

**Music, Media, and Mysticism:
The *Pop-Propheticism* of Bob
Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan**



“What is my message? Truth, peace and love, and music and levity.”
– Bob Marley–

“My message is the message of humanity: love and peace.”
– Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan–

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Abstract of the Dissertation:
**Music, Media, and Mysticism: The *Pop-Propheticism* of Bob Marley and
Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan**

This dissertation examines the recent emergence of popular recording artists who explicitly invoke the prophetic voices of their religious traditions in their music. In doing so, they situate their music within a pre-existing prophetic lineage. These musicians self-consciously view their music as vehicle to spread a divine message, and they recognize that their lyrical voice can either become or echo a prophetic voice. From the outset, it is necessary to emphasize that these artists do not consider themselves to be prophets. Rather, they participate in prophetic movements and traditions in their private personal spirituality and in their public performative contexts. Over time, their fans and followers may construct posthumous hagiographies that elevate these musicians to a higher status so that numerous adherents of their respective religious communities eventually venerate them as spiritual icons.

This dissertation specifically analyzes the lives and lyrics of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan through the lenses of prophecy, politics, and popular culture. Both musicians are internationally acclaimed cultural ambassadors whose names are synonymous with their respective musical genres and countries – Bob Marley with reggae and Jamaica and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan with *qawwali* and Pakistan. Both musicians channeled and transformed their localized prophetic traditions into a popular prophetic voice for a global audience. Both musicians exploited the mechanisms of modern media in order to articulate their respective messages to an international audience, and in doing so, both musicians created a commodified voice for mass

consumption. Furthermore, the personal evolution of both musicians is emblematic of the postcolonial narrative of nationhood for Jamaica and Pakistan, as both musicians found themselves in the midst of a public battle for political power and national identity despite their personal desires to remain outside the political sphere.

This dissertation offers an interpretation of the pop-cultural prophetic production by Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan by constructing a new Religious Studies framework through which to analyze prophecy – *pop-propheticism*. This research project interrogates both these iconic figures’ meteoric rise from popular musicians to pop-cultural prophetic figures. Furthermore, this dissertation explores how both these musicians’ *pop-prophetic* voices were manifest through religion, politics, and music. Although this topic is explicitly situated within the disciplinary field of Religious Studies, it uses multiple lenses and methodologies, and implicates the interdisciplinary fields of South Asian Studies, Caribbean Studies, Media Studies, Theomusicology, Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, and Political Science.

PART ONE: INTRODUCING *POP-PROPHETICISM*

Chapter One Introduction

Religion and Popular Culture

In his penetrating and captivating book *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*, David Chidester investigates and interrogates the religious dimensions of American popular culture, and astutely demonstrates how religion and popular culture are intimately and intricately interconnected. Chidester writes of popular culture and religion:

Popular culture, for its part, encompasses the ordinary – the pleasures of our lives, which we may even take for granted, such as the creative and performing arts, sports, and leisure activities. If we want to think about the relationship between religion and popular culture, we have to ask: How does the serious work of religion, which engages the transcendent, the sacred, and the ultimate meaning of human life in the face of death, relate to the comparatively frivolous play of popular culture?¹

Chidester's provocative question challenges Religious Studies scholars to think about the manifestations and implications of religion in contemporary popular culture. A number of scholars from around the world have taken up this challenge, and "religion and popular culture" has now become a vibrant and expanding field within the larger discipline of Religious Studies. This dissertation resides within this scholarly domain of religion and popular culture, and it contributes to the field a new paradigm – *pop-propheticism*.

Pop-propheticism is deeply invested in the interplay between religion and popular culture, and specifically focuses on the nexus of prophecy and popular music. Through its unique analytical approach, *pop-propheticism* critically examines the prophetic lives,

¹ David Chidester, *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 1-2.

lyrics, and legacies of popular musicians who have transcended the realm of entertainment and are now revered by their fans with a passion that approaches religious fervor. These musicians used the media and the market in creative and innovative ways, which allowed them to disseminate their potent messages around the world.

Within the American context, Elvis Presley represents a remarkable convergence of religion and popular culture. David Chidester describes how Presley's fame has made him more than just American royalty – he is also American divinity:

Elvis Presley, of course, has emerged as the preeminent superhuman person in American popular culture, celebrated as an extraordinary being throughout the country, from the official sanctuary of Graceland to the unofficial Web site of the First Presleyterian Church of Elvis the Divine. Devotees collect, arrange, and display Elvis memorabilia, participate in the annual rituals of Elvis week, and go on pilgrimage to the shrine at Graceland, finding in the King not only a religious focus of attention but also a focus for mobilizing an ongoing community of sacred allegiance.²

In his insightful book *Sacred Matters: Celebrity Worship, Sexual Ecstasies, the Living Dead, and Other Signs of Religious Life in the United States*, Gary Laderman uses Presley as catalyst to pose a larger question about the power of popular music in shaping and mediating religious experiences:

The sacred, however, is an integral element of certain phenomena in the history of rock, found in its origin with Elvis (whose association with the sacred and American religious cultures is even more pronounced after his death as a living ghost haunting imaginative and commercial landscapes)... What are the signs of religious life in rock and roll cultures? How do the music and lyrics contribute to popular religious experiences that reimagine and reconstruct the world... invigorate and reinvigorate social bonds, and stimulate and liberate the body first, and then the soul?³

Just as David Chidester and Gary Laderman explore the American religious legacy of Elvis Presley, this dissertation similarly examines the *pop-propheticism* of the

² Ibid., 33.

³ Gary Laderman, *Sacred Matters: Celebrity Worship, Sexual Ecstasies, the Living Dead, and Other Signs of Religious Life in the United States* (New York: New Press, 2009), 38-39.

Jamaican reggae legend Bob Marley and the Pakistani *qawwali* virtuoso Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. This dissertation does not claim that Marley and Khan are religious prophets, but it does argue that their lives and lyrics are prophetic *within the context of popular culture*. This dissertation also highlights the manner in which Marley and Khan propagated the prophetic teachings of their own faith traditions through popular music. By utilizing the multidisciplinary lenses of canonical formation, mystical intoxication, musical fusion, media proliferation, economic commodification, and political appropriation, this dissertation reveals Marley and Khan as exemplars of *pop-propheticism*.

Prophets and Prophecy

This dissertation contends that Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are pop-cultural icons that used technology to transmit their theologies and are therefore subjects worthy of Religious Studies research. Even though Marley and Khan participated in the prophetic traditions of Rastafarianism and Sufism,⁴ they also spread their voices far beyond the confines of their respective religious communities. In doing so, they transformed their localized prophetic traditions into a universal propheticism, whereby a global audience could access, consume, and embrace their prophetic message through their music.

There is an inherent subjectivity involved in legitimizing a prophet, and depending on the criteria, anyone could conceivably be called a prophet and revered as such. Throughout history and without exception, one person's true prophet has proven to

⁴ It is important to note that many practitioners of "Rastafarianism" and "Sufism" do not think of their traditions as "isms" but rather as a way of life. However, given that the scholarly literature and academic discourse about these traditions use the terms "Rastafarianism" and "Sufism," this dissertation will do the same.

be another person's false prophet. This process of establishing a new prophet often has catastrophic consequences, as evidenced by the notoriety of recent cult figures and self-proclaimed prophets such as Charles Manson, Jim Jones, Shoko Asahara, and David Koresh. This dissertation acknowledges the dramatic political and emotional components involved in elevating anyone to the status of prophet as well as the difficulty in defining prophecy. Nonetheless, this dissertation argues that Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are unique contemporary religious figures whose religiosity is best understood through the prism and convergence of prophecy, popular culture, and postcolonial politics.

Part of the problem in establishing a prophet is that there is no consensus on what the term "prophet" means. The popular understanding of "prophet" invokes an image of soothsayer who predicts the future. However, this simplistic characterization of "prophet" is misleading. Most theologians and scholars understand a "prophet" as someone who claims divine inspiration and promotes a divine message. According to this definition of "prophet," anyone who claims to spread the word of God could technically claim to be a prophet. Ultimately, it is up to a community of believers to anoint a prophet, and for "the community confronted by the prophet, the problem is one of authenticating the prophet's call."⁵

In his foundational study of bureaucracy, the eminent sociologist and political economist Max Weber examines the figure of the "prophet" from a social scientific perspective. According to Weber:

We shall understand "prophet" to mean a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or

⁵ James Darsey, *The Prophetic Tradition and Radical Rhetoric in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 30.

divine commandment. No radical distinction will be drawn between a “renewer of religion” who preaches an older revelation, actual or superstitious, and a “founder of religion” who claims to bring completely new deliverances. The two types merge into one another.⁶

For Weber, a prophet is defined and authenticated through charisma and divine inspiration. Although the role of the prophet overlaps with the ethicist, philosopher, and social reformer, Weber asserts that the prophet differs from these other figures inasmuch as the prophet is deeply invested in the proactive transmission of a divinely inspired message. According to Weber, the prophet is a politically savvy preacher:

What primarily differentiates such figures from the prophets is their lack of that vital emotional *preaching* which is distinctive of prophecy, regardless of whether this is disseminated by the spoken word, the pamphlet, or any other type of literary composition (e.g., the *suras* of Muhammad). The enterprise of the prophet is closer to that of the popular leader (*demagogos*) or political publicist than to that of the teacher.⁷

Thus, the Weberian prophet is a charismatic figure who explicitly transmits and broadcasts a divine message to a larger demographic. Implicit in Weber’s definition of the prophet is the notion that prophetic work is intimately connected with technology, especially as it pertains to the transmission of the prophetic voice. In this manner, Weber understands the prophet as someone who is both cognizant and strategic regarding the available avenues of disseminating and publicizing information. This dissertation incorporates Weber’s conception of the prophet into its own paradigm of *pop-propheticism*, and the figure of the Weberian prophet shapes this dissertation’s examination of charismatic pop-cultural icons that proactively vocalize divinely inspired messages through popular channels of dissemination.

⁶ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 439-440.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 445.

By analyzing multiple prophetic traditions from the world's different religions, Max Weber argues that two distinct archetypes of the prophet emerge, the "ethical prophet" and the "exemplary prophet." Weber writes:

The prophet may be primarily, as in the last cases, an instrument for the proclamation of a god and his will, be this a concrete demand or an abstract norm. Preaching as one who has received a commission from god, he demands obedience as an ethical duty. This type we shall term the "*ethical prophet*." On the other hand, the prophet may be an exemplary man, who, by his personal example, demonstrates to others the way to religious salvation, as in the case of the Buddha. The preaching of this type of prophet says nothing about a divine mission or an ethical duty of obedience, but rather directs itself to the self-interest of those who crave salvation, recommending to him the same path as he himself traversed. Our designation for the second type is that of the "*exemplary prophet*."⁸

Although Weber's description of the different approaches of the "ethical" and "exemplary" prophet is useful in understanding the work of a prophet, his rigid bifurcation of the "ethical" and "exemplary" domains is problematic. This dissertation challenges Weber's strict separation of the "ethical" and "exemplary" prophet, and instead proposes that prophetic figures can exhibit and embody the primary characteristics of both the "ethical" and "exemplary" prophet. Indeed, far from being mutually exclusive, ethical conduct in a prophetic context is often understood through the life example of a prophetic figure.

One of the challenges for a scholar studying prophecy is the inability to academically authenticate the prophet's claims. In his illuminating book *The Prophetic Tradition and Radical Rhetoric in America*, James Darsey discusses the dilemma of studying a phenomenon that is only verifiable through faith. Darsey writes:

A second reason, I would suggest, that we have avoided explanations that have their roots in anything like prophecy is our embarrassment at the prospect of considering seriously claims of divine possession or

⁸ Ibid., 447-448.

consecration. In our everyday usage, we acknowledge the possibility of something like a religious commitment at the base of radical social movements: we talk of revolutionary “faith” and “zeal”; we refer to radical leaders as “prophets”; and we analyze radical rhetoric according to its “God terms” and “devil terms.” At the same time, while we admit to the existence of some blatantly “messianic” or “millennial” or “revitalization” movements that have unmistakably religious roots, we are also victims of our own enlightenment and generally prefer explanations of a more secular order.⁹

From a disciplinary perspective, Religious Studies scholars should analyze prophecy with a social scientific lens and without regards to the veracity of the truth claims made by prophets. But scholars, through a process of introspection and reflection, should also examine and interrogate their own personal convictions and religious beliefs to determine how those beliefs might be shaping their scholarship.¹⁰

In order for scholars to understand prophecy from a perspective that accepts prophetic truth claims, it is instructive to look towards theology for guidance. One of the most renowned theologians to analyze prophets is the Jewish scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel. In his seminal study *The Prophets*, Heschel delineates the nature of the Jewish prophets and their prophecies. He offers his own paradigm that resembles the Weberian prophet but also highlights other characteristics of the prophet:

The prophet is not only a prophet. He is also a poet, preacher, patriot, statesman, social critic, moralist.¹¹

These words not only apply to the Hebrew prophets Heschel analyzes in *The Prophets* but also to those who embody *pop-propheticism*. This dissertation will take Heschel’s model of the Hebrew prophet and use it as a point of departure to argue that in addition to

⁹ Darsey, 8.

¹⁰ In her captivating work *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*, Religious Studies scholar Karen McCarthy Brown wrestles with the ethnographic predicament of being both an academic observer and a religious participant. See Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹¹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1962), viii.

being pop-cultural icons, *pop-prophetic* exemplars are also poets, preachers, critics, and teachers, and therefore embody the spirit of Heschel's prophetic paradigm.

Although prophets are posthumously venerated and held in high esteem, during their lifetimes, they are often considered to be delusional outcasts and dangerous heretics. The most beloved prophets have resided on the margins of society, and that is why they are able to authentically articulate the voice of the disenfranchised and dispossessed. Because their prophetic voices challenged mainstream thinking and claimed divine inspiration, they were ostracized, chastised, ridiculed, and even killed.¹² Accordingly, prophets are not synonymous with perfection. Popular hagiographies of prophets may invoke a mythical quality of perfection to that person's life, but historical evidence shows that prophets are indeed fallible and ultimately human.

Prophets have played an integral role in the development of the Western monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In these Abrahamic religions, prophets are positioned within specific lineages and are inspired by divine revelation. They are venerated as God's earthly representatives and they critique normative behavior and beliefs in order to challenge society to conform to God's will. Collectively, these prophets represent the most beloved and respected religious figures of the Western monotheistic traditions and include Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Samuel, Job, Noah, Jesus, and Muhammad. Despite their overlapping prophets and prophetic lineages however, it is important to recognize that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have all developed their own theological paradigms and scriptural approaches to prophets and prophecy, and that the

¹² "Against claims that their ecstatic certitude and extreme passion are manifestations of God's will, prophets have historically encountered cries of "fanatic" and "madman"; for their posture as witnesses – those who know, *witan* – prophets have characteristically been martyred, a word which comes from a Latin transliteration of a Greek word for witness." Darsey, 31.

model of the prophet from the Tanakh is not necessarily applicable the prophets and prophecy in the New Testament and Qur'an.

This dissertation argues that the prophetic elements of Rastafarianism and Sufism embody the mystical essence of the more mainstream and orthodox traditions of Christianity and Islam, respectively. As such, Rastafarianism and Sufism acknowledge the traditional Abrahamic prophets as authoritative and they venerate them accordingly. But in a parallel prophetic process, they also internally develop and legitimate their own prophetic paradigms, based on the variegated cultural, political, and theological challenges they continue to face. This dissertation illustrates how Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are situated within the both the larger Abrahamic prophetic traditions and the localized Rastafarian and Sufi prophetic traditions. Not only are they descendants of these larger and localized prophetic traditions, they also created new pop-cultural lineages as well, evidenced by the rise of global musicians directly inspired by Marley and Khan. Thus, Marley and Khan are both the products of pre-existing prophetic lineages as well as the progenitors of new, pop-cultural prophetic traditions, and are therefore exemplars of *pop-propheticism*.

For the purposes of this research project, the term “prophecy” will refer to any teaching, prediction, exhortation, and revelation of the Weberian prophet. Prophecy can take the form of a divine injunction or an ominous prediction, a mystical revelation or an instructive story. Amongst devotees, prophecy is revered as the voice of God as revealed through a human intercessor. In terms of a theological approach to prophecy, Heschel provides astute insight into its liberating nature:

Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and man. God is raging in the prophet's words.¹³

This dissertation utilizes Heschel's conception of prophecy to argue that the music of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is an authentic participation in and expression of a prophetic idiom. Through their lives and lyrics, Marley and Khan gave voice to Heschel's "silent agony" and "plundered poor" while inspiring oppressed, downtrodden, marginalized, and disenfranchised communities around the world. By doing so, their music represents Heschel's "crossing point" – the moment when God communes with man and the location where the sacred meets the profane.

In *The Prophetic Imagination*, the theologian Walter Bruggemann further elaborates on the relationship between theology and politics, between religious redemption and social justice. Bruggemann outlines his vision of prophecy through the paradigm of the Biblical prophet Moses:

Here it is enough to insist that Moses, paradigm for the prophet, carried the alternative in both directions: a religion of God's freedom as alternative to the static imperial religion of order and triumph and a politics of justice and compassion as alternative to the imperial politics of oppression. The point that prophetic imagination must ponder is that there is no freedom of God without the politics of justice and compassion, and there is no politics of justice and compassion without a religion of the freedom of God.¹⁴

According to Bruggemann, Biblical prophecy is defined by three convergent factors – the economics of affluence, the politics of oppression, and the religion of immanence.¹⁵ This is an instructive approach to understanding the prophetic elements of Rastafarianism and Sufism, and this dissertation explores how both these traditions are shaped by the

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ Walter Bruggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 8-9.

¹⁵ Ibid., 30.

economics of affluence, the politics of oppression, and the religion of immanence. Within these traditions, the economics of affluence refers to the teleological goal of abundance, both literal and metaphoric. Such affluence is a reaction to the politics of oppression, which creates the need for an alternative to the more orthodox Western religious denominations. Both the economics of affluence and the politics of oppression culminate into the religion of immanence, which enables devotees to access divinity firsthand, through mysticism, intoxication, introspection, and song. By employing Bruggemann's tripartite model, this dissertation argues that both Rastafarianism and Sufism encompass and expand upon prophetic traditions with their own respective lineages of prophets.

Mystics and Mysticism

This dissertation not only engages with prophets and prophecy but also with mystics and mysticism. As with the term "prophecy," the word "mysticism" is often used but rarely defined, and over time it has meant different things to different people. In his classic treatise *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, William James argues that mysticism is the root cause of personal religious experience. For James, a mystical state is a mode of consciousness that dramatically differs from ordinary rational waking consciousness.

According to James, a mystical state is characterized by four distinct factors: (1) *Ineffability* – a mystical state is experiential and emotional, and it cannot be imparted to others; (2) *Noetic quality* – a mystical state is filled with knowledge and insight, revelation and illumination; (3) *Transiency* – a mystical state is impermanent, and often arises and subsides quickly; and (4) *Passivity* – a mystical state is overwhelming and

effectively renders a person passive in resisting its power.¹⁶ Furthermore, according to James, there are varying levels and degrees of the mystical state that represent the full spectrum of the mystical experience. On the low end of the spectrum, a mystical experience might feel like déjà vu, while at the high end it might resemble extreme intoxication.¹⁷

Just as James Darsey articulates the scholar's challenge in verifying prophecy, William James warns the scholar not to accept the mystic's experience as truth. Rather, James suggests that the scholar focus on the phenomenological nature of mysticism as opposed to its theological truth claims. James writes:

But I now proceed to add that mystics have no right to claim that we ought to accept the deliverance of their peculiar experiences, if we are ourselves outsiders and feel no private call thereto. The utmost they can ever ask of us in this life is to admit that they establish a presumption. They form a consensus and have an unequivocal outcome; and it would be odd mystics might say, if such a unanimous type of experience should prove to be altogether wrong. At bottom, however, this would only be an appeal to numbers, like the appeal of rationalism the other way; and the appeal to numbers has no logical force. If we acknowledge it, it is for 'suggestive,' not for logical reasons: we follow the majority because to do so suits our life.¹⁸

The reason it is so difficult to translate the mystical experience to a larger audience is because its content is often beyond the duality inherent in words.¹⁹ For the Jamesian mystic, the mystical experience is *ineffable*, and can only be experienced, not described. In this manner, the mystic and the prophet overlap, both in the extraordinary nature of

¹⁶ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 380-381.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 382-387.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 424.

¹⁹ The non-rational experience underlying all religious experience, as encapsulated in the idea of the *numinous*, informs the seminal work of Rudolf Otto, one of the most influential religious thinkers of the twentieth century. See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

their experiences and also in the challenge of translating their experiences into conventional language.

Given the difficulty of translating this experience into words, prophets and mystics have often turned to poetry and music as a way of communicating their messages. Indeed, according to William James, mysticism finds its most perfected expression through music. James writes:

In mystical literature such self-contradictory phrases as ‘dazzling obscurity,’ ‘whispering silence,’ ‘teeming desert,’ are continually met with. They prove that not conceptual speech, but music rather, is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth. Many mystical scriptures are indeed little more than musical compositions.²⁰

Similarly, in his classic work *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*, the Indian Sufi master Hazrat Inayat Khan emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between music and prophecy, and affirms the prophetic power of music:

By this I do not only say that music is superior to painting and poetry: in fact, music excels religion, for music raises the soul of man even higher than the so-called external form of religion... That is why in ancient times, the greatest prophets were great musicians.²¹

Religions have long relied upon music as a foundational aspect of religious practice. Congregational singing is a central liturgical rite in almost all of the world’s religious traditions, and devotional poetry occupies a prominent place in almost of the world’s literary traditions. Throughout the history of religions, devotional music and spiritual songs have expressed the hopes and prayers of religious communities and their individual adherents. In particular, the music of the mystics is profound in its devotional reach, as it seeks to communicate that which cannot be expressed and to articulate that which cannot be uttered. The emotional intensity of mystical music sometimes leaves its

²⁰ James, 420-421.

²¹ Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 4.

followers in hypnotic trances and intoxicated states while experiencing the sublimity of divinity, the state of awe and ecstasy, and the moment of mystical awareness.

The power of mystical music is also intimately and intricately intertwined with the politics of mysticism. Historically, mystical movements have been considered heterodox by their orthodox counterpart traditions because mysticism advocates a direct relationship with God. In the mystical model, there is no intercessor – the mystical path encourages its adherents to experience divinity firsthand. Mystics often devalue and discredit more organized and elite structures of orthodox religion, which claim a monopoly on religious truth, and mystical movements empower non-elite actors to take control of their own religiosity through vernacular language, localized customs, and devotional music.

This dissertation views Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan as mystics and musicians. Both Marley and Khan openly discussed their mystical experiences, and both viewed themselves as mystical messengers. Both Marley and Khan were deeply engaged with the larger mystical elements of their faith traditions and they both personally experienced the four attributes the mystical experience as described by William James. Both Marley and Khan preached a mystical message through music designed to inspire mystical states, and both used poetic metaphors to describe the outer limits of mystical consciousness. Within the context of *pop-propheticism*, both Marley and Khan exemplify the essential characteristics of the Weberian prophet and the Jamesian mystic, and they both used their popular music to spread their mystical message.

Music as Message

All prophetic and mystical traditions rely upon technology to disseminate their messages, and this is also true with prophetic and mystical musicians. Historically, such technology has included both oral transmission and the written word. In the last century however, with the advent of audio and visual recording and distribution, the technological possibilities for the prophetic voice have exponentially increased. Television, radio, film, and the Internet have dramatically reshaped the technological landscape so that now the prophetic voice can be heard instantaneously around the world. With these new technologies come new prophets, new prophecies and new politics, and herein lay the genesis of the modern *pop-prophetic* musicians, a small and select group of visionaries and virtuosos headlined by Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.²²

Starting in the 1930s, popular music and recording technology began to converge with an emerging global social conscience. For the first time in history, musicians were able to successfully exploit audio and video recording technology as a mechanism to spread their music and message. What resulted was the explosion onto the musical scene of some of the most revered and influential recording artists to date, musicians who not only defined their genres but also created their genres. A list of such *pop-prophetic* musicians includes but is not limited to John Lennon, Jerry Garcia, John Coltrane, and Fela Kuti. These musicians are unique inasmuch as their fans are more like religious devotees than casual music listeners. Many of their fans shaped their personal lives and

²² I am grateful to SpearIt Maldonado for challenging me to think about the religious, political, and cultural dimensions of popular music. Maldonado's own doctoral research examines the rise of Islam in American penitentiaries and the role of "God-core" music in religious conversion. See SpearIt Maldonado's dissertation, *God Behind Bars: Race, Religion, and Revenge*, which was accepted by the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara in September 2006. (<http://rebelcrew.com/SpearIt-Dissertation.pdf>).

sociopolitical worldviews based on their music and message, while the most dedicated of their fans worship these musicians as prophets and hail their music as prophecy. A brief examination of the legacies of these musicians reveals their pop-cultural prophetic status amongst their legions of fans throughout the world, as well as the powerful religious dimensions and mystical themes that resonate in their music and in their lives.

John Lennon is one of the most famous musicians to ever live. As a founding member of the Beatles, Lennon experienced a meteoric rise to global superstardom, prompting his controversial comment about the Beatles' popularity –“We are more popular than Jesus now” – a comment for which he later apologized to the Vatican. Despite the genre defining songs he wrote and recorded with the Beatles, Lennon's *pop-prophetic* voice began to take shape after the Beatles disbanded and his solo career began. Over his ten-year solo career, Lennon's music served to proactively promote and propagate his message of peace. Lennon's activism prompted him to work with controversial political people, groups, and causes, including the Black Panther Party, the Trotskyist Workers Revolutionary Party, Abbie Hoffman, and John Sinclair. Lennon's political associations, collaborations, and proclamations eventually led the US government to try and silence him by attempting to deport him.²³

Despite the US government's insistence that he stop engaging in political activities, John Lennon continued to speak against the Vietnam War while promoting his concept of world peace through the amalgamation of his political, spiritual, and musical worldviews. Lennon's music became his *pop-prophetic* peace message, and his peace anthems such as “Give Peace a Chance” and “Imagine” are amongst the most beloved

²³ The US government's political targeting and attempted deportation of John Lennon is chronicled in detail in David Leaf's provocative documentary film *The U.S v. John Lennon*, (Lionsgate/VH1, 2006).

songs for peace ever recorded. After his tragic assassination in 1980, the peace movement mourned for their lost leader and music fans around the world were devastated. In his memory and at his widow Yoko Ono's request, fourteen million people around the world collectively observed ten minutes of silence to honor their fallen prophet of peace.²⁴

Jerry Garcia is best known as the lead singer and lead guitarist for the psychedelic rock band the Grateful Dead.²⁵ Although the Grateful Dead have come to symbolize the message and the music of the 1960s hippie movement, they toured together for thirty years and their music constantly evolved with the times. Fueled by their eclectic and improvisational fusion of American musical genres, they developed an extremely loyal and devout fan base that would literally spend their lives following the Grateful Dead from concert to concert – city to city, state to state, and country to country. Known as Deadheads, the devotees of Garcia and the Grateful Dead resembled a religious gathering more than a group of fans. They collectively formed an intentionally itinerant community numbering in the tens of thousands, with their own rituals, customs, language, music, and economy. Deadheads flocked to concerts to have mystical experiences, and the ethereal sounds of Garcia's guitar often catapulted them into ecstatic trances.

Even though Jerry Garcia was known first and foremost as the face of the Grateful Dead, he constantly collaborated and performed with diverse musicians such as Bob Dylan, Carlos Santana, David Grisman, Ornette Coleman, Branford Marsalis, Merle Saunders, Howard Wales, Sting, Bruce Hornsby, Babatunde Olatunji, and Sanjay Mishra.

²⁴ In his exhaustive biography of John Lennon, Ray Coleman discusses Lennon's life and legacy, death and deification, "As a twentieth-century philosopher, he set an example of imagination and humanitarianism. Although he would hate to be deified, a light went out on 8 December 1980. But his music and spirit shine on." See Ray Coleman, *Lennon: The Definitive Biography* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), 691.

²⁵ For a detailed popular biography on Jerry Garcia, see Blair Jackson, *Garcia: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

During the rare months when he was not performing with the Grateful Dead, he could be found touring with his side project, the Jerry Garcia Band. Always jamming and spreading his music as far as possible, Garcia's legacy transcends the eclectic musical canon he left behind. For Deadheads everywhere, Garcia was guru as well as guitarist, saint as well as singer, a reluctant redeemer and psychedelic prophet whose music inspired them to become conscious tools of the cosmic universe.²⁶

John Coltrane is arguably the most influential saxophone player ever, but his influence went beyond the world of jazz and into the realm of mysticism. Technically brilliant, Coltrane honed his craft playing alongside jazz giants such as Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk. In 1957, Coltrane kicked his long-standing heroin addiction and experienced a transformative spiritual awakening that manifest through his music. Over the next ten years until his untimely death, Coltrane composed and recorded exploratory jazz albums that reflected his religiosity, evidenced in album titles such as *Ascension*, *Meditations*, *Interstellar Space*, *Crescent*, *Infinity*, and *Om*. His mystical and musical masterpiece, *A Love Supreme*, is widely hailed in jazz circles as a timeless classic, one of the great albums of all time. On *A Love Supreme*, Coltrane offered his music as prayer in the form of a four-part suite – Acknowledgement, Resolution, Pursuance, and Psalm. More than forty years after its release, *A Love Supreme* remains a

²⁶ In a 1972 interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, Jerry Garcia discussed the connection between psychedelics, spirituality, and the Grateful Dead: “To get really high is to forget yourself. And to forget yourself is to see everything else. And to see everything else is to become an understanding molecule in evolution, a conscious tool of the universe... I don't think of that highness as being an end in itself. I think of the Grateful Dead as being a crossroads or a pointer sign and what we're pointing to is that there's a lot of universe available, that there's a whole lot of experience over here.” See *Garcia: A Signpost to New Space* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 100.

powerful marriage of music and mysticism, and its sonic spirituality continues to inspire new generations of saxophonists and seekers alike.²⁷

For many around the world, John Coltrane was more than just a virtuoso musician but in fact a musician-prophet, a human being who channeled divine energy. In 1971, the Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church was established in San Francisco in order to commemorate and celebrate Coltrane's *pop-prophetic* life and legacy. Venerating Coltrane as a saint while referring to him as "the mighty mystic,"²⁸ the Church continues to incorporate Coltrane's music and lyrics into their congregational services.

Fela Kuti was the progenitor of Afrobeat music and the most famous Nigerian musician to date. Like Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Kuti was a Third World superstar who used music to communicate his country's culture and concerns to the rest of the world. Kuti conceived and created Afrobeat music as a vehicle to articulate the critical and commercial voice of postcolonial Nigeria. Inspired by the funk music of James Brown and the empowering ideology of the Black Power movement, Kuti's Afrobeat seamlessly fused together elements of American funk and African percussion. Kuti intentionally chose to sing in Pidgin English so his music and message could penetrate a global audience. Kuti used his searing saxophone and infectious rhythms to

²⁷ Elvin Jones, a longtime John Coltrane band member and the drummer on *A Love Supreme*, describes *A Love Supreme* as spiritual music: "It's unique. In a sense, it's not even jazz. It broadened the concept of what music was. It's totally spiritual... Our spirituality can express itself any way and anywhere: you can get religion in a bar or jazz club as much as you can in a church. *A Love Supreme* is always a spiritual experience, wherever you hear it." See Ashley Kahn, *A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), x.

²⁸ In their praise for John Coltrane, the Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church connects prophecy, technology, and music: "We thank God for the anointed universal sound that leaped (lept) down from the throne of heaven out of the very mind of God and incarnated in one Sri Rama Ohnedaruth the mighty mystic known as Saint John Will-I-Am Coltrane. That same healing sound was captured and recorded on the sound disc on the wheel in the middle of the wheel (sound disc recording). Music has the power to make others happy, deliver and set free the mind, hearts and souls of the dear listener. All praise to God. One Mind, A Love Supreme." See www.coltranechurch.org.

promote and propagate the ideology of Pan-Africanism as articulated by his mother's close friend, the President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

Disgusted over the political corruption in Nigeria, Kuti boldly proclaimed his Nigerian compound and recording studio to be a sovereign state called the Kalakuta Republic. At the Kalakuta Republic, he established a performance area named the Shrine. It was here that he would regularly perform with his band Africa 70 and criticize the Nigerian government to his audience.²⁹ Hostility between the government and Kuti's Kalakuta Republic reached its apex in 1977, when Nigerian soldiers burned down the Kalakuta Republic, beat and imprisoned Kuti, raped and abducted his wives, and killed his mother by throwing her out of a second story window. This tragic encounter resulted in the resilient Kuti stepping up his criticism of the Nigerian government instead of backing down. Kuti founded his own political party called "Movement of the People" and ran for the office of President of Nigeria in 1979. Although he did not win political office, he consistently challenged generations of Nigerians to demand a government with transparency, accountability, and a commitment to human rights. In doing so, he became a pan-African political prophet, revered throughout the world for his potent blend of music, sexuality, and postcolonial politics.³⁰

²⁹ Afrobeat scholar and former Fela Kuti band member Michael Veal argues that the Shrine was Kuti's personal political platform where his music served his message: "From the stages of his Afrika Shrine nightclubs in the working-class areas of Lagos, Fela used his music to present uncharacteristically blunt satires and vilifications of the forces he identified as agents of cultural imperialism, social degradation, political oppression, and economic domination. He ridiculed sociocultural ideas and practices that reflected, in his eyes, the compromise of rejection of what he considered an "essential" African cultural identity." See Michael Veal, *Fela: The Life and Times of an African Musical Icon* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

³⁰ For a scholarly analysis on Fela Kuti and his postcolonial politics of cultural identity, see Tejumola Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music! Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

John Lennon, Jerry Garcia, John Coltrane, and Fela Kuti were more than just the most popular musicians of their genres and generations. They were also infused with a social and spiritual conscience, and they used their music as a political force to challenge normative cultural values and to create a new pop aesthetic and drug culture. Before their untimely deaths, they invoked a loyalty and dedication amongst their fans that resembles religious fervor. Not surprisingly, they have posthumously become legends and their popular biographies are recited like modern hagiographies and contemporary folklore. In fact, these artists have transcended their status as popular musicians and are now enshrined as world historical figures. Amongst their legions of devoted fans, these musicians have attained a near mythical status and are widely revered as musician-prophets.

However, within the pantheon of these musician-prophets stand two towering figures that exemplify the contemporary pop-cultural prophetic voice – Bob Marley, the reggae star from Jamaica, and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the *qawwali* artist from Pakistan. Like the other musicians, Marley and Khan are global icons that transcend popular culture, shape political identity, and challenge entrenched hegemony. Unlike the other musicians however, Marley and Khan viewed the world explicitly through a theological lens. Their perspectives were firmly grounded in their respective faith traditions of Rastafarianism and Sufism, and their devout religious orientation shaped every aspect of their worldview. Their politics, identity, sexuality, and artistry were all defined first and foremost through their theology.

Both Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan viewed their music as a vehicle to spread a prophetic message. They situated their own lives within a lineage of religious

prophets, and they inspired their own lineages of *pop-prophetic* music. With new technologies come new prophetic channels, and both Marley and Khan championed the use of new media as the delivery system for their brand of prophetic pop-cultural production.³¹ This dissertation shows how their mystical devotion to their respective religious traditions sets them apart from other global musical icons and it enshrines them as the exemplars of *pop-propheticism*.

³¹ I am grateful to Gabriel Levy for helping me think through the relationship between prophecy and technology. His own doctoral research explores Biblical prophecy through the lenses of technology and violence. See Gabriel Levy, *Changing Channels: Biblical Prophecy, Writing, and Cognition*, a dissertation accepted by the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara in September 2007 (www.gabriellevy.com/dissertation.pdf).

Chapter Two

Sources and Methodology, Framework and Interpretation

Research Sources

This dissertation explores both the scriptural/canonical traditions and the lived/liturgical experiences of Rastafarianism and Sufism. To this end, this dissertation relies upon primary sources within the respective scriptural traditions and interview sources within the respective religious communities. Studying both the scriptural and the lived traditions of Rastafarianism and Sufism will effectuate and facilitate a more holistic understanding of prophecy, popular culture, and politics in the lives and legacies of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

In order to properly understand Rastafarianism and Sufism, it is necessary to contextualize them within the larger framework of Western monotheism. So in terms of establishing scriptural traditions, this dissertation starts with traditional primary sources such as the Tanakh, New Testament, and Qur'an. These canonical sources collectively constitute the most authoritative scriptural traditions for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and are amongst the most revered and researched texts in history.

In addition to employing scriptural sources from the Western monotheistic traditions, this project also illuminates the rich scriptural traditions within Rastafarianism and Sufism that are often overlooked and underappreciated. As Rastafarianism and Sufism developed as unique mystical derivations of Western monotheistic religions, they compiled their own unique scriptural traditions, which more accurately reflect their mystical missives and cultural context. This dissertation proposes a working scriptural canon for Rastafarianism and Sufism.

This dissertation also challenges traditional conceptions of canon and authority within the Rastafarian and Sufi traditions. According to this dissertation, religious texts are not necessarily what they have historically been construed and constructed as. Religious texts can be anything, including songs and poems, as long as they are properly and methodically presented and argued. In the case of Rastafarianism and Sufism, canon formation is an evolving and organic process, which is competing and contentious, shaped by technology and politics, spanning both the ancient and contemporary, absorbing both the classical and the vernacular.

In this spirit, this dissertation argues that the canonical tradition of Rastafarianism includes the *Kebra Negast* and the *Holy Piby*, as sung about by Bob Marley, while the canonical tradition of Sufism includes select devotional poems from medieval South Asian poets-saints, as sung about by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. This dissertation treats these texts and songs as part of the scriptural tradition that constitutes popular Rastafarianism and Sufism, and it provides an exegetical analysis of them with the interpretive goal being to highlight the prophetic nature of their lyrics and music. Accordingly, this dissertation approaches Marley and Khan by situating their lyrical work within the context of historical scripture, particularly the Abrahamic scriptural traditions from which they derive their lyrics and inspiration.

In terms of representing a lived experience, this dissertation utilizes interviews from a variety of research sources. The dissertation draws from personal conversations with academics, scholars, musicians, and religious practitioners I have had over the years. This dissertation also cites my interviews with Roger Steffens and Adam Nayyar, who

are widely regarded as the world's most authoritative experts on Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan respectively.

In addition to the canonical literature and interview sources, this dissertation references the interdisciplinary scholarship of Religious Studies, South Asian Studies, Caribbean studies, ethnomusicology, political science, and other related academic fields. This dissertation also cites numerous songs and albums from not only the reggae and *qawwali* canon, but also related musical genres – for reggae, these include ska, dancehall, reggaeton, and hip-hop and for *qawwali*, these include kirtan, bhajan, bhangra, Asian Underground, and South Asian fusion music. A select list of the research and theorists referenced is presented in the bibliography, and a select list of the songs and albums referenced is presented in the discography.

Interpreting Lives and Lyrics

Prophecy manifests not only in the prophet's words, but also through the prophet's life. In every prophet's life, there are extraordinary moments that reveal prophetic power. These prophetic moments are emblematic of the prophet's journey, through hardship and suffering, amidst visions and dreams, between politics and mysticism. In order to capture the entirety of the prophet's legacy, the serious scholar must look to the both the prophet's words and the prophet's life. This dissertation employs such an approach by focusing on both the prophetic songs and the prophetic lives of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

In terms of analyzing the prophetic lives and lyrics of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, this project follows the lead of Michael Eric Dyson, who has written a

number of probing biographies of black American icons. In particular, his work on the soul singer Marvin Gaye and the hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur offers a new approach to musical icons by arguing for their relevance as subjects of inquiry in Religious Studies. Dyson explores the religious dimensions of Gaye and Shakur's lives and lyrics by highlighting the prophetic nature of their legacy. As a scholar, Dyson approaches the theology of Gaye and Shakur through a twofold process. First, he interprets the lyrics of their songs through multidisciplinary lenses. Second, he retells their biographies by examining their important recordings as they related to major events in their lives.

Marvin Gaye is a towering figure within the pantheon of American soul music and remains a veritable R&B icon worldwide. His landmark 1971 album *What's Going On* is critically heralded as a modern masterpiece, evidenced by the fact that it is listed at #6 in *Rolling Stone* magazine's 500 greatest albums of all time.¹ On *What's Going On*, Gaye offered his own commentary on the most pressing social issues of the day, such as the Vietnam War, the environment, civil rights, poverty, and drug abuse. By injecting a scathing political critique into the lyrical fabric of *What's Going On*, Gaye effectively captured the generational conflicts and sociopolitical turmoil percolating throughout American society at the time.

In *Mercy, Mercy Me: The Art, Loves & Demons of Marvin Gaye*,² Dyson reflects upon Gaye's prophetic voice through the prism of spirituality and sexuality. Dyson

¹ Marvin Gaye is the only black musician included in *Rolling Stone* magazine's top ten albums of all time and *What's Going On* is the highest ranked non-rock album to make *Rolling Stone*'s list. The others in the top 10 include rock luminaries such as the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, the Beach Boys, and the Clash. For a complete list and critical commentary of *Rolling Stone*'s top 500 albums of all time, see http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/5938174/the_rs_500_greatest_albums_of_all_time.

