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Class Status and Identity in the Trinidadian House: A Semantic Reading of the Typical Trinidadian House, Across Class levels, with Emphasis on FaÃ§ade Design

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Abstract

Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi stated, "Remember that no other memory remains of us than the walls which after hundreds of thousands of years bear witness to him who was their author."[1] Brunelleschi's statement alludes to architecture's ability to encapsulate the spirit of its time and people, allowing it to transcend time, and be translated to future generations. Fascinated by this ability of architecture, this thesis investigates the relationship between the evolution of a particular architectural typology and the changing socio-political climate of its context. To illustrate this theme it presents a social history of the evolution of the single-family house in Trinidad, as the pluralistic society evolves out of Colonialism plagued by issues of class status, identity formation, and need for differentiation.

This thesis focuses on the history of Trinidad from 1900 to 2012 and divides it into four periods, each marked by a major socio-political shift. For each period the thesis discusses the emergence of a new elite group brought about the socio-political shift. It then investigates the need of each new elite group to affirm their status, and their associated vision of an ideal visual representation of status that is reflected in their houses. It discusses the use of the house as a vessel through which to negotiate one's identity and place in society, and simultaneously reflect this status to the world.

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[1] Isabel Kuhl, Kristina Lowis and Sabine Thiel-Siling. 50 *Architects You Should Know* (London: Prestel Pulishing, 2009),13.

The thesis begins with the development of Colonialism and a class system in the island. It then transitions into a discussion of the emergence of French Creole coloreds as a capital holding group due to their success in the cocoa industry at the beginning of the twentieth century; looking at the grand houses they built to attest this success. This is followed by an investigation of the effect anti-colonialist sentiments had on the design of residential architecture leading up to Independence and the major shift in residential design after Independence. The thesis then concludes in contemporary Trinidad and discusses the residential production of East Indians, a once marginalized, but now capital holding major group, illustrating the recurring theme of the need of newly elevated groups to affirm their status in their houses.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Honors Program of the Department of Architecture in the Fay Jones School of Architecture, University of Arkansas.

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Introduction

Dominique Malaquais (1994, 21) in her essay, *You are what you Build: Architecture as Identity among the Bamileke of West Cameroon*, stated, "Human beings and their dwellings are linked in a symbiotic relation, at the heart of which stands one fundamental concern: the acquisition of status."Bamilekes have a rigorous process to climb the social ladder within their distinctly hierarchical society. For each step of the social ladder, there is an associated structure or architectural feature necessary to status gaining. Architecture and social identity converge in Bamileke society. However, this phenomenon of confluence is not unique to Bamileke; it manifests in different forms and degrees in the built fabric of every society. Like the Bamileke, the distinct architecture of Trinidad's multitudinous social groups combines architecture with social mobility.

The Gulf View residential area, a wealthy elite suburb of San Fernando, is composed of a conglomeration of expansive follies, adorned with anywhere from columns and fretwork, to baby elephants and cherubs.[2] Neighboring Gulf View is the Toruba government housing area, whose single- family houses are classified by the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) for low-income families. Like other low - income housing developments throughout the island, Toruba was conceived with standardized houses all of the same plan, elevation and section. Each house was designed as a humble single- story dwelling free of any ornamentation or additive features. However, with the progression of time and accumulation of capital, these clone houses radically mutate. The houses morph into miniature follies as ornamentation emerges, and they increase in size room-by-room. Through these multitudinous

