November 26<sup>th</sup> 2008).

Unfortunately, the days where the visitors' money was considered to be an optional addition to the commune's income, are long gone. The living conditions and the general state of frustration are such that the expectations have been altered.

The emphasis appears to have shifted from spiritual to more material preoccupations, justifying Garvey's reflection on poverty:

No hungry man can be a good Christian, no dirty naked man can be a good Christian, for he is bound to have bad wicked thoughts, therefore, it should be the duty of religion to find physical as well as spiritual food for the body of man (in Gordon 1991: 141).

Barry Chevannes is often criticised for having made *a whole heap of money* off Rastafari, without sharing the alleged substantial benefits from his books and various

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<sup>184</sup> These themes are more developed in the section about work in the third chapter.

publications on the topic with his subject. *Jerusalem School*, which once used to be solely content with salvation, is now asking the dividends of its teachings. Theft, though not very common, is sadly a monthly reality. Visitors, though warmly welcomed and encouraged to learn as much as possible about *Salvation* are often victims of unscrupulous priests or prophets, offering to teach the way to *Righteousness* for variable sums of money.

Consequently, in spite of the permanence of a qualified teacher in the person of Empress Sharon, the living conditions are not ideal for families with children. The school is not functioning because there are not enough children to be taught. *Jerusalem School*, though extremely active, is more and more concerned with money. It has been observed that in the eighties, parents preferred to send their children to governmental schools in order for them to get better prospects in a secular life. This trend can still be observed in the twenty-first century and aggravated by the general concern about money.

Empress Sharon, nevertheless, does not despair. She explains that she often gives particular lessons to adults in mathematics and English as it was done during the early days of the EABIC. Subjects like Amharic Ga or Ewe, which may have been extremely useful in the politics of repatriation, are not yet available on the camp: “no one speaks them, I myself cannot teach these languages. We will have to learn once in our lands in Africa” (Empress Sharon, personal conversation, November 24<sup>th</sup> 2008). Repatriation is according to her the only way to resolve the problem linked with the education of the princes and princesses.

### **7.5.3. Summary**

The EABIC educational system in Jamaica has always focused on *Salvation* through *Repatriation* and has had to adapt to the challenges of the outside world. Indeed, *Jerusalem School* was first created in the 1960s to teach the young and elders about the Bobo Shanti *Livity*. They were living in quite a hostile milieu, troubled by constant persecution from the authorities. Persuaded of the imminence of repatriation, the faithful focused on the apprenticeship of their *Livity* as poignantly described by the Honourable Empress Rachel. They were also taught how to read and write as they were



required to read a chapter of the bible a day. Celibacy at that time was a rule, and the EABIC did not cater for the presence of children.

During the same decade, the policy on celibacy was lifted and the camp saw a natural increase of their children population. The emphasis was put on home-schooling, with the boys and girls learning the same academic subjects. A school was then established in order to cater for the young ones out of governmental schools. This school was usually visited by a state teacher but truly depended on capable EABIC members. With most of them coming from the lowest strata of society, not many members could take on the responsibility. As a result, parents from the sixties onwards underwent the task to co-teaching their children to the best of their abilities. Because of gender taboos, mothers took care of their daughters while fathers, when present, took care of their sons, making sure that they grew up to be adults aware of their gender's duties and rights and be ready to be repatriated.

With the governmental campaigns against illiteracy and the changing attitudes towards Rastafari, the eighties saw many parents opting to send their children to school as teenagers. The objective was to make them successful Bobo Shanti Rases in the wider society. Indeed, Rastafarians, after being persecuted by the police the decade before, had successfully become Jamaican culture bearers. With their traditional ritual drumming at the basis of popular music such as ska, rock steady and reggae, their artistic talent was recognised. Their once marginal way of living, language and faith, had been integrated or at least tolerated by the wider Jamaican population, attitude which has grown nowadays in what one may call a *Rastafad*, where people grow their hair in locks, indulge on marijuana and totally lost the radical essence of Rastafari. Because of their austere principles, the Bobo Shanti has only been affected in a lesser degree by this integration wave. However, the commune kept on flourishing and attracted many families in quest of a better life for their children. The objective to make them good Bobo Shanti had not changed in spite of a shift in the belief from a miraculous to a procedural *Repatriation*.

Nowadays, all princes and princesses attend governmental schools without exception. EABIC seems to have joined the slow absorption of Rastafari by mainstream society with several of its members getting exposure on the international musical scene.

If parents of the eighties were eager to see their children succeed as Bobo Shanti in the world, the economic conjectures of the twenty first century appear to have lowered their expectations to mere material success in sending them to governmental schools.

Nowadays, *Jerusalem School* is still functioning with many international adult students eager to learn about the EABIC *livity*. It has become one of the main sources of income of the camp, leading to some forms of corruption in the system.

## 7.6. Conclusion

Just like any other institutions, the EABIC educational system underwent changes and is nowadays struggling to keep its integrity. Indeed, in order to remain radical, in their claim to repatriation, they had to adapt their methods without compromising their *livity*. Education takes several forms that one will divide in three categories: social education, academic education and theological education.

### 7.6.1 Social education

All activities aiming to socialise the children in their community would fall under this category. It is interesting to note that both male and female learn how to cook, wash, and sew. These activities are gender neutral and children are encouraged to master them from as young as possible. A good cook, tailor or house keeper is an object of pride for parents and are respected as such by the rest of the EABIC community regardless of their gender.