² Michael Eric Dyson, *Mercy, Mercy Me: The Art, Loves & Demons of Marvin Gaye* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004).

argues that Gaye deeply struggled in his attempt to reconcile his sexual and spiritual lives, and this internal battle manifested in Gaye's personal theology:

Marvin's views were certainly contradictory and conflicted. But those views deserve serious consideration, especially since Gaye both embraced and rejected elements of the theology he inherited. It is true that Marvin failed to live up to many of the religious views he espoused. That would make him no different than many Christians who admit they have "fallen short of the glory of God." But Marvin was also rethinking and recasting his theology as he matured... Or, to put it in traditional religious terms, Marvin was exercising the prophetic prerogative. He also proved to have imagination as he interpreted scriptures and Christian belief.³

Here Dyson uncovers the intimate religious dimensions of Gaye's personal life and the creative hermeneutic that shaped his theological beliefs. By dissecting not only moments in Gaye's life, but also lyrics from his music, Dyson portrays the complexity of Gaye's sexual persona and the power of his prophetic voice. In particular, Dyson's discussion of Gaye's famous songs of sexual yearning, such as "Let's Get It On," "I Want You," and "Sexual Healing," reveals the sex symbol's spiritual side. By engaging in both lyrical exegesis and biographical review, Dyson celebrates Gaye's prophetic legacy and mourns Gaye's untimely death at the hands of his father.

Tupac Shakur is the best selling hip-hop artist to date and the defining voice of the hip-hop generation.⁴ His life story is almost mythical in its symbolism and imagery, and more than anyone else, he stood at the generational nexus of the civil rights and hip-hop eras. Born to an incarcerated member of the Black Panther Party, his life and music has come to symbolize the suffering of the streets and the struggle for redemption. Adopting the moniker of "Thug" and inverting it to make it empowering rather than pejorative, Shakur's life and lyrics gave voice to the marginalized, despondent, and

³ Ibid., 121.

⁴ For an intimate glimpse into the life and legacy of Tupac Shakur, see Lauren Lazin's provocative feature-length documentary *Tupac: Resurrection* (Amaru Entertainment Inc., 2003).

dejected. Like Jesus Christ, Shakur embraced the poor and the criminal, traveled with an entourage of disciples, used parables and poetry to communicate his message, and suffered a violent and untimely death.

In *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur*,⁵ Dyson portrays the prophetic dimensions of Shakur's life as evidenced through his compassion for the urban poor. Shakur's desire to empower the disenfranchised arose from his personal understanding of their suffering. By chronicling the plight of the urban poor, Shakur's prophetic voice amplified the suffering and hope of inner city America to the rest of the world. Dyson connects Shakur's prophetic pain to the theological dilemma of theodicy:

In traditional theological circles, the branch of thought that seeks to answer the unmerited suffering of believers is termed theodicy. It has an analogue in social science as well, where theodicy is concerned with discerning meaning in the suffering of the masses. As an inveterate thug and a tireless, if unorthodox believer, Tupac operated with a thug's theodicy. He may be considered what I've called a hip-hop Jeremiah, an urban prophet crying out loud about the hurt that he constantly saw and sowed.⁶

Dyson also interprets Shakur's prophetic voice in the language of his postmortem poetry. Shakur had a prophetic sense of his imminent death, and his lyrics reflect the urgency of his message. Through his exegesis of postmortem Shakur songs such as "To Live and Die in L.A.," "So Many Tears," and "Life Goes On," Dyson contextualizes Shakur's lyrics within a prophetic context. It is Dyson's nuanced and holistic approach to Shakur's life and lyrics that reveals Shakur's multiple and competing identities of rapper/redeemer, thug/thespian, saint/sinner, and poet/prophet.

⁵ Michael Eric Dyson, *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2001).

⁶ *Ibid*, 230.

This dissertation relies upon Dyson' approach of analyzing lives and lyrics while interpreting the lyrical and the lived religiosity of each musician. Accordingly, this dissertation situates Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan within Dyson's interpretive framework, which evaluates them through biographical review and lyrical exegesis. Specifically, this project interrogates and investigates specific prophetic songs and moments in the mystical lyrics and lives of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

A Subaltern Historiography

Despite their global fame and worldly riches, Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan represented the communities they came from, the marginalized and the oppressed, the alienated and the poor. Because Marley and Khan were postcolonial subjects rooted in the subaltern traditions of Rastafarianism and Sufism, their stories should be told through a postmodern historiography situated in a postcolonial framework. This dissertation utilizes the historical methodology of Subaltern Studies and the antisubordination methodology of Critical Race Studies in order to contextualize the lives and lyrics of Marley and Khan.

Inspired by the writings of Antonio Gramsci, the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) burst onto the academic scene in the 1980s and includes renowned South Asian scholars such as Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Gayatri Spivak. SSG contends that historiography has traditionally been a discourse by and for the elite, focusing predominately upon the rich, landowning, politically empowered, literate, educated, male demographics and perspectives, and thereby representing only a small percentage of the population studied. Encouraged by the postmodern deconstruction of

historical metanarratives, SSG is interested in giving a voice to those who have been silenced for so long, first by colonial rulers and then by colonial scholars. These communities of disenfranchised voices include the landless, uneducated, illiterate, low caste, women, mendicants, children, artisans, religious minorities, mystics, and musicians, and their stories showcase alternative and competing historical perspectives.

In the 1990s, Critical Race Studies emerged within the American legal academy. Inspired by Critical Legal Studies and Feminist Legal Studies, CRS includes renowned legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Neil Gotanda, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Devon Carbado. Like SSG, CRS constructs a new historiography that represents the experience and the concerns of minority communities. Unlike SSG, CRS' methodology is primarily sociolegal, as CRS is explicitly concerned with the legal construction of race in the United States. According to CRS, American courts have historically upheld white supremacy with decisions couched in facially neutral language. By professing a colorblind jurisprudence, the judiciary actually institutionalizes societal racism while implicitly legitimizing a white comparative baseline. Many CRS theorists maintain that the most effective interpretive tool in accounting for race is to implement an antistatutory race-conscious approach to constitutional issues instead of an antidiscrimination colorblind one.

SSG and CRS offer critical frameworks for understanding how hegemony, pedagogy, and legality shape historical narratives. SSG is primarily focused on South Asia's marginalized minority communities, and is therefore instructive for understanding Sufism. CRS articulates an antistatutory response to institutionalized white supremacy, which is also the political project of Rastafarianism. Collectively SSG and

CRS provide avenues and approaches for understanding the historical lives and the reactionary lyrics of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and this dissertation incorporates the subaltern historiography, anticolonial methodology, and personal narrative approaches developed by SSG and CRS respectively.

The Double Exegesis Framework

In terms of approaching prophecy through an interpretive framework, once again the work of theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel is helpful. On the one hand, Heschel endorses a faith-based perspective to prophecy that is embraced by the religious believer. On the other hand, he contextualizes prophecy as a social construction rooted in a particular time and place. This bifurcated approach is instructive for this dissertation project, which examines prophecy from both the perspective of the religious practitioner and the Religious Studies scholar. Outlining his interpretive framework for prophecy, Heschel writes:

Prophecy is not simply the application of timeless standards to particular human situations, but rather an interpretation of a particular moment in history, a divine understanding of a human situation. Prophecy, then, may be described as *exegesis of existence from a divine perspective*.⁷

This interpretive framework is instrumental for developing a new approach to analyzing prophecy. Heschel emphasizes the interpretive nature of prophecy, arguing that prophecy is not only dependent upon time, place, and manner, but also upon the worldview of the interpreting prophet. Based on Heschel's interpretive framework, this dissertation develops and utilizes its own *double exegesis* framework for prophetic interpretation.

⁷ Heschel, xii.

In this dissertation, I argue that Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan should be understood within the context of prophecy and popular culture because their lives and lyrics embody a pop-cultural prophetic message. I contend that the prophetic voices of Marley and Khan are based on their self-proclaimed divine inspiration and therefore qualify as Heschel's "exegesis of existence from a divine perspective." In this manner, Marley and Khan provide the first exegesis through their lives and lyrics. I also acknowledge that this dissertation is my interpretation of their interpretation, my exegesis of their exegesis; herein lay the second exegesis in my *double exegesis* framework. Because this project is my creative interpretation of their exegesis, I recognize the inherent subjectivity of my conclusions.

Jonathan Z. Smith encourages Religious Studies scholars to produce scholarship that is relevant to contemporary issues. In his essay "The Devil in Mr. Jones," Smith chastises his fellow Religious Studies scholars for not addressing current events that implicate religion and instead focusing on ancient and medieval religions. In this case, Smith refers specifically to the 1978 mass suicide at Jonestown, where he laments the lack of Religious Studies scholars participating in the public debate and discussion of Jonestown.⁸ This dissertation project accepts Smith's challenge for contemporary relevance by addressing important issues implicating modern prophecy, popular culture, media technology, canon formation, and postcolonial politics.

⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Chapter Three A New Prophetic Paradigm

Framing a Postmodern Prophetic Paradigm

Public intellectual Cornel West, who is internationally acclaimed for his prolific commentaries on race and religion, has also extensively written about contemporary prophets and prophecy within the African American Christian tradition. Throughout the body of his academic treatises, West argues that prophecy is a matter of interpretation and he imagines a new prophetic tradition to challenge the institutional discrimination resulting from white supremacy and European colonialism. Based on his unique approach to prophecy, West constructs a new prophetic paradigm, which he terms *prophetic pragmatism*, and in his collective work on *prophetic pragmatism*, West astutely argues that prophecy is predicated on fundamental notions of freedom, moralism, and analysis.

In his seminal manifesto *Prophecy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, Cornel West articulates a radical approach to African American religion that synthesizes elements of Marxist social criticism with prophetic Christian thought. For West, prophetic Christianity is inextricably intertwined with existential and social freedom:

For prophetic Christianity, the two inseparable notions of freedom are existential freedom and social freedom. Existential freedom is an effect of the divine gift of grace which promises to sustain persons through and finally deliver them from the bondage to death, disease, and despair. Social freedom is the aim of Christian political practice, a praxis that flows from the divine gift of grace; social freedom results from the promotion and actualization of the norms of individuality and democracy. Existential freedom empowers people to fight for social freedom, to realize its political dimension. Existential freedom anticipates history and

is ultimately transhistorical, whereas social freedom is thoroughly a matter of this-worldly human liberation.¹

Here West underscores the interdependent relationship between prophecy and freedom. For West, freedom manifests in both existential and social capacities, which in turn are interrelated and dependently originated. The teleological goal of West's prophetic Christianity is political and spiritual liberation, and West recognizes that freedom also implicates an intellectual choice. Therefore, West further grounds his prophetic Christianity in the moralism and rigorous discernment necessitated by individual choice. In *Prophetic Fragments: Illuminations of the Crisis in American Religion and Culture*, West highlights the relationship between moralism and black prophetic practices:

Black prophetic practices best exemplify the truncated content and character of American prophetic practices; they reveal the strengths and shortcomings, the importance and impotence, of prophetic activities in recalcitrant America. Black prophetic practices can generally be characterized by three basic features: *a deep-seated moralism, an inescapable opportunism, and an aggressive pessimism*. This deep-seated moralism flows from the pervasive influence of Protestant Christianity – unmatched among other industrial and postindustrial nations. Afro-American prophetic practices have been, and for the most part remain ensconced in a moralistic mood: that is, they are grounded in a moralistic conception of the world in which the rightness and wrongness of human actions – be they individually or collectively understood – are measured by ethical ideas of moral standards.²

Here West situates the moralistic components of black prophetic practices within the context of the larger American prophetic tradition. West claims that the core ethical and moral values that lie at the heart of black prophetic practices emerge from and are nurtured by prophetic Christianity. West also warns that the moral and ethical choices offered by black prophetic practices must be grounded in discernment and rationality. In

¹ Cornel West, *Prophecy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*. (Westminister: John Knox Press, 1982), 18.

² Cornel West, *Prophetic Fragments: Illuminations of the Crisis in American Religion and Culture* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1988), 41.

Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times, West argues that black prophetic thought must be rooted in the analytical moment:

The first element of prophetic thought has to do with discernment. Prophetic thought must have the capacity to grasp the present in light of the past. Discernment. We can call it an analytical moment. It is a moment in which one must accent nuanced historical sense. What I mean by nuanced historical sense is an ability to keep track, to remain attuned to the ambiguous legacies and hybrid cultures in history.³

Through his collective work on prophecy, West outlines the parameters of his *prophetic pragmatism* paradigm by demonstrating how *prophetic pragmatism* simultaneously wrestles with moralism, engages with discernment, and aspires for existential and social freedom. In constructing a new prophetic paradigm, West provides a prescriptive approach to a new black liberation theology that challenges preexisting and deeply held cultural convictions that define the African American experience. With a new prophetic paradigm arise new prophets and prophecies, a consequence West embraces. In *Prophecy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, West christens his black American prophets while revealing the prophetic dimensions of the black musical tradition:

The black prophetic Christian tradition – from Frederick Douglass to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Fanny Lou Hamer – exemplifies a courage to hope in the face of undeniably desperate circumstances rooted in a love that refuses to lose contact with the humanity of others or one's self. And the black musical tradition – from the spirituals and blues to jazz and hip-hop – embodies a desire for freedom and search for joy in the face of death-dealing forces in America.⁴

In summary, Cornel West imagines *prophetic pragmatism* as a path to substantive freedom, social justice, and transparent democracy. Based on his *prophetic pragmatism* paradigm, West delineates a new prophetic lineage, which includes Frederick Douglass

³ Cornel West, *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993), 3-4.

⁴ West, *Prophecy Deliverance!*, 7.

and Martin Luther King, Jr., and he highlights the centrality of music within black prophetic life. In his theological construction of *prophetic pragmatism*, West employs the language of postmodernism, which gives him the freedom to reinterpret and reinvent the Christian prophetic tradition. West's postmodern prophetic framework deconstructs traditional Christian thought in order to adapt it to the lived African American experience. In doing so, West uncovers a distinctively African American prophetic Christian tradition that combats nihilism, promotes self-love, and seeks spiritual freedom and political justice.

Taking a postmodern cue from Cornel West's collective work on prophecy, this dissertation likewise claims that prophecy is a function of interpretation. Just as West offers the new prophetic paradigm of *prophetic pragmatism*, the dissertation constructs the new prophetic paradigm of *pop-propheticism*. Just as West argues that Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr. are part of the black prophetic tradition, this dissertation contends that Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are part of the Rastafarian and Sufi *pop-prophetic* traditions respectively. In short, this project embraces West's method of postmodern interpretation in order to illustrate the prophetic legacies of Marley and Khan.

Whereas Cornel West constructs *prophetic pragmatism* around central conceptual themes, this dissertation presents *pop-propheticism* in a similar manner. *Pop-propheticism* resides at the nexus of postmodernism, postcolonialism, popular culture, and prophecy, and in order to properly understand the paradigm and its implications, it is necessary to explicate its component concepts. Thus, this dissertation examines the whole through its parts by presenting *pop-propheticism* through a six-fold conceptual

framework: (1) *canonical recitation*, (2) *mystical intoxication*, (3) *musical fusion*, (4) *media proliferation*, (5) *economic commodification*, and (6) *political appropriation*. Each of these concepts will be theoretically explored here and then practically applied to Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan in Part Two and Part Three of this dissertation.

Canonical Recitation

The process of canonical recitation has taken a number of forms for different religious traditions throughout history. For the purposes of *pop-propheticism*, canonical recitation refers specifically to the *lyrical invocation of scriptural passages and poetic verse within popular music and popular culture*. Canonical recitation affirms not only the devotional and theological nature of certain musical genres, but it also establishes canonical and scriptural legitimacy and authority.

Pop-prophetic canonical recitation must be understood and evaluated within the context of canon formation. Canonical recitation delineates the outer limits of canon through the invocation of scriptural verses and specific prophets. From the process of canonical recitation, a pre-existing body of literature is redefined and codified as canon. Accordingly, the process of canonical recitation facilitates the process of canon formation, which ultimately results in the legitimization of the scriptural tradition.

Not only is canonical recitation central to canon formation, but it also provides a powerful argument for the authenticity of a religious tradition. Before unpacking this idea, it is necessary to first establish a working definition for religion. The term “religion” means different things to different people and defining “religion” is a profound dilemma for Religious Studies scholarship. While acknowledging the interdisciplinary debate and

discourse about the complexities and contradictions inherent within any definition of religion, this dissertation adopts Catherine Albanese's description of religion. In her book *America: Religions and Religion*, Albanese describes the component parts of religion, starting with creed:

First, religion is expressed in *creeds*, or explanations about the meaning or meanings of human life. Such creeds may take various forms, from highly developed theologies and sacred stories of origin to informal oral traditions and unconscious affirmations that surface in casual conversation.⁵

Canonical recitation implicates both the formal and informal creeds described by Albanese. In *pop-propheticism*, the informal creed legitimizes the formal creed and the oral tradition edifies the scriptural tradition. While canonical recitation is obviously part of the oral tradition, it also has the effect of validating the written tradition that it passionately invokes. In doing so, canonical recitation not only champions the oral traditions of informal creeds, but it implicitly argues that the invoked written traditions of formal creeds are authentic and authoritative. In doing so, canonical recitation is central to Albanese's conception of creed, which she views as integral to a working definition of religion:

Religion here can be understood *as a system of symbols (creed, code, cultus) by means of which people (a community) orient themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meanings, and values.*⁶

Not only does canonical recitation as creed connect the oral tradition with the written tradition, it also helps establish the validity of a religious tradition. All religious traditions claim a popular body of scriptural literature, and canonical recitation adds

⁵ Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

enthusiastic support for these canonical claims. So within the framework of *pop-propheticism*, canonical recitation is foundational as it facilitates canon formation and thereby legitimizes religious traditions.

This dissertation argues that at the heart of the *pop-prophetic* music of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is *pop-prophetic* canonical recitation. Both Marley and Khan viewed their music as devotional music, and in terms of lyrical content, their music invokes the canonical tradition and prophetic lineage that they each claim to participate in. While some scholars and practitioners of orthodox Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have labeled Rastafarianism and Sufism as heterodox, even heretical, deviations, by engaging in *pop-prophetic* canonical recitation, Marley and Khan argued that not only were their religious traditions legitimate, but so too were the canonical and poetic works that supported their traditions. By continually chanting from their respective canons while invoking the names of religious figures that they revered as prophets, Marley and Khan used their devotional music as a pop-cultural force that legitimized their religious traditions while simultaneously establishing new canonical traditions.

Mystical Intoxication

Mystical traditions have historically embraced the ideology of intoxication as a means to achieve an elevated and enlightened state of mystical consciousness. By utilizing literal, symbolic, and metaphoric notions of intoxication, mysticism seeks to alter consciousness in order to reveal the unexplored dimensions of the mind. Within the context of *pop-propheticism*, mystical intoxication specifically refers to the *ingestion of intoxicating substances and/or a psycho-physical regime consisting of prayer,*

meditation, visualization, and recitation as methods of inspiring a mystical state of consciousness. Pop-prophetic mystical intoxication channels the prophetic voice into the ritualized act of ingesting intoxicating substances and/or uses the body as a locus for transforming the mind and soul, thereby marrying theory with praxis, words with action.

All conscious organisms display a desire to alter their consciousness. World religions have long recognized this desire and exploited it within their liturgical practices and rituals. Through a combination of prayer, song, chanting, and meditation, religious practitioners seek to achieve a mystical state of consciousness for the purposes of communion and introspection. Perhaps the most direct and immediate way of manufacturing such a mystical experience is through the ingestion of intoxicating substances, and for this reason, many mystical traditions proactively encourage and champion the mysticism of intoxication. Indeed, William James argues that the ingestion of intoxicants can produce powerful mystical states. He writes:

The next step into mystical states carries us into a realm that public opinion and ethical philosophy have long since branded as pathological, though private practices and certain lyric strains of poetry seem still to bear witness to its identity. I refer to the consciousness produced by intoxicants and anaesthetics, especially by alcohol... The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness, and our total opinion of it must find its place in our opinion of that larger whole.⁷

The first scriptural evidence of the liturgical ingestion of intoxicating substances for mystical purposes occurs in the Vedic and Indian traditions. In the *Rig Veda*, the oldest extant scripture in the Hindu canon, the mystical effects of the substance revered as *Soma* are celebrated:

⁷ James, 386-387. James goes on to discuss his personal experiments ingesting nitrous oxide for the purpose of manufacturing a mystical experience. He also acknowledges that his experiences on nitrous oxide provided him with insight that shaped his research.

In my vastness, I surpassed the skey and this vast earth. Have I not drunk the *Soma*? Yes! I will place the earth here or perhaps there. Have I not drunk the *Soma*?⁸

There is scholarly disagreement as to what exactly *Soma* is, as some scholars argue that *Soma* is psilocybin while others claim that *Soma* is a combination of poppy, ephedra, and cannabis. But there is no disagreement that *Soma*, which took the form of both drug and deity, was used for mystical intoxication and the *Soma* cult was the precursor to the South Asian mystical traditions that use psychotropic substances for mystical purposes to this very day.

Psychotropic mysticism was not only a pillar of Vedic religiosity, but it also figures prominently in other mystical traditions as well. Chinese Buddhists and Taoists recite a history of opium usage as part of their religious practice. Native American Church practitioners argue that the ingestion of peyote is a foundational sacramental ritual dating as far back as history itself.⁹ The Brazilian UDV Church is a Christian organization oriented around the ritualized consumption of the powerful psychotropic hallucinogen *ayahuasca*¹⁰ and Rastafarianism bases its theology on the belief that cannabis is a sacrament.

It is not surprising that many mystical and artistic communities are spiritually rooted in psychotropic inspiration. The fact that psychotropic substances are generally illegal is symbolic of the anti-establishment position taken by mystics and artists alike.

Mystics and artists not only challenge normative theological doctrines and cultural

⁸ Wendy Doniger (trans.), *The Rig Veda: An Anthology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 131.

⁹ Like *Soma* in the Vedic tradition, peyote is venerated as sacrament, medicine, protective amulet, and deity by members of the Native American Church. For an analysis on the complex theological, cultural, and legal issues implicated by peyotism, see Varun Soni, "Freedom from Subordination: Race, Religion, and the Struggle for Sacrament," *Temple Political and Civil Rights Law Review* 15:1 (2005): 33-64.

¹⁰ In a surprising unanimous decision, the US Supreme Court upheld UDV's claim that their sacramental use of *ayahuasca* is protected by the 1st Amendment's Free Exercise Clause. See *Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal*, 546 U.S. 418 (2006).

values, but they also question legal and political authority as well, and therefore ingesting psychotropic substances has a powerful symbolic value.

In addition to the ingestion of intoxicants as a method of achieving mystical intoxication, there is also another set of practices consisting of fasting, meditation, and prayer designed to transform the psycho-physical constitution of a mystical seeker. For example, the Sufi master Baba Farid was reputed for having performed the *chilla ma'kusa*, which consists of “hanging upside down in a well and performing the prescribed prayers and recollections for forty days.”¹¹ As a result of this difficult ascetic penance, Farid was rewarded with the ability to turn even stones into sugar, hence his popular epithet, Ganj-e-Shakkar, “treasure mound of sugar.”

While the practice of *chilla ma'kusa* may be an extreme method of physical transformation leading to mystical intoxication, there are other Sufi practices such as *zikr*, “recollection” of the name, and *sama*, “listening” to divine verse that are more commonly employed. Immersed in the proper recitation of the names of God, an individual can experience a state of ecstasy that ultimately transforms one’s base soul (*nafs*) until the recollection of God is present in every breath. Similarly, by participating in the *sama* while listening and dancing to prophetic and poetic verse, an individual can experience a state of divine intoxication (*mast*).

Pop-prophetic mystical intoxication is not limited to the ingestion of intoxicating substances or to a physical set of transformative practices. Within the context of *pop-propheticism*, mystics and musicians also lyrically invoke the state of intoxication as a metaphor for a mystical or divine state of consciousness. In the Sufi tradition, the image

¹¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 346.

of the *mehkhana* (tavern) and *sharaab* (alcohol) are consistently employed in order to heighten awareness regarding the dualism that separates the God from man. Intoxicated from late nights at the tavern in the company of the Beloved, the mystic appears insane to the mundane world when in reality he is exalted in a state of divine surrender. Similarly, in the lyrical tradition *premakhyan* (Sufi love parables), the unrequited love stories of heroes and heroines such as Sassi-Punni, Heer-Ranjha, and Sohni-Mehwal can best be understood as metaphors for the suffering of souls separated from their divine source of sustenance. These prevalent and recurring images establish the poetic power and metaphoric symbolism of intoxication, thus highlighting the possibility and desirability of mystical intoxication on the spiritual path.

This dissertation contends that in both the Rastafarian and Sufi traditions, consciousness is transformed through the ingestion of intoxicating substances and/or by fasting, prayer, recitation, and meditation. These traditions also converge through their invocation of poetic images of intoxication that represent a mystical state of consciousness. So while remaining grounded in their respective traditions' approach to *pop-prophetic* mystical intoxication, both Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan literally, physically, and metaphorically inspired a global mystical consciousness grounded in *pop-prophetic* music.

Musical Fusion

Musical fusion is the hallmark of musical traditions throughout world history. Ultimately, all music is fusion music, inasmuch as all music synthesizes different musical elements and instrumentation, which is a natural result of cultural exchange and

globalization. In the context of *pop-propheticism*, musical fusion refers specifically to *the self-conscious process of musical synthesis with the goal of creating the largest listening audience possible*. By creating fusion music through synthesizing global sounds, instruments, and languages with local ones, the musician is able to exploit *pop-prophetic* musical fusion to communicate with a worldwide audience.

Perhaps the best example of *pop-prophetic* musical fusion can be seen in the emergence and economic viability of a new genre of music sold as World Music.¹² World Music scholar and archivist Tom Schnabel explains the genre as a function of technology and cross-cultural pollination:

World Music illustrates the profound changes of the past century. It is as much about evolving technology as about music – a new and potent blend of traditional; music and postwar technology, a cross-pollination of musical idioms that has swept the world.¹³

The combination of new technology and new global culture enables local, vernacular, and folk musical traditions from around the world to package and promote their traditions under the World Music rubric. Since its inception in the early 1980s, World Music has evolved along with world musicians to the point where musical fusion now lies at the heart of the genre. Not only do World Music artists showcase musical traditions from their respective countries and cultures, they also self-consciously incorporate elements of other popular musical genres into their own, creating a fusion inspired musical hybrid

¹² Critics contend that the term “World Music” is implicitly Eurocentric and that the genre should really be called “The Rest of the World Music.” Tom Schnabel agrees that “World Music” is a problematic designation, but argues that it is an important genre in terms allowing music from around the world to gain popularity and commercial viability in foreign markets, “The term “World Music” was coined in England in the early 1980s by music marketers trying to categorize new recordings of music from non-Western culture. “International,” “folk,” and “ethnic” didn’t fit anymore... As a catch-all category, “World Music” didn’t make much more sense than these earlier designations, but it served an important purpose: to identify an emerging music most people didn’t know much about.” See Tom Schnabel, *Rhythm Planet: Great World Music Makers* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1998), 10.

¹³ Ibid.

that appeals to a wider audience. Schnabel celebrates such musical fusion and World Music for creating new global sounds and audiences:

What makes World Music so interesting is the degree to which non-Western cultures have been able to assimilate new influences yet retain their musical uniqueness... World Music artists can celebrate this uniqueness and preserve it, or they can use it as a springboard to a new contemporary style.¹⁴

Within the context of *pop-propheticism*, World Music strategically employs musical fusion as a mechanism through which to propagate its message to the largest possible audience. Musical fusion enables World Music artists to spread their music and message to a captive global audience eagerly waiting to purchase or download the next new World Music album. The most successful World Music artists are those who exploit musical fusion in order to package their music and message into a global brand that is commodified and consumed by World Music enthusiasts worldwide. In this manner, *pop-prophetic* musical fusion serves as a catalyst for musicians to universalize their local musical and lyrical traditions while the World Music genre offers a global delivery capability for their new fusion music.

This dissertation argues that not only were Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan the most popular and influential musicians within their musical genres (reggae and *qawwali* respectively), but they were also musical trailblazers, eager to experiment with different musical styles and instrumentations, and in doing so, they pushed the sonic boundaries of their own genres. Through their musical fusion and eclectic collaborations, they created a body of work that inspired religious devotion, transcended cultural boundaries, challenged conventional politics, and defined World Music. Even though Marley and Khan both viewed their *pop-prophetic* musical fusion as primarily devotional

¹⁴ Ibid., 10-11.

in nature, it also reflected and embodied their cultural, political, and musical identities as well.

Media Proliferation

Technology and media have historically played a vital role in the propagation of the prophetic voice. Not only does technology convey the prophetic voice, but it shapes it as well. For the purposes of *pop-propheticism*, media proliferation refers to the *process whereby media and technology converge in order to promulgate a prophetic voice and create a virtual community*. Ultimately, it is technology that enables the prophetic voice to reach a wider audience while fostering a sense of community. Not surprisingly, the most popular prophets are those who are intrinsically able to manipulate and exploit media, technology, and community.

In his landmark study, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson develops Walter Benjamin's conception of "mechanical reproduction" as it applies to the rise of print media and its impact upon the development of nationalism. According to Anderson, the advent of the novel and the newspaper were paramount developments that led to the imagining of community and defining of nationalism:

Why this transformation should be important for the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.¹⁵

¹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Press, 1983), 24-25.

Anderson argues that not only did print media propagate the ideologies of community and nationhood, but print media also enabled individuals who had never met before to collectively imagine themselves as a discrete community defined by shared characteristics and common goals. Anderson astutely recognizes that print media provides the technology, language, and forum for individuals to actively imagine themselves as part of a community:

No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.¹⁶

Anderson's work is explicitly concerned with the advent of nationalism, but his analysis is instructive in terms of understanding religious communities as well as political ones. Throughout history, vernacular technology and localized media have been primarily responsible for the propagation of religious teachings, rituals, stories, beliefs, and music. By disseminating religion through variegated media channels, technology has proven to be an indispensable tool for creating, defining, and imagining religious communities. Jeremy Stolow highlights this historically intimate, mutual dependence of religion and media, not just in terms of propagating religion, but also as it shapes self-identification and creates imagined communities:

Throughout history, in myriad forms, communication with and about 'the sacred' has always been enacted through written texts, ritual gestures, images and icons, architecture, music, incense, special garments, saintly relics and other objects of veneration, markings upon flesh, wagging tongues and other body parts. It is only through such media that it is at all possible to proclaim one's faith, mark one's affiliation, receive spiritual gifts, or participate in any of the countless local idioms for making the

¹⁶ Ibid., 36.

sacred present through mind and body. In other words, religion always encompasses techniques and technologies that we think of as ‘media’, just as, by the same token, every medium necessarily participates in the realm of the transcendent, if nothing else than by its inability to be fully subject to the instrumental intentions of its users.¹⁷

In her penetrating article “Impossible Representations: Pentecostalism, Vision, and Video Technology in Ghana,” Birgit Meyer explores the new media landscape in Ghana and explains how the rise of audio-visual technology has facilitated popular expressions of religion in the public sphere. For Meyer, religion is a practice of mediation, and the liberalization and commercialization of media has changed the manner in which religion is consumed and constructed. The media is the site of contestation between new technology and new religiosity, resulting in an efficient delivery system of evolving religious worldviews. Meyer writes:

This chapter seeks to unravel the nexus of religion and media by taking as a point of departure and understanding of religion as a practice of mediation, creating and maintaining links between religious practitioners as well as between them and the spiritual, divine, and transcendental realms that forms the center of religious attention. This realm is constructed by mediation, yet – and here lies the power of religion – assumes a reality of its own. The question of how (if at all) sacred texts, images, and other representations are able to embody and make present the divine is at the heart of religious traditions... If ideas are necessarily reworked through the particular technologies of transmission intrinsic to books, images, spirit mediums, films, radio, TV, video, or the computer, the question arises as to how the accessibility of a new medium transforms existing practices of religious mediation.¹⁸

Birgit Meyer cautions against a media reductionism that essentializes media’s relationship with religion as monolithic and equally applicable to all contexts. Instead, she challenges scholars of religion and media to investigate the interplay between religion

¹⁷ Jeremy Stolow, “Religion and/as Media,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 22:4 (2005): 119-145.

¹⁸ Birgit Meyer, “Impossible Representations: Pentecostalism, Vision, and Video Technology in Ghana,” in *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere*, ed. Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 290.

and media as it manifests in specific cultural contexts during specific historical periods for specific religious traditions. In her lecture entitled “Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion,” Meyer presents probing questions for scholars of religion and media, questions that this dissertation strives to answer:

Important questions for further research are: How does the availability of modern media change religious mediation, and hence the ways in which the transcendental is expressed via particular sensational forms? Are there specific differences between the ways in which different religious traditions, groups or movements adopt and appropriate different kinds of media? What contradictions and clashes arises from the coexistence of the interdiction to make images of God, as found in Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and the dynamics of contemporary visual culture that thrives on visibility? What kind of religious sensations, in the sense of feelings, are generated when religions adopt new sensational forms, such as the spectacle?¹⁹

The advent of print media changed the prophetic landscape by offering innovative new avenues to proselytize, and those that adapted print media technology most effectively could spread their message most efficiently. Similarly, the rise of audio-visual recording technology, the digital arts, and the Internet has dramatically reshaped both the form and the substance of the prophetic voice. CDs, MP3s, DVDs, and the Internet are the new texts, the new scriptures, and the new media delivery systems for *pop-propheticism*, and those that successfully exploit these new media possibilities are able to capture an international audience. Whereas the voice of the Biblical prophet took centuries to reach the far corners of the planet, the modern prophetic voice can be globally heard, downloaded, consumed, and shared instantaneously. Accordingly, *pop-*

¹⁹ Birgit Meyer, “Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion” (Vrije University Amsterdam, October 6, 2006), 18.

prophetic media proliferation provides a theoretical lens through which to analyze modern media and its role in constructing prophetic voices and communities.

This dissertation contends that Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan expertly and deliberately exploited the media technology available to them in order to disseminate their music and were therefore visionary in terms of their approach to media. By boldly and creatively embracing the outer limits of technology, Marley and Khan revealed their contrarian approaches to promoting their prophetic music. Instead of conceptualizing a binary separation of religion and science, Marley and Khan embraced media science to ensure that the widest possible listening audience would be exposed to their prophetic voices. In this manner, both Marley and Khan manipulated the new media possibilities available in order to universalize their prophetic voices and they thereby both epitomize *pop-prophetic* media proliferation.

Economic Commodification

Economic commerce is paramount in establishing the viability of religious traditions around the world. The theology of religion is often spread through the buying and selling of its products and paraphernalia, which in turn results in the commodification of its message. Within the *pop-propheticism* paradigm, economic commodification specifically refers to the *process whereby a prophetic voice is globally marketed, branded, commodified, and consumed as popular culture*. Before evaluating the implications of economic commodification, it is necessary to first define and delineate popular culture and its relationship with religion.

In *Authentic Fakes: Religion and Popular American Culture*, David Chidester examines the religious dimensions of diverse pop-cultural phenomena such as Coca-Cola, Nike, Tupperware, and baseball. In doing so, he shows how American popular culture, through its commercial and technological channels, does the sacred work of religion:

On Planet America, popular culture has been carrying the religious dream and bearing the religious pain through vast global exchanges, with their profound local effects, all over the world. Although conventional religious institutions remain vital, defying the predictions of their demise by prophets of modernization, religious impulses have been diffused in uncontrollable, unpredictable ways through the media of popular culture. Traces of religion, as transcendence, as the sacred, as the ultimate, can be discerned in the play of popular culture. As a result, we can conclude that popular culture is doing a kind of religious work, even if we cannot predict how that ongoing religious work of American popular culture, now diffused all over the globe, will actually work for the United States of America.²⁰

Throughout *Authentic Fakes*, Chidester demonstrates how popular culture both performs and propagates religion. In a capitalist society, where subject formation is predicated on consumerism, self-identity is often shaped by brand allegiance and pop-cultural consumption. Through market mechanisms, popular culture is disseminated and consumed in the form of music, films, clothing, sports, etc. As an economic force, popular culture not only acts like religion as Chidester suggests, but popular culture also uses its infrastructure to propagate and popularize religion. In today's spiritual marketplace, where buying and selling is tantamount to worshipping, *pop-prophetic* economic commodification exploits the profane in order to package and promote the sacred.

In his essay "Economy" from the edited volume *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*, David Chidester examines how religion, media, and popular culture shape

²⁰ Chidester, 231.

and define the political economy of the sacred. Chidester challenges Religious Studies scholars to acknowledge the centrality of economic production and cultural consumption in the construction of modern religion, and this challenge inspired *pop-prophetism's* analytical lens of economic commodification. According to Chidester, both religion and popular culture are mediating forces that are inextricable from capitalism, and this vertical integration challenges not only normative conceptions of religion, but also traditional definitions of economy. Chidester writes:

At the same time, cultural practices, including the practices of cultural media for the storage, transmission, and reception of information, could be incorporated within this expanded understanding of economy. Meaning-making enterprises, such as religion and media, emerged as economic practices of production, circulation, and consumption. Though modern economic theories, such as rational-choice theory, might seek to explain the proliferation of cultural meanings within a conventional economic framework, the cultural meanings of “economy” have dramatically expanded within recent cultural theory to such an extent that they cannot be so easily contained.²¹

In *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, Jeremy Carrette and Richard King argue that spirituality has become a powerful commodity in today’s global market. By exposing the new-age commodification of *yoga*, *ayurveda*, and *feng shui*, Carrette and King show how religion is exploited by corporate culture for economic profit. Carrette and King lament the “privatization” of religion that gives birth to “capitalist spirituality”:

Capitalist spiritualities are emerging in response to the rise of global finance capitalism. Like the individualist or consumerist spiritualities upon which they have fed, they are ‘postmodern’ in the sense that, grounded in an information age and the transfer of electronic data across national boundaries, they tend to disavow explicit associations with traditional

²¹ David Chidester, “Economy,” in *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*, ed. David Morgan (Routledge: New York, 2008), 83-84.

religions, promoting instead a highly eclectic, disengaged and detraditionalised spirituality.²²

In her insightful article, “Identity, Belonging, and Religious Lifestyle Branding (Fashion Bibles, Bhangra Parties, and Muslim Pop),” Lynn Schofield Clark explains how the convergence of capitalism and religion has led to the commercial branding of religious lifestyles. One of Clark’s notable contributions to material culture studies is her recognition that individual consumers proactively and strategically use their purchasing power as a means of religious self-identification. For Clark, religious lifestyle branding is a sociological tool that bridges the gap between the individual consumer and the media marketplace:

The phrase “religious lifestyle branding” is thus meant to build upon terms like “spiritual marketplace” or “material religion” to combine the ways in which sociologists have explored the felt sense of choice among those choosing to be religious (or not) in contemporary society and the ways in which historians have pointed to the role of consumer goods that have long been part of such forms of expression and practice. The phrase reflects the fact that corporations cannot dictate which aspects of religious material culture people will accept and claim as an aspect of their own religious identification. It highlights the sense that individuals do have choices in the marketplace and in media consumption, yet it also suggest that those choices are made within the range of what has been made available in the commercial realm and are in the interests of those who stand to gain the most from a streamlined, commercialized marketplace.²³

Just as David Chidester illuminates the unexpected religious dimensions of American popular culture, this dissertation reveals the unexpected prophetic traditions that have become global commodities. Just as Jeremy Carrette and Richard King explore

²² Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005), 20.

²³ Lynn Schofield Clark, “Introduction: Identity, Belonging, and Religious Lifestyle Branding (Fashion Bibles, Bhangra Parties, and Muslim Pop),” in *Religion, Media, and the Marketplace*, ed. Lynn Schofield Clark (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 27-28.

the “privatization” and “corporatization” of religion, this dissertation examines the commodification of prophecy through popular culture. Just as Lynn Schofield Clark highlights the branding of religious lifestyles, this dissertation investigates the profits of prophets.

Recognizing that commerce is an integral element of all popular religious cultures, Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan embraced the commercialization and commodification of their prophetic voice through popular culture. By successfully exploiting the media and market channels available to them, Marley and Khan each built a global brand worth millions. The industry created by their music commodified not only their recordings but also their theologies and lifestyles. At a time when individual identity is rooted in consumerism, their prophetic voices were spread widely through diverse commercial outlets. Although they both lived relatively ascetic lives, both Marley and Khan strategically utilized the commercial channels available to them in order to propagate their prophetic voices, and in doing so, they exemplified *pop-prophetic* economic commodification.

Political Appropriation

Although political appropriation occurs in a variety of settings and has a multitude of implications, *pop-prophetic* political appropriation refers specifically to the *postcolonial predicament of constructing a new national narrative through the available channels of cultural production*. The marriage between political appropriation and popular culture is a volatile one and depending on the political atmosphere and posturing at the time, political appropriation can alternately reject and embrace popular culture

while simultaneously criticizing and praising popular icons. Ultimately the goal of *pop-prophetic* political appropriation is to establish a postcolonial identity based on the nation-state's unique cultural and political identities in order to consolidate political power for a person or party. For this reason, within the context of *pop-propheticism*, political appropriation can be considered the pop-cultural component of postcolonial discourse.

