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Jamaican Folk Songs Found During Field Work: Their (Re) interpretation of Cultural History of Bustamante, Bedwardism and The Colon Man

Audley C. Chambers

Introduction

My interests in Jamaican traditions go back to my early childhood training and education. It was during these early years that I became aware of two distinct streams of culture that were and still are a part of my life. First, being a British subject, born and living in England, my total education was based on the British educational system. My parents were happy with the education that I was receiving, but would additionally instruct me about the Jamaican way of life. Among the many subjects discussed and narrated were folk tales, duppie (ghost) stories, and anansi stories, along with the singing of many folk songs. It is to the latter of these two streams of culture, and specifically the folk songs of this culture, that this paper focuses on.

From the time of my departure from England, 26 August 1981, to the Southern States of America, to my arrival in the city of Evanston, Illinois, on August 4, 1989, it had been eight years since I was last living in a community where there were many individuals of Jamaican descent. Through the encouragement of the ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner, and the

available populace of Jamaicans living in and around the city of Evanston, the project to study the historical significance of folk songs found in Jamaica became realistic. From that time I began interviewing musical folk artists until the present time.

Finding available artists who were knowledgeable about the folk music of Jamaica was not a problem. Many were willing to give part of their time to be interviewed, and to them I express my deep appreciation. Due to the length restraints of the project, only parts of the six interviews will be incorporated into this final draft. Each of these interviews took place at Northwestern University.

Body

According to Olive Lewin, the well known music research officer associated with the Jamaican Government, and Ivy Baxter, the author of *The Arts of an Island*, the folk music of Jamaica can be divided into four main areas of classification based on either its function or movement dynamics: Ritual and Ceremonial songs, Work songs, Social and Recreational songs, and Instrumental Music.¹ See Table 1 below for the various types of folk songs that can be found within each area of classification.

TABLE 1
An Outline for Classification²

Ritual/Ceremonial	Secular		Instrumental
	Work	Social and Recreational	
1. Revival a) Zion b) Pukko 2. Kumina 3. Rastafarian 4. Gumbay	a) Digging b) Sugar boiling c) Picking – cotton Pimento, corn, coffee d) Planting corn, peas e) Timber cutting f) Rice beating g) Housecleaning h) Women’s work I) Fishing j) Boat loading bananas	a) Dance - Mento Bruckings Tambo Ettu Jonkonnu Set dance b) Play – rising play singing games c) Set up nine nights gerreh dinky minny banga d) Love e) Ballad f) Nursery g) Tea meeting h) Political i) Rastafarian j) Nago k) Maroon l) Anancy m) Canterfables	
Religious & Cult Songs	Work	Games and Dances	Instrumental

In an article, “Ethnomusicology: discussion and Definition of the Field,” Alan P. Merriam has pointed out the fact that early pioneers in the field of ethnomusicology were only oriented toward analysis of the structure of the particular music they studied....He further points out the fact that music does not exist by and of itself but is a part of the totality of human behavior.... It is a part of man’s learned traditions and customs, a part of his social heritage,

and therefore for anyone to have a basic understanding of the music of any people depends upon our understanding of that people's culture, the place music plays in it, and the way in which its role is played. (Merriam, 1960, 108) Baxter further clarifies Merriam's statement by informing us that the "folk tales and folk songs [of Jamaica] reveal the philosophies that have motivated groups during certain phases of their existence, [thus] the study of folk art—its tools and techniques—has to be considered in historical and psychological perspective as well as from the point of view of geographical relationships." (Baxter, 1970: 160) Thus, to fully appreciate Jamaica's [folk] music, one must understand the total environment of the people who create, adapt and use it; (Lewin, 1983: 3) only then, will we be able to approach on a firm foundation our further understanding of what structure is and how music achieves whatever aesthetic ends are sought.

Using Merriam's philosophy of ethnomusicology as being "the study of music in culture,"³ which is reflected in both Baxter's and Lewin's philosophy, the objective of this paper is to not only analyze abstractly the musical and textual principles at work in each composition taken from field work but more importantly to have a deeper understanding of the music by analyzing its historical significance from a social (the group or organization), cultural (the tradition, education, and environment), psychological (the emotional impact of the songs), and the aesthetic (the artistic beauty) perspective.⁴

Since Jamaican folk music is the outcome of a variety of national influences,⁵ information concerning the diverse ethnic composition of the people of Jamaica will be presented. The population of Jamaica is composed of one of the world's most complex racial and national mixtures: African, Afro-European, European, Chinese, Syrian, East Indian, Afro-Chinese, Afro-East Indian, and others. The statistical yearbook of Jamaica of 1973 describes Jamaica's population distribution by racial origin: 76.3% African, 15.1% Afro-European, 0.8% European, 1.2% Chinese Afro-Chinese, 3.4% East Indian, Afro-East-Indian, 3.2% Other Races.⁶