Tasks traditionally understood in traditional occidental *housewifery* are gender neutral and highly valued on the commune. As goddess of creation, women are subject to menstrual taboos, which potency is believed to threaten masculinity (Schultz 2003). The separation from the mother is done as early as the age of seven to allow the boy to become a man, reinforcing the gender demarcation between male and female function in the community. For instance, a naughty boy would be sent to his mother's sphere as a punishment. His ability to become a man is questioned. Girls usually remain with their mothers; however, when allowed to stay outside, they remain under the care of other empresses; this *freedom* is regarded as a privilege that they should enjoy until the beginning of their menstruation cycle. Limitation of movement seems to be the only difference in the socialisation of little princes and princesses. From this perspective,

only menopause would give a woman the freedom of movement that menstruation taboos and pregnancies rob her throughout her fertile life.

### **7.6.2. Theological education**

Initiations to theological matters are also gender neutral. If little girls have to become goddesses of creation while boys are destined to become prophet or priests, both have the responsibility to be ambassadors of the EABIC Livity on an international level. Both men and women have to learn about essential tenets of the livity and be able to represent them to the outside world. The functions are different. Priests are guarantors of the maintenance of the uniformity of the rituals, while women (mostly the ones who underwent menopause) are to travel and agitate for their right to be repatriated to Africa. Nevertheless both actions are equally valued by the community.

### **7.6.3. Academic education**

From the ability to read and write to the pursuit of a career in academia, the requirement and the options given to children of the EABIC have vastly evolved. Indeed, the academic aspect of education has become increasingly important throughout the years. This fact is the evidence of the undeniable link between the wider Jamaican society and the Bobo Shanti community.

The Jamaican government from the years of independence has not ceased to emphasise the importance of education, and allocated a substantial budget to its development. Facing the realities of the market, boys and girls from the EABIC have been sent to governmental schools with the hopes to better their lives. Worse than the persecutions of the 1960s, the absence of the charismatic leader and the horrendous economic situation of the camp have widely opened the door to governmental help and policies, which is a direct threat to the radical spirit of the movement. The children are now educated to seek employment or create their own business outside the camp. The camp structure for at least thirty years is now seriously threatened.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

In this thesis, it has been argued that gender is an essential factor in the dialectic of identity, empowerment and development in the Caribbean. The European system of value has very often been imposed on the Caribbean populations as the only legitimate, reasonable and acceptable one to the material and psychological detriment of the local population (Fanon 1965, Bolland 1996, Mc Farlane 1998). This cultural and economic imposition has led to pungent identity struggles, where very often, gender issues have been overlooked as it is often the case in post-conflict instances (Ford-Smith 1995, Barriteau 1998, Holt 2000, Al Ali and Pratt 2009).

European middle-class women, who had a more important means to voice their opinions, for a long time monopolised the feminist platform. These women, scholars, journalists or politicians earnestly fought against sexist and patriarchal policies and social norms oppressive to their aspirations. While their dedication and struggle to change policies in their own environment is laudable and commands respect, the unquestioned application of their conclusions and theories to women from other geographical, social, cultural and economic background can be regarded as paternalistic, in this context *maternalistic*, but above all insulting.

Lake, in line with the Westernised conception of female liberation, has extensively worked on the theme of female subordination within Rastafari. In her conclusions, she heavily criticised Rastafarian conception of womanhood and concluded that Rastawomen were in fact subordinated in an ideology that called for physical, mental and spiritual liberation. Indeed, using the standards that Cress Welsing called: “White Supremacy system/culture” (1991:122), she identified female subordination through three main indicators: the production of capital, freedom of movement, and the abolition of gendered activities.

Because these women were not generating enough money to sustain themselves without depending on a family or community network, they were therefore declared powerless in the context of a capitalist/consumerist society (Lake 1998: 84). Because they submitted themselves to ritual seclusion when menstruating, they were regarded as oppressed and alienated (Lake 1998: 65). Finally, because they were never encouraged or expected to engage in “masculine activities”, they were judged subordinated and

voiceless (Lake 1998: 96). In Lake's work, a special mention is made of the women of the EABIC community that she regarded as the "most Orthodox", therefore the most oppressive of all mansions of Rastafari (1994:242). In this environment of "subordination" she recorded that Bobo Shanti women testified that they welcomed the purifying process of the twenty-one days as a respite yet she concluded that: "The importance of rules of pollution go (sic) far beyond respite from household duties. To deem women polluted based on regularly occurring biological functions, is to insult their very existence" (Lake 1998: 97).

Female subordination is a frame that several feminist scholars are quick to assign to women outside of the norms of western capitalistic societies or *whiteness* (Henry 2007). This act has been identified and denounced by many African, Asian and Caribbean feminist scholars (Barriteau 1998, Oyewumi 2003, Mohanty 2003). I suggest that the ability to engage in masculine activities or the need to *degenderise* social production and reproduction in order to obtain gender equality are notions that need to be challenged. Beyond the critic of western hegemony in feminist scholarship, one sought in this work to encourage alleged subordinate women (involved in female activities) to voice their opinion on their own living conditions, beliefs and understanding of life.

I have argued in the beginning of this thesis that as a radical social movement, the EABIC would tend to equally value the social contribution of all its members regardless of their gender in order to fulfil its objectives. Indeed, the struggle of the EABIC can be compared to other liberation movements observed by Pankhurst (2007) where it has been demonstrated that a post-conflict backlash would almost systematically hit women in a negative way, depriving them of their original and even pre-conflict rights and privileges (Al Ali 2007). Akin to these revolutionary movements, the EABIC uses both men and women in order to fight *Babylon/Whiteness*, yet, because they have not yet reached their objectives (*Repatriation with Reparation*), I have suggested that its female activities would be as valued as male ones, as it has been witnessed by Luciak (2007) in the context of the Cuban revolution. Due to the particular nature of the struggle between Rastafari and *Babylon*, it is the Jamaican dominant culture that is questioned, challenged and thwarted by the EABIC's countercultural *Livity*.