In order to highlight the postcolonial predicament inherent within *pop-prophetic* political appropriation, it is necessary to first situate and define the term “postcolonial” and its scholarly implications in the interdisciplinary fields of literature, film, political science, anthropology, and other schools of critical theory. This is easier said than done as no single definition of “postcolonial” is able to accurately capture all of the postcolonial component parts. Indeed, the academic disciplinary field of Postcolonial Studies emerged in order to dissect postcolonialism and its predicaments. Ania Loomba acknowledges the dilemma of definition for postcolonialism and Postcolonial Studies:

It is true that the term ‘postcolonialism’ has become so heterogeneous and diffuse that it is impossible to satisfactorily describe what its study might entail. This difficulty is partly due to the inter-disciplinary nature of postcolonial studies which may range from literary analysis to research in the archives of colonial government, from the critique of medical texts to economic theory, and usually combine these and other areas.²⁴

Despite the difficulty of defining and locating postcolonialism and its aftermath, it is possible to paint broad conceptual brushstrokes that signify the conceptual parameters of postcolonialism. At the root of postcolonialism lies an inherent contradiction, which is evidenced in the term “postcolonial” itself. The “colonial” part of postcolonialism refers to the postcolonial nation-state's past colonial legacy while the “post” part of

²⁴ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), xii.

postcolonialism denotes the postcolonial nation-state's present and future possibilities. Stuck between the past and the future, the postcolonial nation-state must paradoxically rely upon indigenous vernacular and ideologies in order to establish itself in a political context that is still deeply colonial in terms of law, language, infrastructure, education, and government. This predicament is compounded by scholarship on postcoloniality that suggest that "the postcolonial subject has been severed from its past by the experience of the hegemonic domination of Western colonialism."²⁵

Pop-prophetic political appropriation resides at the heart of this postcolonial contradiction. Through political appropriation, the politically elite manipulate popular culture in order to support their political platforms and programs. Sometimes political appropriation manifests as a harsh critique of popular culture, which in the postcolonial context takes the form of admonishing and rebuking purveyors of popular culture for peddling Western/colonial products. Sometimes political appropriation occurs when the political apparatus claims the allegiance and endorsement of popular culture icons in order to tap into those icons' broad base of popularity while claiming cultural authenticity. However it plays out, *pop-prophetic* political appropriation serves the opportunistic interests of the political establishment by strategically injecting popular culture into the contentious discourse of postcolonial identity.

This dissertation explains how *pop-prophetic* political appropriation forced Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan to become unwilling participants in the political construction of a nationalistic postcolonial identity. Despite the fact that they were mystical musicians and not calculating politicians, they were often appropriated and

²⁵ Katherine Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 228.

manipulated by political parties and national government for purposes they did not always agree with. Marley and Khan remain their respective countries' most famous recording artists and cultural ambassadors, so it is not surprising that the politically elite appropriated their accomplishments. Despite the fact that both Marley and Khan rejected opportunities to be politically active in their nations' government, they were both posthumously heralded as national icons by the ruling elite. Indeed, they have both been immortalized on commemorative coins and postal stamps, while Marley was given the Jamaican Honor of Merit and Khan was revered as Pakistan's "Shahen-Shah."

Applying Pop-Propheticism

Like Cornel West's *prophetic pragmatism*, *pop-propheticism* is situated within a postmodern interpretive framework and it seeks to identify new prophetic voices within established religious traditions. *Pop-propheticism* recognizes that new technologies inspire new prophets to extol their new prophecies, and *pop-propheticism* seeks to examine this multidimensional process in an interdisciplinary manner. *Pop-propheticism* promotes a holistic approach to its subject material by focusing on the canonical, mystical, musical, technological, economic, and political components of popular culture, postcolonial politics, and prophecy. Accordingly, *pop-propheticism* offers a six-fold analytical paradigm that addresses the complexity of this new prophetic process through its component parts of (1) *canonical recitation*, (2) *mystical intoxication*, (3) *musical fusion*, (4) *media proliferation*, (5) *economic commodification*, and (6) *political appropriation*.

Although *pop-propheticism* is firmly grounded in the academic discipline of Religious Studies, it is inspired by interdisciplinary scholarship and a variety of theorists across the academic spectrum. As evidence of its multidisciplinary approach, *pop-propheticism* incorporates and synthesizes Max Weber's paradigmatic prophet, Cornel West's postmodern methodology of prophecy, Abraham Joshua Heschel's theology of prophecy, Walter Bruggeman's politics of prophecy, Michael Eric Dyson's interpretive approach to biography, Catherine Albanese's formal and informal creeds, William James' intoxicating mysticism, Tom Schnabel's notion of World Music, Benedict Anderson's theory of technology and community, Jeremy Stolow's nexus of media and religious self-identification, Birgit Meyer's description of religion as mediation, David Chidester's analysis of religion and popular culture, Jeremy Carrette and Richard King's critique of capitalist spirituality, Lynn Schofield Clark's conception of religious lifestyle branding, and Ania Loomba's articulation of the postcolonial predicament. Taking up Jonathan Z. Smith's challenge for a contemporary Religious Studies, *pop-propheticism* pushes Religious Studies into the present and proposes a new way to look at the relationship between popular culture and popular prophecy.

This dissertation develops *pop-propheticism* as a lens to analyze the lives and lyrics of Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. However, *pop-propheticism* has a broader application apart from these two musicians. It is certainly relevant for understanding the other similarly situated musicians discussed in this dissertation, such as Elvis Presley, John Lennon, Jerry Garcia, Fela Kuti, John Coltrane, Marvin Gaye, and Tupac Shakur. Other musical icons that fit the *pop-prophetic* mold include Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, Sun Ra, and Kurt Cobain. *Pop-propheticism* isn't only a posthumous

paradigm; it is also relevant for analyzing the prophetic lives and legacies of living musicians, such as A.R. Rahman, Bob Dylan, Bono, and Burning Spear. *Pop-propheticism* is also applicable outside the realm of popular music and can be used to explore the unexpected prophetic dimensions of larger global pop culture. In this manner, *pop-propheticism* is instructive for evaluating global poets, writers, filmmakers, artists, and other cultural icons as well.

PART TWO: THE *POP-PROPHETICISM* OF BOB MARLEY

Chapter Four The Prophetic Dimensions of Rastafarianism

A Trinity of Prophets

Although this dissertation contends that Bob Marley is a modern pop-cultural prophet, Marley never envisioned himself as such. He often referred to himself as a messenger and his music as the message. However, legions of fans and scores of Rastafarians hail him as a prophet nonetheless, so the notion that Marley is a prophet is nothing new. This dissertation does not attempt to convert its readers or proselytize from the perspective of the religious believer or Rastafarian practitioner. Instead, it is primarily concerned with developing a Religious Studies paradigm for understanding how and why so many people around the world revere Bob Marley as a prophet. In doing so, this dissertation offers a new approach to Marley's life and lyrics to add to the growing corpus of academic and scholarly literature on Marley.

In his provocative book *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals*, the political theorist Anthony Bogues uses the dual lenses of heresy and prophecy to reinterpret the lives and legacies of political icons in the black radical tradition, including Ida B. Wells-Barnett, C.L.R. James, W.E.B. Du Bois, Julius Nyerere, Walter Rodney, and Bob Marley. Bogues argues that Marley's prophetic voice was evidenced in his redemptive poetics, and he therefore qualifies as a prophet. Regarding Marley as prophet, Bogues writes:

What makes Marley an outstanding prophetic critic is that he was able to weave together some of the doctrinal tenets of Rastafari, join them to the

local knowledge embodied in proverbs, and then present them as a powerful critique of the system, producing a Zion train that would leave Babylon oppression behind. Within the Africana tradition of prophecy, we can distinguish the feature of *mantic* (a possession and declaration of knowledge) and concern for the wider “moral community at a social and political level.” On all these accounts, Marley qualifies as a prophet... In Marley’s practice, popular culture became a site for ideological struggle. Marley as prophet practiced *symbolic insurgency* in a struggle for the minds of the oppressed, rallying them to Zion in the chants against Babylon.¹

This dissertation uses Bogue’s analysis as starting point from which to think about Bob Marley’s prophetic legacy and his relevance to the field of Religious Studies. In order to understand Marley as prophet, it is necessary to situate him within the theological framework of Rastafarianism. Marley often said that first and foremost he was a Rastafarian; ultimately, it was his theological beliefs that dictated his overlapping political, cultural, musical, and sexual identities. Marley was not only the most famous Jamaican citizen and reggae singer to date; he was also the global ambassador of Rastafarianism. Because of his devout Rastafarian faith and his strong Rastafarian self-identification, Marley’s prophetic voice emerges from his conception of Rastafarianism.

This dissertation explicitly situates Bob Marley within the Rastafarian prophetic lineage of Marcus Garvey and Leonard Howell. For the purposes of this dissertation, these three figures will be collectively viewed as the trinity of Rastafarian prophets. They are prophets in the sense that the Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel imagines them – they are poets, critics, preachers, and moralists – and they have individually done more to promulgate and promote Rastafarianism, both intentionally and unintentionally, than anyone else. So before exploring Marley’s prophetic legacy, it is first necessary to examine his prophetic predecessors and explain how these three Jamaican citizens –

¹ Anthony Bogue, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 199-200.

Marcus Garvey, Leonard Howell, and Bob Marley – were the progenitors of a new religious consciousness and the prophetic voices for a new religious movement.

Marcus Garvey's Words Come to Pass

For many Rastafarians, their story begins with Jamaica's First National Hero Marcus Mosiah Garvey.² Garvey was born on August 17, 1887 in Saint Ann Parish in Jamaica, which is also Bob Marley's birthplace. At the age of fourteen, Garvey left the Jamaican countryside to live in Kingston where he worked as a printer and compositor. Following his time in Kingston, Garvey traveled through South America, lived in London, and eventually returned to Jamaica. In 1914, Garvey founded the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), an anticolonial political organization, which promoted Black Nationalism and economic empowerment.³

The organizing principles of the UNIA provided the philosophical and political framework for Garveyism. According to Garvey, the organizing principles and political goals of the UNIA were:

To establish a Universal Confraternity among the race; to promote the spirit of pride and love; to reclaim the fallen; to administer to and assist the needy; to assist in civilizing the tribes of Africa; to assist in the development of independent Negro communities; to establish a central nation for the race, where they will be given the opportunity to develop themselves;... to establish Universities, Colleges, Academies and Schools for racial education and culture of the people; to improve the general condition of Negroes everywhere.⁴

² The Order of National Hero is the highest of five honors in the Jamaican Honors System and it is awarded to citizens who have displayed the highest degree of service to their nation. On November 16, 1964, the Jamaican government posthumously honored Marcus Garvey as the first recipient of the Order of National Hero.

³ Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 53.

⁴ Noel Leo Erskine, *From Garvey to Marley: Rastafari Theology* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 119.

After failing to secure popular support for the UNIA in Jamaica, Garvey embarked upon a journey to the United States, and eventually headquartered his UNIA in Harlem, New York. By the early 1920s, the UNIA grew to become the largest Pan-African movement of the early twentieth century⁵ and arguably the largest social movement of African descendents ever.

The UNIA gave Marcus Garvey the organizational authority to construct his own Pan-African political ideology, which came to be known as Garveyism. Garveyism was a potent political mix of repatriation, economic empowerment, and Black Nationalism. Garvey preached that black people in the New World were brought as slaves and would always be viewed as subservient as long as they remained in the Western hemisphere. His solution was for black people in the Western hemisphere to go back to Africa, where he promised they could live in peace and thrive in prosperity. He even established his own shipping line, the Black Star Line, so he could physically bring black people to Liberia and continue the Americo-Liberian settler expansion. In 1923, Garvey's movement of Garveyism collapsed when he was sentenced to five years of imprisonment on charges of mail-fraud.⁶

Despite the fact that he was publicly defamed and demonized by the American government, European colonial nations, African leaders, and even fellow Pan-Africanists,⁷ Marcus Garvey was embraced by Rastafarians and deified as their

⁵ Rupert Lewis, "Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians: Continuity and Discontinuity," in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Murrell (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 146.

⁶ Grant, 372.

⁷ The renowned black American scholar W.E. Du Bois considered Marcus Garvey to be a "lunatic" and a "traitor" despite the fact that they were both Pan-Africanists. In a scathing article about Garvey, Du Bois wrote, "The American Negro has endured this wretch too long with fine restraint and every effort of cooperation and understanding. But the end has come. Every man who apologizes for or defends Marcus

foundational prophet. Garvey's prophetic voice first emerged when he left Jamaica for the United States in 1916 and allegedly said, "Look to Africa from which a black king shall arise to deliver his people."⁸ In 1930, there was an ascendance of an African king in Ethiopia who took the coronation name of Emperor Haile Selassie and bestowed upon himself the titles King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Elect of God, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Born in Ethiopia as a prince, his birth name was Ras Tafari Makonnen (Ras is an Amharic title of nobility), and it was in his name that the Rastafarian movement emerged in Jamaica. After Ras Tafari's coronation as Haile Selassie, a group of Jamaicans who comprised the earliest Rastafarian communities swore their devotion to Ras Tafari as a living God and hailed him as the fulfillment of Marcus Garvey's prophecy.

To commemorate Ras Tafari's coronation, Marcus Garvey published a laudatory article about him in his Jamaican newspaper *The Blackman*. The article was noteworthy in its invocation of Biblical imagery and prophecy, and it read in part:

The Psalmists prophesied that Princes would come out of Egypt and Ethiopia would stretch forth her hands onto God. We have no doubt that this time is now come. Ethiopia is now really stretching forth her hands. This great kingdom of the East has been hidden for many centuries, but gradually she is rising to take a leading place in the world and it is for us of the Negro race to assist in every way to hold up the hand of Emperor Ras Tafari.⁹

Garvey's congratulatory article, steeped in the Biblical language of prophecy, provided the early Rastafarian community with additional evidence of Ras Tafari's divinity. Coupled with Garvey's earlier prediction of the rise of an African king, Garvey's article

Garvey from the day forth writes himself down as unworthy of the countenance of decent Americans." See Grant, 31-32.

⁸ Erskine, 116.

⁹ Lewis, 146.

in *The Blackman* firmly established Garvey as the paramount prophet of Ras Tafari and earned him the moniker of “Black Moses.” Because Garveyism and Rastafarianism shared the same political positions on the defining issues of repatriation, Pan-Africanism, and anticolonialism, Rastafarianism was creatively able to incorporate the politics of Garveyism into its prophetic imagination.¹⁰

Although he was heralded as a prophet by Rastafarians, Marcus Garvey viewed his own words as a symbolic metaphor that black salvation resided in a regal African homeland and not as a prophetic prediction regarding a specific emperor. Accordingly, Garvey strongly criticized Rastafarian theology and he never accepted the fundamental Rastafarian doctrine of Haile Selassie’s divinity. Because Garvey viewed Haile Selassie as a political leader and not a Messianic savior, he freely criticized Selassie over Ethiopia’s war with Italy. In his scathing critique of Selassie’s military acumen, Garvey wrote:

He kept his country unprepared for modern civilization, whose policy was strictly aggressive. He resorted sentimentally to prayer and to feasting and fasting, not consistent with the policy that secures the existence of present-day freedom for people whilst other nations and rulers are building up armaments of the most destructive kind as the only means of securing peace.¹¹

Marcus Garvey not only criticized the policies of Ras Tafari, he also displayed open hostility towards the practices of Rastafarians. Garvey, who was born a Methodist and became a Roman Catholic later in his life, thought that Rastafarians were delusional and dangerous, and he denigrated Rastafarian theology in an open and notorious manner. In once such instance, Garvey vociferously condemned the Rastafarian sacramental use of cannabis or *ganja* in an editorial that appeared in his newspaper *New Jamaica*:

¹⁰ Ibid., 147.

¹¹ Ibid., 150.

Between *ganja* and fanatical religion, we are developing a large population of half-crazy people who may not only injure themselves but injure us. Some will do it in the name of the “lord” and others do it under the influence of the evil weed.¹²

Ironically, just as black American intellectuals such as W.E. Du Bois distanced themselves from the political Pan-Africanism of Garveyism, Garvey went to great lengths to distance himself from the Biblical Pan-Africanism of Rastafarianism. In this manner, Garvey vehemently rejected the very community that canonized him as its prophet.

Despite the fact that Marcus Garvey publicly criticized Ras Tafari and openly chastised Rastafarians with hostility and contempt, the Rastafarian community still revered Garvey as a prophet, especially after his death. For Rastafarians, their prophetic connection with Garvey is central to both their theology and their politics. Garvey occupies a rarefied place in the Rastafarian pantheon, and amongst Rastafarians, his name is synonymous with prophecy. In their article “Rastas’ Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Somebodiness,” Clinton Howell and Nathaniel Murrell explain Garvey’s centrality in the construction of a Rastafarian identity and the symbolic nature of his prophecy:

Next to Haile Selassie I, Garvey, the world’s best known Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist, is the most important figure in the Rastafarian identity. Garvey’s birth date, August 17, is one of the most important dates on the Rasta calendar. It is a commonly held belief among Rastafarians that Garvey, a Jamaican, was the forerunner of Haile Selassie I; Rastas regard Garvey as a prophet in the same light as the Biblical John the Baptist. They generally hold that Garvey predicted the crowning of a black king who would redeem the black race. The use of Garvey’s alleged assertion that “whenever a Black king is crowned in Africa our redemption is near” is typical of the link that Rastas make between Garveyism and the origin and development of the Rastafarian movement. To the Rastafarians, Garveyism *is* prophecy.¹³

¹² Erskine, 122.

¹³ Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Murrell, “Rastas’ Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Somebodiness” in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, 43.

Thus, Rastafarians revered Marcus Garvey as their primary prophet and in doing so they edified their belief in Haile Selassie's divinity. The Rastafarian hermeneutic of liberation found a powerful voice in Garveyism, and Garvey's rhetoric of political liberation was transformed into the Rastafarian movement for spiritual liberation. So even though Garvey was a reluctant and unwilling prophet, Rastafarianism successfully appropriated his teachings. According to Noel Erskine, the noted scholar of Rastafarian theology, Rastafarians were able to use Garvey to get beyond Garvey.¹⁴ Through this process of using Garvey to get beyond Garvey, Garvey as a person did not have to literally agree with Rastafarian theology because Garvey as a prophet had already symbolically legitimized Rastafarian theology.

After Marcus Garvey's death in 1940, Rastafarian leaders further intensified their message that Garvey was Haile Selassie's prophet, and Rastafarians throughout Jamaica posthumously constructed Garvey's hagiography in a narrative that deified Garvey. The anthropologist Barry Chevannes conducted extensive field research documenting the posthumous myths regarding Garvey, which afford a glimpse into the Rastafarian hagiography of Garvey's divine and prophetic status. Chevannes writes:

In my fieldwork among the Rastafari, which included many informants other than the founding members, I came across many myths, some dealing with *ganja*, others dealing with Haile Selassie, but the largest number were about Marcus Garvey. Those myths dealing with Garvey are not confined to the Rastafari – indeed I have heard them on the outside – but as the largest and most influential movement to draw inspiration from his work, the Rastafari are today the myths' main transmitters. I found seventeen different myths, twelve of which keep recurring (this is to indicate the strength of their influence throughout the movement) and five of which I heard only once. I have grouped all but one of them into four broad categories: (a) those attributing heroic or divine characteristics to Marcus Garvey himself; (b) those confirming the messianic role of Haile

¹⁴ Erskine, 116.

Selassie; (c) prophetic utterances addressed to the struggles of the people; and (4) curses.¹⁵

In the 1970s, popular reggae musicians began extolling the prophetic virtues of Marcus Garvey through their lyrics, thereby transmitting the Rastafarian belief in Garvey as prophet to all the corners of the world. In particular, the legendary roots reggae artist Winston Rodney, who records as Burning Spear, released his landmark album *Marcus Garvey* in 1975. *Marcus Garvey* established Burning Spear as a reggae messenger in the mold of Bob Marley, a shamanistic musician and hypnotizing performer who invoked the divinity of Ras Tafari and praised Marcus Garvey as his prophet. In the song “Marcus Garvey,” Burning Spear announced the fulfillment of Marcus Garvey’s prophecy:

Marcus Garvey's words come to pass,
Marcus Garvey's words come to pass,
Can't get no food to eat,
Can't get no money to spend.¹⁶

Bob Marley echoed Burning Spear’s announced of Marcus Garvey as a Rastafarian prophet in the song “Marcus Garvey.” In discussing Garvey, Marley said:

Marcus Garvey’s a prophet, mon. Marcus Garvey tells us we must look to the east for the king. A lot of things of things Marcus Garvey say and a lot of it come to pass.¹⁷

Burning Spear’s tribute to Marcus Garvey went on to become one of the most renowned and critically acclaimed reggae albums ever, and its album cover spread the defiant image of Marcus Garvey as Rastafarian prophet throughout the world. Music biographer Stephen Davis describes the impact of Burning Spear’s song “Marcus Garvey” upon its release in 1974:

¹⁵ Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 100.

¹⁶ Burning Spear, *Marcus Garvey* (Mango Records, 1975).

¹⁷ See the Bob Marley documentary *Time Will Tell* (Immortal DVD, 2006).

Their recording of a song called “Marcus Garvey” caught Jamaicans in 1974 with its blistering attack, martial horns, and unabashedly ethnic singing. “Marcus Garvey” reminded people of the Jamaican roots of their national hero and prophet and again called attention to the suffering and poverty of the slums. The song was a scream in the night from the ghetto, and Jamaicans understood its power.¹⁸

This dissertation contends that Marcus Garvey, revered as a Rastafarian prophet, is the first in the lineage of Rastafarian prophets that continues with Leonard Howell and culminates with Bob Marley. Each used their own medium and each had their own message and collectively they comprise the holy trinity of Rastafarian prophets. Ultimately however, Garvey stands above the rest as the foundational Rastafarian prophet and the most important figure in Rastafarianism other than Haile Selassie.

Leonard Howell and the Construction of Rastafarianism

Hailed as the “first Rasta,” Leonard Percival Howell successfully synthesized elements of Garveyism, Ethiopianism, Black Nationalism, Revivalism, Hindu mysticism, and Biblical prophecy, and in doing so he became the first person to articulate and preach a coherent Rastafarian theology and practice. More than just a theologian and preacher, Howell also spearheaded the first Rastafarian community and trained the first Rastafarian leaders. Based on his foundational role in the development of a Rastafarian theology and community, this dissertation argues that Howell is the second prophet in the holy trinity of Rastafarian prophets, a prophetic lineage that starts with Marcus Garvey and ends with Bob Marley.

¹⁸ Steven Davis and Peter Simon, *Reggae Bloodlines: In Search of the Music and Culture of Jamaica* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1992), 54.

Born in Jamaica in 1898, Leonard Howell, like Marcus Garvey, traveled the world at an early age before returning back to Jamaica.¹⁹ His alleged journeys during this period have become a staple of Rastafarian folklore and a topic of debate amongst historians. His own explanation of his travels is sufficiently vague enough to support many possibilities. In his only public account of his early nomadic life, he wrote:

I skipped from one job to another, until I came upon an American army colonel named Aites who happened to be a globetrotter. With Colonel Aites, I traveled over a large section of the inhabited world, from Asia across Europe where I witnessed scenes of horror in places such as Austria, as the war had just ended. After my travels and subsequent return to the United States, I became attracted the Ras Tafari and afterwards returned home to Jamaica to preach its tenets.²⁰

Upon Leonard Howell's return to Jamaica in 1932, he began distributing pictures of Haile Selassie. This historic moment marked the beginning of the Rastafarian movement.²¹ Howell's Afrocentric anticolonial rhetoric soon drew the attention of Jamaica's colonial government, and in 1934 he was arrested and charged with sedition. Howell used his public trial as a platform to preach about the divinity of Ras Tafari and his trial marked the first time that educated urban Jamaicans were exposed to Rastafarian theology. During his courtroom defense, he launched into a long sermon, detailing his Rastafarian theology while using the language of Biblical prophecy:

We were told that we were Gentiles, but thanks be to God we have been awakened from our sleep by the coming of the Messiah to a fuller understanding that we are the Jews, and the reason we were sleeping was because our last king of Israel, Hezekiah, had his eyes plucked out by Nebuchadnezzar and the head of his two son lopped off. From the one we were blind, and could not see the light of the Lord God of Israel, until the Messiah came back to this world in the form of Ras Tafari (2 Kings 24:7).²²

¹⁹ Chevannes, 121.

²⁰ Helene Lee, *Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism* (Chicago: Lawrence Books, 2003), 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

²² *Ibid.*, 73.

Later in the trial, while being cross-examined by the assistant attorney general H.M. Radcliffe, Howell explicitly claimed he recognized Ras Tafari's divinity as the Messiah through prophecy. As part of their courtroom exchange, Radcliffe grilled Howell on his distribution of Ras Tafari's picture and his propagation of Ras Tafari theology:

Radcliffe: What is the good of the picture?

Howell: To know that Ras Tafari is their king.

Radcliffe: Not as a passport?

Howell: No, sir.

Radcliffe: When did you first conceive that idea that Ras Tafari was the Messiah?

Howell: Through a prophecy.

Radcliffe: When was it that you made this discovery?

Howell: In 1930, when Ras Tafari was crowned.²³

It only took the jury fifteen minutes to convict Howell of sedition and he was sentenced to two years in prison.²⁴ While he was in prison, Howell realized that his new religious movement needed a new religious text in order to articulate and propagate its theology. It was in this context that Howell authored his seminal Rastafarian treatise, *The Promised Key*, which stands today as a testament to his enduring prophetic legacy.

In 1935, *The Promised Key* was published under Leonard Howell's alias of G.G. Maragh.²⁵ Scholars acknowledge that Howell's *The Promised Key* borrowed heavily and possibly even plagiarized from Robert Athlyi Rogers' *Holy Piby*.²⁶ In both form and content the *Holy Piby* serves as a proto-Rastafarian text and it provides the theological framework for *The Promised Key*. Before Howell founded Rastafarianism, Rogers

²³ Ibid., 77.

²⁴ Ibid., 79.

²⁵ The name G.G. Maragh is a play on the name of the prominent Jamaican East Indian businessman Mr. Ganga Maragh, thereby evidencing the influence of East Indian culture on Leonard Howell and his conception of Ras Tafari theology. Ibid., 97.

²⁶ Ibid., 39.

started his own Afrocentric religious movement in the United States in the 1920s, and it is highly likely that Howell met Rogers and read the *Holy Piby* while they were both living in New York. The *Holy Piby* serves as the foundational text for Rogers' Afro Athlican Constructive Church, a movement that views Ethiopians as God's chosen people and heralds Marcus Garvey as an apostle of God. In fact, the *Holy Piby* explicitly connects Garvey's divinity with Ethiopia's redemption:

Nonetheless in the year nineteen hundred and twenty two, Apostle Garvey issued a religious call throughout the world which fulfilled the last item upon the map of life. Therefore, Athlyi yielded him a copy of the map, and declared Marcus Garvey an apostle of the Lord God for the redemption of Ethiopia and her suffering posterities.²⁷

The Promised Key is very clear in its proclamation of Ras Tafari's divinity.

Throughout the text, Howell invokes an incendiary blend of Biblical prophecy and Black Nationalism in order to establish Ras Tafari's Messianic status. According to *The Promised Key*:

The Knowledge of H.M. Ras Tafari Kingdom must be had before one could possibly receive the truth, for he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, therefore he is earth's rightful ruler in this name alone will the black people receive happiness. His throne is forever and ever and sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his Kingdom. Woe be unto the preacher of the white man's doctrine of hypocrisy and devil worship.²⁸

After Leonard Howell's release from prison in 1935, he elaborated upon the Rastafarian theology that he laid out in *The Promised Key*. Based in part on the Ethiopian religious text *Kebra Nagast*, a complex Messianic narrative surfaced, establishing the blueprint for popular Rastafarianism. This new Rastafarian theology proclaimed that Haile Selassie was the two hundred and twenty fifth descendent in the lineage of the Davidic king,

²⁷ Roger Athlyi Rogers, *The Holy Piby: The Blackman's Bible* (Chicago: Research Associates School Times Publications, 2000), 55.

²⁸ William David Spencer, "Leonard Howell's *The Promised Key*" in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, 384.

following an unbroken Biblical bloodline that runs through three thousand years of Ethiopian history. The *Kebra Nagast* chronicles a sexual relationship between King Solomon and the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba, and it is their progeny that starts the royal bloodline in Ethiopia, of which Haile Selassie is its culmination.²⁹ For many Rastafarians, Haile Selassie is the Messiah and the world redeemer, thereby fulfilling the Biblical prophecy of the return of Jesus Christ. Just as Moses led the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt to salvation in Israel, the Rastafarians looked to Haile Selassie to bring them from their shackles in Jamaica (Babylon) to their salvation in Ethiopia (Zion).

After articulating the first Rastafarian theology in *The Promised Key*, Leonard Howell went on to establish the first Rastafarian community in Pinnacle. Pinnacle was Howell's legendary Rastafarian commune, which had many incarnations due to the fact that it was regularly destroyed by the police. Pinnacle enjoyed its "Golden Years" from 1944 to 1954,³⁰ and during that time Howell developed many of the social customs and religious rituals of Rastafarian life. The most enduring Rastafarian legacy that arose from Pinnacle was the development of a cannabis culture. At Pinnacle, Howell promoted the cultivation and sale of cannabis as the compound's primary revenue stream. Pinnacle's edict of cannabis cultivation and consumption had a theological component as well, and soon cannabis became sanctified as the Rastafarian sacrament. Pinnacle's financial viability was completely dependent upon its cannabis sales so as its cultivation peaked, so did its prosperity. When the police finally shut down Pinnacle for good in 1954, they

²⁹ See *The Kebra Nagast: The Lost Bible of Rastafarian Wisdom and Faith from Ethiopia and Jamaica* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

³⁰ Lee, 166.

destroyed over a million cannabis plants and arrested one hundred and thirty eight people.³¹

In her biography of Leonard Howell entitled *The First Rasta*, Helene Lee grapples with Howell's complex prophetic legacy:

Leonard Howell's career as a prophet and leader lasted twenty-five years, from 1933 until 1958. After the destruction of Pinnacle, he drifted into the shadows and other leaders took his place as spokesmen for Jamaica's alternate spiritual nationality. The conventional wisdom was that Howell had believed he was God. Maybe it was as the African reggae star Alpha Blondy sings, "See that God's chair was empty – he sat down in it." But there's no evidence or testimony that Howell ever thought that way. It was his followers who called him a Messiah. He led Pinnacle with a dignified attitude, visionary ideas, and inimitable authority. He put his talents and charisma in the service of the poor. His powerful image at the top of the hill protected East Avenue. He persevered through police beatings, prison terms, and stiff fines. He transformed the lives of thousands of people. Who but a larger-than-life being could have done all this?³²

Throughout his life, Leonard Howell was ostracized, alienated, marginalized, and disenfranchised. He was imprisoned, committed to a psychiatric hospital, and chastised as a heretical apostate. Yet, like the Biblical prophets of old, he preached his religious beliefs and nurtured his religious community despite his perceived status as a social outcast and revolutionary. He provided both the foundational Rastafarian text and community, and he inspired the next generation of Rastafarian leaders and mystics. In all these ways, Leonard Howell stands as a paradigmatic Rastafarian prophet, one who inherited Marcus Garvey's anticolonial mantle and paved the way for the postcolonial prophet Bob Marley.

³¹ Ibid., 191.

³² Ibid., 224-225.

Chapter Five

Rastafari, Reggae, and Revolution

Ganja, Dreadlocks, Ital

Leonard Howell offered the first theological treatise on Rastafarianism in *The Promised Key* and started the first Rastafarian community in Pinnacle, and by doing so, he laid a foundation for the Rastafarian movement to flourish. Over the years, Rastafarianism evolved from a theology to a worldview, from a religious consciousness to a religious community, and from an island denomination to a global movement. The development of Rastafarianism into a religious tradition resulted in the emergence of distinctive Rastafarian sociocultural practices that were theologically grounded and challenged normative Jamaican legality. These Rastafarian practices were influenced by numerous local and global cultures, and soon came to encapsulate the essence of what it meant to be a Rastafarian. Such practices include the sacramental ingestion of cannabis (*ganja*), the growth of matted hair (*dreadlocks*), and the development of a special vegetarian cuisine (*ital*). These sociocultural practices created an indelible image of the Rastafarian, one that Bob Marley ultimately embraced as he continued the prophetic lineage of his predecessors Marcus Garvey and Leonard Howell.

Perhaps no community in the world is more associated with the consumption of cannabis than the Rastafarians. Despite the fact that other religious, shamanistic, and mystical communities ingest cannabis as a form of sacrament, within the popular imagination, Rastafarianism has a special and unique connection to cannabis. To properly understand the Rastafarian relationship with cannabis, it is necessary to first situate cannabis ingestion within a historical and religious context.

Although many Rastafarians claim that ingesting cannabis is a way for them to reclaim their rightful African heritage, cannabis actually arrived to Jamaica via South Asia. Specifically, cannabis was brought to Jamaica by the East Indian migration of indentured laborers to Jamaica, which began in 1845. In fact, cannabis is still popularly and legally known in Jamaica by its Hindi etymological designation of *ganja*. In India, *ganja* has been used in religious rituals and ceremonies for thousands of years. In his article “Rastafarianism: The Indian Connection,” Ajai Mansingh claims that the Rastafarian sacramental ingestion of *ganja* was directly influenced by these ancient Indian *ganja* rites which were directly transmitted to black Jamaicans by East Indian indentured laborers during Hindu religious ceremonies. Mansingh writes:

After certain ceremonies which involved the smoking of *ganja*, the congregation would return to the home of the host, chanting and shouting “Jai Kali Mai!” Drinking of *bhang* (marijuana), smoking of *ganja*, hailing the goddess, and dancing and singing preceded the dinner of curried goat and bhat. Curious Afro-Jamaicans would always eavesdrop at a distance in hidden places. Some of them would join the festivities as guests.¹

Whereas Jamaica’s *ganja* culture has South Asian roots, the Rastafarian sacramental usage of *ganja* is Biblically inspired. According to Rastafarian theology, there are specific Biblical injunctions and sources that mandate the sacramental ingestion of *ganja*. For example:

Rastas point to Genesis 1:29 to make the argument that *ganja* was made by God for human use: “And God said, Behold, I have given you every *herb* bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; *to you it shall be for meat*” (King James Version). To justify their claim concerning the therapeutic value of *ganja*, they also cite Revelation 22:2: “the leaves of the tree were for the *healing of the nation*” (King James Version). Rastas also cite apocryphal

¹ Lee, 99.

sources, which indicate that *ganja* grew on the grave of Solomon, which is why it is regarded as the wisdom weed.²

As is the case with many religious communities, the Rastafarian interpretation of the Bible directly shapes their liturgical practices. By grounding their *ganja* consumption within a scriptural tradition, many Rastafarians view their *ganja* rituals as a central component of their spiritual practice.

Not only is *ganja* ingestion central to Rastafarian liturgy and spirituality, it also directly challenges normative Jamaican legality. The fact that *ganja* has been criminalized in Jamaica since its arrival from India essentially renders Rastafarian sacramental practices illicit. Therefore, the practice of sacramental Rastafarianism through *ganja* was initially an anticolonial act and it remains illegal in Jamaica today. Many Rastafarians see the criminalization of *ganja* as another example of how the police state serves as Babylon's wicked agent, seeking to destroy the truth and all that is righteous as represented by Ras Tafari.

Another Rastafarian practice that is possibly influenced by the East Indian migration is the wearing of matted hair, referred to by Rastafarians as *dreadlocks*. Allegedly, the first photograph of a person wearing *dreadlocks* in Jamaica was that of an East Indian indentured laborer. In India, itinerant mystical ascetics have worn *dreadlocks* for thousands of years as a way to emulate the matted hair worn by the Hindu deity Shiva, and it is highly probable that this tradition was brought to Jamaica by East Indian indentured laborers. Another theory as to the origins of the Rastafarian *dreadlocks* posits

² Ennis Barrington Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61.

that *dreadlocks* were the influence of Kenyan Mau Mau warriors and were later popularized by a Rastafarian group known as the Youth Black Faith.³

Regardless of the origins of *dreadlocks*, many Rastafarians view the wearing of *dreadlocks* in a Biblical context. Just as the sacramental consumption of *ganja* is supported by Biblical injunctions, so too is the wearing of *dreadlocks*. Specifically, popular Rastafarian theology cites the following two verses as mandating *dreadlocks*:

Leviticus 21:5: They shall not make bald spots upon their heads, or shave off the edges of their beards, or make any gashes in their flesh.⁴

Numbers 6:5: All the days of the nazirite vow no razor shall come upon the head until the time is completed for which they separate themselves to the Lord, they shall be holy; they shall let the locks of the head grow long.⁵

Similar to the Rastafarian sacramental ingestion of *ganja*, the Rastafarian practice of wearing *dreadlocks* is also a political act. There was an anticolonial aspect to the *dreadlocks* worn by Leonard Howell's followers at Pinnacle, as many Rastafarians preached that *dreadlocks* represent "African" hair as opposed to the "European" hair of the colonial government. *Dreadlocks* also serve as a physical symbol of Rastafarian identity, so that Rastafarians stand out amongst other members of Jamaican society. By making this distinction, Rastafarians convey that they are different from others as they alone are walking the righteous path, marching towards Zion while chanting down Babylon. In his article "Dread 'I' In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization," the Rastafarian scholar Ennis Edmonds highlights the symbolic political power of *dreadlocks*:

³ Barry Chevannes, "The Origin of the Dreadlocks," in *Rastafari and Other Afro-Caribbean Worldviews*, ed. Barry Chevannes (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 77.

⁴ *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 185.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

So, in responding to the Babylonian experience and in attempting to redefine their identity as Africans, Rastas have invoked certain symbols and employed symbolic activities as weapons against Babylon. All of these symbols – *dreadlocks*, Ethiopian colors, *dread* talk – are all exploding with critical significance, the essence of which is a rejection of the Babylonian character of Jamaican society and a commitment to the struggle for selfhood and dignity through the development of an African cultural identity.⁶

Another Rastafarian cultural practice that may be influenced by Indo-Jamaicans is the Rastafarian diet, which is known as *ital* (derived from “vital”) cuisine. Like the traditional East Indian diet, *ital* consists of mostly vegetarian, non-processed food, without chemical additives or preservatives. Although there are varying interpretations of what constitutes *ital* cuisine, generally *ital* is notable for its prohibition of red meat and shellfish. As is the case with *ganja* and *dreadlocks*, many Rastafarians base their *ital* diet on their interpretation of the Biblical dietary laws found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The *ital* diet also sets Rastafarian apart from normative Jamaican society by challenging mainstream morality regarding meat consumption and holistic health.

In this manner, the distinctive Rastafarian practices of *ganja*, *dreadlocks*, and *ital* cuisine are all Biblically grounded and collectively challenge normative Jamaican law and morality. It is this unique Rastafarian theology that eventually evolved into a Rastafarian worldview and lifestyle made possible through a prophetic interpretation of Biblical law. By employing a hermeneutic of suspicion, Rastafarian theology transforms the Bible into a narrative of black liberation and black divinity as represented by Ras Tafari. In their article “The Black Biblical Hermeneutic of Rastafari,” Nathaniel Murrell and Lewin Williams explain how Rastafarian theology reinterprets the Bible in order to contextualize its teachings as part of the Rastfarian experience:

⁶ Ennis Barrington Edmonds, “Dread ‘I’ In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization” in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, 33.

Prior to the advent of Rastafari, meaning and understanding of Scripture in Jamaica were predetermined by those who applied the Bible to people's lives without due regard to their historical experience or social and economic condition. Rastafari challenged this and established a new basis for approaching the Scriptures by making use of their own creative *hermeneutical privilege* as a once oppressed group. The Rastafarians' own ethnic experience, historical and cultural background, and social and economic reality are not divorced from their reading of and meditation on the Bible. The questions, issues, and challenges that surface from their social existence, which are of a most comprehensive nature, are lived through in relation to the Scriptures. Reading the Bible from where they are, seeing what is redeemable there for their own reality, they detect convergence, correspondance, and continuities between the story of the people in the Bible and their own story in Jamaica.⁷

Not only are the Rastafarian social practices of *ganja*, *dreadlocks*, and *ital* cuisine grounded in a Rastafarian Biblical interpretation, but these practices are also deeply influenced by the East Indian migration of indentured laborers to Jamaica. In their study *Home away from Home: 150 Years of Indian Presence in Jamaica*, Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh discuss the impact that the Indo-Jamaicans had upon Rastafarian cultural practices. They contend:

The practice of sacramental smoking of *ganja*, honoring goddess *Kali* while smoking *ganja*, calling locks as *jata* and locksmen as *jatavi*, vegetarianism, hailing Lord as *Jah Rastafari* which is phoenetically similar to *Jai Ramji* and different from any African or European practice, isolating menstruating women from the kitchen, and prayers have all been adopted from the Indo-Jamaicans. Robert Hill had interviewed one of Howell's associates who credited a Hindu named Laloo of Golden Grove, St. Thomas with introducing the 'black supremacy' concept into Rastafarianism.⁸

Thus, through this interesting and often neglected piece of history, the Rastafarian emphasis on the consumption of *ganja*, the wearing of the *dreadlocks*, and the eating of

⁷ Nathan Samuel Murrell and Lewin Williams, "The Black Biblical Hermeneutics of Rastafari" in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, 343.