Before the Spanish under Christopher Columbus landed in Jamaica on the 3 May 1494, (Black, 1983: 20) the Arawak Indians, also called Tainos, (Black, 1983: 10) already inhabited the island. Some four months after the arrival of Columbus, an interview with the Cacique, the chief of numerous villages, and his band of musicians reveal that they had some type of

established music tradition. The Jamaican musicologist Astley Clerk (1868-1944)⁷ describes the retinue:

In the prow of the canoe stood the standard-bearer of the Cacique in a mantle of variegated feathers, with a tuft of gay plumes on his head, and bearing in his hand a fluttering white banner. Two Indians with caps of helmets of feathers of uniform shape and colour [sic], and their faces painted in a similar manner beat upon tabors; two others with hats curiously wrought of green feathers, held trumpets of a fine black wood, ingeniously carved. There were six others, in large hats of white feather, who appeared to be guards of the Cacique.⁸

Because of the fact that they were unable to endure the enslavement and the harsh treatment which they suffered at the hands of the Spanish, and death brought upon them by European diseases to which they had no resistance, the Arawak's way of life became extinct. The oral tradition, which was so much a part of their culture, now makes it virtually impossible to ascertain in greater detail the role and function of music within their society.⁹

With this rapid decline in the Arawak population, the Spaniards began to replace them with enslaved Africans, the first of whom arrived circa 1517. (Black, 1983: 20) These Africans formed the beginnings of the present day population of Jamaica. When the Spaniards were driven out by the English (1655-1660), (Senior, 1984: 33)¹⁰ they and a handful of Portuguese Jews were all that remained. Under the English, the island quickly became a slave colony dedicated to the production of sugar. Increasing numbers of Africans were brought in as slaves until its abolition in 1807 under the leadership of William Wilberforce. (Fryer, 1984: 207) Evolving out of the original and once homogeneous Arawak people, Jamaican society now represents many original stocks which have developed variations of habits and customs in their New World environment. (Purchas-Tulloch, 1976: 78) Despite the fact the European influences can be seen within certain aspects of the folklore of Jamaica, it is important that one keeps in mind the important fact that the roots of the people of Jamaica (which by very conservative estimates consists of a racial origin of 76.3% African), stems back to the West Coast of Africa.

Let us turn our attention to the folk music of Jamaica that came out of the Revival tradition. First, historical information about the roots of Revivalism will be presented followed by musical and textural analysis of examples gathered during fieldwork. According to Martha Beckwith, the Revivalists date from the great revival of 1860 and the influences of the

religious enthusiasm of that period. Beckwith also believes that they were directly influenced by the myal¹¹ “angels” led by Christian enthusiasts who had received their inspiration in the free churches. (Beckwith, 1929: 158)

Revivalism is a distinctly Jamaican religious cult, created by a syncretism of African religious influences. The principal concept is an African one which is based upon the fundamental belief that the spiritual and temporal worlds are not separate but form a unified whole; the living can be possessed and influenced by the spirits of the dead. Many forms of Revivalism can be found in Jamaica, but the two major branches are Pocomania or Puk Kumina (‘Pukko’) and Revival Zion. Many similarities exist between Pukko and Zion, but their basic differences are associated with ritual and doctrine and with the types of spirits invoked. Zion deals only with heavenly spirits, i.e. God, Archangels, angels and saints; Poco spirits are the “ground spirits,” i.e. fallen angels. (Senior, 1984: 134; McCarthy, 2007: 147)

One of the best-known Revival leaders in Jamaica who had been recorded in the annals of Jamaican folk music is Alexander Bedward (1859-1930). It has been reported that Bedward, the popular folk hero and leader of the messianic cult movement ‘Bedwardism,’ followed in the Zion tradition and had a following of thousands from all over Jamaica, Cuba and Central America. Olive Senior describes this folk hero in the following words:

Bedward was born of poor parents and worked as a farm [laborer] at Mona Estate. From all accounts he had no special claim to righteousness or virtue. In the 1860’s he immigrated to Colon along with tens of thousands of other Jamaicans in search of work on the Panama Canal then under construction by a French syndicate. While in Colon, Bedward had a vision or ‘religious crises’, which made him return to Jamaica. He was baptized by [H.E.S. Woods otherwise known as] Shakespeare in 1866 and became actively involved in the August Town church.

However, it was not until 1891 that he actually began his Ministry. Bedward’s fame as a preacher and healer soon spread far beyond the little village. With his fame grew that of the Hope River as his miraculous ‘healing stream.’ Miracle cures were attributed to its waters and many came to be baptized there or to carry water home in bottles. The British authorities soon became anxious about the ‘goings on’ at August Town and whatever threat this posed to colonial order and security. They kept a close watch on Bedward and his followers and in 1895 arrested him for sedition following his prediction that ‘the Black wall shall crush the White wall.’ Bedward was declared insane and committed to the lunatic asylum but was soon released on the intervention of his lawyers.