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[2] A folly, as defined by Trinidadian cultural historian Gerard Besson, in an interview with the author on Jan 4 2013, is: an often extravagant picturesque building erected to suit a fanciful taste.
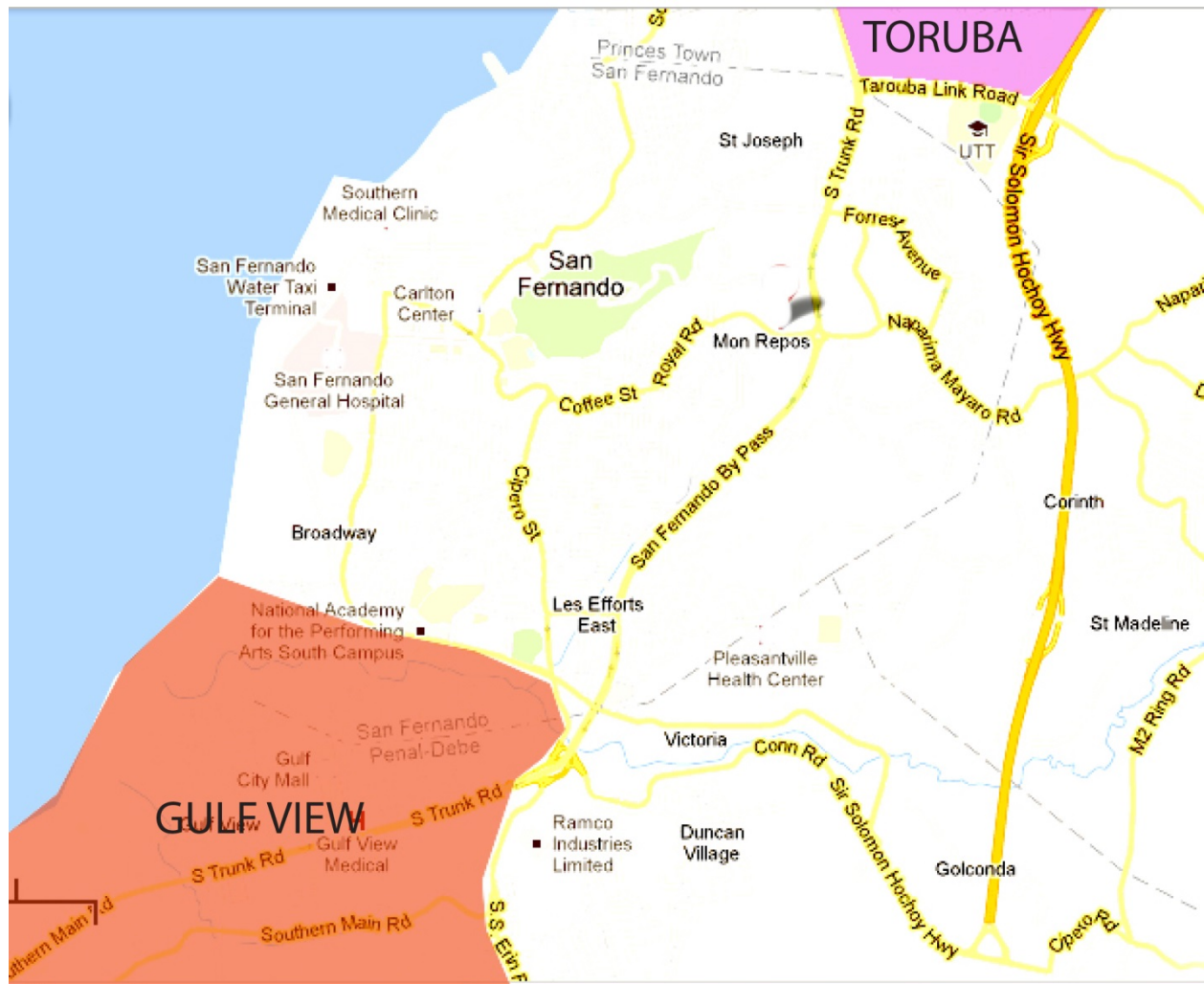
Figure 1: Map of San Fernando showing Location of Gulf View and Toruba
Source: Diagram produced by the author

additions, they seek to surpass their neighbors. Far from an isolated phenomenon, this picture is the

general story of residential architecture in the urban areas of Trinidad.   As one observes this

phenomenon across residential architecture certain questions arise: What motivates these ostentatious

dwellings of the rich, and why do those of lower socio-economic status immediately adorn their houses

as soon as income permits? The distinct appearance of the urban, residential fabric of Trinidad is

explained by architecture's ability to gain and externalize status.   It is best stated by architect, Felipe

Hernandez (2010, 25), "…architecture could be used both as a symbol of cultural superiority and as a

means of socio-political control." Today, Trinidad is a society in a post-colonial state characterized by a

social hierarchy structured by an individual's access to wealth. Indeed, acquisition of wealth and status

is so engrained in Trinidadian society, it has become an integral part of how Trinidadians measure and

identify themselves. Architecture of Trinidad is a consequence of the effect, this thirst for rank, has on

the psychological state of the Trinidadian people.