⁸ Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh, *Home Away From Home: 150 Years of Indian Presence in Jamaica 1845-1995* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999), 119-120.

ital food are all directly influenced by the mystical and ascetic traditions of India. There has long been a historic community of mystical *sadhus* in South Asia who have worn *dreadlocks*, ingested *ganja* as a sacrament, subsisted on a vegetarian diet, and lived an intentionally itinerant lifestyle for literally thousands of years. This is similar to the paradigmatic Rastafarian, known simply as a *dread*; like the *sadhu*, a *dread* smokes *ganja* as sacrament, wears *dreadlocks*, eats *ital* food, and rejects legal notions of land ownership. So despite the dearth of scholarly research on the subject, it seems that Indo-Jamaican culture dramatically impacted Rastafarian socio-cultural customs.

Roots, Rock, Reggae

As is the case with many mystical movements throughout the world, Rastafarianism really began reaching a larger audience through the development and distribution of its spiritual and prophetic music. Rastafarianism's associated musical tradition became known as reggae, and many of Rastafarianism's most popular prophets, such as Bob Marley, Burning Spear, and Joseph Hill were also reggae's brightest stars. Reggae music gave Rastafarianism its own popular culture, a forum and platform from which to spread the message of Haile Selassie's divinity and chant down the neocolonial practices of Babylon. Even though reggae is closely associated with Rastafarian theology in the popular imagination, the fact is that reggae evolved from a synergistic blend of Caribbean, African, and American music.

Ultimately, reggae music has its musical and lyrical roots in the two hundred and fifty year historical experience of black slavery in Jamaica. The music of Jamaican slaves was African influenced liberation music, spiritual at its core but political in its content. In

his seminal work on reggae music entitled *Reggae Bloodlines: In Search of the Music and Culture of Jamaica*, Stephen Davis explicates reggae's slavery roots:

The roots of reggae music are fixed in slavery. Slave orchestras were formed by several of the rich planters and entertained at such slave holidays as End of Crop Time, Piccaninny Christmas, Recreation Time, and the Grandee Balls. Rhythms, songs, and dances that are purely African have survived in rural Jamaica well into the twentieth century. A 1924 study of possible survivals of African song in Jamaica identifies African-derived work songs and graves songs in Western Jamaica's Cockpit Country as featuring part singing, antiphonal call-response chanting, and the repetition of single short musical phrases – all of which are characteristic of reggae. Among the Cockpit Maroon tribes – descendants of runaway slaves who fought the British to a draw a hundred years before Jamaican abolition and treated themselves into an autonomous nation that still exists – the researchers of the 1924 study collected songs (called Coromantee songs by the Maroons) that speak of venerable African story figures.⁹

In this manner, reggae's slavery roots connect a rich African musical heritage with the Maroon political project. Just as slavery in the United States created the canvas on which black American musical idioms such as gospel, blues, and jazz were painted, slavery in Jamaica inspired distinctive Caribbean musical genres, of which reggae is the most popular and renowned.

Despite reggae's roots in the Jamaican slavery experience, most reggae scholars trace reggae's evolution to the Jamaican musical forms of mento, ska, and rock-steady. Although mento became popular in 1930s with the rise of recording technology, it was directly influenced by slave music in Jamaica much earlier. Mento not only inspired reggae in terms of its musicality but also in terms of its social philosophy. Verena Reckord chronicles the impact of mento upon reggae:

Mento is officially considered the first stage in the development of Jamaican popular music even though, according to our social historians, it

⁹ Stephen Davis and Peter Simon, *Reggae Bloodlines: In Search of the Music and Culture of Jamaica* (De Capo Press, 1992), 9-10.

emerged in the nineteenth century as a figure in the popular quadrille dance of the time. Outside of the quadrille set of dances, mento is a song and dance form which was the *métier* of troubadours of the early days, who carried news, gossip and social commentary in lively songs and dances, playing on their mostly homemade drums, bamboo fifes and fiddles. It was then a music of the majority and expressed the people's views and their philosophy of life, not unlike the social role that reggae plays today.¹⁰

Mento is Jamaica's first indigenous musical form and is considered to be folk music, similar in sound and style to the calypso tradition of neighboring Trinidad and Tobago. Derived from both African and European influences, mento typically incorporates acoustic instruments such as the guitar, banjo, hand drunks, and rhumba box, which is a large thumb piano that played the bass part.¹¹

The early 1950s saw the rise of sound system culture in urban Jamaica, and sound systems soon began to replace live bands as the primary form of musical entertainment. Sound systems were mobile sound units that enabled disc jockeys (DJs) to play a dance or party and allowed the promoter to cut the overhead expenses associated with a live band. From the new sound systems emerged a new DJ culture, and these early Jamaican sound system DJs served as the progenitors of the American turntable DJ culture later known as rap.

The potent combination of mento music and sound system culture eventually produced the popular Jamaican musical style of ska. Ska initially started as a dance but in time it evolved into its own musical form, which Stephen Davis describes in *Reggae Bloodlines*:

The music was vibrant and loping; the dancers at the sound systems made up a dance to it and called the dance *ska*, and in time that became the

¹⁰ Verena Reckord, "Reggae, Rastafarianism and Cultural Identity," in *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub*, ed. Chris Potash (London: Schirmer Books, 1997), 5.

¹¹ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *The Rough Guide to Reggae* (London: Rough Guides, 2001), 7.

name for Jamaica R&B. Ska. Cheerful, riddled with funky brass sections, disorganized, almost random. Ska was mento, Stateside R&B, and Jamaicans coming to terms with electric guitars and amplification. The sounds systems became even more popular, and to get a bigger boom outdoors the deejays discovered all they had to do to both satisfy and stun their audiences was to turn the bass knobs all the way up to the pain threshold.¹²

Characterized by the accented rhythms on the offbeat, a walking bass line, and recurring horn riffs, ska's popularity skyrocketed. Ska became Jamaica's most popular musical style in the early 1960s, at around the same time the country was granted its independence, and ska provided the nation its soundtrack as it moved from colonialism to postcolonialism. New ska artists brought Jamaica's indigenous sounds to a global audience for the first time, and the most famous ska artists of the time included Derrick Morgan, Prince Buster, Desmond Dekker, Toots & the Maytals, and the Skatalites.

Just as mento evolved into ska, ska evolved into rock-steady. Like ska, rock-steady began as a dance craze and grew into a musical genre. Rock-steady slowed down ska's upbeat tempo and eliminated ska's distinctive walking bass lines.¹³ Rock-steady emerged in the mid-1960s at a time when young Jamaicans from the country were pouring into urban areas looking for work. Rock-steady's lyrics reflected this new urban angst, and rock-steady produced politically provocative songs that challenged normative social justice. Stephen Davis describes rock steady's distinctive sound and politicized lyrics:

The music was called rock-steady very aptly; as a dance beat it was *steadier* and more dependable than the vagaries of ska. The sound was more substantial and carried more internal meaning than the airiness of the best of ska. Lyrical content exposed the consciousness of the artist for the first time. No longer were songs exclusively about love and making love, the preoccupations of ska; a rock-steady tune might deal with the police,

¹² Davis, 14.

¹³ Barrow and Dalton, 59.

hungry children, or even the disc jockey U Roy's astounding evocation of Dubcek and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in his version of "Listen to the Teacher."¹⁴

In this manner, rock-steady served as an intermediary link between ska and reggae. By slowing down ska's upbeat tempo and politicizing ska's lyrics, rock-steady provided a blueprint for reggae music, which took rock-steady to the next level in terms of eclectic instrumentation, political lyricism, and global popularity.

Whereas ska emerged in the early 1960s and rock-steady was popular in the mid-1960s, reggae arrived on the scene in the late 1960s. Reggae differentiates itself from rock-steady as it employs a dominant drums and bass backdrop, which reggae musicians call *riddim*. The first time the term "reggae" was used in a song was in 1968, when Toots & the Maytals released the popular song "Do the Reggay."¹⁵ Despite the fact that Toots & the Maytals were the first to publicly use the term "reggae," scholars still debate the etymological root of the term. There are at least three plausible theories as to its philological origins; (1) "reggae" originates from the term "regus" meaning "king" so reggae is the music of royalty (i.e. Haile Selassie), (2) "reggae" comes from the Sanskrit term "*raga*," which refers to the musical notes in a scale,¹⁶ and (3) "reggae" is derived from the Jamaican patois term "streggae," a popular term for a street prostitute. Although the origins of the term "reggae" are debatable, reggae's potency and popularity are not. When reggae arrived on the scene, it served as a catalyst to challenge the prevailing political views of the time. Reggae experts Stephen Davis and Roger Steffens respectively describe reggae's early prophetic impact:

¹⁴ Davis, 16.

¹⁵ Barrow and Dalton, 93.

¹⁶ If reggae is indeed etymologically derived from the Sanskrit/Hindi term *raga*, it serves as yet another historical example of the East Indian influence on Rastafarianism.

The reggae sound was even slightly slower than rock-steady and much more powerful due to the emphasis of the bass as the principal melodic drive of most songs. Social, political, and spiritual concepts entered the lyrics more and more, until the reggae musicians became Jamaica's prophets, social commentators, and shamans.¹⁷

Roots reggae is God inspired music so it has to have God as its central theme. Part of talking about God is mouthing prophecies. You don't always know where they came from, but you hear them in your head and they have the ring of truth, and it is your duty to share them.¹⁸

The early reggae pioneers showcased reggae's sizzling new sounds and provocative new lyrics, and they collectively gave voice to a generation of disenfranchised youth living in Jamaica's urban ghettos. The most popular of these early Jamaican reggae bands include Toots & the Maytals, the Upsetters, the Heptones, the Crystalites, and the Beltones. Soon a number of reggae sub-genres emerged, such as dub and lover's rock, and these forms set the stage for what was to become the most popular and well known genre of reggae music – roots reggae.

Roots reggae emerged as Jamaica's most famous export in the 1970s. Roots reggae also became synonymous with Rastafarianism and is often referred to as Rastafarian music. Musically, roots reggae synthesized the sounds of Jamaican ska and rock-steady with American rhythm and blues and African percussion. Lyrically, roots reggae invoked the political doctrines of Black Nationalism and repatriation and the theological doctrines of prophecy and redemption. The rise of Rastafarianism and the popularity of roots reggae were intimately and intricately connected and a convergence of factors, both in Jamaica and abroad, contributed to the unprecedented popularity of both Rastafarianism and roots reggae. But ultimately, it was Bob Marley who successfully

¹⁷ Davis, 17.

¹⁸ Roger Steffens interview, 5/28/08.

packaged, promoted, and promulgated roots reggae as Rastafarian music to a global audience. According to *The Rough Guide to Reggae*:

There were a couple of likely reasons for this popularity. Michael Manley's initially well-received PNP government played a part in turning the ghetto youth towards Rastafarianism, with its message of spiritual and social salvation. The Black Power movement in the United States had also made an impact by then, though the message of American militants such as Eldridge Cleaver and Angela Davis found more of an audience with young intellectuals than with the ghetto dwellers. By the mid-1970s even the intelligentsia were switching to Rastafarianism. The other important – perhaps clinching – factor in Rastafarianism's wide acceptance was that the cult was embraced by all three of the Wailers, the first reggae act to have an album financed by a foreign record company. By mid-decade all three were wearing their hair in dreadlocks – as celebrated by the title of what was in effect Bob Marley's first solo album, *Natty Dread*.¹⁹

More than any form of Jamaican music that preceded it, roots reggae explicitly wrestled with issues of urban poverty, government oppression, and existential angst. It also provided a mystical message for the insurgent Rastafarian community in Jamaica. In this manner, roots reggae simultaneously served as political liberation music and prophetic spiritual music. The most prolific practitioners of roots reggae remain amongst the most famous reggae musicians ever, and they are revered not only as musicians, but also as mystics, critics, poets, and Rastafarian prophets. These icons include Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Burning Spear, and Joseph Hill. Just as mento, ska, and rocksteady inspired the evolution of roots reggae, roots reggae cleared the path for later sub-genres of reggae, such as dancehall in the 1980s, reggaeton in the 1990s, and the hip-hop sounds of reggae in the 2000s. Still, no sub-genre of reggae has ever been as popular, beloved, and revered as roots reggae.

The history of mento, ska, rock steady, and roots reggae is also the narrative of Jamaica's political moods and aspirations, from slavery to independence, from

¹⁹ Barrow and Dalton, 146.

colonialism to postcolonialism. Mento represented the sexualized voice of repressed colonial subjects, while ska was emblematic of the optimism and joy of national independence. Rock steady articulated the postcolonial angst of disenfranchised urban youth, while roots reggae offered the mystical inspiration and religious redemption of Rastafarianism. Collectively, these indigenous Jamaican musical genres represented a powerful prophetic disembodied voice in need of a prophet; this prophetic voice found its prophet in Bob Marley.

Chapter Six The Prophetic Life and Lyrics of Bob Marley

Soul Rebel

Robert “Bob” Nesta Marley was born on February 6th, 1945 in the small village of Nine Mile in St. Ann Parish, Jamaica. His father was Norval Sinclair Marley, a white Jamaican of English descent and a Marine captain who rarely saw his son; his mother was Cedella Booker, a poor, young, black Jamaican from the country. Young Marley’s biracial heritage marginalized him amongst black Jamaicans and his white ancestry would haunt throughout his life. In an interview, Marley described how his racially conflicted childhood eventually edified his faith in Ras Tafari:

My father was a white and my mother was black. Dem call me half-caste or whatever. Well, me deh pon nobody’s side. Me no deh pon da black man’s side nor da white man’s side. Me deh pon God’s side, da one who create me and cause me to come from black and white.¹

As a young child, Marley was primarily raised by his grandfather Omeriah Malcolm, who was respected throughout Nine Mile as an herbalist and as someone who possessed the power and knowledge to combat *obeah* (black magic).² Based on his unique upbringing, Marley was exposed to both Jamaican rural life as well as various Jamaican practices of mysticism and magic. Years later, these formative experiences would surface in the lyrics of his songs.

When Bob Marley was ten years old, he moved from the village of Nine Mile to the city of Kingston with his mother. They resided in a tenement area called Trenchtown, a neighborhood notorious in Kingston for its crime and poverty. At that point, Cedella

¹ *Time Will Tell* (Immortal DVD, 2006).

² Timothy White, *Catch a Fire: The Life of Bob Marley* (New York: Henry Holy and Company, 1983), 54.

Booker moved in with a man named Thaddeus “Toddy” Livingston, with whom she had a daughter. Toddy Livingston had a son named Neville Livingston, and Neville and Bob quickly became half-brothers and best friends. Neville would later be known as Bunny Wailer, one of the founding members of the Wailers.

When Bob Marley was fourteen years old, he dropped out of school and focused on making music with Livingston. Through their music mentor Joe Higgs, they met another aspiring musician named Peter McIntosh, unaware at the time that their encounter would have profound reverberations throughout the annals of music history. Peter McIntosh, later known as Peter Tosh, would be the third foundational member of the Wailers, and Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer became the core of a reggae band that had a number of manifestations and names – the Teenagers, the Wailing Rude Boys, the Wailing Wailers, and finally the Wailers. Years later, Chris Blackwell of Island Records would ask Marley how he came up with the name the Wailers:

“Why,” Blackwell asked Bob, “did you name the group the Wailers?”

“Cause as yout’s we begin like dem people inna de Bible, wha’ gwan de Exodus.”

“I don’t understand,” said Blackwell.

“We call ourselves de Wailers,” said Marley, his keen eyes luminous, “because we started out cryin.”³

At their genesis, the Wailers were caught up in the ska /rock-steady sound and the Rude Boy ethos the music embraced. The term “Rude Boy” signified a delinquent or a criminal, and it described the mood of Kingston at a time when urban violence and youth unemployment were skyrocketing. The Rude Boy culture was a mix of political disenfranchisement, musical creativity, fashion statements, and street skills. Indeed Bob

³ Ibid., 250.

Marley's nickname "Tuff Gong" (later the name of his record label) was based on his fierceness as a street fighter.⁴

In 1963, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer recorded their first single as the Wailers. The track, entitled "Simmer Down," was a plea for peace and calm in the increasingly violent Kingston tenement yards. "Simmer Down" was a success and reached number one on the Jamaican charts. Unlike other popular music at the time, "Simmer Down" had a sociopolitical message of reconciliation that struck a nerve with the urban poor in Jamaica. Bob Marley biographer Timothy White describes the impact "Simmer Down" had on the Jamaican music scene:

During the height of the mento era, there had been plenty of mildly controversial records available, most of them offering calypso-style commentary of current events or lewd observations about social mores, but "Simmer Down" was something quite new: music of the *sufferah*, a crude, spontaneous volley from the psychic depths of the Dungle underclass. The people who ordinarily had no voice in creole society, who were not spoken of in polite circles, depicted on billboards, quoted in newspapers or singled out in any fashion beyond the briefest mention of crimes they'd committed outside their ghetto enclaves, were now a force in the local arena of ideas. Most significant of all, the shanty-dwellers were addressing their own kind.⁵

"Simmer Down" marked the moment of the Wailers' arrival on the national scene, and over the next ten years the Wailers would record with some of Jamaica's most innovative music producers, including Clement "Sir Coxsone" Dodd, Lee "Scratch" Perry, and Leslie Kong. But the Wailers' success was primarily limited to Jamaica until they signed with Chris Blackwell's Island Records based out of the UK, and became the first Jamaican reggae band to be distributed by an international record label.

⁴ Rude Boy culture was immortalized in the 1972 film *The Harder they Come*, which featured reggae singer Jimmy Cliff in a starring role about a Rude Boy struggling to make it in the cutthroat Jamaican music industry.

⁵ White, 159.

In 1973, the Wailers released two records on Island Records, *Catch a Fire* and *Burnin*. By this point, the Wailers had evolved from icons of Rude Boy culture to practitioners of the Rastafarian faith, and they had started to grow *dreadlocks* and promote *ganja*. In fact, the cover of *Catch a Fire*, which was the world's first exposure to Bob Marley, flaunts Marley with his twisted locks smoking an enormous *spliff* (conical cannabis cigarette). By *Burnin*, the Wailers were artistically declaring their allegiance to Ras Tafari in their classic Rastafarian anthem "Rastaman Chant." The fact that Rastafarian leader Mortimer Planno mentored the Wailers gave them even more legitimacy as Rastafarian ambassadors.

Collectively, *Catch a Fire* and *Burnin* contain many famous Wailers songs, such as "Slave Driver," "Stir it Up," "Get Up, Stand Up," and "I Shot the Sheriff." Despite the fact that these albums were critically and commercially acclaimed upon their release and are now considered to be classic roots reggae albums, the Wailers essentially received no monetary compensation from Island Records. In fact, Chris Blackwell sent them an enormous bill despite promising to underwrite the UK concert tour they did in support of the albums.⁶ By 1974, the Wailers disbanded and the founding members – Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer – embarked upon solo recording careers. Torn apart by financial hardship, creative differences, ego battles, and touring pressures, the original Wailers would never perform again. In 1974, Bob Marley released his first solo album with a newly configured Wailers band entitled *Natty Dread*. *Natty Dread* showcased Marley's devout Rastafarian faith and militant politics, and earned him a global following. Over the next seven years until his death, Marley experienced a meteoric rise

⁶ Roger Steffens interview, 5/28/08.

to superstardom, effectively becoming the first Third World global superstar, while selling millions of records and touring sold-out arenas throughout the world.

In 1977, Bob Marley injured his right toe in a soccer game, and when it did not properly heal, he visited a physician who diagnosed a melanoma in his toe. Citing the Biblical vow of the Nazirite as articulated in *Leviticus 21:5*, Marley refused to amputate his toe and the cancer soon metastasized into his lungs and brain. On September 21, 1980, while jogging in NYC's Central Park, Marley collapsed and was rushed to the hospital. Marley sought alternative medical treatment from the Dr. Josef Issels, an unorthodox German physician who developed *Ganzheutstheorie* (whole body theory) therapy to combat cancer.⁷ On May 11, 1981, in the company of his family, Robert Nesta Marley passed away. His last words to his son Ziggy were "Money can't buy life."⁸

Although much of Bob Marley's worldwide fame is posthumous, it is difficult to overestimate how popular and influential Marley was during his lifetime. As the international ambassador for reggae music, Jamaican culture, and the Rastafarian religion, Marley symbolized suffering and redemption, and inspired oppressed and marginalized communities around the world to stand up for their rights. His music and his life became mythologized and celebrated across the globe, evidenced by the worldwide outpouring of sympathy that followed his untimely death at the age of thirty-six.

While he was alive, Bob Marley received numerous international honors, including Jamaica's Order of Merit and the United Nation's Peace Medal of the Third World. Yet like many historical prophets, Marley's popularity exponentially increased

⁷ White, 312.

⁸ Roger Steffens and Peter Simon, *Reggae Scrapbook* (San Rafael: Insight Editions, 2007), 95.

after his death, and his posthumous fame catapulted him to mythical status. After his death, Marley received many additional accolades, including his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, his Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, and his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 1999, *Time* magazine chose Marley's album *Exodus* as the greatest album of the twentieth century and many music critics hail him as the most important figure in twentieth century music.

But even more enduring than these posthumous awards is his postmodern prophetic legacy. For many Rastafarians, Bob Marley's songs are parables and his discography is canonical. For millions of others, Marley is more than just a musical icon. He is revered for his social conscience, spiritual mysticism, and political courage, and he continues to inspire disenfranchised communities by offering them the prophetic promise of worldly justice and divine redemption.

Chant Down Babylon

Like many beloved prophets before him, Bob Marley's message was spread through his words and his music. Marley used proverbs and parables to articulate the hopes and fears of his people. The use of such metaphorical language is derived both from the Bible and the Jamaican folk tradition he was nurtured by during his childhood. In *Reggae Wisdom: Proverbs in Jamaican music*, Anand Prahlaad discusses how Marley appropriated proverbial lyrics in order to communicate his prophetic voice to legions of fans throughout the world:

Undoubtedly, Marley is a consummate proverb master, and this aspect of his lyrics, performances, and persona played a significant part in his popularity and in the high regard with which he is held by fans, fellow artists, and all those associated with reggae music in some capacity. More

than any other artist, he epitomized the warrior/priest, and a major component of his appeal derives from the auras he so successfully projected of the mystic, visionary, freedom fighter, and spiritual guide. An integral feature of these auras was the use of proverbs, which contributed perhaps more than any other single rhetorical component. Hence, Marley's stature exemplifies, along with other things, the prevailing power of the proverb in modern societies and, particularly, in the Third World and amongst societies in the African Diaspora.⁹

Marley authored and performed some of the most popular songs in recorded music history and it is generally accepted that his work fell into three distinct thematic categories – love songs, political songs, and devotional songs. Marley's love songs reveal his intimate side by sensually expressing love lost and found. Love songs like "Waiting in Vain," "Turn Your Lights Down Low," "Could You Be Loved," "One Love," and "No Woman, No Cry" showcase Marley's heart-wrenching emotionality and his prowess as a lover. Marley's political songs have become revolutionary anthems around the world, making Marley a universal icon for insurrection and revolution. Marley's political songs are a call to action for oppressed people throughout the world, and include songs such as "Get Up, Stand Up," "I Shot the Sheriff," "Africa Unite," "Exodus," and "Revolution." Marley's devotional songs are in praise of God, specifically Haile Selassie, also designated as Jah and Ras Tafari. These devotional songs are religious at their core, and Marley's religious convictions are on full display in songs such as "Rastaman Chant," "Natural Mystic," "Forever Loving Jah," "Jah Live", and "Give Thanks and Praises."

Despite the accepted distinction between Marley's love songs, political songs, and devotional songs, such a characterization is misleading, as all of Marley's songs are deeply theological in nature. Because Marley fundamentally viewed the world through

⁹ Anand Prahald, *Reggae Wisdom: Proverbs in Jamaican Music* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 205.

his Rastafarian theology, his beliefs regarding sexuality and politics were completely shaped by his interpretation of the Bible. Accordingly, Marley's love songs, political songs, and devotional songs are all theologically grounded, many of them referencing specific Biblical passages, figures, and events. Because Marley's lyrics are the most authentic available articulation of his theology, an exegetical interpretation of Marley's lyrics highlights his prophetic message. For the purposes of *pop-propheticism*, the entire collection of Marley's recorded work serves as canonical literature for the Rastafarian tradition.

As Bob Marley's life progressed, his lyrics became more even more deliberate in their distillation of Rastafarian theology and Pan-Africanism. Indeed, his final three studio albums – *Survival*, *Uprising*, and *Confrontation* – are replete with Rastafarian imagery and pleas for African political unity. As a trilogy, these three albums represent a prophetic Rastafarian vision. Anthony Bogues refers to these albums as a “memory text”:

How did this “memory text” function in the verbal works of Bob Marley? We already know that central to Rastafari doctrine is the notion of Dread history, and that one kind of difference between this form of history and the conventional narratives of history is time. Rastafari conflates linear time. History functions as a marker of the present. The internal markers of Marley's “memory text” are slavery, displacement, black survival, redemption, celebration of ordinary people, and praise for Jah. These markers coalesce in the themes that frame his last three concept albums: *Survival*, *Uprising*, and *Confrontation*.¹⁰

Bob Marley & the Wailer's 1979 album *Survival* was a defiant call for a unified Africa and it showcased Marley's prophetic postcolonial voice. The politically charged album features Marley anthems such as “Babylon System,” “So Much Trouble in the World,” and “Survival,” and the cover of the album displays the flags of all the African

¹⁰ Bogues, 198.

nations. The prophetic tone of the album is embodied by the lyrics of the song “Africa Unite”:

How good and how pleasant it would be
Before God and man,
To see the unification of all Africans.
As its been said already, let it be done
We are the children of the Rastaman.
We are the children of the higher man.

Africa unite! Cause the children wanna come home.
Africa unite! Cause were moving right out of Babylon,
And were grooving to our Father’s land.

Unite for the benefit of your children.
Unite for its later than you think.
Africa awaits its creators, Africa awaiting its creators.
Africa you’re my forefather cornerstone,
Unite for the Africans abroad.
Unite for the Africans a yard.
Africa unite!¹¹

By invoking Rastafarian images of Babylon, “Africa Unite” addressed the political phenomenon of African unification within a specifically Biblical context. Furthermore, Marley’s Biblical paternalism is evidenced in his reference to his “Father’s” land of Ethiopia, where Africa’s “children” want to return. Accordingly, “Africa Unite” is more than just a song; it serves as an awakening call for postcolonial Africa by creatively fusing the militant Pan-Africanism of Marcus Garvey, the Biblical repatriation beliefs of Leonard Howell, and the roots reggae redemption of Bob Marley. In short, “Africa Unite” is emblematic of Bob Marley’s potent prophetic politics while firmly establishing him within the prophetic lineage of Marcus Garvey and Leonard Howell.

¹¹ Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Survival* (Tuff Gong, 1979).

In 1980, Bob Marley & the Wailers released *Uprising*, which proved to be the last studio album Marley released before his death the following year. The album cover depicts an insurgent and triumphant *dreadlocked* Marley in front of the sun shining over distant mountain peaks. The cover image is evocative of the courageous and jubilant songs on *Uprising*, which features Marley classics such as “Coming In From the Cold,” “Zion Train,” and “Could You Be Loved.” But the *Uprising* track which best captured Marley’s prophetic voice is a poignant acoustic song entitled “Redemption Song;” a song which would ultimately serve as Marley’s epitaph. Knowing that his time was limited, Marley invoked his most intimate prophetic voice on “Redemption Song”:

Old pirates, yes they rob I;
Sold I to the merchant ships.
Minutes after they took I,
From the bottomless pit.
But my hand was made strong,
By the hand of the Almighty.
We forward in this generation,
Triumphantly.

Won’t you help to sing,
These songs of freedom?
Cause all I ever have,
Redemption songs,
These songs of freedom.

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;
None but ourselves can free our minds.
Have no fear for atomic energy,
Cause none of them can stop the time.
How long shall they kill our prophets,
While we stand aside and look?
Some say its just a part of it,
We’ve got to fulfill da book.¹²

“Redemption Song” reveals Marley’s profound introspection and uncompromising honesty, and illustrates the political/spiritual dimensions of

¹² Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Uprising* (Tuff Gong, 1980).

slavery/salvation. In the first verse, Marley invokes the voice of the African slave, brought to the New World in bondage and chains, sold to “the merchant ships.” The slave’s strength and salvation ultimately reside in his belief in God and his faith in the liberating power of music, his “redemption songs, songs of freedom.” In the second verse, Marley invokes the voice of the prophet, extolling mankind to emancipate itself from “mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.” Marley reminds humanity that true liberation lies within and that it should not follow false prophets because “none of them can stop the time.” In the last stanza of “Redemption Song,” Marley’s prophetic voice turns inward; he laments “how long shall they kill our prophets” and ultimately concedes that “we’ve got to fulfill da book.” On “Redemption Song,” the last song on Marley’s last studio album, Marley’s prophetic voice comes full circle, and in the face of death, he bravely bares the sounds of his soul.

Confrontation, the final Bob Marley & the Wailers studio album, was posthumously released in 1983, two years after Marley’s untimely death. Longtime Marley graphic artist collaborator Neville Garrick designed the cover art for *Confrontation*, which references the story of St. George and the Dragon by depicting a triumphant Marley on a white horse slaying the dragon of Babylon with his musical sword. *Confrontation* resurrects Marley’s prophetic voice on songs such as “Buffalo Soldier,” “Chant Down Babylon,” and “Rastaman Live Up.” Marley’s devotional spirit and faith in Ras Tafari is on display one last time in “Give Thanks and Praises”:

Give thanks and praises to the Most High! Jah!
Give thanks and praises so high!
He will not deceive us my bredren,
He will only lead us again.
Oh take that veil from off of your eyes,
Look into the future of realize.

Noah had three sons – Ham, Shem and Japheth;
And in Ham is known to be the Prophet!
Glory to Jah the Prophet is come,
Through all these ages,
Glory to Jah the Prophet is come,
Through all these stages.

When my soul was hurting deep within,
And I'm worrying to be free, desperately.
So guide and protect I and I, oh Jah, Jah,
Through all these ages.
Guide and protect I and I, oh Jah, Jah
Through all these stages.

Rastafari is His Name! Jah!
If Jah didn't love I, if I didn't love I,
Would I be around today?
Would I be around to say?
Give Thanks and Praises!¹³

“Give Thanks and Praises” is a testament to Bob Marley’s steadfast and unwavering devotion to Ras Tafari. As Marley lay upon his deathbed, his convictions and his faith deepened, and even though he was in tremendous pain, he still jubilantly and passionately gave “thanks and praises” to Ras Tafari. In “Give Thanks and Praises,” Marley cites the Biblical lineage of Noah in order to theologically establish Ras Tafari as a divine African king. Marley recounts that “Noah had three sons – Ham, Shem, and Jaspeth” but reminds his listeners that “Ham is known to be the Prophet.” The Hamitic lineage has long been linked to Africa, and Marley Biblically legitimizes Ras Tafari by situating him within Ham’s prophetic lineage. “Give Thanks and Praises” also showcases Marley’s vulnerable side and his struggle with his personal demons; Marley croons, “when my soul was hurting deep within, and I’m worrying to be free, desperately.” On “Give Thanks and Praises,” Marley’s prophetic voice is his devotion to Ras Tafari.

¹³ Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Confrontation* (Tuff Gong, 1983).

Bob Marley's final trilogy of albums – *Survival*, *Uprising*, and *Confrontation* – lyrically represent Marley's urgent prophetic voice as he faced death. "Africa Unite" explicates Marley's prophetic politics, "Redemption Song" offers Marley's prophetic redemption, and "Give Thanks and Praises" reveals Marley's prophetic devotion. This triad of songs provides a glimpse into Marley's prophetic lyricism, but the majority of Marley's songs could serve a similar function. Ultimately, Marley's profound lyrics were singularly responsible for spreading Rastafarianism throughout the world, and in the process, Marley's songs became Rastafarian canon and Marley became canonized as a Rastafarian prophet.

Who Feels It, Knows It

Historically, the life of every prophet is remembered by that prophet's defining moments; specific situations that illustrate the prophet's extraordinary life and profound message. Like the Biblical prophets who preceded him, Bob Marley's life also contained a number of prophetic moments. These are Marley's biographical moments that are popularly recited as hagiography by his most passionate admirers; the transformative moments that define his legend and exemplify his prophetic life. This dissertation examines two such prophetic moments in Marley's life in order to illuminate the prophetic narrative that is at the heart of Marley's story. Specifically, this dissertation explores: (1) the 1976 assassination attempt on Marley's life, and (2) Marley's historical concerts.

Many prophets have historically displayed the prescient ability to predict the future; indeed such foresight legitimizes the prophet's authenticity in the minds of future

generations. Bob Marley was no exception to this prophetic precedent as he foretold his own future with remarkable accuracy on several occasions. In fact, it was a convergence of three of Marley's prophecies that provided the dramatic background for Marley's assassination attempt.

The first prophecy occurred when Bob Marley briefly lived with his mother in Delaware in 1969. At that time, he prophesized that he was going to die when turned thirty-six, a chilling prophecy which proved true.¹⁴ The second prophecy is immortalized on the back cover of Marley's 1976 album *Rastaman Vibration*, released just six months before Marley's assassination attempt. Marley cryptically reveals his belief that he is a representation of the Biblical Joseph by citing scriptural authority. In the album notes for *Rastaman Vibration*, Marley offers the blessing of Joseph:

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him; and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob, the King of Israel, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the conquering lion of the Tribe of Judah. Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the head of Joseph, and upon the head of him that, that was separated from his brethren. (Genesis 44:22-24, Revelation 19:16, Deuteronomy 33:16)¹⁵

The third prophecy took the form of a vision, where Marley envisioned his mother being shot same location he was eventually shot.¹⁶ This vision happened just a few weeks before his assassination attempt.

On December 3, 1976, two days before Bob Marley was scheduled to headline the Smile Jamaica Concert in Kingston, gunmen burst into his Kingston residence at 56 Hope Road. Bob Marley, his wife Rita Marley, and his manager Don Taylor were all shot

¹⁴ Roger Steffens and Peter Simon, *Reggae Scrapbook*, 96.

¹⁵ Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Rastaman Vibration* (Tuff Gong, 1976).

¹⁶ Roger Steffens interview, 5/28/08.

at close range, but miraculously no one was killed. Roger Steffens recounts how close Marley came to death that night and how it was his prophetic vision that ultimately saved his life:

In his vision, it was his mother being shot and because she froze in place, she didn't die. So when the gunman came in and turned to the left, they shot Don Taylor five times in the groin. They then turned to shoot Bob, and because he had the vision early he just froze in place. I always say that if he had been exhaling instead of inhaling, he would have been dead because the bullet came right across his heart and lodged into his left arm. He took that to the grave with him.¹⁷

Bob Marley's assassination attempt must be understood within the context of these three prophecies. Firstly, the failed assassination attempt strengthened Marley's prophetic belief that he would live until thirty-six, which in fact he did. Secondly, Marley's prescient foretelling on *Rastaman Vibration*, depicting how the "archers have sorely grieved him; and shot at him, and hated him," proved to be chillingly true and prophetic. Finally, Marley's prophetic vision of his mother being shot enabled him to avoid being killed by his would be assassin's bullets. In this manner, these self-fulfilling prophecies shaped the events and outcome surrounding Marley's assassination attempt.

Bob Marley ultimately viewed the attempt on his life as a function of his Rastafarian identity. In describing the assassination attempt, Marley said:

Men like we is Rasta. And we stand for the cause. Everybody knows that we don't deal with politics, neither JLP nor PNP. We're Rasta. And getting rid of Rasta is the only thing people try and do when they deal with politics cause you're not a voter.¹⁸

The fact that he survived the assassination attempt only strengthened his faith in Ras Tafari and his conviction that he was Jah's protected messenger. This is evidenced in the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Time Will Tell* (Immortal DVD, 2006).

lyrics to his 1979 song “Ambush in the Night,” a song in which Marley defiantly and emphatically declared, “They open fired on me... Protected by His Majesty!”¹⁹

Just as Bob Marley’s assassination attempt should be viewed through the lens of prophecy, so should a trio of his most memorable and celebrated concert performances; (1) the 1976 Smile Jamaica Concert, (2) the 1978 One Love Peace Concert, and (3) the 1980 Zimbabwe Independence Concert. At these concerts, singing in front of the three flags of Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie, and Ethiopia, Marley was transformed into a militant mystic. Amongst all his famous performances, these are the three that most represent the profound prophetic parameters of his music. Collectively, these three concerts demonstrate his political power and affirm his international popularity, and as Marley’s devotees construct his pop-cultural hagiography, these are the concerts that they eulogize and mythologize.

In December 1976, Bob Marley & the Wailers were scheduled to headline the Smile Jamaica Concert in Kingston, Jamaica. The concert was originally conceived of as a concert for national unity during the election but it became extremely politicized. Many believe that Marley’s assassination attempt two days before the concert occurred to prevent him from playing the concert. Despite being shot, Marley performed a scorching ninety-minute set at the Smile Jamaica Concert. Defiantly showing off his wounds, Marley was the indelible image of a survivor, a soldier for justice, and a prophet of Haile Selassie. Marley biographer Timothy White describes the prophetic elements of Marley’s performance that night:

At the close of his performance, Bob began a ritualistic dance, acting out aspects of the ambush that had almost taken his life. In Ethiopia, from Solomon’s time to Selassie’s, whenever a brave hunter killed a lion, he

¹⁹ *Survival* (Tuff Gong, 1976).

was summoned before the emperor to reenact his feat before receiving the pelt as a badge of his courage. Jamaica was witnessing the Rastafarian version of this dance in and out of the path of Death. Swaying slowly and half-steppin' to the beat, Bob opened his shirt and rolled up his left sleeve to show his wounds to the crowd. The last thing they saw before the reigning King of Reggae disappeared back into the hills was the image of the man mimicking the two-pistoled fast draw of a frontier gunslinger, his locks thrown back in triumphant laughter.²⁰

After the Smile Jamaica Concert, Bob Marley left Jamaica on a self-imposed exile to London for fourteen months and returned only to play the 1978 One Love Peace Concert in Kingston. In the backdrop of the One Love Peace Concert was the escalating violence between Jamaica's warring political parties, the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP). At the concert and under a full moon, Marley was catapulted into an ecstatic trance state during his electrifying performance. Playing the role of the mystical mediator, Marley called on to stage Michael Manley, the leader of the PNP, and Edward Seaga, the leader of the JLP. Marley clasped the hands of Manley and Seaga together in the name of peace, prosperity, and Selassie. Timothy White describes the prophetic profundity of the One Love Peace Concert:

During the Wailers' set, Bob pointed to the moon and cried out, "Da Lion of Judah will break ev'ry chain an' give us da victory again an' again!" Then, during a nerve-tingling rendition of "Jamming," he somehow induced Manley and Seaga to come up and lock hands together with his as the crowd of thirty thousand watched – initially in stunned silence, but eventually snapping out of the spell of the unlikely tableau onstage to cheer – as the two political archrivals showed frozen grins.²¹

On April 18, 1980, the newly liberated African nation-state of Zimbabwe celebrated its independence and the inauguration of its leader Robert Mugabe. Bob Marley was the headlining musical artist invited to play Zimbabwe's Independence

²⁰ White, 292.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 301. The next time Michael Manley and Edward Seaga publicly shook hands again was three years later at Bob Marley's state funeral.

Concert, an event that marked the formal transition of colonial Rhodesia to postcolonial Zimbabwe. Marley composed the song “Zimbabwe” in anticipation of the event, in which Marley implored “Africans a liberate a Zimbabwe!”²² The Independence Concert provided an international stage for Marley to consecrate the birth of a new African nation-state, but the experience also showed him that Africa was not the Promised Land he had envisioned.²³ The concert itself was emblematic of this disconnect; while Marley sang of Zimbabwe’s new freedom, thousands of people who could not get into the concert were being tear-gassed and beaten by police officers. Timothy White describes how Marley was a freedom figure for the very Zimbabwe that simultaneously disillusioned him with its oppression:

Thousands of adulatory peasants and rank-and-file members of the revolutionary army had amassed outside the arena hoping to see the performance of international reggae sovereign Bob Marley, hero of black freedom fighters everywhere and the most charismatic emissary of modern Pan-Africanism. Hearing the reggae rhythms pulsing within, wave upon wave of idolators attempted to storm the gates. Police responded with tear gas grenades and rifle volleys over their head, but the people would not be held back and they surged over the wall... Bob Marley’s singing lacked its customary snap and bite. The scene he had witnessed earlier had shattered the vision of black African solidarity he had brought with him to Zimbabwe.²⁴

These three concerts collectively showcased Bob Marley’s multifaceted *pop-propheticism*. On the biggest stages at important historical junctures, Marley simultaneously played the role of politician, mystic, mediator, musician, and prophet. Whether it was surviving an assassination attempt, bringing together Jamaica’s fighting political parties, or inaugurating a new African nation-state, Marley’s stage performances established him as a charismatic prophet of Ras Tafari, who tirelessly worked towards

²² Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Survival* (Tuff Gong, 1979).

²³ Roger Steffens interview, 5/28/08.

