

**FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AND EQUALITY IN
BOB MARLEY AND THEWAILER'S SONG LYRICS:
A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Music has its own meaning to the person who listens to it in the different way. Some music lovers say music is an expression on people's soul, but some other says it is just a merger of several instruments which can produce some noise. Just like trend, music is also changing. In 1950s - 1960s, the music rock n roll, calypso, rhythm and blues, and ska were successful to be a phenomenon in the circles of music lovers. In 1966, a new music genre called rock steady was also crashed the music world, and then it is followed by the birth of new music style named reggae in 1970s that was suddenly sucked the attention of all people in the world.

Reggae is generally characterized by drumming style that has its pattern "thump-thump, pause, thump-thump". Some literatures say reggae was in its golden age in 1967 and become the most popular phenomenon in 1970s - 1980s, it was centered in Kingston, Jamaica. Some people argues that reggae was adopted from folk music, church music 'pocomania', band jonkanoo, farmer rituals, and mento. But another argues that reggae was the development of ska and rocksteady, and still having its root on New Orleans rhythm n blues. *Bob Marley and the Wailers* is one of the reggae bands in the world. *Bob Marley and the Wailers* was formed in Kingston, Jamaica 1974, a small city in Latin

America mainland. It was metamorphosis of *The Wailers*, the band which formed in around 1963 and consisting of Bob Marley, Bunny Livingston (later known as Bunny Wailer), and Peter McIntosh (later known as Peter Tosh). After the breakdown of this group, Bob Marley (who become the vocalist and the front man of The Wailers) continued with his new band '*Bob Marley and The Wailers*' and teamed up with new members that included Carlton and Aston 'family man' Barret (drum and bass), Junior Marvin and Al Anderson (lead guitars), Tyrone Downie and Earl 'way' Lendo (keyboards), Arin 'seeco' Patterson (percussion), and the I-Threes (backing vocals) included Marley's wife, and still Bob Marley as the vocalist and the front man.

The unique thing about reggae is that this music was born as the form of fight against the empire system (England and Spain) in Jamaica, a city which located in Latin America mainland. The birth of reggae music was having a close relationship with the identity awareness movement of black people in early twentieth century pioneered by Marcus Garvey (a black pundit and activist in Jamaica) who emerged the philosophy of "back to Africa" and who advocated the repatriation movement (the black people emigration back to Africa). When RasTafari Makonnen (a black African) was crowned as the king of Ethiopia in 1930 titled HIM Haile Selassie 1, Garvey's followers considered RasTafari as a savior of black people from Babylon's suppression. Garvey's ideology then involved to be a new religion named "rastafari" and Haile Selassie became a person who deified by Rastafarians. After Bob Marley

joined to 'rastafari' in 1967, together with his band he sounds rastafari values through reggae. Later people considered that this year was the birth of reggae.

There are many interesting aspects can be seen from *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics. There are also many assumption about *Bob Marley and The Wailer's* lyrics that arrived from people and fans, such as Anthony Bogues in "Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals", (New York: Routledge,2003) argues that *Bob Marley and The Wailer's* song lyrics are representative of Rastafarian musical tradition of social critique. He also notes that Marley functions as more than a musician: he is social prophet. In that role, he articulates the complex symbol world of Jamaican culture and biblical language to provide pointed analysis on socio-political realities. Bogues says that in the lyrical world of Bob Marley, Babylon stands for a systemic reality that alienates the descendant of Africa from their real selves and homeland. Having expressed the drudgery of life under the colonial system as "trodding on the wine press muchtoo long".

Marley's lyrics of *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* songs justifies his critique and the social response that he issues through his use of the vampire descriptor for 'Babylon' to represent the parasitic power of the empire. Nathaniel Samuel Murell, "Introduction: The Rastafari Phenomenon", in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple Press,1998) explains that the term "Chant Down Babylon" of Marley's lyrics of *Bob Marley and The Wailer's* songs refers to Rastafarian oppositional discourse with regards to colonial society. Furthermore, Joseph Owens in "Dread: The Rastafarian of

Jamaica” (London: Heinemann,1984) proposes that Marley’s lyrics of *Bob Marley and The Wailer’s* song is capturing both sense of alienation of exilic existence and the critique against imperial power. He quotes that the critique of Jamaican colonial society in Marley’s lyrics of *Bob Marley and the Wailer’s* songs reflect the mainstream of Rastafarian philosophy as informed by Marcus Garvey’s thought ([http:// www. Stl-site. org / publications / article. AspX? articleId = 496](http://www.Stl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=496)).