Assessing female subordination within this group needed to be analysed through the EABIC system of value or Rastafari epistemology (Mc Farlane 1998). In order to verify this theory this thesis focused on three major domains of the EABIC community: political, cultural and economic. These areas of study were chosen accordingly with Leahly's indicators of gender justice (1986) and Barriteau's theory on gender systems and modernity within the Anglophone Caribbean (1998). As a self proclaimed *Priesthood Order*, I have considered primordial to also analyse the notions of female representation and expectations within the EABIC's theology. The following are the findings for each of the aforementioned sections.

### **8.1. EABIC Theology**

Upon analysing both primary and secondary sources in addition to extensive field work, one can conclude that the EABIC conception of the divine is both male and female and does not advocate female subordination as claimed by Lake (1998: 65). Indeed, unlike the European Christian conception of a masculine God without a spouse yet with a son, the EABIC preaches that King Alpha and Queen Omega are the supreme beings, parents of creation in line with Garvey's views on female primacy in spiritual matters (Gordon 1991: 139). Poles apart from misogynist Christian scholars, who allotted to women an inferior status to men due to their active role in the "fall of man" (Genesis 3:6); the Bobo Shanti cosmogony describes the original sin to be the disobedience of both men and women to the divine commands against miscegenation. The burden of being responsible for the fall and the pernicious influence of sexist Christian theologians observed by Toriesen (1993) does not weigh on the shoulders of the Bobo Shanti Empress.

This particular egalitarian approach of the divine is supported by the importance placed on the idea of community. It has been concluded elsewhere that in Jamaica, the imported forms of Christianity destroying the community, was worryingly problematic (Gordon 1991:141). By placing the spiritual emphasis on the community and on the necessity to unite against a more popular system of value, the EABIC has identified the negative impacts of *whiteness* Christianity on the Jamaican population and effectively offered a spiritual alternative. The EABIC is therefore constructed on a fundamentally

gender egalitarian and anti-individualistic spiritual basis, which has influenced its particular conception of the body.

## 8.2. EABIC conception of the body

The EABIC conception of the body can indeed be regarded as the most visible praxis of its theology. From this gender-neutral genesis, women of the EABIC are encouraged to love themselves as true black goddesses of creation. Indeed, members of the EABIC have ascribed to themselves a divine status that they are proud to proclaim. Their persons are no longer temporal bodies, but wonderful *temples* sheltering the divinity within them. As gods and goddesses, demonstrations of respect and love towards each other are imperative on the commune. The divinisation of the body has encouraged both men and women to cherish their *temples* by following the natural path of an *Ital* way of life where life is valued above all needs. I have suggested that the divinisation of the African body is a strategy used by the members of the EABIC to counteract the *Blès* of slavery translated in the heavily colourist Caribbean and Jamaican society at large where the African phenotypes are not considered beautiful or *respectable* (Ford-Smith 1995, Charles 2003 Cooper 2004, Sméralda 2004, Donatien-Yssa 2007). From sub-human to divinity, the African-Caribbean *temple* is celebrated and elevated to the realm of super-natural but above all, it is rendered “normal” through the ceaseless endeavours of the EABIC.

From this perspective, the clothes worn by Bobo Shanti men and women can be considered symbols of their empowerment rather than tools of subordination. Indeed, the EABIC has been much criticised for its extremely conservative dress code ascribed to women (Lake 1998). It has been demonstrated that both men and women have to abide by this austere fashion, making it an EABIC clothing characteristic rather than of a medium to repress women’s individuality or sexuality. Just like women, men are encouraged to wear long sleeve shirts and a turban covering their hair in public settings with regard to their divine nature. I have also suggested that the EABIC dress code was a way to erase classicism within the community. Because clothes are readily available for everyone to be “royally” dressed the issue of self-respect raised by Tafari-Ama (1998) are therefore less relevant in this context. The headdress worn by Bobo Shanti women can therefore be regarded as the expression of their covenant as women with the divine instead of being a sign of female subordination (Lake 1998: 109).

If menstrual blood is generally considered to be a shameful and even sinful flux in mainstream Judeo-Christian paradigms (O'Grady 2003), the EABIC considers the menstrual blood as a sacrifice that the goddesses have to make to the earth. Instead of lowering the woman in the community, the taboo placed on this blood enhances her status and prestige whenever she conforms to the sacrifice. This particular attitude towards women's flow can be attributed to the fact that EABIC women are not solely under the censure of the original sin. Therefore, the regulations found in the biblical book of Leviticus are regarded as purposeful instead of punishments.

### **8.3. The EABIC as a government**

Having analysed the theological frame from which the EABIC males and females are defined, the decision-making arena was the fourth area observed and analysed in this thesis. I have argued that as a communist-like community, challenging the norms of a greater political hegemony, the EABIC encouraged women's involvement in leadership functions (Luciak 2007, 2008). It has been observed that the *Congress* was ruled by two official structures: the Committee of Elders and the Woman Freedom Liberation League (WFLL). These two assemblies have different functions. The Committee, composed of men and women, holds both legislative and executive powers, while the WFLL is an all-female association dedicated to women's fulfilment and empowerment within the EABIC. This association is extremely active in charity work and in promoting entrepreneurial spirit within the EABIC. Extremely dynamic, the WFLL does not limit itself to the commune's boundaries and is active, like the Committee, on an international level.