He resumed his activities and by 1920 announced that he was ready to fly to Heaven. He foretold his ascension for 31 December. (Senior, 1984: 19-20)

The editors of the *Kingston Gleaner*, who were monitoring Bedward's movements, wrote under large headlines:

Yesterday there was great excitement at the Railway. Every train brought a large number of people, men, women and children all bound for August Town. But they come from Colon as well, on a steamer traveling across seas to see their 'Lord of August Town' ascend. In King Street all tram-cars traveling to Hope Gardens were besieged by men, women and children, some infants in arms, others hardly able to help themselves, but they were all bundling in with their clothes, baskets and fowls. All have sold out to come up and see the Lord and Master do the disappearing trick. There are still more to come. (Beckwith, 1929: 169)

December 31, 1920, came and went without the fulfillment of his prophecy. As the hours passed well into the New Year, he told them that the event had been postponed. From time to time, many other dates were set. Still his followers remained faithful. Whether it was on the 21 April 1921, (Senior, 1984: "Revivalism," 135) or sometime during the month of May of that same year, (Beckwith, 1929: 171) it is recorded that while Bedward and his followers were marching from August Town to Kingston, the government seized the opportunity to arrest the leaders for vagrancy. As a result, he was committed once again to the asylum. He died there in 1930.

According to Rupert and Lodelin Kerr, numbers of folk songs have been inspired by Bedward's attempt to fly and the religious fervor surrounding the indoctrination of new converts by baptism....Two songs were brought to my attention by the Kerr's:

Example 1.

Bedward gwine (going) go (to) fly
But 'im put it off fe (for) July. (Kerr, 1989)

Example 2.

Dip him Mister Bedward dip him,
Dip him in the healin' stream
Dip him sweet but not too deep,
Dip him in the healin' stream. (Kerr, 1989)

The Kerrs could not remember the complete melody to Example 1; therefore it will not be notated here. As can be seen from the text, Bedward's forecast of his ascension into heaven along with the continual change in date prompted folk singers to express their feelings. The Kerrs continued to outline their reflection of story behind this song:

Preacher Bedward, as we in Jamaica affectionately call him, planned to have a baptism. On the day which the baptism was to take place, a selected few of his followers were told to dam the water at the top of the river to ensure that the water level would be low where he would be preaching. They were also informed to allow the water to continue its flow at 12:00 Noon. While he was preaching and proclaiming, the water came rushing down. More individuals now began to believe him; they saw the water rushing down, and many decided to be baptized.

Whenever a baptism takes place in Jamaica, you will find not only the members of the church coming out to participate in the event, but also individuals from all walks of life will be there to witness the grand event. (Kerr, 1989)

Interviewer Audley Chambers: *Was this song composed while the event was in process or sometime after the event had taken place?*

This folksong just came about while the event was in process. They just started to sing that song....This is something that I was told by my parents....They imagined the preacher dipping them in the water, so they sang "Dip him Mister Bedward." (Kerr, 1989) See Example 3.

Example 3. "Dip him Mister Bedward dip him," sung by Rupert Kerr.

G: (I) (V) (I) (I) (V) (I) (IV)

Dip him mis-ter Bed-ward dip him dip him in de heal-in' stream

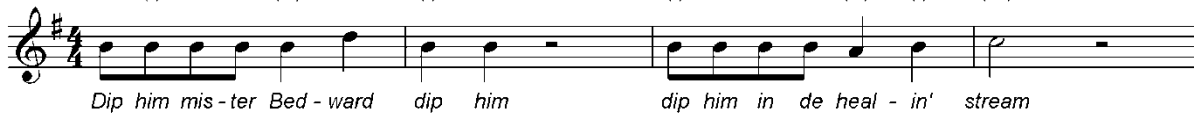
5 (V7) (V) (I)

Dim him sweet but not to deep dip him in the heal-in' stream


Redverse DaCosta sung a slightly different version from that sung by Kerr.

Example 4. "Dip him Bedward dim him," sung by Redverse DaCosta.

G: (I) (V) (I) (I) (V) (I) (IV)



Dip him mis-ter Bed-ward dip him



5 (V7) (V) (I)
Dim him sweet but not to deep dip him to cure bad feel-in

Two other versions, Example 5, 5A, and 6 shown below, reveal more about Bedward and his followers.