²⁴ White, 2.

uniting and empowering his people. Roger Steffens recounts Marley's saintly disposition and selfless orientation as well as his proactive prophetic positions:

He was conscious of the fact that he was the messenger of the Rastafari faith and that involved a certain amount of prophecy. He turned every conversation into a lecture about Rastafari... This was the motivation for everything he did and everything he wrote. He was the most selfless person I ever knew. He cared nothing for material trappings.²⁵

In short, it was not only Marley's lyrics that represented his prophetic voice, but also his performances. As a self-conscious messenger of Ras Tafari, Marley used his pop-cultural capital not to increase his own fame as so many celebrities do, but rather to spotlight the suffering of oppressed people throughout the world. Historically, prophets inspire their devotees through the difficult moments that come to define their lives; in the case of Marley, it was these three historic concerts that have come to define his prophetic life.

²⁵ Roger Steffens interview, 5/28/08.

Chapter Seven The *Pop-Propheticism* of Bob Marley

Canonical Recitation

By applying the *pop-propheticism* paradigm to Bob Marley, a more nuanced and encompassing view of his prophetic life emerges. As outlined in Chapter Three of this dissertation, *pop-propheticism* is a six-prong analysis starting with canonical recitation. *Pop-prophetic* canonical recitation refers to the *lyrical invocation of scriptural passages and prophetic lineages within popular music and popular culture*. Marley's use of canonical recitation reveals the devotional heart of his music and legitimizes a Rastafarian canonical tradition and prophetic lineage.

Before performing a sizzling rendition of "I Shot the Sheriff" at his 1979 Santa Barbara County Bowl concert in California, Bob Marley invoked the Bible to support his Rastafarian and Pan-African beliefs:

His foundation is in the holy mountains. Jah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things have been spoken of thee, oh city of God. I'll make mention to Rahab and Babylon to them that know I. Behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia it shall be said that this man was born there. And the highest Himself shall establish the Earth. Jah Rastafari!¹

This was not an unusual proclamation for Marley to make, as all of Marley's concert recordings are replete with Biblical quotes supporting the divinity of Ras Tafari. Many of Marley's songs also contain scriptural quotes and references from the Kebra Nagast, the Holy Piby, and the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. Indeed, through his songs, Marley constructed a modern Rastafarian narrative steeped in Biblical language and imagery.

¹*Time Will Tell* (Immortal DVD, 2006).

In 1976, Bob Marley & the Wailers released their most commercially successful album, *Rastaman Vibration*. *Rastaman Vibration* provides a snapshot of Marley's canonical recitation as it is filled with scriptural passages and Biblical imagery. For example, on "Want More," Marley sings, "But Jah have them in derision, in the valley of decision,"² a passage based on Joel 3:14, which reads, "Multitudes, Multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the Day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision!"³ On "Night Shift," Marley emphatically chants, "The sun shall not smite I by day, nor the moon by night,"⁴ which is taken from Psalms 121:6, "The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night."⁵

When *Rastaman Vibration* was re-released, it included the bonus single, "Jah Live," which Bob Marley wrote as a response to critics who belittled Rastafarianism after Haile Selassie's death in 1975. On "Jah Live," Marley defiantly proclaims that Ras Tafari lives:

Fools say in their heart,
Rasta your God is dead.
But I and I know, Jah Jah,
Dread it shall be dread a dread.
Jah live, children yeah,
Jah Jah live, children yeah.
Let Jah arise, now that the enemies are scattered.⁶

"Want More," "Night Shift," and "Jah Live" are just three of many Marley songs that specifically reference Biblical quotes and imagery in order to lyrically establish canonical authority and scriptural legitimacy against those who deride Rastafarianism as heretical

² *Rastaman Vibration* (Tuff Gong, 1976).

³ *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1353.

⁴ *Rastaman Vibration* (Tuff Gong, 1976).

⁵ *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 919.

⁶ *Rastaman Vibration* (Tuff Gong, 1976).

and heterodox. In this manner, these three songs enshrine *Rastaman Vibration* as a musical exemplar of *pop-prophetic* canonical recitation.

Mystical Intoxication

The second prong of the *pop-propheticism* paradigm is mystical intoxication, which this dissertation defines as *the ingestion of intoxicating substances and/or a psycho-physical regime consisting of prayer, meditation, visualization, and recitation as methods of inspiring a mystical state of consciousness*. In Bob Marley's case, mystical intoxication took the form of his ritualized sacramental ingestion of *ganja*. Marley's *ganja* smoking served as a visible symbol of his mysticism and as an affirmation of his Rastafarian faith. Marley's popular association with *ganja* makes him perhaps the most famous cannabis proponent and user in history. His mystical intoxication christened him not only as a global ambassador of Rastafarianism, but also an international spokesperson for cannabis culture.

Bob Marley viewed his *ganja* ingestion as foundational to his identity as a Rastafarian. Throughout his adult life, Marley argued that *ganja* illuminated path to Rastafarian mysticism – “The more you accept herb is the more you accept Rastafari.”⁷

For Marley, smoking *ganja* was a spiritual practice:

When you smoke herb, herb reveal itself to you. All the wickedness you do, herb will reveal to your conscience; herb will show up yourself clear, see yourself through. Herb make you meditate.⁸

Marley embodied his cannabis crusade through both his lifestyle and lyrics. The most famous photographs and popular depictions of Marley invariably feature him

⁷ *Time Will Tell* (Immortal DVD, 2006).

⁸ Bob Marley, *60 Visions: A Book of Prophecy* (Miami: Tuff Gong Books, 2004), Book IV: 53.

smoking a large *spliff* while many of his lyrics invoke the state of *irie*, a mystical mindset inspired by the potent combination of *ganja* and roots reggae. The musical convergence of Marley's *ganja* fueled lifestyle and lyrics resulted in his upbeat 1978 album *Kaya*. *Kaya* took its name from a popular Jamaican term for cannabis and the album was Marley's love song to his *ganja* and to his women, in that order. The opening lyrics of *Kaya* present Marley in an elevated and playful mood:

Excuse me while I light my spliff,
Good God, I gotta take a lift.
From reality I just can't drift;
That's why I am staying with this riff.
Take it easy, Lord I take it easy!
Take it easy, got to take it easy!⁹

On the album's title track "Kaya," Marley explicitly connects the ingestion of cannabis with the mystically intoxicating state of *irie*:

I feel so high, I even touch the sky,
Above the falling rain.
I feel so good in my neighborhood,
So here I come again.

Got to have kaya now
For the rain is falling.
Feelin *irie* I,
Cause I have some kaya now.¹⁰

Many of Marley's songs celebrate cannabis consumption but *Kaya* remains a cannabis inspired roots reggae album for the ages. *Kaya* is often overlooked as it was released between the two classic Marley albums *Exodus* and *Survival*, but *Kaya* is a shining example of Marley's *pop-prophetic* mystical intoxication.

Bob Marley's *pop-prophetic* mystical intoxication is apparent through his lifestyle and his lyrics, through his inveterate ingestion of cannabis and his devotional incantation

⁹ Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Kaya* (Tuff Gong, 1978).

¹⁰ Ibid.

of *irie*. The iconic and indelible image of Marley with his *dreadlocks* flowing with wispy puffs of *ganja* smoke hovering around his head enshrines him as the paradigmatic *dread*, the mystical Rastaman, and the transcendent reggae singer. Ultimately, Marley's *ganja* inspired mysticism challenged and critiqued normative Jamaican spirituality and legality and endeared him to millions of spiritual seekers and cannabis connoisseurs throughout the world.

Musical Fusion

The third analysis for *pop-propheticism* is musical fusion, which describes the *self-conscious process of musical synthesis with the goal of creating the largest listening audience possible*. By capturing a global audience, the artist disseminates both music and message around the world. In Bob Marley's case, his infectious brand of reggae embodied black fusion music, as it seamlessly incorporated elements of ska, rock steady, jazz, soul, gospel, African percussion, and American rhythm and blues. Marley's reggae sound was emblematic of his desire to create a pan-African universalism, which he saw as a global movement uniting black people in the Biblical land of Ethiopia. Using music as a medium for his prophetic message, Marley self-consciously synthesized musical elements from the African, American, and Caribbean communities that he both inspired and was inspired by. Ultimately, it was Marley's *pop-prophetic* musical fusion that enabled him to transform roots reggae from a Jamaican folk tradition to a world music genre.

Bob Marley was the first reggae artist to be recorded by an international record label, Island Records, which promoted Marley to a global audience. In order to capture a

larger listening base, especially the black American market, Island founder Chris Blackwell consciously remixed Marley's music and synthesized the popular American sounds of rock and roll, rhythm and blues, and funk and soul. This was apparent from the very beginning of Marley's collaboration with Blackwell.

The Wailers recorded their first Island album *Catch a Fire* in Kingston in 1973. After they recorded the tracks, Marley met Blackwell in London in order to transform the Wailers roots reggae sound into something for the rock market. *Catch a Fire* studio musician John "Rabbit" Bundrick recounted the recording sessions as an exercise in musical fusion and a departure from a "purist" reggae:

The experiment was for Chris Blackwell to help Bob break in America. We needed to add some things that Americans were used to, like clavinetts. So Bob was ready for that. The thing we were trying to do by bridging the gap from roots reggae to an Americanized reggae, which Americans could palette, was not purist.¹¹

Chris Blackwell acknowledged that *Catch a Fire*'s musical fusion was profit driven at its core:

This record had the most overdubs on it. This record was the most, I won't say softened, but enhanced to reach a rock market because this was their first record and they wanted to reach into that market.¹²

Using white English studio musicians to paint over the sonic canvas of black Jamaican roots reggae musicians, Bob Marley and Chris Blackwell created a new reggae sound for global consumption. Marley orchestrated the music while Blackwell oversaw the recording, and Marley saw Blackwell more as a translator than a producer, as Blackwell later admitted:

¹¹ See the documentary *Classic Albums: Catch a Fire* (Eagle Rock Entertainment, 1999).

¹² Ibid.

Someone asked Bob if I was his producer and he said no, I was his translator. And I was very happy with that. I think that's probably what I was doing. I was mixing the tracks, arranging them in a way I thought would have the best chance of getting across.¹³

Catch a Fire set the standard in terms of Island's approach to the rest of Bob Marley's catalog. On subsequent albums, Marley's Wailers grew in size and scope, incorporating a host of horn players, back-up singers, and percussionists. Marley's sonic landscape became emblematic of his global religiopolitical vision; Marley politically united black people around the world by musically fusing together black music from around the world. Ironically, the black American audience that Marley so desperately tried to attract never embraced his music during his life. Even on Marley's last concert tour, while he headlined European venues that seated over one hundred thousand people each,¹⁴ he struggled to connect with the black American market. Yet he continued to position his message and music to capture this elusive market, and *Catch a Fire* inspired the musical fusion approach to his subsequent Island studio albums of *Burnin* (1973), *Natty Dread* (1974), *Rastaman Vibration* (1976), *Exodus* (1977), *Kaya* (1978), *Survival* (1979), *Uprising* (1980), and *Confrontation* (1983).

Everything changed in 1984 with Island's posthumous release of *Legend*,¹⁵ Marley's "greatest hits" compilation which reintroduced Marley to the world by showcasing his crossover material and soft side, primarily from the later stages of his career. *Legend* exponentially increased Marley's global fame and remains the highest selling reggae album of all time. Up until *Legend*, all of Marley's albums collectively and

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Bob Marley's biggest concert in terms of attendance was on June 27, 1980 in Milan, Italy. Over one hundred and twenty thousand people were at the concert and Marley outdrew the Pope who had appeared at the same venue the week before. To this day, Marley's Milan concert is regarded as the biggest musical event in Italian history. See Roger Steffens interview, 5/28/08.

¹⁵ Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Legend* (Island Records, 1984).

globally sold fewer than two million copies; *Legend* sold ten million copies in the US alone.¹⁶ So *Legend* finally delivered the black American radio and media markets that had eluded Marley while he was alive. The *pop-prophetic* musical fusion that started with *Catch a Fire* reached its fruition, proved its efficacy, and left its legacy in *Legend*.

Media Proliferation

The fourth point of analysis in the *pop-propheticism* paradigm is media proliferation, which refers to the *process whereby media and technology converge in order to promulgate a prophetic voice and create a virtual community*. Throughout Bob Marley's life, he displayed an uncanny ability to manipulate the available media technology in order to foster an international sense of community. Such media proliferation allowed Marley's music and message to be disseminated instantaneously and globally.

A potent example of Bob Marley's *pop-prophetic* media proliferation is evident in his song "War," which appeared on his 1976 album *Rastaman Vibration*. "War" was inspired by a 1963 Haile Selassie speech at the United Nations, which was a rousing oration that warned the international community to disarm and decolonize, specifically in Africa. The speech read, in part:

Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned; that until there are no longer first-class and second class citizens of any nation; that until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes; that until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race; that until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained. And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique and in

¹⁶ See the documentary *Rock Milestones: Bob Marley's Legend* (Classic Rock Legends, 2007).

South Africa in subhuman bondage have been toppled and destroyed. Until that day, the African continent will not know peace. We Africans will fight, if necessary, and we know that we shall win, as we are confident in the victory of good over evil.¹⁷

On “War,” Marley sings the verbatim text of Haile Selassie’s speech, adding a chorus that uses other quotations from Selassie. As a song, “War” highlights the remarkable nexus between politics, pop culture, and media, as it allowed Selassie’s exact words to be transmitted throughout the world. After the release of “War,” devout Rastafarians who viewed Selassie as God started to see Marley as his prophet – a charismatic figure who spread the literal word of God through his music and his message. In the process, Marley universalized Rastafarianism by introducing the words of Selassie, which he viewed as divine revelation, to the rest of the world.

“War” represents a seminal moment of *pop-prophetic* media proliferation. By using recording technology to propagate Haile Selassie’s words around the world, Bob Marley was popularly anointed as Selassie’s prophetic voice. Standing at the crossroads of the industrial and information ages, Marley successfully exploited the available technology of the time in order to promote his Rastafarian message around the world. Many of Marley’s songs embody his prophetic Rastafarian voice, but only “War” promulgates the exact words of Ras Tafari to Marley’s devotees throughout the world.

The speed through which prophecy is now transmitted has exponentially increased based on the evolution of media technology. Whereas ancient religions transmitted prophecy through the spoken word and medieval religious traditions transmitted prophecy through orality and literature, new religious traditions, such as

¹⁷ Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1987), 142.

Rastafarianism, transmit prophecies by marrying the spoken and written word to transnational media delivery platforms. So while it took many centuries for the Abrahamic prophets to spread their religious traditions throughout the world, Marley single-handedly spread the Rastafarian faith throughout the world in only a few short decades.

Even posthumously, Bob Marley's music displays the remarkable ability to adapt and incorporate new media technology to spread its message. New technological developments, such as recording devices and CD/DVD/MP3 formats, have ensured that Marley's prophetic songs and performances will be digitally archived and transmitted to future generations. Marley now has an enormous global presence on the Internet and his hagiography continues to evolve through online chat-rooms and websites. For all these reasons, Marley has become the paradigmatic global proponent of *pop-prophetic* media proliferation.

Economic Commodification

The fifth level of analysis for *pop-propheticism* is economic commodification, which refers to the *process whereby a prophetic voice is globally marketed, branded, commodified, and consumed as popular culture*. Bob Marley embodies *pop-prophetic* economic commodification perhaps more than any other popular culture icon in history. Marley is singularly responsible for the economic viability of many successful industries and has come to symbolize all of them, from reggae music to Ras Tafari, from cannabis to revolutionary gear, from Jamaican tourism to Pan-Africanism. Popular culture's

complete embracement of Marley has arguably made his visage the most recognized and reproduced in the world.

Because Bob Marley successfully utilized the media channels available to him, he built a global brand during his lifetime. At his death, Marley's estate was worth about thirty million dollars and his music catalog continues to generate millions of dollars in royalties each year.¹⁸ Marley remains a lucrative global brand, and his image adorns shirts, flags, posters, stickers, books, and other memorabilia worldwide. By manipulating the mercantile machinations of popular culture, Marley transmitted his sociopolitical and geo-religious prophecies to millions of consumers worldwide. At a time when individual subject formation is often predicated on consumerism, Marley's prophetic voice continues to spread widely through the avenues of consumer universalism

Bob Marley was not a passive product of *pop-prophetic* economic commodification; rather he proactively constructed his brand empire for a specific teleological purpose. Like Biblical prophets before him, Marley attempted to uplift his community, not just himself. He saw his success as an opportunity to think globally while acting locally, for just as he was unifying a global community of kindred spirits, he was also economically empowering Jamaicans through his Kingston based record label Tuff Gong. Roger Steffens confirms Marley's social entrepreneurship and business ambitions:

Marley was negotiating with Polygram when he died, a \$10 million dollar contract that would have included not only him but other artists he had been working with like Burning Spear, Nadine Sutherland, others in the Tuff Gong camp. I think he wanted to have a Jamaican Motown.¹⁹

¹⁸ Maureen Sheridan, "Talkin' Over: Marley Estate Case Ends; Island Logic, Family Can Purchase Assets," in *Every Little Thing Gonna Be Alright: The Bob Marley Reader*, ed. Hank Bordowitz (Cambridge: De Capo, 2004), 185.

¹⁹ Roger Steffens interview, 5/28/08.

According to Marley's business manager, Tuff Gong directly supported over six thousand people a month on its payroll.²⁰ Furthermore, Marley funded food distribution, child care, and employment placement services, which he operated out of his residence at 56 Hope Road in Kingston. These programs positively impacted the lives of thousands of other Jamaicans on a daily basis.

Bob Marley carefully and consciously wielded his double-edged sword of *pop-prophetic* economic commodification. On the one hand, Marley exploited popular culture commerce to propagate his prophetic music and message to millions of consumers throughout the world. On the other hand, Marley embodied his prophetic message by creating economic empowerment and commercial growth opportunities for his community in Kingston. This parallel prophetic process legitimized Marley as both a global brand and a social entrepreneur, and enshrined him as the exemplar of *pop-prophetic* economic commodification.

Political Appropriation

The sixth and final analytical prong for *pop-propheticism* is political appropriation, which specifically signifies the *postcolonial predicament of constructing a new national narrative through available cultural formations*. For most of his recording career, Bob Marley was caught in the crossfire between Jamaica's two warring political parties, the PNP and the JNP. As discussed earlier, his reluctance to endorse either party was the primary motivation for the assassination attempt on his life. Marley became disgusted with the Jamaican political scene and went on a self-imposed exile during the last years of his life, refusing to participate in Jamaican politics, which he felt was still

²⁰ Ibid.

colonial despite its formal independence. For Marley, worldly politics were divisive, and Ras Tafari alone had the authority to unite:

All world politics are just things to keep people divided and foolish, and to put your trust in men. None of them can do nothing for you because if you don't have no life, you don't have anything. So even those who are big politicians, they must find Rastafari too, you know?²¹

Despite the fact that Bob Marley rejected formal political alliances, Jamaica's ruling elite still appropriated him for their own political purposes. Even as Jamaica cracked down on Rastafarian communities through tough *ganja* laws, Jamaica's politicians positioned themselves around Marley in hopes of popularizing and legitimizing themselves by association. While Jamaica developed its postcolonial narrative of nationhood, competing political factions attempted to appropriate Marley in order to win elections. Such political appropriation revealed the hypocrisy of Jamaica's postcolonial governance by the politically elite; even as they appropriated Marley as a popular political symbol, they denigrated him for his Rastafarian beliefs and lifestyle. In turn, Marley viewed Jamaican politicians as wicked agents of Babylon who cared more about themselves than their country. Marley's astute understanding of Jamaica's political corruption is articulated in his anthem "Revolution" from *Natty Dread*:

Never make a politician grant you a favor,
They will always want to control you forever!²²

Despite the national political appropriation that Marley detested and denounced, there was a transnational permutation of political appropriation that energized and excited Marley. Around the world, even before he died, Marley was politically appropriated as a hero for the oppressed and forgotten. Along with Che Guevara, Marley's visage adorns

²¹ *Time Will Tell* (Immortal DVD, 2006).

²² *Natty Dread* (Tuff Gong, 1974).

posters and paraphernalia of revolutionary movements throughout the world, and Marley's political anthem "Get Up, Stand Up" is arguably the most famous musical injunction for social justice and human rights ever recorded. So even as specific political parties in Jamaica were jockeying to appropriate Marley for their platform objectives, a worldwide community of political revolutionaries emerged and appropriated Marley as a symbol of their struggles. Accordingly, Marley's *pop-prophetic* political appropriation was a double-edged sword that sliced through national and transnational politics, postcolonial and progressive platforms, and politicians and revolutionaries alike.

Ultimately, the totality of Bob Marley's *pop-propheticism* made him the most important figure in twentieth century music. He was a people's prophet, a world citizen, a freedom fighter, and a mystical poet; his impact continues to reverberate throughout the world with the same power and profundity he embodied. In the eloquent words of Roger Steffens:

Today, the Havasupai Indians who live at the bottom of the Grand Canyon regard Bob as one of their own, a man of the soil who revered Mother Earth and Father Sky as they do. In Nepal, Bob is worshipped by many people who regard him as an incarnation of the Hindu deity, Vishnu. In Addis Ababa he is thought of as a modern reincarnation of the ancient Ethiopian church composer the Holy Yared. On a mountainside above Lima, Peru, carved in huge letters, is the legend "Bob Marley is King." Maori, Tongan, and Samoan islanders join together in a band called Herbs to sing Bob's "songs of freedom." Rebels of every stripe march to battle singing Marley's anthems. Says Jack Healy, head of Amnesty International, "Everywhere I go in the world today, Bob Marley is the symbol for freedom." Thus the music and lyrics continue in the hearts of Jah's people as they chant down Babylon on their way to freedom.²³

²³ Roger Steffens, "Bob Marley: Rasta Warrior," in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, 264.

PART THREE: THE *POP-PROPHETICISM* OF NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN

Chapter Eight Subcontinental Sufism

Prophecy and Islam

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was arguably the most famous Sufi of the twentieth century, and he promoted the teachings of Islam and Sufism throughout the world in a manner that no one had ever done before. Like Bob Marley, Khan never considered himself a prophet. Instead, he thought of himself as a devout Muslim spreading the word of God through the *qawwali* musical lineage of his ancestors. Throughout his life, Khan focused on his message rather than his role as messenger. Nonetheless, Khan's legacy is world historical like Marley's. Whereas Marley's prophetic roots lie in Judaism, Christianity, and Rastafarianism, Khan's are deep within Islam and Sufism. Khan used new recording technology to package his Sufi message, but his Sufi theology is rooted in a long lineage of Sufi teachers and mystics, going back to the Prophet Muhammad (570-632 CE) himself. Therefore, in order to contextualize Khan's legacy, it is first necessary to understand prophecy in Islam.

The Arabic term for prophet in Islam is *nabi* and the tradition accepts and acknowledges over one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets that have existed throughout time. These prophets structure human history and it is through them that God reveals his will and command. The foundational prophets in Islam include prophets from Judaism and Christianity, and according to Islam, the prophetic tradition starts with

Adam and ends with Muhammad. A list of the most popular and most beloved prophets in Islam comprises of:

Adam, Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih, Ibrahim (Abraham), Lut (Lot), Isma‘il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya‘qub (Jacob), Shu‘ayb (sometimes associated with the biblical Jethro), Yusuf (Joseph), Ilyas (Elijah), Idris (possibly the biblical Enoch), Ayyub (Job), Yunus (Jonah), Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Khidr (Khizr), Dawud (David), Sulayman (Solomon), ‘Uzayr (Ezra), Zakariya (Zacharia), Yahya (John the Baptist), ‘Isa (Jesus), and Muhammad.¹

Even though Islam incorporates the major prophets of Judaism and Christianity within its prophetic fold, according to the tradition, the final prophet and the seal of the prophets (*khatm-al-nubuwwa*) is the Prophet Muhammad.² Unlike the prophetic traditions in Judaism and Christianity, Islam distinguishes between prophet (*nabi*) and divine messenger (*rasul*).³ A *rasul* is a *nabi* of the highest order; unlike other prophets, the *rasul* is a divine messenger with a specific message transmitted through a revealed text. Muhammad was a *nabi* but he was also a *rasul*, a divine messenger with a scriptural transmission in the form of the Qur’an. In his acclaimed book *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*, Reza Aslan explicates this important difference between *nabi* and *rasul*:

Muslims believe in the continual self-revelation of God from Adam down to all the prophets who have ever existed in all religions. These prophets are called *nabis* in Arabic, and they have been chosen to relay God’s

¹ John Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 84.

² This understanding is derived from Surah 33:40 in the Qur’an: “Muhammad was not the father of any man from among you, but rather the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets.” The finality of the Prophet Muhammad is a central article of faith within the Islamic tradition and any attempt to tarnish his reputation or duplicate his authority is considered blasphemous. This immutable and fundamental relationship between Allah and Muhammad is encapsulated in the confession of faith (*shahada*) – “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger,” which is the first of the five pillars that comprise the Islamic tradition.

³ According to Yohann Friedmann, the Islamic tradition catalogues a range of over 8,000, 124,000 or 224,000 prophets (*anbiya*) and 313 messengers (*rusul, mursalum*). Yohann Friedmann, *Prophecy Continous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 50.

divine message to all humanity. But sometimes a *nabi* is given the extra burden of handing down sacred texts: Abraham, who revealed the Torah; David, who composed the Psalms; Jesus, whose words inspired the Gospels. Such an individual is more than a mere prophet; he is God's messenger – a *rasul*. Thus, Muhammad, the merchant from Mecca, who over the course of the next twenty-three years will recite the entire text of the Quran (literally, “the Recitation”), would henceforth be known as *Rasul Allah*: “the messenger of God.”⁴

Accordingly, like David and Jesus, Muhammad is considered to be a *rasul*, a divine messenger who transmits sacred scripture. Because David, Jesus, and Muhammad attained prophetic authority through revelation, they are the location where the profane becomes the sacred and where the worldly meets the divine. However, for Muslims, Muhammad stands above the other *rasuls* for he alone is the intercessor between man and God. Whereas the Jewish Tanakh and the Christian Bible are revered as divinely inspired by their respective faith communities, those faith communities generally acknowledge that their scriptural texts were written, composed, edited, interpreted, codified, and translated by human hands. However, according to Islam, the Qur'an is not an interpretation of God's revelation by Muhammad; rather, it is God's direct revelation in the Arabic language recited by the angel Jibril (Gabriel) to Muhammad. The perfection of Muhammad is furthered underlined by the fact that he was illiterate (*ummi*) and hence a “vessel that was unpolluted by “intellectual” knowledge of word and script so that he could carry the trust in perfect purity.”⁵ Thus, Muhammad is both the paradigmatic *nabi* and the paradigmatic *rasul*; amongst all the prophets and divine messengers throughout

⁴ Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2005), 35. Generally it is Moses, not Abraham, who is considered to be the one who revealed the Torah.

⁵ Schimmel, *The Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 26-27.

history and around the world, Muhammad is the only one to directly receive and reveal the words of God.⁶

Like the Biblical prophets before him, there is no historical evidence that Muhammad was trying to start a new religion. Instead, Muhammad attempted to integrate Arab people into the house of Abraham and create a unified monotheistic community.

According to Reza Aslan:

It's not prophets who create religions. Prophets are, above all, reformers who redefine and reinterpret the existing beliefs and practices of their communities, providing fresh sets of symbols and metaphors with which succeeding generations can describe the nature of reality. Indeed, it is most often the prophet's successors who take upon themselves the responsibility of fashioning their master's words and deeds into unified, easily comprehensible systems. Like so many prophets before him, Muhammad never claimed to have invented a new religion. By his own admission, Muhammad's message was an attempt to reform the existing religious beliefs and cultural practices of pre-Islamic Arabia so as to bring the God of the Jews and Christians to the Arab peoples.⁷

Karen Armstrong, author of the seminal work *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* underscores how radical Muhammad's attempt at monotheistic unity was in the context of seventh century CE Arabia. She writes:

Unlike the prophets of Israel, Muhammad was not working towards the difficult monotheistic solution with the support of an established tradition which had its own momentum and insight and could provide ethical guidance that had been hammered out over centuries. Jesus and St. Paul were both embedded in Judaism and the first Christians came from the Jews and their supporters, the Godfearers, in the synagogues. Christianity took root in the Roman empire where Jewish communities had paved the way and prepared the minds of the pagans. But Muhammad had to start

⁶ The centrality of Muhammad to the Islamic tradition is perhaps best epitomized in the faulty designation of the tradition as 'Muhammadism' by non-Muslim scholars and commentators of the tradition. Annemarie Schimmel highlights the foundational role of Muhammad in Islam— "Muhammad constitutes a limit in the definition of Islam and sets it off from other forms of faith. Mystics who used the first half of the profession of faith exclusively, without acknowledging the special rank of Muhammad, were prone to fall into a sweeping pantheistic interpretation of Islam." Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 214.

⁷ Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*, 17.

virtually from scratch and work his way towards the radical monotheistic spirituality on his own.⁸

Reza Aslan and Karen Armstrong's explanation of Muhammad's unifying intentionality and is scripturally supported in *Surah 2* of the Qur'an:

To be rightly guided they say that you must be Jews or Christians. Say rather: 'Ours is the community of Abraham, a man of pure worship. No polytheist he! Let your word be: "We believe in God and what has been revealed to us, and revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, and we believe in what was brought to Moses, to Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord. We do not distinguish between any of them and to God we make submission." If they believe in accordance with this faith of yours, then they are truly guided. But if they turn away from it they are plainly in schism. God who hears and knows all will see you through in all your dealings with them.'⁹

In this manner, Muhammad worked throughout his life to create an inclusive Arab religiosity based on the teachings of Jewish and Christian prophets. It was only after Muhammad's death that his community enshrined him as the founder of their new religious tradition and canonized him as the final prophet of the Western monotheistic lineage.¹⁰ Inspired by the charismatic life and profound teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, within a century of his death, the new religion of Islam had spread throughout the world.

⁸ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 53.

⁹ Kenneth Cragg (ed. and trans.), *Readings in the Qur'an* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 122.

¹⁰ Whereas as most scholarly accounts of Islam stress the finality of Muhammad's prophethood, according to Yohann Friedmann, the belief in *khatm-al nubuwwa* "did not gain universal acceptance in the early centuries of Islamic history. Echoes of dissident opinion can clearly be perceived in the literature of tradition and exegesis. The sporadic appearance of prophetic claimants seems to have given the most powerful impetus to the development of the dogma that eventually acquired an undisputed and central place in the religious thought of Sunni Islam." Friedmann, 70.

The First Sufi

Within a century of the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632, Islam had spread far beyond the Arabian Peninsula. With inroads from Africa to Asia, new lands were transformed into sanctified places, often referred to as *dar-ul-Islam* ("abode of Islam") in distinction to *dar-ul-Harb* ("abode of war"). In addition to Islam's growing geographical importance, within a generation of Muhammad's passing there was also growing division regarding lines of succession and authority. Whereas the Sunni tradition traced authority through the four "righteous" caliphs – Abu Bakr (632-634), Umar (634-644), Uthman (644-656), and Ali (656-661) – the Shia tradition traced authority from Muhammad directly to his son-in-law, Ali.

However, regardless of the subsequent genealogies of succession drawn by different sectarian interests in the Islamic tradition, all legitimacy was indisputably predicated upon the authority of Muhammad. Similarly, like the Sunni and Shia traditions, the Sufi tradition also constructed a lineage (*sharjah*) of authority with which all Sufi lineages converge. This is because within any Sufi lineage, Muhammad is considered to be the final prophet and the first Sufi.¹¹

While there are those who would argue that Sufism is outside the mainstream of Islam, Sufis would argue that Sufism represents the mystical essence of Islam. As a spiritual quest that seeks unmediated and direct access to the divine, the Sufi tradition upholds the central tenets of "orthodox" Islam: Muhammad as the final prophet, the importance of *sunnah* (Islamic customs) and *shari'ah* (Islamic law), and the revelation

¹¹ With regards to Muhammad as the prototypical Sufi, Annemarie Schimmel writes, "Muhammad is the first link in the spiritual chain of Sufism, and his ascension through the heavens into the divine presence, to which the first lines of Sura 17 allude, became the prototype of the mystic's spiritual ascension into the intimate presence of God." Schimmel, *The Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 27.

enshrined in the Qur'an. Noting the convergence between Sunni, Shia, and Sufi traditions, Annemarie Schimmel writes:

The *tariqa*, the “path” on which the mystics walk, has been defined as “the path which comes out of the *shari'ah*, for the main road is called *shar'*, the path, *tariq*.” This derivation shows that the Sufis considered the path of mystical education a branch of that highway that consists of the God-given law, on which every Muslim is supposed to walk.¹²

The dialectic between the outer (*zahir*) requirements of faith and the inner (*batin*) essence of realization is central to Sufism and both elements are informed by each other. Sufism is therefore an interiorization of the tradition that does not deny, *but rather reinterprets*, the external requirements of the tradition. The status of the Sufi masters, known as *pir* or *wali*, is also subordinate to Muhammad. They are known as *awliya Allah* (“the friends of Allah”) and their special status is affirmed several times in the Qur'an, but especially in Sura 10:63 – “Verily, the friends of God (*awliya Allah*), no fear is upon them nor are they sad.”¹³ Thus, the status of Sufi saints is not in opposition to the will of God or the Prophet Muhammad, but rather its culmination:

The concept of sainthood (*wilaya*) was the culmination of Sufism as a path (*tariqa*) leading toward direct experience of God... Since *wali* has the connotations of friendship and authority or trusteeship, the Islamic concept of sainthood implies the saint's closeness to God and also the saint's role as executor and implementer of divine commands. From the earliest period of Sufism, saints were regarded as the invisible supports of the universe; an invisible hierarchy headed by the *qutb* or “axis” of the world carrying out the will of God in all things.¹⁴

¹² Ibid., 98.

¹³ Ibid., 199.

¹⁴ Carl W. Ernst *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 10-11. Additionally, there are similarities to be noted in the categorization of the Sufi saint as *qutb* and Shia notions of the hidden *imam*. While *wali* is a term that designates “saint” in the Sufi tradition, in the Shia tradition Ali is known by the epithet *wali Allah*, “friend of Allah.” Thus, there are a great number of similarities between the Shia and Sufi traditions regarding the importance of the mystical preceptor (*wali, imam, pir*). See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 199-213.

While there have been discussions amongst Sufi philosophers regarding the status of saint versus prophet, “traditional Sufi schools have always agreed upon the superiority of the prophet.”¹⁵ Despite their shared convictions on the absolute authority of the Prophet Muhammad, there have been many instances when Sufi masters have clashed with Islamic authorities. Perhaps the most famous occurred in 922 CE, when the Persian mystic Mansur al-Hallaj was executed as an alleged Muslim heretic. Before he died, he exclaimed “Ana al-Haq!” which literally means “I am the Truth!” His critics interpreted Mansur al-Hallaj’s statement to actually mean that he was God, which they considered a heretical statement with a penalty of death.¹⁶

Sufism in South Asia

South Asia is the home to the largest geographically concentrated Muslim population in the world, and the emergence of Islam in the South Asian subcontinent can be dated to within decades of the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Indeed, the earliest military, economic, and religious contacts between South Asia and the Islamic world began in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. This encounter found its greatest expression in the three paradigmatic figures of the warrior (military), merchant (economic), and Sufi (religious).

Pre-dating the arrival of imperial armies in Northern India, Arab Muslim merchants established themselves along the western and southern coasts of India prior to

¹⁵ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 203. In addition to providing a typology of the two types of saints – *wali sidq Allah* and *wali minnat Allah* – the early Sufi scholar Tirmidhi also proposed a theory of “the seal of saintship” (*khatm al-wilaya*) much like the “seal of prophethood” (*khatm al-nubuwwa*). Ibid.

¹⁶ Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 70.

the turn of the eighth century.¹⁷ In quick succession, Muslim rulers first achieved a foothold in the subcontinent during the Arab conquest of Sindh by Muhammad bin Qasim in the early eighth century. However, bin Qasim's arrival did not signal any sizeable conversion to Islam. Initially, though the impact of Islam on Hindu traditions was slight, there were profound ramifications for the subsequent decline of the Buddhist tradition in the northwest, especially in its monastic institutions. For example, the destruction of the famous Buddhist monastery/university of Nalanda is attributed to both the Islamic raids and the waning fortunes of a sizeable Buddhist presence in Sindh.

The arrival of Islam in the northwest was brought about by Turkish power in the Ghaznavid and Ghurid dynasties. During the reign of Mahmud of Ghazna, Turkish Ghaznavid power established itself in the Punjab by the eleventh century and ventured into the subcontinent for the express purpose of raid and plunder. However, it was not until the tenure of Mohammad of Ghur and the Ghurid dynasty that a permanent base in India was established. Therefore, in the early centuries of Turk and Arab military invasions, the subcontinent was seen as the easternmost limit of Islamic kingdoms situated in the Middle East and Central Asia. While these Turk and Arab rulers operated within a Perso-Islamic model of kingship and rule, efforts at conversion to Islam amongst the indigenous population were still limited.

However, for these Turkish rulers, "Sufi models of authority were especially vivid, since Central Asian Sufis had been instrumental in converting Turkish tribes to Islam shortly before their migrations from Central Asia into Khurasan, Afghanistan, and

¹⁷ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*. (Brill: Leiden, 1980). For more on the Indian Ocean trade and the role played by Arab merchants, see Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) and Amitav Ghosh, *In An Antique Land* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

India.”¹⁸ While there are many paradigms for how conversion to Islam occurred in the subcontinent – theories ranging from Islam as a “religion of the sword” or as a “religion of social liberation,” or as a “religion of political patronage” – the initial avenue of conversion was most likely achieved through Islam’s mystical denominations of Sufism. As mystical Muslims, the lives and teachings of paradigmatic Sufis were largely responsible for the transmission of Islam in South and Southeast Asia, as well as throughout Africa and Europe.

Though it is difficult to date with exact precision when Sufis arrived in the subcontinent, by the eleventh century a sizeable Sufi presence had begun to play a major role in disseminating Islam throughout the subcontinent. Initially, conversion appears to have largely attracted low caste Hindus or pastoral and peasant groups outside of Hindu caste society altogether, but over time it drew from every level of Indian society.¹⁹ While the instruction of Sufi masters was not formally institutionalized in the early period, over the course of time the Sufi tradition developed into identifiable institutional orders replete with the foundational structures possessed by every religious tradition: an esteemed spiritual lineage, oral and textual sources of authority, a liturgical calendar of festivals, places of worship and a sacred geography, and diverse ritual practices.

¹⁸ Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam on the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 31.

¹⁹ The exact mechanics of conversion have yet to be fully understood. While Carl W. Ernst argues that the Sufi *dargah* acted as a location for Islamization over time, he is quick to state “it is quite another thing to say that Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakkar personally engaged in attempting to preach Islam to large numbers of Hindus,” and that “Nizam al-Din Awliya observed that Indians were not drawn to Islam through sermons, and Nasir al-Din Mahmud Chiragh-i-Dilhi never converted anyone to Islam; Gisu Daraz was unusual in that he engaged with some Indians in disputations but he complained that they did not follow through with conversion when defeated. While the Chishtis would doubtless have been pleased to see people attracted to the faith of Muhammad, the assertion that most Sufis “regarded the conversion of non-Muslims as one of their primary spiritual objectives in India” cannot be supported by contemporary accounts.” See Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, 157.

Derived from the Arabic word *suf* (“wool”) that refers to the ascetic’s rough woolen garments, Sufism represents the development of Islamic mysticism (*tasawwuf*). While there are differences within various Sufi orders, broadly speaking, the central elements of Sufi organization are shared and overlapping. Under the guidance of a teacher (*shaykh, murshid, pir*), an individual undergoes initiation (*bayat*) and becomes affiliated with a particular chain of teachings (*silsila*). Living alongside other disciples within hospices, the disciples are bound together by a shared common focus on fasting and various ascetic and meditative practices. Sometimes poetry and music is introduced to offer a direct experience of the divine.²⁰

The power and prestige of any Sufi order is embodied in the charismatic power (*baraka*) of its founder or preceptor. Ultimately, the pedigree and lineal descent of Sufi masters and practices associated with their orders is what differentiates one order from another. Between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, the foundations of the major Sufi orders in the subcontinent were established by powerful Sufi saints. The four major Sufi orders that took root in the subcontinent were the Suhrawardi order introduced into the Punjab by Shaikh Baha-uddin Zakariya (d.1262), with its main *dargah* (shrine) at Multan; the Shattari order established by Shaikh Abdullah Shattar (d. 1485); the Naqshabandi order established by Baha’uddin Naqshband (d. 1390); and the Chishti order established by Moinuddin Chishtiya (d. 1236), with its main *dargah* at Ajmer. While all of these Sufi orders traced back ultimate authority to the Prophet Muhammad,

²⁰ Though our understanding of the Sufi experience is largely derived from the male Sufi experience, there are sources chronicling the lives and teachings of famous female Sufi saints and scholars (Rabia al-Adawiyya, Maryam al-Basriyya, Bahriyya al-Mausulliya) and a Sufi poetic tradition replete with the imagery of the human soul as a woman/bride in search of God, the bride-groom. See Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul Is A Woman: The Feminine in Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1997) and Shemeem Burney Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

significant differences existed between these groups. For example, while some orders such as Naqshabandi eschewed the practice of music and dance, others like the Chishti embraced those practices; the Shattari order incorporated Indian yogic practices into their regimen of fasting, prayer, and asceticism;²¹ and each order had varying responses to their interactions with state power.

