

ABSTRACT

Spiritual Assemblages: Revival, Dress, Ritual and Power

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Material and performative representations of dress in an African-Jamaican religious context have been an underexplored phenomenon in Caribbean Cultural Studies. This study adds to the corpus of knowledge available on material culture within Caribbean dress historiography and shifts dominant academic conversations from secular dress to religious dress in Jamaica's Revivalism.

The primary objective of this research was to understand the process involved in the production of meaning through dress in Jamaica's Revivalism. The following questions guided the study: (1) What is the process involved in the production of meaning through dress in Revivalism? (2) What are the meanings associated with the elements of Revival dress? (3) How is the dressed body deployed in sacred ritual spaces of Revival? (4) What ritual identities are performed through dress in Revival rituals and ceremonies?

I employed a variety of data collection methods including in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observation following ethnographic methodologies. Additionally, knowledge of the broader corpus of African-Caribbean religions including Santería, Spiritual Baptist, Candomblé and Vodou became essential for the comparative data used to analyse Revival dress. The data collected led to the organic development of a Revival Dress Map (RDM). The RDM featured three categories of Revival dress: Spirit-commissioned, Spirit-informed and General dress. The categories of Revival dress were explained within the pre-dress practices, ritual dressing process, performance of ritual identities and post-dress practices of the participants.

This dissertation's original contributions to knowledge are: (a) the development of a systematic and comprehensive dress map which captures the flow of Revival dress from its conceptualising to its sourcing, making, assembling, performing and doffing, and (b) the development of 'Spiritual Assemblages' from the study of Revival dress as a theoretical framework beyond the application of performative assemblages in architectural studies.

The RDM has implications for future cultural studies research on religious dress in Jamaica and other African-Caribbean religions such as Santería, Spiritual Baptist, Candomblé and Vodou.

Keywords: Revival; Spiritual Assemblages; Cultural Studies; Caribbean Cultural Studies; Dress; Jamaica; Ethnography; African-Caribbean Religions; Performance; Ritual Identity; Meaning; Spirit; Power.