Example 5. "Bedward"¹²

♩ = 132



An' me al-way go up a de Au-gus Town, but me nev-er go up a Mo-na One day I was in -



6
vit-ted By a old man dem call Jo-nah Whom me go up a Mo-na me see Bred-da Bed-ward

12 Chorus:
stand in' Im-mek Sis-ta Ma-ry pull-im han'an' dim her in de heal-in' stream Oh dip dem Bed-ward dip dem



19 Vs. 3,4
dim dem in-a heal-in' stream Dip dem sweet but not too deep. Dip dem fe cure bad feel-in'. Some



25
come from de wes' like a per-fec' pes fe go dip in a de heal-in stream. Some come from de eas' like a

30 Chorus:
big lego-go beas' fe go dip in a de heal-in' stream Oh dip dem Bed-ward dip dem,



35
Dip dem in-a heal-in stream Dip dem sweet but not too deep, Dip dem fe cure bad feel-in

Example 5A. Showing stanzas two of the folk song “Bedward” of Example 5

Stanza Two

Some ride jackass but dem cyan get a pass,
 Fe go dip in a de healin’ stream.
 Some carry Jimmy John, wid dem face favah pan,
 Fe go dip in a healin’ stream

Example 6. “Dip them, Mister Bedward,” (Jekyll, 1966: 235) is a conflation of the Chorus and verse two of Example 5 and 5A

The musical notation for Example 6 consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written on a five-line staff. Below the staff, the lyrics are: "Dip them, Mis - ter Bed - ward, dip them Dip them in the heal - ing stream; Some". A measure rest is present in the second measure of the first staff. The second staff begins with a measure rest labeled "5" above it, followed by the melody. The lyrics below the second staff are: "come with jack - ass, some come with bus, Dip them in the heal - ing stream". The piece ends with a double bar line.

Let us turn our attention to the text of this folk song to observe what it reveals about the social and religious cultural climate of Jamaica.

According to Lewin, this folk song is classified as a Narrative. (Lewin, 1973: 17) This can be further defined as a story in the form of a song about an individual or maybe individuals who were either directly or indirectly associated with Bedwardism. The text to the first 16 measures (see Example 5), the narrative introduction of the folk song, informs us about an individual who always made regular visits to August Town,¹³ but because of circumstances of which we are not told, he never traveled to Mona, his birthplace and where he worked as a farm laborer. Why travel to Mona when Bedward’s movement centered around the ‘Jamaica Native Baptist Church’ in August Town? Maybe it was because he performed a different type of service in Mona. The rest of the text reveals that something else was going on up there, but the details were not given. All we are told is that the invitation was given by one called Jonah to the individual to go up to Mona and see Bedward. While there, Bedward was seen to be dipping Mary into the healing stream. DaCosta describes the Mona phenomena in the following words:

The person that composed this song is depicting Bedward as being a bush doctor; one who would administer some type of herbal medicine. The herbal remedies would be used in conjunction with various types of rituals in the process of healing the sick. Along with the administering of the herbal medicine, baptism would also take place.

The dipping in the healing stream referred to in the text, could also refer to an individual being dipped into a tub of hot water. This ritual in Jamaica is known as *balming*. (Dacosta and Styles, 1989)¹⁴

Interviewer Audley Chambers: If I understand you correctly, are you telling me that the phrases “dip in de healin’ stream,” and “Dip dem fe cure bad feelin’,” are in reference to someone who is in need of spiritual as well as physical healing?

Jasmine Styles: Yes. Your assumption is correct, but there is an even deeper meaning. There is also a connection here with *myalism*.¹⁵ People often associate their sickness with someone casting an evil spell on them; therefore, the text could also be implying that Bedward was taking counteractive measures against the evil spirits...There is no doubt in my mind that the descriptive elements in this folk song could imply having more than just one meaning. (Dacosta and Styles, 1989)

Stanza two, three, and four appear to be a vivid description of the various types of individuals (along with their personality traits) that were making their way to see their Lord and Master—Bedward. If these stanzas are looked at in relation to what the Kingston *Gleaner* had published (see page 9), then these stanzas are a perfect description of the many individuals coming from various parts of the world; the attractive and the unattractive individuals, the wild and uncouth individuals, and those who did not know when to stop talking.

Another folk song titled “Colon Man,” that Rupert Kerr shared with writer also revealed much about the Jamaican way of life.

This folk song concerns people who love to travel; but more so out of the necessity to obtain work. The place that they traveled to was Colon. [Colon was the port of disembarkation for laborers on the Panama Canal] (Jekyll, 1966: 245) In those days employment was hard to find; and when you did find employment the wages were low, so many individuals went to Colon where the wages were large. While in Colon, they would spend part of their wages on buying souvenirs for their family and friends back home. One special gift that many Jamaicans came home with was the watch. They had watches on their

wrists and watches around their necks, and so a song was created about the Colon Man. (Kerr, 1989) See Example 7 below.