The most influential denomination of Sufism in the subcontinent was the Chishti order.²² The Chishti order was founded by Abu Ishaq Shami in 930 CE in the town of Chisht located in present day Afghanistan. However, the foundational Chishti saint in the subcontinent was Moinuddin Chishti. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Chishti order witnessed an explosion of activity in the lives and teachings of four great Chishti masters: Farid-uddin ‘Ganj-e-Shakkar’ (d. 1256) at Pakpattan; Qutubuddin Bhakhtyar Baki (d. 1236) outside of Delhi in Mehrauli; Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325) whose disciples included the famous Amir Khusrau; and Nasiruddin Chirag-i-Delhi (d. 1356).

From the medieval to the modern period, there has been an inextricable relationship between Sufis and Sultans (kings) in the exercise of authority and the granting of dominion, whether spiritual or territorial. While some Sufi masters studiously avoided contact with worldly rulers, others cultivated close contacts, thus ensuring state patronage and support. In fact, during the medieval period, certain South Asian Sufi

²¹ For more on the Shattari order, see the “Introduction” in Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman (trans.) *Madhumalati: An Indian Sufi Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²² According to Chishti Sufi scholar Robert Rozeenal, “In South Asia – the vast geographic and cultural zone encompassing modern-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh – the Chishtiyya has been the most prominent Sufi brotherhood since the twelfth century.” See Robert Rozeenal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 3.

masters were seen as “kingmakers” by the rulers who desperately sought their public legitimation and blessing.

During the Sultenate period,²³ Turko-Afghan dynasties established themselves firmly in northern India and there developed an intimate relationship between those Muslim rulers who occupied Delhi and the Chishti masters of that region. Although the Chishti masters did not directly grant authority to the kings of the Sultenate, it was widely believed that their presence ensured a successful rule. For example, in 1569, the Mughal Emperor Akbar was blessed with a son and male heir, Prince Salim (the future Emperor Jehangir) through the efforts of Shaykh Salim Chishti who lived at Sikri. In tribute to the power of Shaykh Salim Chishti, Akbar built the monumental fort-city Fatehpur-Sikri while simultaneously “making a statement about the spiritual, Islamic basis of his rule.”²⁴

Even with the rise of Sunni dominated Muslim states such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, the presence of Sufi masters continues to inspire millions of subcontinental Muslims today. Situated within the Chishti lineage, Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927) was one of the most famous twentieth century Sufi teachers to have emerged from the subcontinent. Touring through Europe and the United States, Hazrat Inayat Khan popularized the quintessential Chishti practices of *sama* and *zikr* amongst Western audiences by separating the Sufi mystical quest from the larger Islamic tradition.²⁵ More recently, with the growing popularity of Rumi as translated by Coleman Barks,

²³ The Sultenate period runs from 1206-1526: the Mamluks (1206-90), the Khaljis (1290-1320), the Tughluqs (1320-1414), the Sayyids (1414-51), and the Lodis (1451-1526).

²⁴ Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 156.

²⁵ For more on the legacy of Hazrat Inayat Khan see Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 140-143.

knowledge of the mystical Sufi path has achieved greater dissemination amongst both Muslim and non-Muslim demographics.²⁶

Given the spread of Sufi teachings, both historically and contemporarily, the rise in popularity of a figure such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan should be understood from both a Sufi and secular perspective. Situated within the Chishti Sufi tradition, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's legacy partakes in the lineage initiated by Moinuddin Chishti that celebrates and canonizes the voices of charismatic mystics, ecstatic saints, intoxicated poets, and euphoric singers. These Muslim mystics – *wali*, *pir*, *fakir*, *dervish*, *malang*, and *qalandar* – belong to the prophetic world which Khan inhabited and embodied. Conversely, as an international *qawwal* whose popularity in the non-Muslim world is unparalleled, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's legacy must also be accounted for in secular venues ranging from recording studio to concert hall, and movie sets to the Internet.

²⁶ Coleman Bark's translations have made Rumi the best selling poet in the United States.

Chapter Nine Intoxicated Spirit

The Medieval Bhakti Movement

During the medieval period, there was a convergence of mystical movements in the Indian subcontinent. While Sufism had widespread success in disseminating Islam amongst the indigenous population beyond the control of Muslim theologians and officials, it was also in conversation with the popular and devotional currents often referred to as *bhakti* (devotion) within Hindu religious traditions. Whereas theological syncretism between the Hindu and Islamic traditions seems impossible given the vast differences that separate them – Islam is a revealed and prophetic religion focused upon a single deity (Allah), a singular and final prophet (Muhammad), and a single book (the Qur'an) while the Hindu tradition speaks of over 330,000,000 different gods divided into three distinct streams (Vaishnava, Shaiva, and Shakta) and different conceptions of the divine ranging from polytheism to monotheism to monism – the devotional language and experience of *bhakti* provided a common idiom that transcended these sectarian traditions.

The medieval movement, known as the *bhakti* (devotion) movement, was predicated on the revolutionary belief that God can be accessed firsthand, without ritual or institutional intercession. Although scholars generally imagine *bhakti* as being part of the Hindu fold, the *bhakti* movement transcended the academic boundaries and theoretical classifications of religion, region, dialect, and culture. Derived from the Sanskrit verb “*bhaj*,” with a semantic range of sharing, participation, and communion, the *bhakti* movement was pan-sectarian and included Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities

alike. Medieval *bhakti* impacted vernacular culture, politics, and the arts, and empowered historically oppressed and socially disenfranchised subaltern communities throughout the Indian subcontinent.

The prevailing view amongst South Asian scholars is that the *bhakti* tradition is best understood as a literary movement of devotional poets. Such an approach neglects the radical theological and sociopolitical manifestations of *bhakti*. At its core, *bhakti* challenged the hierarchical power structures of South Asian Hinduism and Islam, where the religious elite sat at the top of the social hierarchy. In Hinduism, the *Brahmin* caste is the highest social caste, the guardian caste of elite Sanskrit and Vedic culture. Because *Brahmins* have exclusive access to the texts and traditions, their knowledge is leveraged as power. Similarly, the *ulema and mullahs* in South Asian Islam are also privileged within society as the translators and transmitters of the Qur'an, Hadith, and *shari'ah* law. Like the *Brahmins*, they leveraged their knowledge of classical Arabic and Persian to elevate their status to the top of the sociopolitical hierarchy.

Bhakti represented the voices of the contemporaneous South Asian mystics, proclaiming that liberation could be achieved without an intercessor, and *bhakti's* devotionalism often took the form of poetry, chanting, and singing in vernacular South Asian languages.¹ The advent of *bhakti* ensured that a *bhakta* (devotee) could access divinity firsthand, without the traditional exclusionary barriers of caste, gender, or language and without the intercessionary authority of the religious elite. In this manner,

¹ For the relationship between *bhakti* and the development of vernacular and regional languages see, A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns For the Drowning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

the *bhakti* movement was more than a mystical and literary movement; it was also a social uprising with the theological goal of spiritual and sociopolitical liberation.²

In particular, *bhakti* poetry challenged religious orthodoxy, as it also provided vernacular languages and localized rituals through which worship was possible for non-elite sectors of society. *Bhakti* poetry's literary landscape soon became a vernacular canon for the many of the medieval devotional denominations on the South Asian scene, and the poet-philosophers themselves were eventually elevated to the status of *sant* (saint) and *bhakta* by their respective communities. The *sants* were mystics who possessed the remarkable ability to express the devotionism of their communities, and by doing so, they also became political revolutionaries challenging an orthodox theology predicated on an entrenched social hierarchy. The most famous of the medieval *sants* include Ravidas, Tulsidas, Kabir, Surdas, Mirabai, and Nanak.

Amongst these *sants*, the fifteenth century *sant* Nanak stands alone as the founder of a major world religion – Sikhism:

Of all the singer-saints of North India, it is Nanak whose name is most closely tied to a particular religious community. So closely, in fact, that the community has recast the name: Nanak is almost never referred to simply as Nanak. Instead he is Guru Nanak – Nanak the Teacher, Nanak the Preceptor – and so in a way takes his identity from those who are his pupils. These are the Sikhs, and their name means exactly that: “pupils.”³

Guru Nanak embodied the *sant* tradition and Sikhism emerged as the culmination of the *bhakti* movement. The convergence of *sant* and *bhakti* is evidenced in Guru Nanak's conception of Sikhism. For Guru Nanak, Sikhism was an egalitarian mystical movement

² See David N. Lorenzon ed., *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community Identity and Political Action* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) and Vinay Dharwardkar, *Kabir: The Weaver's Song* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2003).

³ John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 63.

that rejected traditional conceptions of clerical classes and entrenched social hierarchies. Like mystics everywhere, Guru Nanak synthesized theological doctrines from mainstream theology with the vernacular and syncretic mystical beliefs represented on the ground.

After Guru Nanak's death in 1539, his devotees compiled the Sikh textual tradition, which eventually culminated in the creation of the Guru Granth Sahib, the authoritative canonical and scriptural source for Sikhism. The Guru Granth Sahib is unique amongst the world's scriptural religious traditions, inasmuch as it is comprised of *sant* devotional poetry set to music. As evidence of the historical syncretism occurring within the *sant* tradition, the Guru Granth Sahib contains more than just the poetry of Guru Nanak and his Sikh successors. It also contains devotional poetry by *sants* that are now considered Hindu and Muslim, poets such as Baba Farid, Kabir, Ravidas, and Namdev. In this manner, the Guru Granth Sahib serves as a powerful symbol of the fluid nature of religious boundaries and the potency of syncretic literary mysticism in medieval Punjab.

The social mobility that was integral to the medieval *bhakti* movement was especially apparent in the evolution of Sikhism. Due in part to Sikhism's anti-caste and anti-clergy ideology, large numbers of landless, peasant Punjabis known as *Jats* converted to Sikhism. In doing so, they proactively liberated themselves from religious, political, and social mechanisms of caste-based hegemony. Indeed, it was the massive migration of *Jats* to Sikhism that accounted for its rise as an egalitarian religious tradition. The three hundred year rise of *Jats* from landless peasants during Guru Nanak's time to the rulers of the historical Punjab under their *Jat* king Maharaja Ranjit Singh is

one of the great albeit neglected stories of social mobility in human history. At the root of this profound paradigm shift in the *Jats*' social status is the liberating ideology of the *bhakti* movement.

Beyond Bhakti

Bhakti's enduring literary legacy is best represented through its vernacular and regional canon of devotional poetry, and through the *sant* tradition. *Bhakti* poetry transcends language and liturgy, region, and religion. The power of *bhakti*'s literary devotionalism invokes the feelings and desires of the heart and cultivates a transcendent experience that imbues the devotee with a greater sense of God. As evidenced by the codification of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh sacred scripture, *bhakti* poetry synthesizes *sants* from different traditions and faiths into a shared literary repertoire. Included in the *bhakti* canon are the prophetic and poetic voices of Hindus, Sikhs, and Sufis.

It is difficult to extrapolate the particularized elements of each tradition to create a chronological chart that determines which traditions influenced the others. There is general scholarly agreement that the medieval *bhakti* tradition was a syncretic movement that fused together ideas and imagery from different faith traditions, and Sufi scholar Bruce Lawrence argues that North Indian Sufism directly shaped the poetic landscape of the *sants*. In his essay "The *Sant* Movement and the North Indian Sufis," Lawrence contends that the mystical poetry of the *sants* was directly influenced by popular poetic genres previously pioneered by the Sufis. He supports his argument through a thematic methodology, claiming that certain poetic themes, such as the pain of separation, the

union with the Beloved, and the introspective awareness of the divine, were Sufi themes that were later adopted by the *bhakti* tradition.⁴ Lawrence also claims that the hagiographical accounts of the *sants* were undoubtedly influenced by the Sufi system of hagiography.⁵ Whatever the chronological chain of cause and effect may be, Lawrence astutely highlights the unique shared literary devices employed within *bhakti* poetry, regardless of the religious affiliation of its author.⁶ The three overlapping South Asian influenced literary images incorporated into *bhakti* poetry in praise of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh icons are (1) the *viraha* (separation) tradition, (2) the rain cloud imagery, and (3) the metaphor of intoxication.

The *viraha* poetic tradition depicting a lover longing for the Beloved has a long and rich history in the Indian subcontinent. The most well known example of this style stems from Hindu devotional poetry in praise of Krishna, which relates his pastimes in Vrindaban and his conjugal relationship with the *gopis* (cowmaids), especially with his beloved Radha.⁷ Radha feels the burden of separation when Krishna is not around, and this pain serves as a metaphor for the highest form of devotion to God. Radha's constant longing for Krishna symbolizes the individual soul's unbearable desire to be with God.

When this literary device was incorporated into the framework of South Asian Muslim devotional poetry, the poet was transformed into a feminine voice lamenting over the absence of her Beloved. The Beloved was the Prophet Muhammad, who sometimes

⁴ He writes, "The major thematic equivalence between the Sants and Sufis concerns the love relationship. It is fundamental to both groups, and in its intensity it supersedes all other relationship and ritual/scriptural requirements. Not only the love relationship but its special manifestation through the pain and suffering of the devotee are articulated and extolled as indispensable experiences in Sant and Sufi poetry alike." Bruce Lawrence, "The Sant Movement and North Indian Sufis," in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Karen Schomer and W.H. McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 369.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For more on the participation of Islam in *bhakti* literary idioms see Aditya Behl, "Presence and Absence in *Bhakti*: An Afterword." *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11, 3 (2007): 319-324.

⁷ Hawley and Juergensmeyer, 99.

took the guise of the bridegroom to be.⁸ The poet waits for Muhammad, for the union of lover and Beloved, for only Muhammad is able to quench the intolerable thirst, cure the love-sick lover, and extinguish the agonizing flames of *viraha*.

The centrality of the *viraha* tradition is apparent when reading Jayadeva's classic *Gitagovinda*, a twelfth century poem detailing the separation of Radha and Krishna, juxtaposed to 'Abd ur-Ra-uf Bhatti's poetry, a Muslim poet influenced by the Indian *viraha* tradition. Notice the similarities in style and content:

To Krishna:

Divine physician of her heart,
The love sick girl can only be healed with elixir from your body.
Free Radha from her torment, Krishna-
Or you are crueler than Indra's dread thunderbolt.⁹

To Muhammad:

Revive me so that I may live; otherwise I shall surely die
Cure me with the medicines and potions of mercy
You are the physician and the healer;
Place your hand on this weak one.¹⁰

The metaphor of separation plays a foundational literary role in the evolution of the medieval South Asian Sufi poetic canon. Such Sufi compositions are profound on a number of levels; a mundane reading of the poetry paints a picture of a lover gone mad separated from the Beloved, while a more symbolic reading illuminates the pain an individual soul feels when alienated from God. Adam Nayyar, the eminent ethnomusicologist, highlights the literary usage of the metaphor of separation. According to Nayyar, the analogy of separation illustrates the pain of living without the divine.

⁸ Ali Asani and Kamal Abdel-Malek, *Celebrating Muhammad: Images of the Prophet in Popular Muslim Poetry* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 30.

⁹ Barbara S. Miller, *Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gitagovinda* (New York: Columbia University Press), 89.

¹⁰ Asani and Abdel-Malek, 32.

That is a very powerful analogy that Sufi texts use. The fact that lovers are attracted, the fact that they join is seen as a divine union with the Eternal and is used as an analogy, because Sufis always try to reach you through what you know- the pain of separation. So it's all there. But the central issue is *ishq*, or divine love, that goes beyond creation. Sufis have a concept that there was a pre-creative stage, an Eternity called *azal*. The concept of *azal* is a key concept to the Sufi faith and *qawwals* use that. There is one Sufi who says, "Creation happened yesterday but I have been in love since Eternity." Meaning, "What is creation? It is something very recent."¹¹

Another powerful literary metaphor is that of the rain cloud, which was traditionally employed in the context of the monsoon season. The Beloved returns home from business matters during the rainy season, making it a time for lovers to reunite. That is why the torment of separation is especially unbearable during this time of year.¹² The lover gazes at the rain clouds, symbolic of her missing Beloved, and waits longingly in the dark and gloomy monsoon season.

Already established in mainstream Muslim literature was the association of Prophet Muhammad with rain and rain clouds, which was espoused in the Qur'an as being indicative of God's mercy.¹³ However, when transplanted on South Asian soil, the rain and rain cloud imagery also became associated with the pain of separation in the monsoon season. Sometimes incorporated into such poems were the names of important Hindu pilgrimage sites. Such is the case with Muhsin Kakorawi's *Madih khair al-mursalina*, where he praises Benares and Mathura, pilgrimage cities associated with the Hindu deities Shiva and Krishna respectfully.¹⁴

¹¹ Adam Nayyar, "Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*" (transcribed and edited by Varun Soni), *SUFI Magazine*. Issue 44, Winter 1999, 8-12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

Another literary metaphor employed by *bhakti* poets is that of intoxication. In the Sufi poetic context, intoxication is emblematic of divine inspiration. Many medieval South Asian Sufi poems invoke the analogy of wine alongside the metaphor of intoxication. Adam Nayyar describes the mystical concept of Sufi intoxication as that which inspires divine knowledge:

There is the symbolism of the wine, the *me*, which is supposed to be something that alters your state of consciousness. The reference to wine is the wine of *ma'rifat*, or the secret knowledge of gnosis, which puts you in an altered state of consciousness and is compared to intoxication. So this is an analogy. When you absorb this knowledge which cannot be learned from a book but only experienced, you reach this level highest level of *fana*, where you dissolve yourself completely and become one with the Eternal, similar to the Hindu idea of *moksha* and the Buddhist idea of *nirvana*.¹⁵

The literary genre that synthesizes these three themes of separation, rain clouds, and intoxication is that of the Urdu *ghazal*, or love lyric. Urdu is a unifying literary and poetic language amongst South Asian Muslims, and the *ghazal* is a popular, highly dense classical poetic lyric written in Urdu and recited at *mushairas* (poetry gatherings). The theme of the *ghazal* is unrequited love, elusive and impossible. The *ghazal* represents the desperation of lost love, of eternal desire never fulfilled. *Ghazals* often employ common images representative of unreciprocated love. The lover is characterized by loyalty and is always in the throes of anguish and misery because of burning unfulfilled love. The Beloved is beautiful and inaccessible, either off gallivanting with another or drinking wine from a goblet. Often the lover is likened to a moth near a candle, or is loitering in the alley outside the Beloved's home. Sometimes the Beloved is viewed as a rose, the lover as a nightingale.

¹⁵ Nayyar, "Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*," 8-12.

Because images are inherently more open to interpretation than words, because the non-semantic is less constraining than language, the *ghazal's* content matter tends to be vague. As is the case with other genres of South Asian devotional poetry, the most common reading of a *ghazal* views it as a metaphor for one's desire to be with God, and sometimes depicts God in a very unorthodox manner. In the *ghazal*, God is the Beloved who the lover longs for, beautiful beyond words and unresponsive to the lover's pleas. With God as the object of desire, the illicit love that some scholars claim *ghazals* are based on is no longer frivolous but rather essential for survival.

Ghazals were also used to validate various political agendas. In certain *mushairas* held in British India, the lover represented the patriot, the Beloved was viewed as independence, and the Beloved's partner, responsible for separating the lover and the Beloved, was personified as unjust British rule. Because the *ghazal* is so vague in its lyrical content is and free from specific theological projections and doctrinal designation, it allows itself to be interpreted in various ways. The fact that *ghazals* are interpreted through a variety of lenses made it an extremely popular poetic form in South Asia, amongst Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs alike. This is the case with the *ghazal* gender designations as well. Because the *ghazal* is so open to interpretation, the gender usage in the *ghazal* does not necessarily reflect what the writer/reciter intends or the reader/listener imagines. The vagueness within *ghazal* lyrical content is responsible for the fact that its composition and recitation are egalitarian in nature, transcending both religion and gender. In this manner, the *ghazal* has since evolved into a non-sectarian form of literary expression, exploring the deepest emotions of the heart while transcending traditional cultural and religious restraints and boundaries.

The Call of Qawwali

Derived from the Arabic, *sama* refers to the act of “listening” to mystical verse alongside musical accompaniment and dance. It is also known in South Asian contexts as *qawwali*, that which is “recited,” and often times accompanies the *urs*, literally “wedding,” but more accurately described as the celebration that surround the death anniversary of any given Sufi master at his *dargah* (shrine). As an experience oriented around the power of words and song, it shares in the legacy of the Qur’an, the canonical text of the Islamic tradition, which itself literally means “recitation,” and is a model to the power of the auditory experience in cultivating a direct apprehension of the divine.¹⁶ Although the power of recitation holds an undisputed role in the Islamic tradition, the practices of *sama* and *qawwali* have generated a great deal of controversy by pre-eminent Islamic rulers, scholars and practitioners due to an ambivalent estimation of the proper role of dance and music in religious practice.

The varying estimations of the legitimacy of *sama* as a spiritual practice and vocation are highlighted in the following passage by Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence:

Sama relates to the spiritual progress of a Muslim mystic or Sufi adept in one of three ways: (1) it may be totally excluded as inappropriate to Islamic teachings – mystical or nonmystical (as the Mughal Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi [d.1624] and his suborder, the Mujaddidiyya Naqshbandiyya, believed); (2) it may be accepted as a penultimate stage on the mystical ladder leading to ontological unity, i.e., perfection; or (3) it may be viewed as the top rung on the ladder, itself the ultimate mystical experience when properly pursued.¹⁷

¹⁶ In *The Qur’an: A Biography*, Bruce Lawrence writes, “The emphasis on recitation is not accidental. It is central to understanding the formation and force of the Qur’an. The Qur’an is a book unlike any other: it is an oral book that sounds better spoken than read silently, but it is an oral book that is also scripture. More evocative in recitation than in writing, the Qur’an is only fully the Qur’an when it is recited. To hear the Qur’an recited is for Muslims unlike anything else.” Bruce Lawrence, *The Qur’an: A Biography* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006), 7.

¹⁷ Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, 34.

In spite of the condemnations of *sama* by orthodox Muslims, traditionalists and legalists alike, the practice of *sama* and the presence of *samakhanas* (music halls) are attested to as early as the ninth century in Baghdad. Additionally, *sama* was a topic of discussion in various Arabic manuals and was widely practiced in Iraq and Iran.¹⁸ Far from being a later accretion to the tradition as a response to a non-Muslim environment, *sama* has been an integral part of Sufi experience from its very inception.

The status of *sama* has historically depended on the particular Sufi order in question. As a practice that has the potential to provide a practitioner with the requisite spiritual *hal* (insight) and/or *wajd* (ecstatic experience) on the Sufi path, Sufi authorities themselves had, “recognized that musical sessions could potentially degenerate into sensual excesses, and they accordingly established strict guidelines, stressing purity of intention as the most important criterion for *sama*.”¹⁹ Thus, *sama* was never a spontaneous, undisciplined, or wild expression of Sufi spirituality, but rather a practice governed by the concept of *adab* (moral conduct) that ensured both the proper external parameters of the performance and the proper inner piety of a participant or audience member. However, the most important factor for the proper performance of *sama* was the legitimizing and watchful presence of a Sufi master.²⁰

¹⁸ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 98-186.

¹⁹ Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, 10.

²⁰ In his writings, the twentieth-century Pakistani Chishti Sabiri Sufi master, Shaykh Muhammad Zauqi Shah outlined the three factors necessary for the *sama*. “There are three requirements for *sama*: place (*makan*), time (*zaman*), and companions (*ikhwan*). *Makan* means the place where *qawwali* is performed. It should not be a location where everyone passes by. Rather it should be a secluded site. *Zaman* means that there should be a prescribed time for *qawwali* when no other duties are at hand. For example, it should not be time for prayer or any other obligations that might intervene. *Ikhwan* means that only people of taste [*ahl-i-zauq*] should be seated in the *qawwali* assembly [*mahfil*], and only those in search of God [*talab-i-haqq*] ought to listen to the *sama*. The singers [*qawwals*] are also included under the requirement of *ikhwan*.” Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound*, 216.

With regards to the prevalence and centrality of *sama*, the two orders most visibly linked with intoxicating music and ecstatic dance are the Mevlevi order (also known as the Whirling Dervishes) in Turkey associated with Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (d.1273), and the Chishti order associated with Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer (d. 1236).²¹ For these two orders, the *sama* and the *mahfil-e-sama* (musical gathering) are central aspects of Sufi practice. Although some look upon the movements of the Whirling Dervishes with suspicion, according to the Mevlevi tradition, the dance itself is actually a “carefully elaborated ritual that leaves no room for “ecstatic” movement but is built upon perfect harmony, with each movement having a special meaning.”²²

Similarly, far from creating an embarrassment for the Chishti Sufi order, *sama* has had two indisputable functions: first, historically speaking, it distinguished the Chishti order from their subcontinental counterparts in both the Suhrawardi and Naqshabandi orders; and secondly, from a spiritual perspective, it was a means towards experiencing divine union and immediacy.²³ Far from defaming Sufism with the brush of blasphemy, *sama* actually vindicated the Sufi quest by justifying “the supremacy of divine love over all other religious obligations, while at the same time acknowledging that both music and

²¹ For an insightful analysis of the dervish groups of the medieval era, see Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994).

²² Annemarie Schimmel, *I Am Wind You Are Fire* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992), 197. In *Awakening: A Sufi Experience*, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, the son of Hazrat Inayat Khan, details the mechanics of how the Dervish learns to whirl. He writes, “Attuning to the majestic qualities of the dervish, place your right toe on top of your left toe, cross both arms over your heart, place the hand of each arm on the opposite shoulder, and bow reverently. Then, as you raise yourself, uncross your feet. Next, start whirling counterclockwise (to the left). Place the weight of your body on your left foot. Next, lift your right foot and turn it toward your left foot – so that you are pigeon-toed. Now, rotate your left foot, using your right foot to occasionally touch the ground, propelling you and helping you to maintain your balance. The axis around which you are spinning is between the big toe of your left foot and the next one. In Konya, they actually place a nail in the floor between these two toes – it helps them to locate the point around which they gravitate as they spin.” Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, *Awakening: A Sufi Experience* (New York: Putnam, 2000), 172-173.

²³ Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, 34-46.

love and, indeed, every aspect of life had to be experienced within an Islamic worldview upholding the Qur'an, the Traditions of the Prophet, and the rudiments of Muslim law, the *shari'ah*.”²⁴

Situating the lyrical *qawwali* performances of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan against the backdrop of *sama*, it is necessary to emphasize that *sama* and *qawwali* are not necessarily synonymous with one another.²⁵ A concrete example of the ambivalent status of *qawwals* (singers) in Sufi settings of *sama* is indicated in the spatial layout of the *mahfil-e-sama* itself. While the Sufi master is situated at the center of ritual action, the *qawwals* are confined to the periphery.²⁶ Based on his fieldwork with Chishti Sabiri Sufis in Pakistan, Robert Rozehnal notes the ambivalent position held by Sufis towards world famous Pakistani *qawwali* singers such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the Sabri Brothers, and Mehr and Sher Ali. He writes:

While disciples may respect popular singers for their musical artistry, they are highly critical of those who commercialize and commodify Sufi music. *Sama*, Chishti Sabiris insist, is not a form of entertainment. It is a powerful spiritual catalyst that should be used only in the presence of an accomplished spiritual master who understands its power. Removing *sama* from its proper ritual setting, disciples argue, undermines the music's spiritual efficacy and dilutes its transformative power.²⁷

When *sama* is situated within its proper Sufi ritual contexts, its efficacy and salience is profound. However, pressing questions remain regarding the role of *sama* and *qawwali* in non-ritual contexts and the adaptation of the Chishti Sufi message in non-Muslim contexts. A model here for this is provided by the modern Sufi master, Hazrat Inayat Khan, who tried to adapt the Chishti Sufi message for the western world. With

²⁴ Ibid., 34.

²⁵ Rozehnal, 213-225.

²⁶ Ibid., 217.

²⁷ Ibid., 222.

regard to Hazrat Inayat Khan's mission and the difficulties inherent in revealing the Chishti Sufi tradition to non-Muslims, whether in South Asia or around the world, Carl W. Ernst writes:

Though there is little doubt about Inayat Khan's own Islamic observance and loyalty there is a question about the Islamic identity of those participants in various Sufi organizations linked to him. On the one hand, his order is marked by universalism, following the Qur'anic dictum (2:136) that no distinction is to be made between the messages revealed by God to different prophets. Also, one of his alleged disciples, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, was the first English convert to Islam to translate the Qur'an into his native tongue. Yet Inayat Khan made the momentous decision to present Sufism to Europeans and Americans as a spiritual path that was not tied to Islam.²⁸

With the recent popularity of *qawwali* music in the West through the pioneering efforts of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, these issues have become even more pressing. These issues are compounded by the fact that *qawwali* music has come to signify many things and its history diverges from the practice of *sama* in significant ways. *Qawwali* is fusion music, seamlessly synthesizing instruments, rhythmic cycles, musical motifs, and poetic lyrics from diverse West, Central, and South Asian musical, literary, and religious traditions. *Qawwali* is Sufi music, invoking popular Sufi figures as a means of inducing a mystical experience with the sublime goal being God realization. *Qawwali* is trance music, catapulting its listeners into states of rapture and intoxication, liberation and exhilaration. *Qawwali* is ecstatic music, as evidenced by Judith Becker in her compelling book *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*:

The strongest version of happiness in relation to musical listening and an example of extreme arousal is ecstasy. Usually associated with religious rituals, ecstasy, as extreme joy, almost by definition involves a sense of the sacred (although musical ecstasy can justly be claimed by some attendees at secular music events such as rock concerts). The degree to

²⁸ Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, 142.

which Muslim Sufi orders have formalized and institutionalized musical ecstasy has seldom been exceeded.²⁹

Many scholars argue that *qawwali*'s progenitor was Amir Khusrau, the iconic thirteenth century Sufi musician, poet, and scholar. Khusrau enjoyed close relations with the different rulers of the Delhi Sultanate and served time as the classical poet on the royal court. Khusrau is widely considered to be the father of *Hindustani* music and popularly credited as inventor of the *sitar* and *tabla*, the foundational instruments for Indian classical music. *Qawwali* scholar Adam Nayyar acknowledges that Khusrau is the root foundational figure for *qawwali* but suggests that *qawwali*'s history could predate Khusrau:

Hazrat Amir Khusraw (1253-1325), a famous Sufi saint and an expert both in Indian and Persian music at the court of Ala' al-Din Khilji, Sultan of Delhi (1296-1316) is credited with the introduction of Persian and Arabic elements into South Asian music. Of particular importance are two musical forms: *Tarana* and *Qaul*, which is said to be the origin of *qawwali*, a form of Muslim religious song. However, there is evidence that *qawwali* predates Hazrat Amir Khusraw: the great Sufi Masters of the Chishtiya and Suhrawardia Orders of South Asia were admirers of *qawwali* and the Saint Hazrat Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki is said to have died in 1236 while in a musical trance induced by a *qawwali*.³⁰

Even today, Amir Khusrau's compositions are amongst the most important within the *qawwali* canon. In addition to Amir Khusrau, *qawwali* music invokes the poetic and prophetic voices from other popular icons within the South Asian Sufi tradition. Amongst the prominent South Asian medieval mystical poets *qawwali* claims in its canon are Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussein, Sultan Bahu, Kabir, and Guru Nanak. Persian remains the liturgical language of *qawwali* for it is the original language of *qawwali*. But *qawwali* has developed regional and vernacular repertoires in Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Braj

²⁹ Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 79.

³⁰ Adam Nayyar, *Qawwali* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa Research Center, 1988), 2.

Basha, Purbi, and Rajasthani. The range of languages represented in *qawwali* is indicative of the great cultural and geographical diversity that Sufism seeks to incorporate.³¹

Qawwali's lyrical poetry is replete with metaphoric language and symbolic imagery in order to illustrate the pain of separation and the ecstasy of reunion. The poet is often characterized as the spurned and dejected lover, tirelessly searching for the Beloved. Thus, these Sufi compositions are profound on a number of levels; a mundane reading of the poetry paints a picture of a lover gone mad separated from the Beloved, while a more symbolic reading illuminates the pain an individual soul feels when alienated from God. In this manner, *qawwali's* lyricism is similar to the *ghazal* in both form and content; indeed many of the most popular *qawwali* songs evolved from *ghazal* compositions.

In terms of its musicality, *qawwali* is a fusion of Central Asian and South Asian music. Its precursor is *mugham*, which is found in Uzbekistan – essentially a chorus accompanied by clapping. A typical *qawwali* group has a lead singer, a few back-up singers, a harmonium player, a *tabla* player, and a chorus of men singing and clapping. Clapping and percussion power *qawwali's* rhythmic drive, and this provides a dynamic

³¹ *Qawwali* was integral in spreading the teachings and theology of Chishti Sufism's mystical teachers. In doing so, *qawwali* was also partially responsible for the large-scale conversion to Islam that occurred in medieval South Asia. Neither the esoteric theology of the Muslim elite nor the rigid liturgy of orthodox Islam inspired South Asians to convert to Islam as much as the potent and powerful Sufi message spread through *qawwali*. Adam Nayyar explicates upon *qawwali's* prophetic legacy as missionary music: "Sufis call the *qawwals* the *imams* of the religion of Islam, the people who are the missionaries of the faith. Their targets were basically hierarchical Brahmanism of the Hindus and the orthodox *mullahs* of established Muslims. So the idea was to give light to everybody, to revivify the faith and show people that there is no difference between human beings by birth. The biggest challenge for the Sufis in India was the caste system, which is something they did not accept. So in that sense, it was also a sort of musical attack on Brahmanism. There was also some kind of dialogue on that level, because *bhakti*, the part of Hinduism that rejected Brahmanism, rose to meet Sufism. So in *qawwali* you will see Sufi and *bhakti* together, aiming for that bridge and for that unity." Nayyar, "Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*," 8-12.

backdrop to the searching and soulful singing associated with *qawwali*. *Qawwali* incorporates within its structure the classical music forms of *raag* (melody) and *taal* (rhythm). The singers and musicians within the *qawwali* party are always male. The lineage of *qawwali* singers, known as *qawwals*, is also a male lineage, and the musical transmission has always been between the men in the family. In fact, in Pakistan, women are often separated from the men during the *qawwali* performance. Adam Nayyar describes how women represent a distraction for the serious Sufi mystic deeply intoxicated in trance:

Data Sahib says that *qawwals* cannot have women in front of them because that would divert their focus from what they are doing, and they might begin to have lascivious thoughts, which would then damage both their texts and their rendition. So he tells *qawwals* not to look up at the rooftops where the women are. Women should be behind or on the sides of the musicians and not facing the men, because the musicians would then divert their attention towards displaying sexuality rather than a more sublime message.³²

Qawwali must be understood and analyzed in its proper cultural and performative context. In her seminal ethnography of *qawwali* music entitled *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, Regula Qureshi observes the Sufi shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya in New Delhi, India.³³ Although her research was compiled over thirty years ago, it maintains its status as the definitive research study on *qawwali*, in terms of both breadth and depth. Qureshi's anthropological and ethnomusicological methodology is apparent in her presentation of *qawwali* music. Her conception of *qawwali* as "context-sensitive musical grammar" highlights the interactive nature of *qawwali's* interplay between the performer and the audience. Unlike other

³² Ibid.

³³ Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

classical musical traditions, *qawwali* has historically been performed only in religious settings and only before live audiences. The performance of *qawwali* on any particular occasion is dependent not only on the wishes of the performer, but also the atmosphere of the performance and the desires of the audience. Qureshi's research highlights the reality that a *qawwali* performance is context sensitive and is determined in part by an interdependent web of societal, economic, and religious forces. According to Qureshi:

Qawwali considered as an occasion is a gathering for the purpose of realizing ideals of Islamic mysticism through the ritual of 'listening to music', or *sama*. By enhancing the message of mystic poetry, and by providing a powerful rhythm suggesting the ceaseless repetition of God's name (*zikr*), the music of *Qawwali* has a religious function: to arouse mystical love, even divine ecstasy, the core experience of Sufism. The *Qawwali* assembly is held under the guidance of a spiritual leader, and is attended by Sufi devotees though it is usually open to all comers. In listening to the songs, the devotees respond individually and spontaneously, but in accordance with social and religious convention, expressing states of mystical love. The musicians for their part, structure their performance to activate and reinforce these emotions, adopting it to the changing needs of their listeners.³⁴

Like *sama*, *qawwali* is a central liturgical rite of the *urs* celebrations that take place at the different *dargahs* in North India and Pakistan as part of the Chishti Sufi religious festival circuit. Each *dargah* is associated with a different Sufi saint and amongst the famous *dargahs* in the Chishti Sufi tradition are Nizamuddin Auliya in New Delhi, Datta Sahib in Lahore, and Baba Farid in Pakpattan. The most important and popular Chishti *dargah* remains its foundational one, the Moinuddin Chishti *dargah* in Ajmer, where more than three hundred thousand pilgrims attend the annual *urs* celebration. Outside the annual *urs* celebration circuit, *dargahs* also showcase local *qawwali* groups at weekly performances, often held on Thursday evenings. Regula

³⁴ Ibid, *xiii*.

Qureshi argues that *qawwali*'s liturgical significance and religious context at the *urs* is critical to understanding *qawwali*'s scope and impact:

In summary form the function of *qawwali* music is: to present mystical poetry – addressing the Prophet or Sufi saints, or expressing spiritual emotion – in a musical setting, so as to arouse mystical love, culminating in ecstasy, in listeners with diverse spiritual needs. The music is placed entirely in the service of this spiritual aim, mainly acoustically (arousing drum beat and clapping; group alternation, volume and enunciation for text emphasis), durationally (musical rhythm represents poetic meter, frequent stress repeats for arousal), and structurally (musical form represents texts units, flexible structuring for text repetition and insertion to serve diverse listeners).³⁵

³⁵ Regula Qureshi, "Recorded Music and Religious Music," in *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*, ed. Lawrence A. Babb and Susan Wadley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 141.

Chapter Ten

The Prophetic Life and Lyrics of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

Shahen Shah

The man singularly responsible for transforming *qawwali* music from an esoteric devotional tradition to a world music genre was the Pakistani Sufi singer Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Arguably the most popular recording artist ever to emerge from the South Asian subcontinent, Khan's musical virtuosity brought *qawwali* music from the shrines of Pakistan to the films of Hollywood and inspired a new generation of fusion musicians in the South Asian Diaspora. Khan was not only the most famous ambassador of Pakistani culture, but his message of compassion and devotion embodied the highest teachings of Sufism and enabled him to unify religious and linguistic communities in Pakistan and India that were previously divided.

This dissertation does not assert that Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was a prophet within the context of Islam or Sufism, but rather that he was a self-conscious messenger spreading the words and teachings of the Islamic prophets and Sufi saints who inspired him. Even though Khan is not analyzed as a prophet, this dissertation does explore the *pop-prophetic* dimensions of his life and lyrics and interrogates the manner in which he engaged with the larger prophetic aspects of Islam and Sufism while simultaneously ascending through the pop-cultural pantheon of iconic artists. In this manner, Khan's prophetic life and lyrics must be understood within the context of *pop-propheticism*, and Khan himself is presented as an exemplar of *pop-propheticism*. Accordingly, this dissertation offers *pop-propheticism* as an instructive methodology and framework for understanding Khan's legacy through the convergence of prophecy and popular culture.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was born on October 13th, 1948 in Lyallpur (presently Faisalabad), Pakistan, a child of the Partition of India and Pakistan that preceded his birth a year earlier. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's father Fateh Ali Khan and uncle Mubarak Ali Khan were distinguished *qawwals* and musicians, part of a family lineage of *qawwals* that went back hundreds of years. Although Fateh Ali Khan wanted his son to be a physician, he still trained him in classical music. Adam Nayyar describes how Nusrat's extended familial classical musical training gave him a competitive advantage amongst other *qawwals* later in his life. Nayyar writes:

From the musical point of view, Nusrat's father was also his teacher. His father wanted him to become a famous man and he taught him classical music. He wanted him to become a classical musician as well as an educated person, so Nusrat went to school. His father was his main teacher, along with his uncle, Mubarak Ali. Fateh Ali and Mubarak Ali were two brothers. When his father died, Mubarak took over, and then Mubarak died as well. So Nusrat had to start *qawwali* at a very early age. The dream of classical music instead transferred to *qawwali* and that enriched the *qawwali*. No other *qawwal* has as much knowledge of classical music as Nusrat had.¹

It was Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's father who imparted to him his family's canonical *qawwali* songbook. Khan's songs are not his own compositions; rather they are the renditions of Sufi songs handed down through his familial lineage. Khan's *qawwali* repertoire primarily consisted of songs in praise of Allah as well as different prophets and *pirs*. Those venerated in his *qawwali* songs include pan-Islamic figures such as Muhammad, Ali, and Hussein, as well as South Asian Sufi icons such as Amir Khusrau, Shabnaz Qalandar, and Baba Farid (Ganj-e-Shakkar). Although Khan did not write most of his lyrics, he did infuse his traditional *qawwali* repertoire with his own inspired

¹ Nayyar, "Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*," 8-12.

melody and rhythm and extemporaneously recited lyrics from a wide range of compositions.