Becoming influential members of the WFLL and the Committee is not a collegial decision. The key members of both institutions have to be appointed by King Emmanuel himself or by the President. If this appointment grants legitimacy to the person in charge, it nevertheless poses a problem of succession. Indeed, the legitimacy of a newly appointed Committee member may be questioned, as King Emmanuel can no longer physically appoint people. Because the charisma and authority of King Emmanuel cannot be equalled, people most susceptible to be influential in the decision-making area are those who have managed to gather enough prestige within the



commune. Those people would invariably be elders who have been recognised as worthy members and contributors to the cause.

Seniority here is therefore more important than gender. Wilson's (1995) notion of *Reputation* would definitely be a criterion to select an elder. Indeed, in this community, only respect brought by *Reputation* can confer authority. In this particular context, *Reputation* is to be acquired by both men and women as the idea of social class usually associated with *Respectability* is not encouraged on the commune. One can therefore suggest that in the current state of the Bull Bay commune, prestige is granted to zealous members regardless of their gender, yet with a consideration for seniority. In celebrating the status of the elders and giving them deference and power, the EABIC is drawing closer to African traditions where seniority is very often more susceptible to consideration than gender (Bascom 1942, Oyewumi 1997, Cornwall 2005).

After the death of King Emmanuel, serious succession issues have arisen, weakening the power of the Committee of Elders. This is problematic because the administration of the International Congress is centralised in Jamaica. The Jamaican Committee is therefore important and powerful, but failings in its administration have created a relatively slow bureaucracy frustrating at times the international chapters.

The WFL has not encountered this problem as the Honourable Empress Esther still rightfully remains in her position as *Leading Empress* and ambassador. Therefore, from observations and the testimonies of discontented EABIC members, one may suggest that the WFL is currently the most efficient administrative entity of the EABIC. It has been able to federate more members in and outside of the camp due to its flexible cobweb structure similar to the female power observed by Leo-Rhynie (2003).

#### **8.4. Gendered activities of the EABIC**

The aim of this section was to assess the EABIC's ethos on role distribution as a radical community separated from the mainstream economic system. Barriteau (1996), Mills (2003), Momsen (2004), Huffman and Cohen (2004) unanimously emphasised the perverse effects of global capitalism on female work:

Around the globe, gender hierarchies are produced and maintained in relation to transnational circuits of labor mobilization and capital accumulation. In varied and often locally specific ways international capital relies on gendered ideologies and social relations to recruit and discipline workers, to reproduce and cheapen segmented labor forces within and across national borders (Mills 2003: 42).

This phenomenon ineluctably led to an almost systematic devaluation of non-remunerated reproductive activities generally associated with women and increased the prestige of well-paid activities in the production sphere linked to men. While most scholars advocate the necessity to *degenderise* activities for both men and women to equally develop in lucrative and rewarding activities, it has been argued here that the problem of gender inequality in the production and reproduction spheres did not lie in the activities, but on the value genuinely attached to them by the community.

On the EABIC commune all activities are defined according to gender. Apart from cooking, which is a male prerogative on the camp, the *house service* sector and craft-making are generally attributed to women. Men are supposed to engage in masculine production tasks such as broom manufacturing, agriculture and the distribution of the craftwork produced on the commune. It has been observed however that in the absence of women, men would engage in *house service* activities without losing their masculinity. This non-stigmatisation of female activities could be explained by the presence of the *Universal* economic system rendering the use of money redundant on the community.

Unlike the wider Jamaican society, money does not have such a direct impact on the dynamic between gender and production-reproduction sectors. In lieu of money, an EABIC member receives prestige from the community for his or her activities. Female activities revolving around craft making, laundry cleaning or clothes mending receive the same prestige as the male assigned activities such as cooking, baking or handy-work.

However, this system based on prestige can only be sustained because of the *Universal* economic system, which is a careful mix of communism and free market. The *Universal* system federates the talents and activities of EABIC members in order to make food, clothing and shelter freely available to any member or visitor, may they be male or female. With an effective *Universal* economic system, money is not relevant to

the survival of the commune dwellers. With their basic needs fulfilled, the EABIC member is more susceptible to focusing on spiritual matter and even reach an EABIC version of Maslow's *self-actualisation*.

After the death of the charismatic leader, King Emmanuel, the *Universal* is dangerously weakening, as the current administration has not been able to sustain it. As a consequence, the camp population has depleted, leaving a great gap in the production area. In fact, the broom factory is not thriving as it used to and the *Universal* kitchen can no longer feed the community on a daily basis. Money and the mainstream economic system are therefore slowly entering the camp as many are looking from the outside world for support. A few members have already started selling marijuana, refreshments and even industrially processed snacks within the commune, discarding the fundamental principle of the *Universal* stipulating that money was not to be used on the commune. One may therefore argue that the disappearance of the charismatic leader has destabilised the economic equilibrium of the camp, which was one of the factors promoting gender equality and justice in guaranteeing an economic and ideological independence from the wider Jamaican society. This research does not allow one to accurately measure the consequences of the *Universal* dismantlement on gender and role distribution on the commune. One can only conjecture that the distinctiveness of the EABIC enterprises may either vanish in the *whiteness* system or reaffirm itself in a more radical way. It would be interesting to analyse female activities in the next five years in the eventuality of a total cessation or resuscitation of this system.

### **8.5. Matting patterns/family**

Family patterns in the Caribbean are topics that have widely been analysed, criticised and counter analysed. Formerly classified as deviant from the bourgeois pattern of the *nuclear family* by early European researchers, recent local studies have shown that the female headed household pattern prevalent in the Caribbean is the bittersweet result of historical social and economic realities (Mohammed 1999, Rowley 2002) that is also spreading to Europe as a result of greater involvement of women in the production domain (Bumpass 1994, Stuart 1996).