Example 7. “Colon Man,” sung by Rupert Kerr

One two three four Colon man a come (x3)
Wid him brass chain a lick him stomach pum pum pum

Ask him wa’ de time an’ him look up in de sun (x3)
Wid him brass chain a lick him stomach pum pum pum

According to Kerr, “pum pum pum” in the last line of the second stanza is used in reference here to the sound of the watch bouncing against the individual’s stomach. It should be noted here that many Jamaican nationals state that Kerr is mistaken in the description “stomach pum pum pum,” but rather it should be “belly bam bam bam.” The musical version sung by DaCosta, which is more consistent with what is presently being sung today, portrays this last line more vividly in describing what the watch was actually doing. See Example 8 below.

Example 8 “Colon Man,” sung by Redverse DaCosta

One two three four Co-lon man a come, One two three four Co-lon man a come, One two three four
6
Co-lon man a come wid him brass chain a lick him bel-ly bam bam bam Ask him fe de time an' him look up on de sun, me
11
ask him fe de time an' him look up on de sun, me ask him fe de time an' him
14
look up on de sun, wid him brass chain a lik him bel - ly bam bam bam

Interviewer Audley Chambers: *Is there a special reason why the Colon Man always looks at the sun when asked what time it is?*

Redverse DaCosta: Yes there is. Let me explain it to you...On their way back home from working on the Panama Canal, many would buy souvenirs to take

home with them. While many know how to use what they bought, many others did not; for example, the 'Colon Man,' did not know how to interpret the dials of the watch. Because of this, he would always be looking towards the sun when asked to tell the time. People correctly interpreted the time based on the position that the shadows formed—like a sundial. (DaCosta and Styles, 1989)

If we can accept both the fact that folk songs do reveal information about the actual events that have taken place at specific times in the past and that they can be linked historically to the country which they belong, then the 'Colon Man' will make us aware of the fact that the country was failing in its economic and educational policy. It is a known fact that during the construction of the Panama Canal during the latter part of the twentieth-century, many laborers were imported from the British West Indies to help in its construction. For many Jamaicans, working on the Panama Canal was their way of surviving. For those who stayed at home, the lack of employment, low wages, along with an educational system that seemed to have not been giving any help to its people, eventually brought about a crises. From the pen of Louise Bennett, the most famous Jamaican folk artist, we are given a glimpse of the form of this crisis: '...not a week goes pass without some type of strike; train strike, bus strike, marching strike, water strike, power strike, telephone strike, lightening strike[?].... The only thing that the Jamaicans are not short of is STRIKE!'¹⁶ Alexander Bustamante (1884-1977) who was the leader of many strikes in Jamaica will be the focus of the next and final folk song.

Further discussions with Rupert Kerr began to enlighten the writer as to how this national hero operated.

Rupert Kerr: His real name was William Alexander Clarke, but now everyone affectionately calls him 'Busta'. When he came back from Cuba, he became involved in politics with the aim of helping Jamaicans. During that period of time the Marcus Garvey movement was in full swing. Busta paid a great deal of attention during those days to Garvey. When I was much younger, I attended a Marcus Garvey meeting that was held in Kingston. Busta and many other men were there with the intent to help the people of Jamaica. It was not too long after that that Busta began to have supporters.

Busta was sincere. He was for the poor people. Wages were low, and the people were not getting anything substantial, so he started to call the people to strike. He wanted more money to be given to the people for an honest day's work.

Interviewer Audley Chambers: *Did the strikes take place in one small area, or were they the type of strikes that had an effect on the whole island?*

A strike would start out locally, and would spread from one locality to another. The United Food Company used to employ people in their cane plantation factory, but the money was low. Busta was brought in to negotiate, but the management of the factory was not willing to negotiate with him. So the people went on strike. Everything was shut down. He would travel through the island attacking various organizations that would not pay a reasonable wage.

Bustamante not only had the power to call a strike but also the workers would obey his command to go back to work. In 1946, Busta made this comment:

I saw that the streets of Kingston were in a very bad condition and I sent the workers back temporarily; I saw the people were suffering from lack of ice and I sent back the ice workers. I also sent the Public Service workers back. I sent the Railway workers, who went on strike, back to work. I sent the Match Factory workers back to their tasks. I wanted the people to get a little beef and so I sent back the workers at the Slaughter House. I told them don't move until they hear my voice. The workers are part of the people. (Jones, 1977: 30)

Interviewer Audley Chambers: *What year did all this activity take place?*

It all began around the late 1930's. It was around that time that Busta was imprisoned. Norman Manley, who was then the Chief Barrister in Jamaica, defended his case and got him out of prison. Sometime after his release, corporations and industries began to pay their workers more money so that their businesses could continue. The people began to get more money, and they began to see the effect that Busta was doing for them, so they began to honor and praise him. He was like a god to them. No one could say anything bad about Busta, because he was the man who got the people out of living in very poor conditions; he was the man who made it possible for people to enjoy a decent wage. He was the man who belonged to the people! Out of this experience, a song was born. It went like this:

Example 9. "I Will follow Bustamante" as sung by Rupert Kerr

5

Bust-ta Man - te I will fol - low, I will fol - low Bus-ta Man - te, Bus-ta

Man - te I will fol - low, I will fol - low Bus - ta Man - te till I die

Second Stanza

From the station¹⁷ to the graveyard,
 From the station to the graveyard,
 From the station to the graveyard,
 I will follow Bustamante till I die.