In 1971, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan along with his brother Farrukh Fateh Ali Khan inherited their family's *qawwali* group as was the tradition amongst within the Punjabi *qawwali* familial lineage. For the rest of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's life, his brother Farrukh Fateh Ali Khan accompanied him on vocals and harmonium, and over the next thirty years, they changed the face of *qawwali* music. In fact, it was Farrukh's virtuosity on the harmonium and as a back-up singer that gave Nusrat's music its unique rhythmic drive and harmonic contrast. Adam Nayyar confirms Farrukh's centrality in Nusrat's musical success:

Nusrat's group had a major advantage in that Nusrat himself knew everything that there was to know about the *tabla*, which is not something that every *qawwal* knows. So he had the basic foundational grid. The other important thing was that Nusrat knew more about *ragas* than any other *qawwal* living today, and he was able to choose the *raga*. Even more important in terms of musical quality was the fact that his brother Farrukh is a genius on the harmonium keyboard and the bellows. The combination of the bellows and the keys, the way that Farrukh does it, nobody else can. A lot of the pieces were composed by Farrukh himself, and that is something that not many people know about. Initially, if you look at Rehmat Gramophone cassettes, you'll see Music: Farrukh Fateh Ali Khan.²

During the 1970s, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *qawwali* party emerged as the pre-eminent musical group in the tradition. Throughout Pakistan and India, Khan's name was synonymous with the genre of *qawwali*, and his music was heard in *dargahs* and on radio stations alike. Khan's fame provided him with the platform to use his music not only to inspire mystical intoxication, but also to bridge geo-political divides. Khan's self-

² Ibid.

identification as a Punjabi and as a Sufi was critical to his success in bringing together religious, cultural, political, and linguistic communities that had been previously divided.

Despite the fact that Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan sang in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Rajasthani, and Braj Basha, Punjabi was his mother tongue and the language he enjoyed singing in most. Khan's self-identification as a Punjabi allowed him to bring together the religious, literary, and musical traditions of the historical Punjab with his distinctively Punjabi style of *ang qawwali*. Drawing from Punjabi folk epics such as the love story of *Heer-Ranjha*, Khan re-imagined the boundaries of Punjab so that they matched Punjab's cultural heritage instead of its partitioned politics. Invoking medieval Punjabi devotional poets associated with the different Punjabi religious traditions, Khan brought together Punjabi Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims in a multi-faith celebration of mysticism and music. Khan's root Punjabi identity enabled him to unite the religious traditions of a fractured and fragmented Punjab, a region with a tortured history of ethnic fratricide that is a microcosm of a postcolonial South Asia replete with religious communalism and sectarian strife.

Likewise, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's self-identification as a Sufi empowered him to unite many mystical and musical communities throughout the world. Operating outside the parochial boundaries of orthodox religiosity, Khan's universal message of love and peace connected disparate religious groups in a collective focused on shared values and a common heritage. Just as *qawwali* music propagated Sufism throughout medieval South Asia, Khan wielded his brand of *qawwali* to spread Sufism throughout the contemporary world. In this manner, Khan evolved into a Sufi icon and musical missionary, the embodiment of *qawwali* music and a global ambassador of the nation-state of Pakistan.

Despite his root Sufi identity, Khan was publicly reserved about it, usually referring to himself as a Muslim who sang Sufi music. Khan himself explained how Sufi music enabled him to find God:

I am not a Sufi but I spent a lot of time from my childhood up until now with the Sufis and I deeply studied them. Sufi music is a kind of prayer, and if you sing in this manner, you will become close to God, very close. That's basically what I do. Every religion has its own way of describing God. Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism – they all have their own way of following God. Sufism describes God and teaches how to come closer to God. So basically, I follow the Islamic form of Sufism to find my way to God.³

Adam Nayyar claims that Khan's modesty revealed the depth and profundity of his Sufi worldview:

He was being modest. To call yourself a Sufi, you have to have a fairly high level of knowledge and a very high level of meditation. *Qawwals* are people who render the work of Sufi masters. So if you ask a musician, "Are you a Sufi?" he will say, "I am one who renders the works of Sufi masters," meaning, "I am not that master." This kind of modesty is essential. Also, if you ask a Sufi, "Are you a Sufi?" he will say, "I am learning on this path, which is an ocean, the depths of which I cannot plumb." So to say "I am a Sufi" is a heavy thing.⁴

During the 1970s, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's prolific *qawwali* party recorded hundreds of albums in Pakistan and he cemented his legacy as the leader of the best *qawwali* party in South Asia. Eventually, Khan began to tour outside of South Asia, showcasing the regional music of *qawwali* to rest of the world. Amongst the international arts and culture crowds, Khan represented a new type of world musician, one who was classically trained in his tradition but whose talent could not be constrained by his

³ Dimitri Ehrlich, "Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan: A Tradition of Ecstasy," *Inside the Music: Conversations with Contemporary Musicians about Spirituality, Creativity, and Consciousness* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1997), 119-120.

⁴ Nayyar, "Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*," 8-12.

tradition. In particular, France and Japan developed devoted fan bases loyal to Khan's infectious *qawwali*, and Khan's tours through Europe and Asia effectively rendered him as *qawwali*'s first global ambassador.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's worldwide fame increased exponentially after his historic meeting and collaboration with the Western pop star Peter Gabriel through Gabriel's world music festival entitled World of Music, Arts, and Dance (WOMAD). WOMAD started in 1982 and it is now the biggest annual world music festival on the planet. Khan was a featured performer at the early WOMAD festivals, and WOMAD provided Khan the forum and framework for spreading *qawwali* throughout the world. Khan's world music was soon transformed into music for the world, and his legendary voice was celebrated from Lahore to London, from Peshawar to Paris, from Karachi to Khartoum, and from Islamabad to Istanbul.

In 1989, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan collaborated with Peter Gabriel on *Passion*, the soundtrack to the controversial Martin Scorsese movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Scorsese's filmic interpretation of the popular Nikos Kazantzakis novel by the same name. Inspired by the sounds of the Middle East, *Passion* brought together virtuoso world musicians from diverse geographical regions such as Turkey, Senegal, Egypt, India, and Pakistan. On the title track "Passion," which plays during the pivotal crucifixion scene in the film, Khan joined the Senegalese voice of Youssou N'Dour, the South Indian mandolin of L. Shankar, the Brazilian percussion of Djalma Correa, and the American trumpet of Jon Hassell to paint an unforgettable sonic portrait of suffering and redemption. The indelible image of William Defoe's Jesus being nailed to the cross as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's agony drenched voice provides the chilling score is arguably the

most poignant moment in Scorsese's film. This dramatic introduction to the larger world music community was a precursor to Khan's meteoric rise to global superstardom that he would soon achieve.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's contribution to the soundtrack to *The Last Temptation of Christ* opened the floodgates for offers to collaborate on other Hollywood film scores. In the last years of his life, Khan's voice appeared on the soundtracks to the Hollywood films *Natural Born Killers* (1994), *Dead Man Walking* (1995), and *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996). On these soundtracks, Khan collaborated with some of the biggest musical names in the US, including Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor, Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, and slide-guitar virtuoso Ry Cooder. In doing so, he helped create fusion music unlike any previously recorded before, and through his fusion music, he introduced North America to the sounds of *qawwali*.

Soon after Hollywood employed Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Bollywood came knocking. In 1994, Khan recorded the soundtrack to Shekhar Kapoor's *Bandit Queen*, a controversial film chronicling the true-life story of Indian outlaw turned politician Phoolan Devi. Like the Hollywood films Khan chose to score, *Bandit Queen* challenged normative culture legality and sexuality and made him an easy target for Muslims who derided his fusion music as a corruption of *qawwali* culture. Still, Khan persevered with his Bollywood soundtracks, some of which were released posthumously, such as *Aur Pyaar Ho Gaya* (1997), *Shaheed-e-Mohabbat* (1999), and *Dhadhkan* (2000). His music also appeared on the soundtracks of popular films from the South Asian Diaspora, notably Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) and Gurinder Chadha's *Bend it like Beckham* (2002). He also collaborated on projects with Bollywood composer A.R.

Rahman and Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar. With this strategic approach, Khan's Hollywood and Bollywood soundtracks enabled him to spread the music and the message of his Sufi faith throughout the world.

Not only did *Passion* inspire a host of Hollywood and Bollywood soundtracks, it also allowed Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan to record on Peter Gabriel's Real World Records, which afforded him access to a high quality production studio for the first time in his career. Khan's *qawwali* recordings on Real World Records collectively comprise some of the best sounding and recorded *qawwali* music ever produced. Khan's Real World *qawwali* catalog includes his classic albums *Shahen Shah* (1988), *Shahbaaz* (1991), *Devotional and Love Songs* (1993), *The Last Prophet* (1994), and his posthumous *Body and Soul* (2002). Just as Island Records gave Bob Marley's reggae a global consumer base, Real World Records enabled Khan's *qawwali* to be distributed and purchased throughout the world. Khan and Gabriel continued to collaborate on fusion albums and soundtracks, and their epic working relationship reshaped the world music landscape. Perhaps the most visible pop-cultural moment they shared together was at the 1996 VH1 Honors, when Khan's *qawwali* party joined Gabriel onstage with Michael Stipe, Don Henley, Joan Osbourne, and Natalie Merchant for a show stealing rendition of Gabriel's popular song "In Your Eyes."

While recording his *qawwali* albums with Real World Records, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan met Canadian music producer Michael Brook. Together they collaborated on *Mustt Mustt* (1990), a genre-defining album which seamlessly combined *qawwali* with ambient and trance sounds. The title song "Mustt Mustt" was remixed by the popular British trip-hop band Massive Attack, and the remixed single became the first South Asian song to

crossover to a larger Western audience. In 1996, they reunited for *Night Song*, a fusion masterpiece that eventually became Khan's best selling album.

Not only did the Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan/Michael Brook collaboration energize the world music community, it also inspired a postcolonial generation of South Asian musicians and artists around the world. Many South Asian youth growing up in the Diaspora first heard *qawwali* on the fusion Brook/Khan recordings, and used that experience as a catalyst to explore traditional *qawwali* music in greater depth. In particular, the Asian Underground musical movement, which originated in the early 1990s in England, viewed *Mustt Mustt* and *Night Song* as seminal recordings in their musical canon. The Asian Underground movement featured South Asian musicians and DJs who were raised in the UK. The music of the Asian Underground movement combined the sound of drums and bass with *tabla* and break beats, while adding heavy bass lines, South Asian vocal tracks, and classical Indian music loops. The progenitors of the Asian Underground movement include Talvin Singh, Nitin Sawhney, Asian Dub Foundation, State of Bengal, and Joi. These musicians came together in 1997 and released a Real World tribute album on to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan entitled *Star Rise*. *Star Rise* showcased the stars of the Asian Underground movement remixing the music from the Brook/Khan fusion collaborations of *Mustt Mustt* and *Night Song* and in doing so, introduced Khan's *qawwali* music to a whole new listening demographic including the trip-hop, drums and bass, and electronica communities.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan passed away on August 16th, 1997 in London from complications arising from kidney and liver failure. Hailed as "*Shahen-Shah-e-Qawwali*" (King of *Qawwali*), Khan remains one of the most popular South Asian recording artists

ever, certainly the most famous *qawwal* to ever live, and undoubtedly one of the most influential Pakistanis in history. After his death, he received many accolades and commendations from a variety of political, religious, and media sources. He is in the Guinness Book of World Records as the most prolific *qawwali* artist of all time, with over one hundred and twenty five albums in his discography. *Time* magazine named Khan as one of the top twelve Asian artists and thinkers in the past sixty years while *Spin* magazine named Khan as one of their fifty most influential artists in 1998. Scores of tribute albums and concert videos flooded the market after his death, and more than ten years after his death, his imprint on Pakistani music is still overwhelming. Despite all these honors and awards, Khan's most enduring legacy is his prophetic voice, which still inspires people to embrace the Sufi tenets of universal love, compassion, and peace.

Prophetic Lyricism

Despite the fact that Western audiences embraced Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *qawwali* music, the language barrier precluded most of his new listeners from appreciating the poetic depth of his lyrics. Khan himself realized this and he was adamant throughout his lifetime that his Western audience should have access to poetic translations of his lyrics so as to understand the proper theological and literary context of *qawwali* music.⁵ Unfortunately, Khan passed away before the dream of his multimedia translation project reached fruition.

⁵ In 1996, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan proposed a multimedia translation project that would allow Western audiences to understand his *qawwali* lyrics. His physician at the time, Dr. Vikas Bhushan, offered to fund the project but Khan died before the project started. Nonetheless, the multimedia translation project was completed under the working title *Nusrat Revealed*. I served as the principle editor and coordinator of the project, which will soon be housed at the Digital Archives at the University of Southern California's Libraries. The translations used in this dissertation were compiled as part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project.

There are two sides of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's prophetic lyricism, which are only apparent to those who understand his lyrics. First and foremost, Khan's music participated in the prophetic elements of Sufism. For Khan, spreading *qawwali* was his life's mission and he believed that his lyrics articulated a divine message, a voice from heaven. The second aspect of Khan's prophetic lyricism is that the lyrics to his *qawwali* compositions invoke the names and memories of Muslim and Sufi prophets from the Middle East and South Asia. Not only do Khan's lyrics promote the teachings and tenets of Sufism, they also praise and invoke the Sufi tradition. In this manner, Khan's prophetic lyricism cut two ways by spreading a prophetic message while exalting the prophetic messengers. In an interview, Khan described how his prophetic lyricism inspired his mystical music:

When I sing traditional spiritual songs, I always concentrate on who it is that I'm singing about. For instance, if I am inspired by the Holy Prophet, I concentrate on the Prophet. When I sing, I sing for God and for holy prophets, and their personalities are in my mind. Accordingly, whenever I sing about God, or the prophet Muhammad, I feel like I am in front of him. I feel their personalities, and I pray.⁶

Unlike Bob Marley, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan did not write the lyrics to his compositions. Instead, the lyrical content of Khan's *qawwali* compositions were penned by celebrated Sufi poets from the classical, medieval, and contemporary eras. But each time Khan performed a *qawwali* song, it was unique; he never performed a song the same way twice, either musically or lyrically. The lyrical composition provided a framework through which to improvise, and part of Khan's genius was his ability to interject inspired poetic couplets that reflected the mood of the performance and the venue. So even though Khan was not the author of his lyrics, he was the vehicle through which *qawwali's* lyrics

⁶ Ehrlich, 120-121.

were shaped, sung, and delivered. For this reason, within the corpus of Khan's recorded work, each version of each composition on each album is different from each other.

Not only do Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *qawwali* compositions capture his prophetic lyricism, but his musical catalog can also be considered a canonical source for the Chishti Sufi tradition. This dissertation analyzes three of his *qawwali* compositions, which represent the convergence of the form and the substance of his prophetic lyricism. These selections illustrate not only the range of languages Khan sung in, but also the diversity of poetic idioms, literary themes, and historical eras contained within Khan's large *qawwali* repertoire.

Perhaps the most important liturgical composition that Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan regularly performed was "Man Kunto Mawla." "Man Kunto Mawla" is attributed to the thirteenth century progenitor of *qawwali* music, Amir Khusrau, and is one of the few *qawwali* compositions in the Chishti canon that is in Persian. Unlike other *qawwali* compositions, which are performed in both religious and popular contexts, "Man Kunto Mawla" is traditionally performed in a religious context. In fact, "Man Kunto Mawla" typically inaugurates the *urs* celebration of a Chishti Sufi. According to Adam Nayyar:

For example in Chishti-*mahfils* of the Sufis you'll start with a piece by Amir Khusrau of the thirteenth century. It will always open up with the *qaul*, which is "Man Kunto Mawla," and it will end with a *rang* when everybody will have to stand up, again a thirteenth century text.⁷

Not only is "Man Kunto Mawla" important as liturgy, it also highlights Khan's prophetic lyricism through its devotional tone and its establishment of a clear prophetic lineage. "Man Kunto Mawla" imparts both worldly and mystical teachings to the listener, as evidenced by its lyrics:

⁷ Nayyar, "Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*," 8-12.

King of Men, Lion of God, the strongest Nourisher and Protector,
Victorious of God, the possessor of His celebrated sword,
If you accept me as Master,
Then Ali, too, is your Master.

Da ra dil de da ra dil de da re da ni
No tom tana na na na, tana na na re
Ya la li ya la li ya la ya le re
Dar a dile da ra dile da re da ni

Ali, Master, Ali, Master, Ali, Master!
Ali is the Master!
I am a slave and drunken dervish of Haider (Ali)!
I am the dog that roams the streets of the Lion of God, Ali!

If you accept me as Master,
Then Ali, too, is your Master.⁸

“Man Kunto Mawla” lyrically establishes a clear and authoritative prophetic lineage to Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. The Arabic saying “Man Kunto Mawla,” which translates into English as, “If you accept me as Master, then Ali is also your Master,” is attributed to the Prophet Muhammad as codified in the *Hadith* collection of Ahmed ibn Hanbal.⁹ By explicitly placing Ali within the direct lineage of the Prophet Muhammad, a Sufi framework oriented around Ali as a foundational figure emerged. By performing “Man Kunto Mawla” at the beginning of each *urs* celebration, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan reiterated and reinforced this prophetic lineage.

Although “Man Kunto Mawla” represents the elite Persian liturgy of *qawwali*, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s personal preference was to sing in his mother tongue of Punjabi. In particular, Khan cherished the poetry of medieval Punjabi mystics such as Guru

⁸ Translated from Farsi by Jameela Siddiqi as part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project.

⁹ The phrase “Man Kunto Mawla” is contained in *Hadith* number 915 in Ahmed ibn Hanbal, one of the seven most authentic *Hadith* collections in Arabic.

Nanak, Sultan Bahu, and Shah Hussain.¹⁰ Within this tradition of medieval devotional poets, there was one poet Khan revered most – Bulleh Shah. Bulleh Shah was a seventeenth century Punjabi Sufi mystic whose poetry is still celebrated by Punjabis throughout the world. Khan regularly performed many beloved Bulleh Shah compositions throughout his career, the most famous being “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal.”

Like most popular Sufi poems, “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal” can be read on two levels – literally and allegorically. Literally, “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal” recounts the famous Punjabi folk tale *Heer-Ranjha*, often referred to as the *Romeo and Juliet* of the Punjab. Allegorically, *Heer-Ranjha* is an illustration of *viraha* (the pain of separation), and represents human longing for union with the divine. Although *Heer-Ranjha* has been retold for hundreds of years, most famously by the eighteenth century Sufi poet Waris Shah, Bulleh Shah’s “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal” puts a unique mystical spin on the traditional *Heer-Ranjha* folk narrative:

Ranjha came as a *yogi*,
Wearing strange clothes.
Repeating the chant: “The One! The One!”
I want to go with the *yogi*!

Ever since I’ve belonged to the *yogi*,
No sense of self remains in me.
The *yogi* is with me,
I am with the *yogi*.

I want to go with the *yogi*!
Wearing a ring in my ear.
He is no *yogi*,
But God in some guise.

¹⁰ Like other famous medieval Punjabi mystics, Shah Hussain challenged normative cultural legality through his poetry and his lifestyle. In his provocative work on Shah Hussain, Scott Kugle writes, “Shah Hussain was one of these recklessly bold Sufis known by the label “Qalandar,” whom we know as antinomian (*be-shar*) for their flagrant and deliberate transgression against legal norms.” See Scott Kugle, *Sufis & Saints Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, & Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007), 182.

The *yogi*'s dress becomes him,
The *yogi* has got a hold of me,
This *yogi* lives within me.

Truth be told, I swear on the Qur'an:
The *yogi* is my religion, my faith.
The *yogi* has made me sick with love.
I belong to this *yogi* and to no one else.

People! I've dived in, dived in.
People! My eyes have locked onto the *yogi*.
Call me the *yogi*'s bride.
People! The girl called Heer has died.

This *yogi* is drunk in trance,
In his hand, a rosary of "Only God!"
His name is "the Mantled One."
I want to go with the *yogi*!

If this *yogi* came to my house,
My eyes yearn, my heart cries out:
"Come back, Traveler! For the sake of love!"
If the *yogi* would come to my house,
I'd be free of all troubles and sorrows.
I'd take him to my breast,
And throw countless feasts.

Bulleh Shah, a *yogi* has come.
He spread magic mist in our home.
And stole Heer Syal.
Showing his beautiful face.
I want to go with the *yogi*,
Wearing a ring in my ear.¹¹

At its core, *Heer-Ranjha* is the story of the tragic love affair between Heer and Ranjha, lovers from different villages and different castes, who are forbidden to see each other by the society they live in. In order to be together, they must disguise themselves, and their story is told in "Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal." "Ni" is the feminine marker in the Punjabi language, so Bulleh Shah writes in the feminine voice, from the perspective of

¹¹ Translated from Punjabi by Jamal J. Elias as part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project.

the lovesick Heer eagerly awaiting her beloved Ranjha. In Punjabi, “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal” literally means “I want to go with the *yogi*” and Bulleh Shah’s composition poignantly articulates Heer’s desire to run away with Ranjha, who has come to see her disguised as a *yogi*. Heer wants to dress like a *yogi*, adorned with earrings and traveler’s clothing, and leave her village with Ranjha. Before they elope, a jealous relative poisons Heer – as Bulleh Shah writes, “People! The girl called Heer has died.” Thus, a literal reading of “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal” paints a picture of star-crossed lovers who are unable to consummate their relationship because they are victimized by a prejudiced and unforgiving society.

However, a more nuanced reading reveals a mystical sub-text to Bulleh Shah’s composition. Such an exegesis exposes that the *yogi* is not Ranjha but rather a manifestation of the divine – “He is no *yogi* but God in some guise” – and Heer’s longing for Ranjha is not carnal desire but instead is emblematic of the pain humans feel when separated from God. In this mystical rendering, Heer is not killed but rather becomes one with Ranjha, which is a symbolic depiction of *fana*, spiritual annihilation in the divine. In this manner, when Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan sang “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal,” he not only propagated a pan-Punjabi cultural and literary tradition, he also transmitted the mystical poetry of the Chishti tradition. Thus, like “Man Kunto Mawla,” “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal” represents Khan’s prophetic lyricism both in terms of its form and its substance.

Inspired by the *ghazal* tradition, much of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s *qawwali* canon is comprised of compositions in Urdu, the national language and lingua franca of Pakistan. As is the case with *ghazals*, these Sufi compositions explore the pain of separation between the lover and the Beloved by using poetic literary couplings, such as a

moth to the flame, a nightingale to the rose, a drinker to the wine. These compositions also remain faithful to the mystical theology they arise from. South Asian mysticism is predicated on cultivating a personal relationship with God, outside of the structure of organized religion and without the aide of a clerical intercessor. Oriented around their common teleological goals, the different mystical traditions of South Asia draw from a shared pool of themes, moods, languages, and prophets. Because of this, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was able to bring together practitioners of different religions and inhabitants of different regions through his *qawwali*; his mysticism absorbed the overlapping strands of South Asian devotionalism and his music reflected the underlying cultural commonalities of Pakistan and North India.

Perhaps no other Urdu composition utilizes shared poetic themes as a foundation for an interfaith theology better than “Sanso Ki Maala Pe,” a contemporary poem written by Tofail Hoshiarpuri. Whereas “Man Kunto Mawla” edifies the classical Persian foundation of *qawwali* and “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal” embodies the medieval Punjabi mysticism of Chishti Sufism, “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” represents the contemporary sound of popular Sufi music in Pakistan.¹² But like “Man Kunto Mawla” and “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal,” “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” is a paradigmatic example of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s prophetic lyricism. Lyrically, “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” not only tells the tale of love and longing, it also creates an interfaith mystical consciousness:

On the rosary of my breath
I tell the beads of my love’s name!

I know what’s in my heart,
Only Rama knows my Beloved’s mind.

¹² Like many of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s *qawwali* songs, “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” was remixed as a tantalizing Bollywood song – in this case, for the blockbuster film *Raja Hindustani* (1996), starring Aamir Khan and Karishma Kapoor.

This is the bondage of my soul,
This is the worship of my heart.

Someone's love lives in a temple,
Another's is in a mosque.

And I, on the rosary of my breath,
Tell the beads of my love's name!

I am engulfed in the hues of love,
Blending with the image of my Beloved.

Telling the beads of my love,
I blend with Shyaam (Krishna) himself.

I am capable of nothing else,
But to love the name of love.

With each breath, on the rosary of my breath,
I tell the beads of my love's name!

Immaculate is my Beloved
Perfection without a flaw.

People think I am mad,
Talking to myself alone.

On the rosary of my breath,
I tell the beads of my love's name!¹³

In “Sanso Ki Maala Pe,” which translates into English as “on the rosary of my breath,” Tofail Hoshiarpuri incorporates the pan-South Asian poetic imagery of a lover seeking union with the Beloved – “I am engulfed in the hues of love, blending with the image of my Beloved.” The lover is literally going crazy waiting in vain for the Beloved to arrive – “People think I am mad talking to myself alone” – and ultimately the lover becomes incapacitated by love and longing – “I am capable of nothing else but to love the name of love.”

¹³ Translated from Urdu by Philip Nikolayev as part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project.

As is the case with other Sufi poems, in “Sanso Ki Maala Pe,” the Beloved is a metaphor for God and the lover is a symbol of human longing for the divine. What differentiates “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” from other Sufi compositions is that God is described in a Hindu Vaishnava form, first as Rama and then as Krishna. Within orthodox Islam, this would be extremely controversial – “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” is a Muslim devotional song praising Hindu deities!

But within the mystical context of Sufism, “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” is an authentic articulation of Sufi theology. Mysticism seeks to unite and not divide, it seeks to include and not exclude, and for these reasons, mystics often incorporate the language, literature, and liturgy from other mystical, devotional, poetic, and musical traditions. Instead of focusing on the politicized debates around theological differences, mysticism accepts all forms of devotionalism as equally valid. So when Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan performed “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” and invoked the names of popular Hindu deities as divine avatars, he promoted a pan-South Asian devotionalism that transcended the parochial boundaries of religious definition and national identity. By drawing from the diversity of devotional and poetic traditions of South Asia, Khan brought together religious and regional communities previously divided by sectarianism and communalism.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was a pioneer in creating new performative contexts for *qawwali*, such as world music festivals, university halls, and amphitheaters. He was also the only Pakistani musician of note to regularly perform at Hindu *mandirs* and Sikh *gurdwaras* around the world. In his own performative choices, he embodied the spirit of “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” – “someone’s love lives in a temple, another’s is in a mosque” – and this translated into a pan-South Asian embrace of Khan as both a man and a musician. Just as his lyrics brought

together Hindu and Sikh devotionism in Sufi poetry, his music incorporated elements from Hindu *bhajan* and Sikh *kirtan* into Sufi *qawwali*. In creating and inspiring a pan-South Asian devotionism, Khan placed himself within the poetic lineage of those who had done the same before him, namely Amir Khusrau, Guru Nanak, and Bulleh Shah, and compositions such as “Sanso Ki Maala Pe” embody their collective prophetic lyricism.

From the classical Persian composition “Man Kunto Mawla,” to the medieval Punjabi poem “Ni Mai Jana Jogi De Naal,” to the Urdu song “Sanso Ki Maala Pe,” Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s prophetic lyricism connected him to the prophetic elements of his Sufi tradition. These songs encapsulated his mystical message of interfaith engagement, pan-South Asian devotionism, musical intoxication, and divine union, and they inspired a devout following around South Asia and around the world. Khan’s prophetic lyricism established him as the pre-eminent musical missionary of Sufism and the most famous mystical singer in Islam.

Revelation

As is the case with all spiritual icons, there were moments in Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s life that are now used as evidence of his prophetic power. Although Khan’s life is replete with extraordinary moments, this dissertation analyzes two moments in particular that embody the prophetic potency of his music and his message – (1) his prophetic dreams, and (2) recording “Gurus of Peace” with the Indian composer A.R. Rahman. These prophetic moments offer a unique glimpse into the mystical mind of the king of *qawwali*.

Even though Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s father was a famous *qawwal*, he did not want his son to follow in his footsteps, as being a *qawwal* is considered a low status occupation in Pakistan. Instead, he encouraged young Khan to become a physician. Khan discusses his childhood in a 1996 interview with American musician Jeff Buckley:

I was just studying with my father, a very difficult task for me since he was a great, great *qawwali* singer. He didn't want me to become a musician, he wanted me to be a doctor, because he said singing was too hard. You see, many people can sing without any basic background. But this style of *qawwali* is what my family does, and to do it well, we have to go through many difficulties.¹⁴

Khan begged his father to train him as a *qawwal*, and his father eventually relented. Before Khan's training was complete, his father passed away. After his father's death, Khan had a vivid dream of his father instructing him to sing at his *chilla* (death ceremony), which occurs forty days after death. As Khan recounts:

My father died in 1964, and ten days later, I dreamed that he came to me and asked me to sing. I said I could not, but he told me to try. He touched my throat, I started to sing, and then I woke up singing. I had dreamed that my first live performance would be at my father's *chehelum*, where we would all sit together again and read prayers from the *Qur'an* and so on. On the fortieth day after his death, we held the ceremony, and I performed for the very first time.¹⁵

Khan's friend and interpreter, Rashid Ahmad Din verified Khan's recollection of his prophetic dream and first performance:

Nusrat was the most beloved child in the family. The whole town used to take him around and play with him and so forth; in other words, spoil him. His father thought, "He will not be able to concentrate." They wanted him to carry on studying to be a doctor. But he used to listen to his father teaching his students and secretly, he would go and practice, hiding his gift. One day, his father discovered him while he was practicing and he got a bit cross, but he found out that Nusrat had a talent, and then he started teaching him, too. Unfortunately, his father died not long after that. After he did though, he said to Nusrat in the dream, "This world will hear a new voice, which will surprise them all." But he didn't know whose voice it would be.¹⁶

Ultimately, it was this prophetic dream about his father that launched Nusrat

¹⁴ *Interview Magazine*, "Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan interview by Jeff Buckley," January 1996.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Fateh Ali Khan's storied career in 1971. Convinced that his father had come to bless him through this dream, Khan threw himself wholeheartedly into his *qawwali* and in turn made world music history. The fact that his first public performance occurred at his father's funeral provided was symbolic of Khan's anointment as his father's successor and as the new leader of his family's *qawwali* party. With this dream, Khan's prophetic circle had come to its fruition, resulting in his swift ascendancy to the top of the *qawwali* world.

In his early life, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan also experienced recurring dreams about singing at the *dargah* in Ajmer, India during the *urs* of Moinuddin Chishti. For all Chishti *qawwals*, performing at the Chishti *urs* in Ajmer is the *summum bonum* of all performative possibilities. However, for a Pakistani *qawwal*, it is extremely difficult to perform at any Indian *dargah*, let alone the most revered one in Ajmer, due to the highly politicized policies that preclude pilgrims from crossing the India-Pakistan border for religious events. Nonetheless, in 1979, Khan made history by performing at the Chishti *urs* in Ajmer, India. Fulfilling the prophecy of both these dreams (the dream of his father and the dream of Ajmer) convinced Khan that his life's mission was indeed the will of God.

Another potent prophetic moment in Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's life occurred in 1997, when he collaborated with A.R. Rahman, the popular Indian composer known for his eclectic Bollywood soundtracks. Rahman burst onto the Indian musical scene in 1991 when he composed the soundtrack for the film *Roja*, the first of his visionary Bollywood soundtracks. The soundtrack to *Roja* was so unique in its scope and its fusion that *Time* magazine named *Roja* as one of the top ten soundtracks of all time and dubbed Rahman

as the “Mozart of Madras.” *Time*’s film critic Richard Corliss writes of Rahman’s debut soundtrack:

This astonishing debut work parades Rahman's gift for alchemizing outside influences until they are totally Tamil, totally Rahman. He plays with reggae and jungle rhythms, fiddles with Broadway-style orchestrations, and runs cool variations on Morricone's scores for Italian westerns.¹⁷

Roja (1991) is the first film in the celebrated trilogy by critically acclaimed filmmaker Mani Ratnam examining the rise of religious fundamentalism in India. Whereas *Roja* focuses on Indian nationalism in Kashmir, the second film *Bombay* (1995) depicts the 1992 communal riots in Mumbai, and the third film *Dil Se* (1998) explores the separatist movements in India’s northeastern states. Not only did Rahman compose the soundtrack for all of the films in Ratnam’s famous trilogy, he also scored Deepa Mehta’s controversial film trilogy of *Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998), and *Water* (2005). All in all, Rahman composed over one hundred film soundtracks representing many of India’s vernacular cinematic traditions, and his soundtracks have collectively sold over one hundred million copies worldwide, making him the most powerful and prolific popular musician in India and one of the top twenty five highest selling recording artists of all time. Rahman’s work has a global reach as well; he has collaborated with international musicians, such as Michael Jackson, Yusuf Islam (formerly known as Cat Stevens), David Byrne, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and M.I.A.,¹⁸ and he has composed the scores for the Chinese film *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* (2003), the American film *Elizabeth: The*

¹⁷ *Time*, “Top 100 Soundtracks of all Time,” November 2005.

¹⁸ A.R. Rahman is currently recording with a new “global supergroup” featuring Mick Jagger, Dave Stewart, Joss Stone, and Damien Marley.

Golden Age (2007), and the British film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008).¹⁹ So just like Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, A.R. Rahman is a South Asian superstar whose work transcends traditional regional boundaries and embraces global fusion and creative collaboration.

In August of 1997, India and Pakistan celebrated their fiftieth year anniversary of independence as nation-states. In order to commemorate India's fiftieth year anniversary, A.R. Rahman composed the full-length album *Vande Mataram*, which featured a remake of India's national song "Vande Mataram." In Sanskrit, "vande mataram" literally means, "I bow to you, Mother." Historically, "vande mataram" was a Sanskrit supplication to the Goddess (*devi*). However, during the Indian freedom struggle against British colonial rule, nationalists promoted the phrase as a tribute to Mother India and as a battle cry for independence.

On *Vande Mataram*, A.R. Rahman recorded two versions of "Vande Mataram" – one in Hindi and one in Tamil. Not only did this play to Rahman's Bollywood and Tollywood²⁰ bases, but it was also an artistic attempt to politically unify north and south India. A.R. Rahman not only tried to unite a fractured India with *Vande Mataram*, he also sought to bring together India and Pakistan in a joint musical celebration of both countries' fiftieth year anniversaries of independence. During the *Vande Mataram* recording sessions, Rahman traveled to Pakistan to record with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Together, the most famous musician from Pakistan and the most famous musician from India composed their collaborative masterpiece "Gurus of Peace," which served as an impassioned plea for peace between their two hostile nation-state neighbors. Mixing

¹⁹ At the 81st Academy Awards, A.R. Rahman won two Oscars for *Slumdog Millionaire*, Best Original Score and Best Original Song. In his acceptance speech for Best Original Song, Rahman softly said, "All my life I've had a choice between hate and love. I chose love and that's why I'm here."

²⁰ Whereas Bollywood refers to the Hindi language film industry based in Mumbai (Bombay), Tollywood represents the Tamil language film industry based in Chennai (Madras).

acoustic guitars, Indian *tablas*, and an English children's chorus, "Gurus of Peace" remains a striking testament to the lyrical power of music to bridge geopolitical divides:

(Children's chorus in English)

Join on sunshine! Join on blue skies!
Sunshine – break the clouds!
Blue skies – break it out!

The moon and sun, thousands of stars, the entire world is yours,
Given this, what are we fighting over?
Look at these drawn lines, imagine if they were not drawn on the earth,
Our hearts separated by these walls.

No matter where in the world, no matter what the suffering,
No matter where in the world, no matter what the suffering,
Whatever is done in this world, we feel the pain of those wounds,
And our heavy hearts shed tears.

(Children's chorus in English)

What are you waiting for – another day, another dawn?
Some way we have to find a new way to peace!
What are you waiting for – another sign, another call?
Some day we have to find a new way to peace!

Why has this distance remained in our hearts?
Why have these chasms widened?
Life is beautiful, the world is beautiful,
Relationships are forged with great care,
But they can be broken in a moment.

Love is the remedy to every pain,
We are tied to everyone by these chains of love.
Destroy all of these obstacles to love,
Let love protect the world.
The whole world is exalted through love,
The whole world is illuminated by love.²¹

"Gurus of Peace" proved prescient as the following year in 1998, both India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons, prompting the then US President Bill Clinton to call the

²¹ A.R. Rahman, *Vande Mataram* (Columbia Records, 1997). Translation of "Gurus of Peace" from Hindi/Urdu by Ami Shah.

India-Pakistan border the world's most dangerous region. The nuclear tests were framed in explicitly religious terms, as India's Hindu fundamentalist ruling party at the time, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), initiated the tests, and Pakistan responded by asserting that it had the "Muslim" bomb. But Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and A.R. Rahman had reminded the region the year earlier that India and Pakistan could unite based on cultural fusion instead of being divided over nuclear fusion. The recording of "Gurus of Peace" is a profound example of Khan's prophetic message of universal peace, a bold message in the face of the political and religious rhetoric of exclusion being propagated at the time. "Gurus of Peace" was also lyrically prophetic, as it prophesized the need for dialogue and reconciliation, even before South Asia reached its nuclear tipping point.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's life was replete with prophetic moments, such as the fulfillment of his powerful dreams and the historic recording of "Gurus of Peace" with A.R. Rahman. These moments paint the portrait of a prophetic musician and provide evidence for the popular hagiography of Khan's mystical life. Along with Khan's profound prophetic lyricism, these revelatory biographical moments offer a glimpse into his prophetic life and enduring legacy.

Chapter Eleven

The *Pop-Propheticism* of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

Canonical Recitation

By applying the *pop-propheticism* paradigm to the life of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the unexpected dimensions of his prophetic life emerge. As outlined in Chapter Three of this dissertation, *pop-propheticism* is a six-prong analysis that begins with canonical recitation. *Pop-prophetic* canonical recitation refers to the *lyrical invocation of scriptural passages and poetic verse within popular music and popular culture*. Khan not only chanted passages from the scriptural text of the Qur'an, but he also incorporated selections from the popular mystical medieval poets of North India and Pakistan, such as Amir Khusrau, Sultan Bahu, Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussain, Kabir, and Guru Nanak. By doing so, he expanded the Sufi repertoire to include not only canonical compositions from the Qur'an and Sufi masters, but also pan-South Asian mystical poetry as well. Khan's reliance on canonical recitations reveals the devotional heart of his music and situates a Sufi identity within an Islamic prophetic lineage.

Even as he recited compositions from various canonical sources, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan developed his own canon, one that represented the musical and literary traditions of Sufism, and brought together the different regional and religious sensibilities of North India and Pakistan. Khan's canon included compositions from traditional Muslim sources, as well as the devotional poetry of the medieval *sants*. Khan's canon also contained compositions from Sikh canonical sources, the most important being the Guru Granth Sahib. By bringing together these different sources into a single repertoire, Khan also brought those canonical communities together into a single listening audience.

Through his *pop-prophetic* canonical recitation, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan both symbolically and literally created a new canon. Khan's symbolic canon was an amalgamation of different South Asian canonical and poetic traditions and was manifest in his lyrics. This symbolic canon reflected Khan's ability to use his music to bring together different South Asian communities over a shared mystical worldview. Khan's literal canon was created through his family's musical lineage, which followed the *qawwali* tradition by transcribing and transmitting the family's unique songbook, a songbook that is a familial canon in its own right. Khan's father and uncle handed down the family songbook to him, and after he passed away, the songbook was passed down to his nephew and designated successor Rahat Fateh Ali Khan.¹ The Khan's family songbook was at their sides at all performances and provided the blueprint for how the performance transpired. In Khan's Punjabi *ang qawwali* tradition, the person sitting behind the *qawwali* singer is the *bol dasan vala*, and he recites the lines of the composition into the singer's ear from the party's songbook. The composition is then spliced with extemporaneous lyrical and musical flurries, ensuring that each performance is unique. As Adam Nayyar explains:

After the lead singer has been delivered the line, there is a musical interlude and clapping, and then the chorus takes over. While the chorus is repeating a line, the next line is whispered into the ear of the lead singer. Usually he takes the line that is whispered into his ear, but it is his prerogative not to take it or hold it for the next line, in which case it will be repeated. Because he may get an inspiration and he may insert something called an *amad*, or inspiration, and he'll insert a *girah*, that's the technical term for it, which enhances the text that is already being used as a refrain.²

¹ As part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project, I photocopied portions of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's songbook, which had never before been done.

² Nayyar, "Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*," 8-12.

Accordingly, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *pop-prophetic* canonical recitation cut two ways. On the one hand, Khan recited compositions from a diverse collection of canonical sources, which reflected his desire to bring together those canonical demographics. On the other hand, Khan created a new canon by reciting the compositions from his family's songbook, which represents the rich musical and literary heritage of Sufism. In this manner, Khan's canonical recitation follows the lead of his Chishti Sabiri Sufi lineage, for as Religious Studies scholar Robert Rozehnal notes, at "the dawn of the twenty-first century, Chishti Sabiri Sufism is imagined and inscribed anew in texts, even as it is embodied and performed in ritual contexts."³

Mystical Intoxication

Mystical intoxication, the second prong of the *pop-propheticism* paradigm, refers to the *ingestion of intoxicating substances and/or a psycho-physical regime consisting of prayer, meditation, visualization, and recitation as methods of inspiring a mystical state of consciousness*. While the ritual ingestion of cannabis as a sacrament plays a prominent role in Rastafarianism, for Chishti Sufis, states of mystical intoxication are generally brought about through strictly monitored practices of prayer, recitation, and meditation. Although there is the historical and living tradition of the *malangs* (Sufi ascetics) engaging in the consumption of cannabis, their practices are viewed with suspicion by the mainstream Sufi community.⁴ For Sufis, mystical realization occurs within the context of

³ Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound*, 230.