Always breaking away from the *whiteness* system, radical EABIC families are yet again different from these well-observed patterns. I have identified three different

phases in the construction of the EABIC family: the monastic family in the 1950s and early 1960s, the separated family of the 1970s 1980s and the united family of the post King Emmanuel's period. I have linked the evolution of the EABIC family patterns with the attitude of the general Jamaican public. I have argued that as Rastafari became more and more tolerated in Jamaica, the concept of the EABIC family went from the abstinent family/community to the awkward inclusion of sexual activity without male/female cohabitation and finally to the nuclear family. The first two stages translated the need for the EABIC to protect its members against the general censure and cultivate the EABIC *Principle of Priesthood*.

After the death of King Emmanuel, the weakening of the *Universal* caused families to unite in a nuclear pattern, discarding the *Principles* of the EABIC and threatening the paramount idea of community, the last rampart against the individualistic notion of the *whiteness* system. The parents are nowadays solely responsible for the maintenance of their children. The *kingmen* or husbands would usually engage in activities outside the commune while women would keep producing small craft items and utilise the female or blood relation networks to complement the earnings of the husbands. This new arrangement is not particularly well received by the commune, yet these families are tolerated. In spite of this change of organisation, the commune would still play an important role in the education of the children and provide the emotional and spiritual support necessary for the family strive and uphold the values of the EABIC.

## **8.6. EABIC education**

Children education is indeed a communal affair where the objectives of the EABIC are more important than individualistic ambitions. Similarly to the family patterns, education has also evolved according to the political context and agenda of the EABIC. Indeed, whilst children used to be schooled solely on the commune, in the 1970s and early 1980s, the Bobo Shanti princes and princesses of the 1990s and beyond are going to school to learn trades or professions that would allow them to be useful in an eventual removal to an African country in the process of *Repatriation*.

Girls are encouraged to work as hard as boys and as far as it has been observed in this research, natural talent would be encouraged in every child regardless of gender.

If princesses are socialised to be as accomplished as the *Virtuous Woman* praised in the biblical psalm, they are also encouraged to partake activities such as public speaking or *reasonings* which are gender neutral area in the EABIC system of value and from which a member can receive a lot of prestige. Even if the *Universal* is not currently able to sustain the original conception of work, power, education, family patterns or even gender relations, the members of the Bull Bay commune are adapting to their harsh economic environment whilst striving to keep their values free from the *Babylon/whiteness* system that they purposefully escaped.

### **8.7. Bobo Shanti Empresses in and out of Babylon and the gender debate: contribution**

The main objective of this thesis has been to assess how and when the adjective “subordinate” could relate to the female condition. One has strived to undergo the study according to pre-established indicators described in the work of Leahy (1986):

women’s power and authority and (2) society’s perception of women’s acceptable roles. Women’s equality relative to that of men’s, in this regard is generally measured by (1) women’s abilities to acquire and exercise influence, power, and authority as compared with men’s abilities; and the parameters of acceptable social relations, there is general agreement that in any society ‘the position of women represents a coherent structure in which all the elements [of social relations] are integrated: ideology, the role of the family, role in society, economic role, sphere of activity and sphere of forbidden activity, etc. (Leahy 1986: 10)

Under the guidance of these indicators, I have decided to measure the Bobo Shanti female condition according to their very own system of value. These women willingly broke away from the westernised world and it would be really illogical to analyse them according to the very same lifestyle that they have purposefully refused. Leahy’s indicators serving as railings for Caribbean *strategic gender universalism* (St Hill 2003), one has demonstrated that the very essence of the EABIC ethos and *principles* prohibited subordination and challenged the normalised prejudiced gender relations present in the occidental societies emulated by the Caribbean ones. The power of this organisation relies essentially on the notion of community where individualistic concerns such as personal economic independence are not relevant. Indeed, supported by the concept of the *Universal*, the commune has managed to sustain the radical ethos, a new system of value where men and women ought to equally fight the norms of *whiteness* symbolised in the word *Babylon*. In the EABIC context, the *Universal* acts therefore as a catalyser for gender equality, making androgyny irrelevant.

Nevertheless, the death of the charismatic leader has produced an economic and social instability to which the commune has responded so far by slowly importing an increasing number of individualistic values affecting the economy, the family organisation and the children education. It has not been in the scope of this thesis to study the “new Bobo Shanti women”. Yet with standards of living approaching those of the women from the Jamaican inner cities, it could be interesting to assess in which measures the fundamentally egalitarian and communalistic principles of the EABIC could be adapted, sustained or discarded in this new context.

Adaptation without compromising the spirit of the founding *principles*, appear to be the preoccupation of the EABIC of the twenty-first century. These Members of the EABIC have understood that:

The task is not to manage colonial inheritance, but to reform everything, to think everything out anew. The task is to define our own objectives, set our own standards, and pick our own heroes from among those who outstandingly serve our own interests. (Chinweizu 1987: 9).

They have therefore created a counter system where gender justice issues are also taken into account. EABIC women share an equal status with their male counterparts, united for the same objective: *Chanting down Babylon*. In this thesis, female condition has been analysed by EABIC standards and has not been found wanting. In an era where Rastafari as a social movement is progressively being absorbed by the global society and turned into what one may call a *Rastafad*, one has strived to demonstrate that gender re-construction in a counter-culture such as the EABIC is primordial to the reformation of the system advocated by Chinweizu (1987).