Third Stanza

If it's bloodshed I will follow,
 If it's bloodshed I will follow,
 If it's bloodshed I will follow,
 I will follow Bustamante till I die.

Kerr's historical recollection of the birth of this folk song is not fiction. During one of Bustamante's political rallies during the month of May, 1938, it is recorded that while he was addressing crowds straddling a cassia tree on an empty lot at Harbor and Duke Streets, he said "...from this day on, follow me. I shall be your leader till I die." A while later during his speech, the branch broke but Bustamante fell on his feet. The crowd surged round him and someone burst out singing: "I will follow Busta till I die." (Jones, 1977: 30) Many kept this promise of faith to Busta.

In the musical analysis that follows, an analytical model established by the musicologist Portia k. Maultsb will be used. (Maultsby, 1976: 54) The following abbreviations used in musical examples are as follows: CH identifies the chorus stanza, VR identifies the verse stanza, and R identifies the refrain line; 1 is the first phrase of text, 2 is the second phrase etc.

In describing the folk songs of Jamaica, Baxter informs us that:

The most common type of Jamaican folk song consists of a verse of two or three lines for a solo singer, with a repeated chorus or refrain which can be sung by everybody. The idea of the song may be a very short narrative, but on

the whole, most of the themes in Jamaican folk songs are descriptive, and deal with the immediate present, past, or future. (Baxter, 1970: 174)

Much has been said about the descriptive theses that are ever present within the text, but what is their textual and musical construction? The following chart below (Table 2), describes the textual and musical composition found in the folk songs discussed in this paper.

The general melodic style of the Jamaican folk songs is simple. Large skips in the linear or melodic intervals were not used regularly but vocally diatonic. Under natural conditions, much of the music would consist of improvisation, both melodically and harmonically; yet in some inexplicable way, they [meaning the Revivalists and other groups] intercommunicate so that each improvisation is carried by the whole group. (Lewin, 1982: 14)

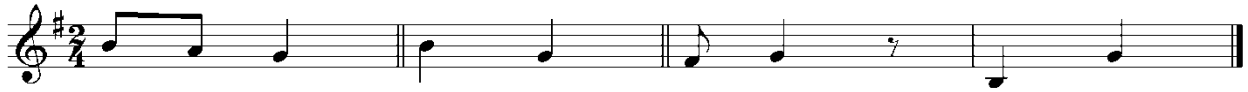
TABLE 2

TEXTUAL AND MELODIC FORMS

<u>SONG TITLE</u>	<u>TEXTUAL STRUCTURE</u>	<u>MELODIC STRUCTURE</u>
Dip Him Mister Bedward' (see Ex. 3)	CH: abab VR: none	CH: abab VR: none
Dip Him Bedward (see Ex. 4)	CH: abcd VR: none	CH: abcd VR: none
Bedward (see Ex. 5)	Introduction CH: abcd VR: efgh CH: abcd	Introduction CH: abcd VR: efgh CH: ib'cd
Dip Them Mister Bedward (see Ex. 6)	CH: abcb VR: none	CH: abcd VR: none
Colon Man A come (see Ex. 8)	CH: aaab VR: cccb	CH: abac VR: a'b'a'c
I Will Follow Bustamante (see Ex. 9)	VR: abac CH: none	VR: aba'c CH: none

Concerning the melodic endings, they usually descend scale wise from three to one. Certain others ended a second, or an octave leap, or from a third above, as shown in Example 10.

Example 10. Showing typical melodic endings of folk songs



According to Olive Lewin, the scales used are the major, minor and that of the ancient patterns. (Lewin, 1973: 7)¹⁸ The scale that was found in the folk music discussed, is that of the C-Ionian mode, but transposed at various intervals into a different key.

A unique characteristic that can be found in some of the folk music of Jamaica is that of rhythm, which often differs from that of most Western European music by having the accent on the unstressed rather than the stressed syllables. For example, the folk song “I Will Follow Bustamante,” can be accented in the following ways:

Bustamante I will follow
I will follow Bustamante
Bustamante I will follow,
(see musical Example 9.)