Bob Marley and The Wailers is not only one of the reggae music in the world, but most of the people in the world believed that reggae was mainly popularized by *Bob Marley under The Wailers*, his first band which cut the first album. Even, after this group reincarnated to be *Bob Marley and the Wailers*, reggae music became more globalized. Reggae music more properly denotes a particular music style that originated following on the development ska and rocksteady (style of music which still having its root on New Orleans rhythm n blues). Ska which characterized by the bass played walking quarter-notes and the drum begin hited in the second and fourth beats in unison with the piano and guitar, morphed into rocksteady, style of music which the vocals came to the fore and the tempo slowed. This transition later was giving way to reggae which is based on a rhythm style characterized by regular chops in the off-beat (known as ‘the skank’), the tempo is generally slower than that found in ska and rocksteady and usually has accents on the 3rd and 4th beats in each bar because of the rhythm guitar. The major of people in the world recognized that *The Wailers* (later on changed to *Bob Marley and the Wailers*) was the group

who made the transition through all three stages above and they are also among the significant pioneers who can be called the literal roots of reggae.

The composition of music is one of aspects which are interesting too. As reggae music, *Bob Marley and the Wailers* used different played characteristic than usually used by others groups. Commonly, reggae music is often very simple, and sometimes a whole song will have no more than one or two chords. The *Bob Marley and the Wailers* in their music is almost entirely comprised of A-minor chords. These simple repetitious chord structures add to reggae's sometimes hypnotic effect. Marley in *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* music also wrote more complex chord structures. This style of music is rarely to be found in other groups of reggae. Another bumpy characteristic in *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* music are the guitar and keyboard played. The guitar instrument, especially the lead guitar will often add a rock or blues-style melodic solo to a song, but in *Bob Marley and The Wailer's* music it plays the same part as the bass line an octave higher, with a very muted and picked sound. This adds definition to the bass line (which in reggae is usually devoid of upper frequencies) and emphasized the bass melody. Typically, the *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* keyboard often plays melodic runs and extra beats. The organ part is typically quite low in the mix, and is often more felt than heard. Example includes the songs "natural mystic", "is this love", and "midnight ravers".

There are also some appeals that can be found in *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics. One of the stronger features of the lyrics is its method of reflecting the condition of Jamaica society between 1960s-1980s. Take an

example of “Rastaman Chant” which tells about the struggle of black people in Jamaica against the empire (white imperialism). This song lyric reflected socio-political realities in 1970s. At the time, Jamaican faced many historical events such as poverty, slavery, famine, colonization, suppression which occurred almost four hundred years on. By assembled the spirit and the power, Jamaicans was fighting for freedom and equality.

Lyric in ancient Greece is a poem accompanied by musical instrument (Fletcher, 2008). Although the word is still often used to refer to the songlike quality in poetry, it is more generally used to refer to any short poem that expresses a personal emotion, be it a sonnet, ode, song, or elegy. Copyright applies to music when it is recorded, either by writing it down or in any other manner. With a song there will usually be more than one copyright associated with it. If you are the composer of the music you will be the author of the musical work and will have copyright in that music. The lyrics of the song are protected separately by copyright as a literary work. The person who writes the lyric will own the copyright in the words.

Fight for freedom and equality in *Bob Marley and the Wailer’s* song lyrics is one of the interesting aspects too. If we read *Bob Marley and the Wailer’s* song lyrics, we can easily see how they reflected Jamaican’s fighting for freedom and equality, those struggles was pointed to economic sector, socio-political sector, and psychology sector.

Furthermore, *Bob Marley and the Wailer’s* song lyrics also deal with Jamaica’s culture and religion. The cases that publicated in the lyrics such as Jah, ganja,

dreadlocks, and Zion. *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics portrayed that Jamaica's culture and religion was a strong tradition which adhered to the Jamaicans. Take an example of "dreadlocks", it means the style of hair which locked by twist. Jamaicans believed that dreadlocks have had deep spiritual values. It also symbolized the distinguishing factor from "baldheads" (the term of white people) which they grouped as the Babylon.

Dealing with the literature, sociology reflects the way of literature interacts with society and there is a close relationship between literature and sociology. Based on <http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm?literature+history/80531>, the relationship between literature and society in general is unlimited and it requires a theory of history and society. Especially, sociological it self explains the particular social structures to find expression in individual literary works and what functions these works perform in society.