This thesis has essentially focused on gender conception in a specific mansion of Rastafari, the Bobo Shanti, and in a specific location: Jamaica. The data collected and analysed in this work may differ greatly from another mansion of Rastafari or even from another EABIC commune in South and Central America. It would be interesting to observe and analyse how sustainable the EABIC *Livity* is in other geographical and structural settings. Nevertheless, as far as Jamaica is concerned, one can suggest that issues pertaining to identity, violence and poverty created by a legitimate colonial and

capitalistic system (slavery) were left unsolved by the succeeding neo-liberal and “post colonial” system. The EABIC has therefore identified that:

The central objective in decolonising the African mind is to overthrow the authority which alien traditions exercise over the African [and African Caribbean]. This demands, the dismantling of white supremacist beliefs, and the structures which uphold them, in every area of African life. It must be stressed, however, that decolonisation does not mean ignorance of foreign traditions, it simply means denial of their authority and withdrawal of allegiance from them...One should certainly use items from other traditions provided they are consistent with African cultural independence and serve African objectives... (Chinweizu 1987: 6-7).

Because of the particularly self-destructive identity construction of the *New World*, the Caribbean is not an environment where an original local culture such as the African one can be spoken of. The EABIC has therefore strived to create a new identity, a new system of value, as well as a new gender dynamic enabling its members to challenge the system of *whiteness* surrounding them. In this struggle where everything is to be redefined, justified and balanced, women are more than ever agents of their own destiny.

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## Annexe:

### Meet the Honourable Empress Esther

Constance Harris also known as Empress Esther (Given to her by King Emmanuel) was born at 9 Humber Avenue Montego Bay St. James. At the age of 17 she became conscious of her-story before slavery, and origin as an Ethiopian African exiled in Jamaica. Rastafari was first introduced to her by one of her elder relative Ras Higher from Belmont and her brother who was the first Rasta in her immediate family of five



children.

She then move on to Kingston resided in Hugenden with her mother and other brother and sister, she started to reason with Rastafarians, none organizational Bredren, Bredren from Coptic, orthodox, Twelve Tribe, Nyabinghi. Empress Esther begun to educate herself by reading the words of Marcus Garvey, the bible selected speeches of H.I. M and attending annual celebrations ( July 23 Emperor Haile Selassie I earth day and African liberation day, May 25 )and also events being held by the Twelve tribe of Israel .Finally She came in contact with the BoBo Shanty Bredren with the broom and was inspired by their line of reasoning. Such as :(1) the Priesthood Ceremonial order of Rastafari,(2) the Black Christ Salvation he history of Back-a Wall with Prince Emmanuel (Now King Emmanuel ) and especially the observation of the Sabbath .After visiting the Camp at 10 miles Bull Bay Kingston in (1979) and having audience with the High Priest ,our worthy founder leader and President of the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress she decided that Rastafari way of life was her calling .

At Age 22, she fully embraced principle of Rastafari livity through the Bobo Shanti order. February 7<sup>th</sup>1980 she left her home and family to rally with the Jah of love, to take her place as an Ethiopia African freedom fighter for the cause of herself ,her people and for African Redemption. The Empress became a devoted and a staunch advocate of Repatriation for all Africans to return to their own vine and fig tree with Reparation to repair the damage done to all Africans at home and abroad. Through the guidance of our God Head, the mighty king of Kings Haile Selassie I the first, the skilful Leadership of the Most Rt. Hon. King Emmanuel Charles Edwards the Black Secretary General of the Black United Nation, the voice of the Black Tiger John Marcus Garvey I Selassie I Jahrastafari and H.I.M's total balance our dearly beloved Mother of Creation Her Royal

Highness Empress Woizero Menen. Black Supremacy Divinity Black Dynasty in Principles and integrity of God and Goddess in Flesh!

She has been active in the Congress Governmental affair by voice of King Emmanuel who anointed her in 1980 as the first official Leading Empress in office of the EABIC 2nd Secretary of the Congress, secretary of the Woman Freedom League, Member of Parliament and Committee. 1990 she was appointed as an Authorized Ambassador of the King. 1984 she led a delegation to the Nigerian High Commission had audience with the then High commissioner Professor Adofua concerning the rights of Africans in the west. 1987 she went before the master in Chambers MS. Vandapump representing the Congress and the Rastafari community agitating for Repatriation in the Supreme Court. The suit was brought against the People National Party (PNP) government, the Queen of Briton, the Governor General along with the state, for the atrocities done to enslave Africans, Rastafari children. Demanding International Repatriation with Reparation compensation for the damaged done to black people by the European families. The EABIC have always been making representation to former and present Governor generals (Representatives of the Queen of England) the P.M. and ministers of parliament concerning the Fundamental Human Rights and Justice of 1834-38 Emancipation Proclamation Bill of rights.