Baxter states that:

Jamaican folk music is dominated by a strong rhythmic component. The rhythm is determined by the purpose for which the music has been used in terms of movement. The type of action required for a digging song, a singing game, a mento dance, or for the old Jamaican version of a schottische or mazurka, exerted differentiating rhythmic effects....In both [the] vocal and instrumental folk music the strongly marked rhythmic pattern is a notable feature. (Baxter, 1970: 192)

Because the writer was not able to observe an actual performance of a group of folk singers, or time taken to come across this in recordings, comments on the degree of rhythmic complexity used in performance cannot be discussed further.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the writer now turns for a brief moment to his interview sessions. *What do you consider is the function of folk songs in Jamaica?*

DaCosta: Apart from the various activities associated with these songs such as work, social activities, etc., these songs inform us about the past events and where you're coming from. In every situation along the corridors of time, we always have songs that fit into the situation that existed then. These songs in many ways reveal the history of our people in various situations. These folk songs have been passed on to us. I hope that they will not fade out or go out of fashion. The new technology is certainly having its effect. People are not suffering as much now, so maybe some may feel that we don't have to sing these songs anymore.

Styles: I don't think that these folk songs are going to be extinct; I think that they are just changing their form. The time that we are living in is not the same as it was when these folk songs were first sung; the experiences are now different. Folk songs are and were born out of experiences all along the way, and the experiences that the country is currently going through are different from our fore parents'. I am still seeing folk songs being born, but now in a different style. I think many of the songs that have been written about 'Gilbert' and other hurricanes will end up in the folk archives—the lyrics of the 'Gilbert' songs were about the blackout, the partial destruction of the telephone system, etc. In reference to the function of folk songs, it is a form of recording the history of our experiences. Why in folk songs? Songs are easily memorized, they stay with you, and they live on. All you need is a key word from the song to recall what the song is all about. And so, this is an easy way of recording history as opposed to putting it down on paper, and then going back to find out the information. Therefore, think of it as a vocal expression of a specific situation, something that was currently happening in society. Jamaicans have the uncanny ability of turning their experiences into songs. The words are important, but the music is also a means of venting their feelings on a current topic.

Interviewer Audley Chambers: *How would you describe the artistic beauty surrounding these folk songs?*

Styles: Generally speaking, they are easily learnt, they are simple in form and are very transferable—you only have to hear them once and then they will become a part of you. Somewhere in one's life, some of these songs are applicable to a person's experience. The lyrics are also very unique. (DaCosta and Styles, 1989)

Interviewer Audley Chambers: *If you had to summarize in a few short sentences how these folk songs affected you and secondly what your feelings are toward the folk songs of Jamaica, what would you say?*

Jethlyn and Dale Russell: These folk songs affected us very much. They were our only means of enjoyment, merriment, and recreation. It was our way of feeling good. We did not have a television to sit and watch. These songs were

our soap operas. These folk songs were what we looked forward to, and I was happy singing them. (Jethlyn and Dale, 1989)

The three songs discussed in this paper have only touched the surface concerning the historical significance of folk songs in Jamaica and their influence on urban cultural landscapes of generations past and present; there are others that have had a significant impact upon the people of Jamaica that need to be documented. With respect to the topic of this paper, Bedward made his mark on society, and his name still lives on; the Colon Man mentality may be long gone, but many Jamaicans still make a living by buying and selling goods made outside of their island. As for Bustamante, his policies of striking brought about the Jamaican independence from British Colonial rule, setting the stage for the cultural landscape that presently exist. From the three folk songs that have been documented here, the writer hopes that it has become apparent to the reader that the folk songs of Jamaica are directly related to the social, cultural, psychological and aesthetic perceptions of the people that make up the Jamaican culture; and thereby, only with this understanding can we be able to have a better appreciation of them.

Notes

- ¹ The above classification is a conflation of both Lewin and Baxter's division of folk music in Jamaica. In Olive Lewin's article "Biddy, Biddy Folk Music of Jamaica. (Lewin, 1976: 39), she classifies Jamaican folk music into three main areas according to its function: Ritual and Ceremonial music, Work and Social music and Recreational music. Ivy Baxter, in the book The Arts of an Island (p. 192), classifies the folk music of Jamaica in accordance to their movement dynamics; four areas of classification are established: 1) Work songs; 2) Game and Dance songs; 3) Religious and Cult songs; and 4) Instrumental Music.
- ² Table 1, Outline for Classification, is a modification of a similar chart found in Olive Lewin's article in "Folk Music of Jamaica: An Outline for Classification." (Lewin, 1970: 68). This chart is by no means complete.
- ³ Merriam, Ethnomusicology, 109. J. H. Kwabena Nketia makes it very clear in his article "The Problem of Meaning in African Music," Ethnomusicology VI (1962), 1, that the study of "music in culture" ignores neither music nor culture, neither formal structure nor function but unites both in a comprehensive statement of meaning. Thus in its methods, ethnomusicology must of necessity use not a single unidirectional approach but an integrated approach derived from the disciplines to which it is closely related.
- ⁴ The writer came across McCarthy's dissertation in the late stage of writing this paper which is also founded on similar principles of analysis. See (McCarthy, 2007: 22-24)
- ⁵ For a good general discussion and summary of the various ethnic groups and their musical contributions to the island of Jamaica see "The folk and Cult Music of Jamaica, West Indies," an unpublished PhD at Indiana University at Bloomington by Laura Bernice Murray, 1971.
- ⁶ Statistical Yearbook of Jamaica, Department of Statistics, 174-176, 1973. See also Colin Clarke's Kingston, Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change 1692-1962 (Berkeley: California Press, 1975), 152.
- ⁷ In Peta Gay Jensen's book, The Last Colonials: The Story of Two European Families in Jamaica, the author describes his great uncle as being one "who recognized and promoted a distinctly