The current struggle Trinidadians have with the definition and representation of their identity is indelibly

a consequence of the colonization process.   Overwhelmingly, the colonial process of domination is

discussed as a corporeal means of control; however, a more crucial part of the process to gain control is

the means of psychological domination, due to the longevity of its effect.   *Ethnography and the*

Historical Imagination, by John and Jean Comaroff (1992, 235), discusses the condition of the formerly

colonized, emphasizing, "The colonization of their consciousness and their consciousness of

colonization." Colonization of consciousness entails the imposition of a particular way of seeing and

being through signs and practices foreign to the colonized.   Colonization is carried out in two ways:

through the transference of an ideology directly or by using familiar symbols to covertly transfer an

unfamiliar ideology.   According to Comaroff (1992, 236), colonizers in most situations, "try to gain

control over the material and semantic practices through which their would be subjects produce and

reproduce the very basis of their existence; no habitat being too humble, no sign too insignificant to be implicated in the battle." In other words to gain control over the material artifacts a person identifies with is to gain control of that person. Thus it becomes eminently clear why architecture is intrinsic to the colonizing mission because it is the strongest material artifact through which people reproduce their existence. According to Felipe Hernandez (2010, 16), "Architecture was one of the principle means used by colonizers to impose a new social and political order and also, to maintain control over colonized subjects." Architecture was used by the colonizer as a symbol of cultural superiority giving authority to European architecture. Thereby placing it as a high culture against which everything else was measured. European architectural symbols became the embodiment of colonialism and the power and prestige of the colonizer.

Throughout Trinidad's history, varying elite groups, in recognition of the power of architecture to communicate identity, have followed the precedence of the colonizer and used architecture as a means to proclaim social status. Thus, from the colonial, to the post-colonial period, residential architecture has actively implemented- and actively rejected- architectural symbols of wealth and status, to reflect the prestige of the commissioner. As a result this thesis seeks to investigate the design of the urban Trinidadian house, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present, as the purest manifestation of Trinidadians' quest for acquisition of status. This research investigates different periods, which fall within Trinidad's modern history (1783-present), and discusses how the composition of the elite group, having the most influence on the design of residential architecture, changes as society evolves. Furthermore it investigates the influence these changes in the leading social group have on collective ideologies of status representation in architecture. To this end, the thesis focuses on four periods in Trinidad's modern history: the rise of the cocoa industry (1900-1920), the post-World War I

period (1920-1960), the post- emancipation period (1960-1990) and Contemporary Trinidad (1990-present). N.B. These temporal boundaries are in no means strict as various issues and architectural expressions overlap. For each period, the change in residential fabric is discussed as it relates to changing ideologies of identity and class status. To best represent these fundamental changes in ideology, there are focal residential examples discussed in terms of their socio-political context and architectural details.

Historiography

Of the few critical works that have been published on the architecture of Trinidad, there are major reoccurring themes: a romanticized quest for origins, a search for a prototype emblematic of Trinidadian architecture, a discussion of a particular era of design as the height of Trinidadian architecture; and a discussion of iconographic historical models. Scholars have yet to begin in- depth discussion of the relationship of architecture with Trinidad's ever-changing social identity. As a result this thesis attempts to fill this gap in literature. However, vast historical and sociological literature on Trinidad exists with respect to collective identity formation, cultural assimilation and rejection, and construction of class differentiation. Trinidad is the case study per-excellence for the post-colonial situation because of its social pluralism. Though scholars of socio -historical literature do not generally discuss the use of architecture as a means by which Trinidadians to rationalize these themes of identity, they do establish the frame work for my study of the relationship between architecture and social identity. Significant voices in this line of study are Bridget Brereton, Lloyd Best and Dr. Anthony Maingot.