In my tenure as Ambassador I have been on delegation in 2004 to the office of the EABIC Miami, EOZ Empress Menen Conference, 2005 travelled to Panama along with Bredren and sisters of other mansions to the Rastafari Hispanic Conference, 2006 Chili, 2007 met with the then Prime Minister the Hon. Portia Simpson concerning Repatriation, 2007 an observer to Smithsonian exhibit, 2008 Martinique 37 festival Cultural De la Ville De- Fort De- France in honour of Oraison Pour Aime Césaire (the Marcus Garvey of Fort De- France) and in 2010 E.O .Z Annual Empress Menen Conference South Africa. It is said Proverbs 31 verse 31, "Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her own works praise her in the gates." As a Hon. Leading Empress my duties are to see that all the Empresses and Children needs are met. Over the years I have been spearheading construction and the reconstruction works of Empress Quarters, housing accommodation for national and international visitors coming to the EABIC.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Blessed Love. Queen Esther, Authorized ambassador/Leading Empress EABIC/WFLL

## Meet The Honourable Priest Wayne

The Honourable priest Wayne is a Bobo Shanti *Bredren* who manifested Rastafari and the end of the 1990's. He unfortunately did not get the chance to meet King Emmanuel in the flesh. He selected the EABIC *Livity* because of its values, the rectitude promoted in its member, its entrepreneurial spirit. Here is what he wanted to share with



us:

“Give thanks to the Most High on the Blessed Day of celebration<sup>185</sup>. Selassie I JAH Rastafari. You have to keep in mind that no matter what your faith is, you, as an African, have the duty to work toward the valorisation of the African race. As an African, you cannot turn your back on your brother. Like the Most Honourable Marcus Garvey, we must strive to work together, agitate for reparation of the injustice that has been done to us. Our women must be proud of their bodies, hair, skin, everything that makes them goddess of creation. Why would you worship a white God that you cannot see and who let you suffer before reaching a heaven that you cannot see? We know that God is both male and female as the creation is also male and female. We know that God is Natural and not *supernatural*. I believe that people have not reached this overstanding because they still refuse to acknowledge the fact that God lives in them. We have to love ourselves in order to love the other.

We have to build our own schools, teach the reality of the Black Christ who came in the person of King Emmanuel. I do not have anything against people of other colours as Man of Right is god and Woman of Right is goddess in flesh. I only agitate against the white supremacy promoted by Babylon, which is only about death. Look in Somalia; look in Norway, all that is happening is because of the selfish ideals of Babylon, which is only about the profit of a few, riches built on blood, intolerance and non respect of life. As gods and goddesses that is what we are fighting! Everyone can do a bit in its own way! Keep in mind that the Congress is open to everyone and welcome all. It is about love and life. If we do not, we are only heading for more confusion, oppression. Salvation is now, peace is now, Zion is Africa.

Once again, I give thanks for the I and the opportunity given. Selah”.

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<sup>185</sup> July 23<sup>rd</sup> is the Birth day of HIM Haile Selassie, which is celebrated around the world by Rastafarian.

### Meet the Honourable Prophet Jimmy



Jah Jimmy is a prophet from Guadeloupe. I met him in Paris and had the opportunity to celebrate a Sabbath with him in Nantes. I unfortunately could not get through to Prophet Jimmy for this biographical note as he is now living between Guadeloupe and Ste Lucia. Extremely talented he is tailor, a cabinetmaker, has a qualification in naturopathy and is a joyful person altogether. His help has been invaluable to conduct the interviews in and out of the commune and attend various Rastafari celebrations in Paris and in Martinique.

## Meet the Honourable Empress Bérénice

Blessed Love,

First of all let's give thanks for Life and Our Almighty Life Giver, Holy Emmanuel I Selassie I jaH Ras Tafari.

Heart of Love; My name is Honourable Empress Bérénice Rachel. I was born and raised in Egypt/France, in the small village of the countryside, my dad being a farmer and my



mum a teacher.

I grew up mainly among white people but I already had a special concern for Africa from my younger days, and a strong desire for justice. As a teenager I started to observe the society, rejecting the dogmas of the Catholic Church, which I used to attend, and the “system” which I&I term as Babylon. At the same time, I was looking for the truth for myself, so I started to study the Bible as well as African history. I was drawn into the reggay world also, as a youth I loved to listen to that music and try to get what the conscious singers were talking about. Yet I used to feel a little frustrated because I didn't know any Rastaman directly to guide me or even to reason with. I already knew deep within myself that Ras Tafari was my life, and that beyond the “basis” that I was gradually practicing – the growing of locks, Ital diet, African consciousness etc. – there was a whole world of wisdom, knowledge and understanding at hand.

In 2001 I went to California for a month; this was my first experience overseas, and I really observed the American society as the most extreme Babylonian way of life. I didn't meet any Rastaman there but I bought my first consistent books about Ras Tafari culture, and Black history, and I studied them thoroughly.

In 2002 I graduated from High School and joined a preparatory class in Nantes (west of France). This is where I really started to meet Rasses and spend time with them, first through the music, but very quickly the Bredrens saw that I was more interested in the culture and they handed me more books. At that time there used to be an associative house in Nantes where Ras Tafari and West Indians people would gather and spend time together. I started to spend a lot of time there and got acquainted with some more serious Rasses. This period was like a revival because I was eventually getting close to

what my heart had been willing for years. The hours of reasoning and reading shaped my mind and the joy was so great that I wanted to share this with everyone. I became very active in communicating about Ras Tafari on internet forum (at that time sound information in French on the Ras Tafari culture was very scarce). I started to translate speeches of Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie I, Empress Menen, and many Ras Tafari elders, and associated with a Bredren who helped encouraged me to publish it into booklets. I also founded with the same Bredren and another Ras an association called FANA to help the poor and needy in Africa by collecting money, clothes, school material and networking with organizations which needed it on the continent (Togo, Cameroun, Congo, later Ethiopia and Senegal). The two other founding members of FANA were wearing turbans and teaching about Emmanuel, so I naturally got interested in the Man, and studied his teachings.