From the review above, the writer is interested in analyzing the fight for freedom and equality in *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics by using sociological approach.

B. Literature Review

So far, a study about fight for freedom and equality in *Bob Marley and The Wailer's* song lyrics has not been studied yet by the student of UMS of Surakarta, especially which is related to sociological perspective. Based on this statement, the writer is interested in analyzing this lyric by using sociological approach.

C. Problem Statement

Problem statement is essential for the research, because it makes the study clearer and more focus. In this study, the researcher proposes the following problem: How fight for freedom and equality is reflected in *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics.

D. limitation of the Study

In this research, the researcher just focuses on the *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* songs of *Revolution, Night Shift, Rat Race, The Heathen, Exodus, Three Little Birds, One Love / People Get Ready, Is This Love, Kaya, Crisis, Time Will Tell, Punky Reggae Party, Stir It Up, Zimbabwe, Babylon System, Survival, Ambush In The Night, Zion Train, Forever Loving Jah, Redemption Song, Chant Down Babylon, Blackman Redemption, Stiff Necked Fools, I Know, and Rastaman Live Up* lyric. Those lyrics of chosen songs became the hits that may reflect fight for freedom and equality in *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics.

E. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the song lyrics based on its structural elements of lyrics: speaker, spoken to, figurative language, rhythm and rhyme, imagery and symbols, diction, and theme (main idea).
2. To analyze the lyric of *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* songs based on the sociological perspective by identifying fight for freedom and equality based on social background of the author in the *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* lyrics.

F. Benefit of the Study

By researching *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* lyrics, two benefits can be gained:

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is aimed to give additional information to literature research especially the literary studies on the lyrics of *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* songs.

2. Practical Benefit

This study is aimed to get deeper understanding in literary field in analyzing the fight for freedom and equality of *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics.

G. Research Method

1. Type of the Study

The type of the study is qualitative research because it is subjective research. A qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.17), qualitative research, broadly defined, means “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (in Hoepfl: 1997). In analyzing the data, the writer applies sociological aspect of the fight for freedom and equality which are reflected in the lyrics of *Bob Marley and the Wailer’s* song.

2. Type of Data and Data Source

In this research, the type of data is in the form of text, words, phrases, clauses and sentences which used in the lyrics of Bob Marley and The Wailer’s songs. In doing this study, the writer uses two sources of data, those are:

a. Primary Data Source

The primary data sources are the cassette of *Bob Marley and the Wailers*, which the transcriptions of writing have taken from the internet (<http://www.thirdfield.com/bobmarley/lyrics.html>). Totally, the songs that produced by Bob Marley and The Wailers consists of 8 album, they are; Natty Dread (1975), Rastaman Vibration (1976), Exodus (1977), Kaya (1978), Babylon By Bus (1978), Survival (1978), Uprising (1980), Confrontation (1983), each album consists of about ten lyrics. Totally, there are about 80 lyrics in the Bob Marley

and The Wailer's song. From the number above, the writer takes of 25 songs as the data of the research, which are taken based on the theme of the struggle against the oppression, colonization, and the suffering of the people.

b. Secondary Data Source

The secondary data sources are some references and materials related to the study, such as biography of the author, some books of sociology, website (it is in the form of books, internet, and Video Compact Disk).

3. Technique of Data Collection

The technique of collecting data in this study is library research, the data derived from both primary and secondary sources. The techniques of collecting data are follows:

- a. Listening to the music
- b. Browsing the internet to get several information and related to the object of the study
- c. Taking notes of important data from both primary and secondary data
- d. Arranging the data into several parts according to its classification
- e. Selecting particular parts that are considered important and relevant for the analysis
- f. Drawing conclusion based on the data analysis.

4. Technique of Data Analysis

The technique employed in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It concerns the relationship between the lyrics and the sociological theory to show the fight for freedom and equality in *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics.

H. Research Paper Organization

This research paper is classified into six chapters. The first chapter is introduction that consists of background of study, literature review, and objectives of the study, research method, and research paper organization. The second chapter deals with underlying theory covering with the sociology of literature, the principle of sociology of literature, Jamaicans fight for freedom and equality, structural elements of lyrics / poetry, and theoretical application. The third chapter consists of the social historical of Jamaican in early twentieth century and biography of Bob Marley as a major author of *Bob Marley and the Wailer's* song lyrics. The fourth chapter is structural analysis, which consists of the analysis of the structural element of the lyrics and discussion. The fifth chapter consists of conclusion and suggestion.