⁴ In her insightful article "*Malangs of the Punjab: Intoxication or Adab as the path to God?*," Katherine Ewing describes how the inveterate ingestion of cannabis by the *malangs* of the Punjab challenges normative Pakistani legality and religiosity. She writes, "One activity that most Pakistanis consider to be a violation of the *shari'a* and which is regularly engaged in by *malangs* is the smoking of *hashish* (*charas*) and the drinking of *bhanga*. Flagrant use of *charas* marks the *malang* as being outside respectable society

adab (moral conduct) and under the guidance of a spiritual teacher (*shaykh*, *pir*, *murshid*).

As an inheritor of the Chishti Sufi tradition, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan participated in two foundational Chishti practices – *zikr*, the recollection of God’s names, and *sama*, listening to music – both designed to elevate individual consciousness into divine realization.⁵ The practices of *zikr* and *sama* are not predicated upon an abstract knowledge or love of God, but upon a deeply embodied and active set of practices to be cultivated under the guidance of a teacher.⁶ Both *zikr* and *sama* must take place under the guidance of a teacher in order to ensure proper progression on the Sufi path and the requisite levels of *hal* (insight) and *wajd* (ecstasy). Based on *The Order of Hearts*, an eighteenth century treatise written by the Chishti master Nizam-ad-Din Awrangabadi, the basic elements of *zikr* include, “the recitation of the name Allah, the first half of the Muslim profession of faith (“there is no god but God”), or the Arabic divine names; breath control [*habs-e-dam*]; concentration on “moving” a name or formula from the lower to the upper body; and occasional visualizations of letters, words, or complicated visions.”⁷

With regards to the mystical intoxication generated by the recitation of the name

and also clearly sets him apart from the *ba shar pirs*.” See Katherine Ewing, “The *Malangs* of the Punjab: Intoxication or *Adab* as the Path to God?” in *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 363. Although most *malangs* are men, Ewing details a fascinating encounter she had with a female *malang* in Pakistan. See Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam*, 209-217.

⁵ Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, 27-46.

⁶ With regards to the importance of a teacher guiding one’s spiritual journey, Robert Rozeznal writes, “By surrendering to the will of a spiritual master, the Sufi disciple learns to rehabilitate the self through a program of rigorous and routinized ritual practice. Through the disciplining of the body, the ego is gradually transformed and ultimately transcended.” Rozeznal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound*, 175.

⁷ *Ibid*, 29.

of Allah, the lyrics and performance of the *qawwali* composition of Allah Hu (“God Is”) are instructive. The following couplets from the composition, one of Khan’s favorites, express the power that resides in the name of Allah:

Allah is, Lord of the World, Allah is the only Companion
There is only One and no other

When the Prophet ascended to the heavens
When there was nothing standing between Creator and created

Then angels bowed and said
You were, you are and you will be

You created all beyond all doubt!
The entire universe seeks your spirit.

Your glory is manifest in every nook and corner.
You were, you are and you will be

Allah hu, Allah hu, Allah hu.
Allah hu, Allah hu, Allah hu.⁸

In both private and public ritual contexts of individual practice and performance of *qawwali*, the recitation of “Allah Hu” is a method by which consciousness is raised through immersion in the divine name.⁹ In this way, the practice of *zikr* is fully realized “when it is fully internalized – when the remembrance of God is as constant and effortless as breathing itself.”¹⁰

In addition to the aforementioned physical practices that “reshape the acculturated, socialized, secular self into a sacralized, moral Sufi subject,”¹¹ it is also

⁸ Translated from Urdu by Jameela Siddiqui as part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project.

⁹ The Sufi master Hazrat Inayat Khan describes the power of “Hu” as “Hu is the origin of sound, but when the sound first takes shape on the external plane, it becomes ‘A,’ therefore *alif* or *alpha* is considered to be the first expression of *Hu*, the original word.” See Khan, *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*, 312.

¹⁰ Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound*, 192.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 175.

necessary to examine the lyrical intoxication embedded in the music and lyrics of *qawwali*. *Qawwali* music's mission is to catapult its listeners into mystical states of consciousness, and its trance rhythms mixed with its soaring vocals offer a potent sonic elixir of mystical ecstasy. Talvin Singh, one of the progenitors of U.K.'s Asian Underground movement, understands *qawwali* as intoxicating at its core:

Qawwali has an intoxicating quality, which is linked to Sufism, and whether it's music or philosophy, it's very intoxicating – it's the wine of the gods.¹²

Likewise, Michael Brook, the producer and collaborator for Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's Real World sessions, compares *qawwali*'s mystical intoxication with gospel music:

Part of the goal of *qawwali* is to induce ecstasy into people, as it is in gospel music – they're very similar actually – and in order to do that, there's a high degree of passion.¹³

Not only is *qawwali* musically intoxicating, it is also lyrically intoxicating. Theologically, intoxication represents enlightenment, so *qawwali* compositions work on two lyrical levels. On the one hand, the poet is drinking wine in order to drown his sorrows, and on the other hand, the poet is drinking the wine of knowledge in order to achieve mystical intoxication. Many of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's most famous *qawwali* compositions lyrically invoke mystical intoxication, but perhaps none as eloquently as *Yeh Jo Halka Halka Suruur Hai*. Written by Anwar Farakhbad, this Urdu song lyrically invokes the intoxication of wine, love, and revelation. A couplet from the composition highlights its lyrical intoxication:

¹² *A Voice From Heaven* (Cross Media Productions, 2001).

¹³ *Ibid.*

With every glance of the cup-giver, I whirled and drank,
Playing with the waves, I swayed and drank.

How could I dare to drink without restraint?
Drowning in the depths of desire, I floundered and drank.

This soothing mood of intoxication,
Your eyes are the culprits of my condition!

It is all the fault of your glance,
That has taught me to drink.

Your love, your adoration,
Your intoxicated gaze.
Has turned me into a drunk.¹⁴

Unlike Bob Marley, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan did not ingest psychotropics for the purposes of mystical intoxication. But his music and his lyrics were oriented around the virtues of mystical intoxication cultivated by the physical practices of *zikr* and *sama*. The intoxicating power of Khan's performances inspired mystical moments for his audiences around the world, and even Khan himself felt intoxicated while performing his own *qawwali* music. According to Khan:

I feel like I am in another world when I sing, the spiritual world. I am not in the material world while I am singing these traditional holy messages. I'm totally in another world. I am withdrawn from my materialistic senses, I am totally in my spiritual senses, and I am intoxicated by the Holy Prophet, God, and other Sufi saints.¹⁵

Musical Fusion

Musical fusion is the third analytic prong for *pop-propheticism* and it describes the *self-conscious process of musical synthesis with the goal of creating the large*

¹⁴ Translated from Urdu by Tahira Naqvi as part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project.

¹⁵ Ehrlich, 21.

listening audience possible. For Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, musical fusion took two distinct forms: (1) creating a new instrumentation for *qawwali* music, and (2) mixing *qawwali* music with other musical genres. So not only did Khan change the way *qawwali* is performed, he also introduced *qawwali* to the world through his prolific collaborations with global musicians.

A traditional *qawwali* party consists of a lead singer, a chorus of background singers and clappers, a harmonium player, and a tabla player. It was this traditional instrumentation that Fateh Ali Khan taught to his son Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. However, when Khan took control of his father's *qawwali* party, he began to experiment with other instrumentation possibilities. On many of Khan's celebrated albums, including *Devotional and Love Songs*, *Rapture: An Essential Collection from the Genius of Qawwali*, and *Swan Song*, acoustic guitars and electronic synthesizers supplement traditional *qawwali* instrumentation. By introducing Western instrumentation to traditional South Asian Sufi music, Khan pushed the conventional limits of *qawwali* music and created a sound that other contemporary *qawwali* musicians now emulate. When Khan traveled the world, he began to incorporate the regional sounds he encountered into his own music, creating a musical fusion of world music. By infusing traditional *qawwali* with a global sound resulting from musical fusion, Khan also made *qawwali* music more palatable to Western audiences who had never before heard it. According to ethnomusicologist Lorraine Sakata:

Wherever he went, he listened to music. When he went to Spain for example, he listened to flamenco musicians. He wasn't aiming to change his style. He was just able to incorporate so much into his style.¹⁶

¹⁶ *A Voice From Heaven* (Cross Media Productions, 2001).

Not only did Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan bring a global aesthetic to *qawwali* music, he also brought a *qawwali* sound to global music. Through his many collaborations with musicians throughout the world, the music of Pakistan was transmitted globally, embedded within film soundtracks and scores, remixed as dancehall and house music, and fused with acoustic and electronic music. One such eclectic fusion album was *Sangam*, the collaborative effort between Khan and Javed Akhtar, the Indian poet best known for his Bollywood film lyrics. Like “Gurus of Peace” with A.R. Rahman, *Sangam* was a courageous act of cultural diplomacy between India and Pakistan. *Sangam* was also a profound moment of *pop-prophetic* musical fusion, and his experience recording with Khan left Akhtar thinking about the musical fusion that could have been:

Perhaps if he had been given just 10 more years, I just can’t imagine what he would have done. Because I really believe he had just started. You see, with all his efforts, he had just opened the door to World Music.¹⁷

Khan’s legacy of *pop-prophetic* musical fusion endures both in South Asia and abroad, as musicians and DJs continue to mix Khan’s music with their own. The Asian Underground, a musical movement in the U.K. representing the critical and commercial voice of a generation of postcolonial South Asians in the Diaspora, still reveres Khan. Asian Underground musicians such as Talvin Singh, Nitin Sawhney, Asian Dub Foundation, and Joi have all remixed Khan’s music with his blessings. Lorraine Sakata recalls:

I know that a number of South Asian musicians in England used to idolize Nusrat and he would give them whatever they asked for. He would give them his music and they could do whatever they wanted with it. They mixed their music with his voice and that was fine with him.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Ultimately, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *pop-prophetic* musical fusion was part of his broader agenda of regional and religious unity. By blending Eastern and Western music together, Khan brought together the denizens of the East and the West. Khan's musical fusion allowed him to be *qawwali's* global missionary and its most famous musician. It also ensured that he remains one of the best selling World Music artists to date.

Media Proliferation

The fourth point of analysis in the *pop-propheticism* paradigm is media proliferation, which refers to the *process whereby media and technology converge in order to promulgate a prophetic voice and create a virtual community*. More than any other *qawwali* musician or Pakistani artist, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan strategically exploited various media channels in South Asia and around the world as an avenue for disseminating his prophetic voice. Because Khan pioneered collaborative and fusion music projects around the world, there was constantly a media spotlight on him. Khan redirected that media spotlight to focus on the music and the message of Sufism rather than on himself, and by doing so, he became one of the most famous Sufi singers to ever live.

One powerful example of Khan's *pop-prophetic* media proliferation was his decision to collaborate with Peter Gabriel – first as a member of Gabriel's WOMAD concert tour, then as a guest musician on Gabriel's studio albums, and finally as an artist signed to Gabriel's Real World Records label. Khan's relationship with Gabriel opened up media channels no other Pakistani musician ever had, and Gabriel's global media

network ultimately catapulted Khan into international superstardom. Based on his relationship with Gabriel, Khan's music was recorded in state-of-the-art facilities and distributed throughout the world, documentaries were made about his life and concert films were released in film festivals everywhere, and ambitious concert tours were conducted and collaborative projects with global musicians were arranged. Khan himself gratefully acknowledged Gabriel's pivotal role in his global exposure:

Qawwali music was already popular in India and Pakistan but the first time they heard in the West was 1983 in Gloucester, England, where people really began to take notice. After that, Peter Gabriel introduced me to the world.¹⁹

Just as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan used Peter Gabriel's media channels to access European and North American audiences, he utilized Bollywood as a media channel to enter Asian and African households. Over the years, Khan recorded numerous songs for Bollywood movies, which resulted in many Bollywood composers blatantly stealing his songs for their soundtracks.²⁰ In 1997, Khan made his first and only appearance in a Bollywood film, *Aur Pyaar Ho Gaya*. The film generated serious media buzz, as it was the debut Hindi film for Aishwarya Rai, 1994's Miss World and current Bollywood superstar often heralded as the "most beautiful woman in the world."²¹ In the film, Khan plays a version of himself, the lead singer of a *qawwali* party who implores a dancing Aishwarya Rai and a gyrating Bobby Deol to celebrate their love. In the song he recorded for the film, "Koi Jaane Koi Na Jaane," Khan sings:

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ The most egregious case of Bollywood stealing Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's music is the 1994 super-hit film *Mohra* starring Akshay Kumar and Raveena Tandon. The very popular song from the film, "Tu Cheez Badi Hai Mast," is a blatant rip-off of Khan's *qawwali* classic "Dam Mast Qalandar."

²¹ In 2005, the CBS television show *60 Minutes* did a feature interview with Aishwarya Rai called "The Most Beautiful Woman in the World? It's Aishwarya Rai, Queen of Bollywood."

What beloved is this, oh Allah!
What a thing is love!
What intoxication is this!

Listen earth, listen sky,
To this story of our love.

What madness is there in us?
And where will this insanity take us?
With passionate hope and optimism in our hearts,
We leave these alleys of the world.²²

Even though Rai was supposed to be the big story when the film debuted, tragically it was Khan who made the news. In a cruel twist of fate, the day the film was released was also the day that Khan passed away. Nonetheless, Khan left the world with his enduring image in *Aur Pyaar Ho Gaya*, spreading his Sufi message of love and longing, renunciation and intoxication.

Not only did Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan endear himself to Peter Gabriel's fans and Aishwarya Rai's admirers, he penetrated new demographics each time he collaborated with other global musicians. Michael Brook exposed Khan to a world fusion audience, Bally Sagoo introduced Khan to DJ club culture, and Eddie Vedder brought Khan into the American rock and roll scene. Furthermore, each new collaboration inspired new avenues of media dissemination, and now Khan's music is broadcast around the world through his albums, films, music videos, soundtracks, and fusion collaborations on records, cassettes, CDs, DVDs, MP3s, and streaming on the Internet. In all these ways, Khan's *pop-prophetic* media proliferation is evidenced through his mastery of the available media channels as a strategic avenue for propagating the prophetic music and message of Sufism.

²² Translated from the Urdu by Suman Kashyap as part of the *Nusrat: Revealed* multimedia translation project.

Economic Commodification

The fifth level of analysis for *pop-propheticism* is economic commodification, which refers to the *process whereby a prophetic voice is globally marketed, branded, commodified, and consumed as popular culture*. More than any other Pakistani musician, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan exemplified the process of economic commodification. Despite the fact that he promoted an ascetic aesthetic, he was still the highest grossing Pakistani musician to date. Even though his recordings were freely bootlegged throughout South Asia, his estate was worth several million dollars at his death and catalog continues to generate significant revenue through licensing to film scores, commercials, and music videos.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan as a brand identity is synonymous with the Sufi industry. Khan remains the most famous representative of Sufi music in record stores and on radio shows around the world, and his career resurrected the entire *qawwali* music business. What Rumi has now become to Sufi poetry, Khan is to Sufi music; they are both global icons and have spread the teachings of Sufism, in part, through the economic commodification of their art. By opening up commercial and mercantile avenues of cultural consumption, both during their lives and posthumously, both Rumi's poetry and Khan's music are indispensable brands in the global Sufi industry.

Although Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan personally earned a significant amount of money during his life, he was an ascetic at heart. He never indulged in personal excess or extravagant spending. Rather, like Bob Marley, he sought to reinvest his earnings back into his community. One example is the school of music that Khan established in his

hometown of Faisalabad, Pakistan, where Khan himself taught young students the art of *qawwali*. Traditionally, women have been excluded from singing *qawwali* and there are no professional female *qawwali* singers to date. Even the popular female Pakistani singer Abida Praveen is considered a Sufi singer rather than a *qawwali* singer. Nonetheless, Khan instructed girls and women in Pakistan on how to perfect their musical craft, and accordingly, Khan brought an egalitarian sensibility to the traditional tutelage model. Khan also regularly performed at charity events in Pakistan and around the world; in particular, he loyally performed at cricketer Imran Khan's annual benefit shows for cancer research and treatment. Thus, Khan was able to translate his monetary success into philanthropic and pedagogical opportunities and endeavors at home in Pakistan.

Like Bob Marley, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan strategically negotiated the double-edged sword of *pop-prophetic* economic commodification. On the one hand, Khan propagated his prophetic music through the economic avenues of global commercialism and pop-cultural consumption. On the other hand, Khan embodied his prophetic message by using his economic and social capital to empower communities throughout Pakistan. In doing so, Khan emerged as a lucrative Sufi brand and the paradigm for South Asian *pop-prophetic* economic commodification.

Political Appropriation

Pop-propheticism's sixth and final point of analysis is political appropriation, which specifically signifies the *postcolonial predicament of constructing a new national narrative through available cultural formations*. Like Bob Marley and Rastafarianism, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Sufism have also been caught in the crossfire of competing

groups ranging from Islamist parties to secular nationalists regarding the “proper” Islamic identity of postcolonial Pakistan. The political appropriation of Khan’s life and music was uniquely reflected in issues of religious identity that were at the forefront of a newly created Pakistani Muslim state. Though the core of *qawwali* is apolitical, due to the prestige and status of Sufi beliefs and practices in Pakistan, especially in populous regions such as Punjab and Sindh, the tradition represented by the *pir* and *dargah* has often come into conflict with the dominant Sunni *ulema* and institutions such as mosque and *madrasa*.²³

Established as an Islamic Republic in 1947, the nation-state of Pakistan is perhaps the first avowedly Muslim state ever created.²⁴ Although the poet Iqbal wrote of a state in the northwest of India as a homeland for Muslims, it was not until the 1930s that Chaudhry Rahmat Ali captured Iqbal’s dream. According to Ali, Pakistan, “the land of the pure,” was to be comprised of Punjab, the Northwest Frontier (Afghan province), Kashmir, Sindh, and Baluchistan. Throughout the struggle for Pakistan in the 1930s and 1940s, and even after Independence in 1947 up until the present day, questions regarding the type of Islam that would bind together this new nation have remained. As a fledgling nation-state with a weak national identity and fragmented multi-ethnic population, the *Quaid-e-Azam*, “founder of the nation,” Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan were both challenged by diverse Islamist and secular

²³ According to Adam Nayyar, “*Qawwali* is strictly something to be performed in a Sufi shrine for your spiritual uplift and to bring out the pain that the world necessarily brings about by your very being in it. I don’t think it is a political issue.” Nayyar, “Intoxicated Spirit: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Art of *Qawwali*,” 8-12. See also Sarah F.D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sindh 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²⁴ Despite its newly minted status as a Muslim nation at the time of Independence in 1947, the paradoxical fact remains that India was and continues to be home to a larger number of Muslims than Pakistan.

stakeholders regarding the type of state Pakistan would become.²⁵ Furthermore, geographically divided by over one thousand miles, West and East Pakistan were further separated by differences ranging from culture to cuisine and economic structures to environmental conditions. As a result, Islam provided the ideological glue to both connect West and East Pakistan and contain the differences between the varying sub-regions within Pakistan.²⁶

During the 1971 war and the subsequent creation of the state of Bangladesh, the central role of Islam in the creation and maintenance of Pakistan's national identity became even more contested. After the 1971 war, connections with the subcontinent were largely severed as Pakistan's gaze turned westwards to the Middle East. This shift to the Arab world has had significant ramifications for the growing Islamization of Pakistani politics and society. Although leaders such as Ayub Khan (1958-1969) and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1979) attempted to use the language of Islam in their modernization and democratization campaigns, it was not until Zia ul-Haq's period (1977-1988) that Salafi and Wahabbi inspired Islamic revivals changed the face of Islam in Pakistan.²⁷ By arguing for a return to a pristine Islam and a strict adherence to the Prophet, the *Qur'an*,

²⁵ In his speech to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, Muhammad Ali Jinnah spoke at length about the status of minorities in Pakistan and a secular ethos that would ensure religious freedom for all. At that time he stated, "Now what shall we do? Now, if we want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, and especially of the masses and the poor. If you will work in co-operation, forgetting the past, burying the hatchet, you are bound to succeed. If you change your past and work together in a spirit that everyone of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges, and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make."

http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/constituent_address_11aug1947.html

²⁶ Katherine Ewing describes the foundational role of Islam in Pakistan's national self-identity – "Initially split territorially into two widely separated wings, Pakistan could not claim to be in essence a people of shared ethnicity, language, culture, or even territorially contiguous. What they claimed instead was a shared identity based on adherence to Islam, and many of Pakistan's leaders articulated their political goal as the establishment of an "Islamic democracy.'" See Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam*, 65.

²⁷ Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

and the *sunnah*, these movements attempted to delegitimize the beliefs and practices of the minority traditions – Shia, Sufi, and Ahmadiyya – in Pakistan.²⁸ With regard to the antagonistic relationship between Sunni and minority Islamic traditions and changes wrought by increased influence from the Gulf States, Carl Ernst writes:

Ironically, as a result of strategic successes by fundamentalist movements in certain key regions like Arabia and the massive oil wealth that fell into the lap of the Saudi regime, many contemporary Muslims have been taught a story of the Islamic religious tradition from which Sufism has been rigorously excluded. It is ironic because as recently as the late eighteenth century, and for much of the previous millennium, most of the outstanding religious scholars of Mecca, Medina, and the great cities of the Muslim world were intimately engaged in what we today call Sufism. It is doubly ironic because the fundamentalist story is belied by religious practices of more than half of today's Muslim population.²⁹

Despite the westward gaze of Pakistan to the Middle East and the importance of cities such as Mecca and Medina in the Muslim imagination, the simple fact remains that many of the sacred sites within Pakistan are associated with indigenous Sufi masters, i.e. Pakpattan (Baba Farid), Data Ganj Baksh (Ali Hujjiwiri), Sehwan (Shahbaz Qalandar, “Jhule Lal.”) In an attempt to regulate Sufi religious endowments and shrines, in 1959 the state enacted the West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinance.³⁰ Brought under the purview of the state, Sufi *pirs* and *urs* celebrations were harnessed to the task of nation building through an Islamic idiom and political and administrative officials enhanced their legitimacy through their association with these new national heroes and festivals. During Zia ul-Haq's period, these Sufi beliefs and practices received more scrutiny and “were closely monitored for ‘un-Islamic’ practices such as dancing and drumming, and

²⁸ Because sectarian violence in Pakistan has recently been directed at Shia and Ahmadiyya mosques and processions, the bomb blasts of July 2, 2010 at the Sufi *dargah* of Data Ganj Baksh Ali Hujjiwiri in Lahore that killed over 40 people were particularly shocking. Visited by Shias, Sunnis, and Sufis alike, Ali Hujjiwiri's tomb is understood to be the site where Muinuddin Chishti was granted dominion (*wilayat*) over South Asia.

²⁹ Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, xiii.

³⁰ Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound*, 23.

devotional attendance was discouraged in Friday prayers.”³¹ According to Religious Studies scholar Katherine Ewing:

During General Zia ul-Haq’s administration, which sought legitimacy through the active promotion of Islamization, there was considerably less overt promotion of the *urs* celebrations and activities at the shrines than there had been in Bhutto’s time. Clearly, the government did not need to demonstrate its ties to Islam through its support of shrine activities, since it pushed so heavily a program of Islamization.³²

Although Khan did not face threats of physical violence or ideological attacks from Islamist parties, as a visible representative of the Chishti Sufi tradition, his life and music must be understood against the backdrop of this larger dialogue regarding the role of Islam and the parameters of Muslim identity within postcolonial Pakistan.

In addition to being caught in the crossfire of the contested status of Sufism vis-à-vis dominant Sunni Islam in Pakistan, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was also accused of betraying the Islamic principles upon which Pakistan was founded due to his recording collaborations with Indian and Western musicians. In 1994, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s voice was used on the soundtrack of the controversial Oliver Stone film *Natural Born Killers*. The soundtrack, produced by Trent Reznor of the popular band Nine Inch Nails, features a remix of Khan’s devotional song “Allah, Muhammad, Chaar Yaar,”³³ and in the film, Khan’s voice provides the sonic backdrop for Woody Harrelson’s cold-blooded killing spree. In Pakistan, politicians and clerics harshly criticized Khan and accused him of debasing Islam by including his music in such a gruesome film. Even Khan was genuinely concerned about his participation on the *Natural Born Killers* soundtrack:

³¹ Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 151-152.

³² Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam*, 76.

³³ The Chaar Yaar is a reference to four Sufi saints: Baba Farid Shakar Ganj Pakpattan (1174-1266), Jalaluddin Bukhari of Bahawalpur (1196-1294), Bahauddin Zakariah of Multan (1170-1267), Lal Shahbaz Qalandar of Sehwan (1177-1274)

Without my consent, they used my songs in one or two sequences, which I did not approve of. This kind of thing can tarnish the image of Sufi music.³⁴

Despite the mounting political pressure in Pakistan after the *Natural Born Killers* controversy, Khan continued to record with different musicians while touring the world, proactively promoting the politics of universal and spiritual inclusion instead of national and religious exclusion.

What was at stake through Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *pop-prophetic* political appropriation was nothing less than the construction of a postcolonial identity for the nation-state of Pakistan. The emergence of Khan as Pakistan's first and only global superstar was a unique opportunity for Pakistanis to engage in a pop-cultural discourse with the rest of the world. Conversely, by aligning themselves with Khan, Pakistan's military and political elite hoped to use his popularity to garner support for their agendas. Even though Khan did not endorse any particular candidate or party, he still remained a power player on the Pakistani political scene throughout his recording career, like the Chishti Sufi "kingmakers" of the medieval era.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *pop-propheticism* was the process through which *qawwali* music and its Sufi message were propagated and disseminated around the world. Because of the efficacy of Khan's *pop-propheticism*, the music of the Chishti Sufis is now heard in all countries and on all continents, and is celebrated by mystics and musicians alike. But ultimately, the true testament of the *pop-prophetic* power of Khan's music is its transformative effect upon its listeners around the world.

³⁴ *A Voice From Heaven* (Cross Media Productions, 2001).

Chapter Twelve Conclusion

Passing the Pop-Prophetic Mantle

Even though Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan have both passed away, their legacy endures. Both artists are arguably more popular now than ever, and their music continues to find new audiences while their message continues to permeate new demographics. Like all popular prophets, their work continues on through their disciples and their progeny.

Bob Marley has at least thirteen recognized children, many more in all likelihood. Believing that the Bible prohibits birth control, Marley's legendary sexual exploits were geared more towards procreation than recreation. Some say Marley was conscientiously breeding an army to carry the Rastafarian mantle forward, and if this were the case, he may have succeeded. Many of his children have gone on to become reggae artists and Rastafarian icons in their own right, but the three who stand out above the rest are Bob's sons Ziggy, Stephen, and Damian Marley.

Ziggy is Bob Marley's eldest son with Rita Marley and the first Marley child to launch a recording career. Ziggy was often on stage with Bob during the last years of Bob's life, and Bob anticipated that Ziggy would keep the Marley legacy alive and keep the Marley house in order. In the 1977 recording of "Keep on Moving," Bob sings – "Tell Ziggy I'm fine and to keep Cedella in line!" – referring to Ziggy's sister and Bob's daughter Cedella. After Bob's death, Ziggy formed the Melody Makers with his siblings and started touring the world. Since then, Ziggy has won four Grammys and released

more full-length studio albums than his legendary father. And like his father, Ziggy's faith is what keeps him moving:

It just happened to me. It was a natural process – nothing planned, nothing forced. I believe it because I've seen it work in my life. I see the fulfillment of my faith because I see the reality of it affecting my life. Simple things. I see it is right because I have guidance from dreams and visions.¹

Stephen Marley is Ziggy's younger brother and also a son of Bob and Rita Marley. Marley family friends claim that out of all of Bob's children, Stephen is most similar to Bob in his temperament. Although Stephen is a passionate singer, his real genius resides in his music production skills. In the studio, Stephen blends reggae with hip-hop to create a fusion sound that is truly unique. In 1999, Stephen produced and engineered *Chant Down Babylon*, a visionary album that remixed Bob's classic songs with new verses from popular artists including Lauryn Hill, Chuck D., Aerosmith, Busta Rhymes, Guru, Erykah Badu, and the Roots. In 2007, Stephen released his long awaited solo album, *Mind Control*, which features memorable collaborations with Mos Def, Ben Harper, Damian and Julian Marley, and Mr. Cheeks.

Damian Marley is Bob's only child with Cindy Brakespeare, 1976's Miss Jamaica and Miss World. Known as "Junior Gong," Damian represents the future sounds of the Marley family. His four studio albums, *Mr. Marley* (1996), *Halfway Tree* (2001), *Welcome to Jamrock* (2005), and *Distant Cousins with Nas* (2010), collectively chronicle his creative maturation in bringing together reggae and hip-hop, Jamaica popular music and American popular music. In fact, Damian's hit single "Welcome to Jamrock," reached number twelve on the *Billboard Hot Rap Tracks* charts. Of all Bob's children,

¹ Ehrlich, 48.

Damian is the most poised to break through to the black American market that eluded Bob throughout his career.

Just as Ziggy, Stephen, and Damian Marley spread their father's Rasta gospel, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan sings the Chishti gospel of his uncle, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Rahat is Farrukh's son and because Nusrat did not have a son, Rahat was anointed as the sole heir to the family's *qawwali* tradition. Nusrat began training Rahat when Rahat was old enough to sit on Nusrat's lap. When Rahat was seven years old, he began to perform publicly with his uncle Nusrat and his father Farrukh. Rahat recalls his first performance with Nusrat:

I was seven years old and the stage seemed very big. He sat next to me with his harmonium. On side was my father, Farrukh Fateh Ali Khan. On my other side was my teacher, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. No one sat in front of me – it was like I was at home. In his presence, I sang very well.²

Rahat has also followed in Nusrat's footsteps in terms of collaborative recordings and world concert tours. In 2001, he released his first studio album *Rahat*, which was produced by the legendary American music producer Rick Rubin for a North American and European market. Rahat's voice also appears on a number of Hollywood soundtracks and scores, including *The Four Feathers* (2002) and *Apocalypto* (2006). Recently he has become a star in South Asia through his work on Bollywood soundtracks, and stars in a new reality TV show on the Star Plus channel called "Chhote Ustaad" with Indian singing sensation Sonu Nigam, an India-Pakistan musical partnership similar to Nusrat's famous collaboration with A.R. Rahman. In all these ways, Rahat is bringing his uncle's legacy full circle.

² *A Voice From Heaven* (Cross Media Productions, 2001).

Another popular Sufi musician who has proactively propagated Nusrat's prophetic legacy is Salman Ahmad, the founder of the seminal Pakistani rock band Junoon.³ Junoon has sold over thirty million albums worldwide, making Ahmad the world's most famous Muslim rock star. Ahmad is also a physician, a UN Goodwill Ambassador, a social justice activist, and the progenitor of Sufi-rock, his own unique blend of Pakistani Sufi music and American rock and roll. On Ahmad's solo tours, he regales his audiences with Junoon favorites including "Sayonee," "Bulleya," and "Meri Awaaz Suno" and Sufi-rock classics such as "Lal Meri Pat," "Allah Hu," and "Man Kunto Mawla." Invoking the spirit of the South Asian medieval mystics at a recent concert at the University of Southern California, Ahmad elevated the crowd's intoxicated spirit by saying:

You can bring down the pillars of the mosque, you can tear down the walls of the temple, but you should never break another's heart, because that's where truth resides.⁴

At the same concert, Ahmad told the crowd about Junoon's historic concert in Srinagar, Kashmir in May of 2008. Facing death threats from militants and surrounded by the military, Junoon courageously played the first rock concert in Kashmir's history. During their concert, their fans stormed the stage from all around Dal Lake and sang the popular Junoon song "Dosti" in unison. In this manner, through their lives and lyrics, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Salman Ahmad are the current torchbearers for Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *pop-propheticism* and they both continue to spread his Sufi music and message throughout the world.

³ Salman Ahmad reflects upon his life and legacy as a Pakistani-American Sufi rocker in his recent autobiography *Rock and Roll Jihad: A Muslim Rock Star's Revolution* (New York: Free Press, 2010).

⁴ "The Office of Religious Life Presents an Evening with Salman Ahmad," Bovard Auditorium at USC on November 6, 2008. This quote is drawn from the poetry of the Punjabi Sufi poet, Bulleh Shah.

Pop-Propheticism and Religious Studies

This dissertation offers Religious Studies a new approach for understanding prophecy and popular culture. Whereas Religious Studies has historically viewed prophecy as a phenomenon rooted in Biblical times, this dissertation challenges Religious Studies to acknowledge contemporary prophetic figures and their followers. With new prophetic voices emerge new prophecies, and this dissertation reveals this prophetic process through the overlapping lenses of technology, commerce, postcolonial politics, and popular culture.

This dissertation argues that prophecy is socially constructed and that prophets are shaped and defined by the political, commercial, technological, and cultural movements of their milieu. Just as Cornel West's *prophetic pragmatism* anoints new prophetic figures within its prophetic fold, *pop-propheticism* claims a host of modern musicians within its lineage, most notably Bob Marley and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. In short, *pop-propheticism* provides an analytical framework that situates contemporary prophetic traditions within the context of media, mysticism, and music, and by doing so, *pop-propheticism* offers Religious Studies a multidisciplinary methodology through which to understand the interplay between religion and popular culture in today's world.

Even as the debate between religion and science rages on in the public sphere, *pop-propheticism* moves beyond this traditional discourse and recognizes that there is a science to prophecy. For prophecy only endures if its message is strategically disseminated to the widest possible demographic. That is why prophecy has historically exploited all available vernacular technology to spread its voice. Indeed, the most popular

prophecies have always been the most technologically savvy. Whereas Religious Studies tends to view prophecy as a function of scripture, *pop-propheticism* contends prophecy is also a function of technology.

All of the major world religions have inspired associated artistic, musical, poetic, literary, theatrical, and cinematic traditions that reflect and embody religious devotionism. With the mystical arts, the devotionism is more prescriptive and less descriptive. In the case of mystical music, the music itself is a vehicle for liberation, for intoxication, and for inspiration. At their core, both mysticism and music aim to transcend duality, to move beyond words, to travel that vast distance between the human mind and the human heart. It is no surprise then that the combination of mysticism and music is profoundly potent, and *pop-propheticism* challenges Religious Studies to further interrogate this intricate and intimate relationship between mysticism, media, and music.

Not only does *pop-propheticism* offer a new prophetic paradigm for Religious Studies, it also brings together multiple methodologies and disciplines within its analytical fold. While firmly rooted in Religious Studies, *pop-propheticism* also draws heavily from academic disciplines and subjects such as Critical Race Studies, Subaltern Studies, Media Studies, and ethnomusicology. In this manner, *pop-propheticism* is interdisciplinary at its core and it continues the ongoing Religious Studies project of investigating religion as constructed and disseminated by media, technology, and postcolonial politics.

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DISCOGRAPHY

Bob Marley: The Island Records / Tuff Gong Records Discography

The Wailers, *Catch a Fire* (1973)

1. Concrete Jungle
2. Slave Driver
3. 400 Years
4. Stop that Train
5. Baby We've Got a Date (Rock it Baby)
6. Stir it Up
7. Kinky Reggae
8. No More Trouble
9. Midnight Ravers

The Wailers, *Burnin* (1973)

1. Get Up, Stand Up
2. Hallelujah Time
3. I Shot the Sherriff
4. Burnin' and Lootin'
5. Put it On
6. Small Axe
7. Pass it One
8. Duppy Conqueror
9. One Foundation
10. Rastaman Chant

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Natty Dread* (1974)

1. Lively Up Yourself
2. No Woman, No Cry
3. Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)
4. Rebel Music (3 O'Clock Roadblock)
5. So Jah Seh
6. Natty Dread
7. Bend Down Low
8. Talkin' Blues
9. Revolution

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Live!* (1975)

1. Trenchtown Rock
2. Burnin' and Lootin'
3. Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)

4. Lively Up Yourself
5. No Woman, No Cry
6. I Shot the Sherriff
7. Get Up, Stand Up

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Rastaman Vibration* (1976)

1. Positive Vibration
2. Roots, Rock, Reggae
3. Johnny Was
4. Cry to Me
5. Want More
6. Crazy Baldhead
7. Who the Cap Fit
8. Night Shift
9. War
10. Rat Race

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Exodus* (1977)

1. Natural Mystic
2. So Much Things to Say
3. Guiltiness
4. The Heathen
5. Exodus
6. Jamming
7. Waiting in Vain
8. Turn Your Lights Down Low
9. Three Little Birds
10. One Love / People Get Ready

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Kaya* (1978)

1. Easy Skanking
2. Kaya
3. Is This Love
4. Sun Is Shining
5. Satisfy My Soul
6. She's Gone
7. Misty Morning
8. Crisis
9. Running Away
10. Time Will Tell

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Babylon by Bus* (1978)

1. Positive Vibration
2. Punky Reggae Party
3. Exodus
4. Stir It Up
5. Rat Race
6. Concrete Jungle
7. Kinky Reggae
8. Lively Up Yourself
9. Rebel Music
10. War / No More Trouble
11. Is This Love
12. Heathen
13. Jamming

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Survival* (1979)

1. So Much Trouble in the World
2. Zimbabwe
3. Top Rankin'
4. Babylon System
5. Survival
6. Africa Unite
7. Ride Natty Ride
8. Ambush in the Night
9. Wake Up and Live

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Uprising* (1980)

1. Coming in from the Cold
2. Real Situation
3. Bad Card
4. We and Dem
5. Work
6. Zion Train
7. Pimper's Paradise
8. Could You Be Loved
9. Forever Loving Jah
10. Redemption Song

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Confrontation* (1983)

1. Chant Down Babylon
2. Buffalo Soldier
3. Jump Nyabinghi

4. Mix Up, Mix Up
5. Give Thanks and Praises
6. Blackman Redemption
7. Trench Town
8. Stiff Necked Fools
9. I Know
10. Rastaman Live Up

Bob Marley & the Wailers, *Legend: The Best of Bob Marley and the Wailers* (1984)

1. Is This Love
2. No Woman, No Cry
3. Could You Be Loved
4. Three Little Birds
5. Buffalo Soldier
6. Get Up, Stand Up
7. Stir It Up
8. One Love / People Get Ready
9. I Shot the Sherriff
10. Waiting in Vain
11. Redemption Song
12. Satisfy My Soul
13. Exodus
14. Jamming

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan: The Real World Records Discography

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party, *Shahen Shah* (1988)

1. Shams-Ud-Doha, Badar-Ud-Doja
2. Allah, Muhammad, Char Yaar
3. Kali Kali Zulfon Ke Phande Nah Dalo
4. Meri Ankho Ko Bakshe Hain Aansoo
5. Nit Khari Mangan Sohnia Main Teri
6. Kehna Ghalat Ghalat to Chhupana Sahi Sahi

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook, *Mustt Mustt* (1990)

1. Mustt Mustt (Lost in His Work)
2. Nothing Without You (Tery Bina)
3. Tracery
4. The Game
5. Ta Deem
6. Sea of Vapours
7. Fault Lines

8. Tana Dery Na
9. Shadow
10. Avenue
11. Mustt Mustt (Massive Attack Remix)

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party, *Shahbaaz* (1991)

1. Beh Haadh Ramza Dhasdha
2. Shahbaaz Qalandar
3. Dayaar-E-Ishq Meh
4. Jewleh Lal

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party, *Devotional and Love Songs* (1993)

1. Allah Hoo, Allah Hoo
2. Yaad-e-Nabi Gulshan Mekha
3. Haq Ali Ali Haq
4. Ali Mawla Ali Mawla Ali Dam Dam
5. Mast Nazroon Se Allah Bacchae
6. Woh Hata Rahe Hai Pardah
7. Yeh Jo Halka Halkar Suruur Hai
8. Biba Sada Dil Mor De
9. Yadaan Vichre Sajan Dian Aiyan
10. Sanso Ki Mala Peh

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party, *The Last Prophet* (1994)

1. Maki Madni
2. Sahib Teri Bandi
3. Ganj-e-Shakar
4. Sochan Dongian

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook, *Night Song* (1996)

1. My Heart, My Life
2. Intoxicated
3. Lament
4. My Comfort Remains
5. Longing
6. Sweet Pain
7. Night Song
8. Crest

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook (remixed), *Star Rise* (1997)

1. Sweet Pain (remixed by Joi)

2. My Heart, My Life (remixed by Talvin Singh)
3. Ta Deem (remixed by Asian Dub Foundation)
4. Shadow (remixed by State of Bengal)
5. Longing (remixed by Aki Nawaz)
6. My Comfort Remains (remixed by Black Star Liner)
7. Tracery (remixed by Nitin Sawhney)
8. Lament (remixed by Earthtribe)
9. Nothing With You (Tery Bina) (remixed by Dhol Foundation)

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party, *Dust to Gold* (2000)

1. Khawaja Tum Hi Ho
2. Data Tera Darbar
3. Koi Hai Na Ho Go
4. Noor-e-Khuda Hai Husn-e-Sarapa Rasul

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party, *Body and Soul* (2002)

1. Mayey Nee Mian Dhak Farid Dey Jana
2. Mahya Pardesh Hogiya
3. Barsoon Kay Intizar Ka
4. Tasbeh Dei Ik Ik Dhaneh