After Ivan blew in Jamaica in 2004, I gathered funds to help rebuild the tabernacle that were sent to the Foundation when in 2004-2005 the Bredren whom I was working with went to Bobo Hill in Jamaica and got crowned as a Prophet and Ambassador of the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress Church of Salvation. From that time I received much more teachings about the EABIC, through letters, recordings and videos. I was really satisfied to find an order in which everyone had the same consistency and interpretation about prophecy and history. And I loved how deep the reasoning was going, promoting a true liberation and providing salvation out of the colonial ways of imperialism and all –isms and schisms in which we were raised in the West. I started to really purge out from misinterpretations and misunderstanding by asking clearance or by studying the truth by myself, and I would always find that what King Emmanuel was teaching us could be proven or justified with very tangible facts; this enhanced my will to “trust and obey” as the hymn says, because even if at first I didn’t understand something in the levity, later I would eventually find out the truth in it, and it proved that this Man was the True and Living God, with Eternal Knowledge.

I especially found out that, contrary to what is usually said, the Bobo Shanti Order was not racist neither oppressive towards woman. In fact, it is a whole different paradigm from the western teachings, but in this Kingdom there is room for everyone, without regard to race, colour or sex. I started to communicate and strengthen the Empress League work, especially in collecting funds for the rebuilding of the journey gate at Bobo Hill. In 2006, a few Bredrens from Paris had started to join the Congress, and FANA was getting bigger also. I had graduated from the University, and I decided to leave Nantes to go back to my hometown where I got a job as school assistant. I was editing a Ras Tafari newspaper called “Mabraq” – which means “thunder” in Amharic (Ethiopian language), and I was managing a team of journalists to publish about 30 pages every month on Ras Tafari culture. The booklets I edited a few years before were still spreading. We also used to have Bobo Shanti gathering where we would teach the hymns and choruses and the order to ones who had joined us. In 2007 I went to Ethiopia for about two months with a Sister, member of FANA. Visiting this country was a very long awaited moment and it was a wonderful experience on many aspects. I also visited the EABIC in Shashemene and enjoyed my first Sabbath Service there. Meeting with Honourable Priests, Prophets and Empresses was a delight and gave me even more inspiration in that trod. After this travel I became involved in the reinforcement of the Empress League House in Shashemene. I went back to Ethiopia in November 2008 until January 2009, and spent a month with the Bobo Shanti family in Ethiopia. In August



2009 I went to Bobo Hill in Jamaica and experienced the 21 days principles, which was a blessing to me.

I am fully satisfied with the natural levity that came to my remembrance through the Bobo Shanti teachings. Though today I am living in the world and sometimes have to adapt to the conditions I live in, many aspects are fundamental to me now, especially when it comes to the keeping of the Sabbath or the Woman Principles. Glorify our King Alpha and Queen Omega for their Wonderful Love towards I&I Royal Sons and Daughters. Salvation is the keeping of Life. Blessed Love.

### **The Daniel number one Band.**

On the CD, you will be able to hear the particular Nyabinghi rhythm of the EABIC.

The first piece is called *Ethiopia International Anthem*. I have chosen this piece because one can hear very well the male and female voices. It is also one of the very few instances where the drum line can be modified from the usual fundeh/Kette/Base are not heard. The song is indeed entirely led by the base drum.

Ethiopia the land of our Father,  
The land where all God and goddess love to be.  
As a swift could of might, so they gather,  
God children are gathered to thee.

(2)  
With our Red Gold and Green floating over us,  
With our Emperor to shield us from wrong.  
With our God and our future to shield us,  
We hail and we shout and we sung.

Chorus:  
God bless our Negus, Negus high,  
And keep Ethiopia free.  
To advance with truth and right,  
To advance with love and light.  
With righteousness set speeding we haste to  
the calling.  
Humanity is pleasing one God for us all.

(3)  
Ethiopians:, The tyrant is falling,  
Who smote thee upon our knee,

And thy children are lastingly calling,  
From over the distant sea.

(4)

Jahovia the great one has heard us,  
He has heard our sigh and our plea.  
With a Spirit of love Jah has brought us,  
To be one through this coming age.

(5)

O Eternal God of this ages,  
Grant unto our sons and daughters that live,  
Thy wisdom knowledge understanding thou  
give to this ages,  
When Israel was so in need.

(6)

Thy voice through the dim pass has spoken,  
Ethiopia shall stretch forth our hand,  
By thee all barriers be broken,  
And heaven bless our dear mother land

The second piece is *Bird in a tree top*, very conventional with the fundeh/kette/base line. Note how the lyrics have been modified to suit their context. Below are the EABIC Lyrics followed by the original hymn:

Birds in the Treetops  
Praising Far I  
Flowers in the Garden  
Bowing Down their Heads  
Rastaman sit up giving praises  
Praises unto Far I  
Then why should I?  
Why should I?  
Not praise Rastafari?

### **Original hymn**

The birds upon the tree tops sing their song;  
The angels chant their chorus all day long;  
The flowers in the garden blend their hue,  
So why shouldn't I, why shouldn't you praise Him too?

The third hymn is *Marchando Vamos* from the Chile community. The line fundeh/kette/base is respected. It is interesting to note that the rhythm is slightly accelerated, as it has clearly been influenced by Chilean rhythms. It is an example of the versatility of the EABIC ethos. One could unfortunately not get the lyrics for this song.

The fourth hymn is just my favourite one *Fyah Fyah Fyah*. One can recognise the voice of Mama Maize leading the chorus. This chorus is one of the few that have not been modified. I have sung it this way in many Pentecostal and Seventh Day Adventist churches in Trinidad one can also hear very well the Daniel number 1 band at the end.

Fyah Fyah Fyah  
Fyah Fall on me  
Fyah Fyah Fyah  
Fyah fall on me  
On the day of Pentecost  
Fyah fall on me.