Jamaican culture long before such things were fashionable and at a time when the received English culture was the norm accepted by Jamaicans of all races. He was the Jamaican patriot's patriot and a cultural pioneer. "He "inspired activities and institutions that were to make possible the flowering of the Arts in Jamaica in the 1940s. His interests covered music, folklore, art, linguistics, poetry, philately, conchology, publishing and research into a wide range of subjects." In addition, "he published musical magazines, and collected over 400 songs, scored, arranged, performed and published a number of Jamaican folk songs, sung bass, played the organ and piano, was a piano-tuner and teacher and was generally the moving spirit behind most musical events on the island." More information on Astley Clerk can be found at the following electronic source: Gensen, Peta Gay, 2005. *The Last Colonials: The Story of Two European Families in Jamaica*. Available: <http://books.google.com/> [10 September 2010], 69.

- ⁸ Laura Bernice Murray, "The folk and Cult Music of Jamaica West Indies." (Unpublished doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University Bloomington, 1971), 22. This quote was taken from a lecture given by Astley Clerk in Kingston Jamaica in 1913, which can be found in *The Music and Musical Instruments of Jamaica*.
- ⁹ Clinton V. Black in his book *The History of Jamaica*, informs us that a certain amount of information is contained in the books about the area by early Spanish visitors, beginning with Columbus himself, who in his account of the Arawak Indians and of all that was new and striking to Europeans eyes. A good deal of evidence was left by the Indians in the form of refuse heaps..., in pottery remains, stones implements, wood, stone and rock-carvings, idols and ornament...From careful study of these remains much information has come to light. [Maybe in due time, further investigation will reveal information related to the role of music within their society].
- ¹⁰ An interesting account of this important event in Jamaica's history may be found in S.A.G. Taylor's book *The Western Design* (Institute of Jamaica, 1965)
- ¹¹ Myal, an old Jamaican magi co-religious cult is derived from the Hausa "maye" meaning sorcerer, wizard; intoxication; return. In Jamaica myalism as embodied all these definitions in combination. It had been associated with the obeah complex. However, there seems to have developed a distinction between the use of the powers of evil (obeah) or good (myal). The practitioners of Myal counted themselves angles of light, and called those of the opposite craft angels of darkness. Myalism as such, probably no longer exists, but many of its elements have been absorbed into Revivalism, which itself gained its greatest impetus from the Great Revival. For more information on Myalism consult the following works: F.G. Cassidy and R.B. Le Page, *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 313. Purchas-Tulloch, "Jamaica Anansi," 122-25.
- ¹² This song was taken from (Lewin, 1973: 37).
- ¹³ August Town is a community, situated in the Eastern section of the parish of St. Andrew, in the Hope Valley, nestling between two lush green mountains (Dallas and Long Mountain), with the Hope River running on one side. It neighbors the University of the West Indies and Hermitage is 0.5 km from Liguanea. More information about August Town can be found at the following URL: <http://www.augusttownonline.com/>
- ¹⁴ The definition of 'balm' according to *Dictionary of Jamaican English* is to give treatment, physically or spiritually, at a Balm Yard. The Balm Yard is the ritual site of a Balm-Man, who administers herbal and other remedies such as Balm Oils, and who leads at this Yard a form of worship with revivalist preaching and the singing of Sankey and Moody hymns accompanied by drumming and dancing which induce a trance-like state in the dancers; after which healing may take place, followed by a feast. The Balm-Man is also qualified to remove 'obeah' by practice of 'White magic' (myal). For more information see page 22 of this dictionary by Cassidy and Le Page.
- ¹⁵ See Endnote 10.
- ¹⁶ This is taken from the poem "Strikitis" by Louise Bennett which was recorded by the author while visiting in Jamaica during the month of July, 1986. The author does not for one moment think that this poem was written by Bennett during the early 1920's, but it is used here to emphasize exactly what happened 15-30 years later.
- ¹⁷ The *station* stated in the text is in reference to that of the Police Station.
- ¹⁸ The author believes that the scales that are "ancient patterns," more than likely refer to the church modes.

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