Bridget Brereton's *History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1962* gives an interpretative account of the history of Trinidad starting from the "true" settlement of the 1780s. Written in 1981, early in the post-

Independence period, Brereton's work is essential to the thesis because it reflects the agendas of the period in which it was written. She relates the history of Trinidad with an emphasis on class issues and cultural identity as these were major themes being discussed in post-Independence Trinidad. She examines Trinidad's shifting economies and the emergence of various political movements and how the society evolves as a result of these issues. Lloyd Best's work, *Race, Class and Ethnicity: A Caribbean Interpretation* looks specifically at race, class and identity in a contemporary Caribbean setting. It takes the historical social tensions discussed by Brereton and analyzes sociologically how these issues persist to create identity conflicts in contemporary times. Through his discussion, Best illustrates that Trinidad has yet to achieve true Independence, still plagued by the conflicts of superimposed, imported cultural values. His work confirms the underlying theory of the thesis that colonial mechanisms persist through Trinidad's development. Irrefutably colonial ideas of power are still the modus operandi of contemporary society, and are reflected in the way Trinidadians identify themselves.

With the celebration of Trinidad's fifty years of Independence in 2011, many scholars found it an opportune moment to reflect on the evolution of the society. Their subsequent sociological essays were published in *Trinidad and Tobago 50 Years of Independence*. Included was a work by Dr. Anthony Maingot, *Foreign Social Scientists Look at Trinidad at Independence: Understanding Creolization and Assimilation.* Although previous works such as Best's discussed identity conflicts that arise in a pluralistic society in a post-colonial setting, Maingot goes further to suggest how these conflicts were negotiated post-Independence to bring cohesion to the society. He discusses theories of creolization, plural acculturation and plural disassociation. He postulates that when people of different cultures learn to co-habitate it results either in the transference of cultural logics or the active rejection of such logics as a means of refining individual and collective identity.

Recently, works have begun to investigate the social development of Trinidad as it relates to the realm

of architecture. Of these works, *Ajoupa* by John Newel Lewis was one of the most insightful. The

prerogative of the work was to prove the varying forms of the Trinidad house, across time, were simply

different evolutions of a single prototype, the Amerindian Ajoupa.[3] Although his basic premise of a

typological connection across time is irrelevant to this thesis, his work is nevertheless provides one of

the few evolutionary, critical studies of the Trinidadian house social groups. Another important work of

critical architectural discussion is *Modern Trinidad Outlined and the Works of Colin Laird and Anthony*

Lewis by architect Mark Raymond. Directly aligned with the theme of the thesis, it discusses the socio-

political issues of each period as they relate to Modern design across four periods of time. Both works

substantiate an inextricable link between architecture and identity, shaped by society's ever-changing

ideologies.

Methodology

The class structure in Trinidad- and its attendant ideas of status, conflicts of identity, and effects on

architecture- are all remnants of a colonial legacy and affirmations of a post-colonial present. These

themes inherently require an investigation that spans across a large time period; as such, the approach

is that of a social history. Although the definition of a social history is debated among scholars, British

historian, Raphael Samuel presents some general characteristics of this type of study. It entails the

historical account of the production of 'ordinary people'; it projects modernity backwards, finding

justifications for the present condition in the past and thus bringing them closer together; it is a

cumulative study of the human, the sociological factors that shape his/her attitude, and how they

reproduce this attitude.[4] As per social history method, the thesis takes historical accounts of Trinidad

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[3] The Ajoupa was the house of the indigenous people of Trinidad
[4] Raphael Samuel, "What is Social History?" last modified April 6, 2013, http://www.historytoday.com/raphael-

and Caribbean based sociological and architectural theory and combines them with a semantic reading

of houses across different class levels from 1900 to the present.   These houses become paradigms of

Post- Colonial theories of ambivalence, hybridization, transculturation and creolization.

 Because it would be impossible to analyze every piece of Trinidadian residential architecture to

definitively deduce design desires, induction and deduction in a logical system had to be used.

Researchers Hiller and Hanson used this method in the study of social patterns in the architecture of the

Ambo Tribal Compound. They studied the floor plan layouts of the Ambo tribe as a representative

sample, deduced the socio-cultural patterns related to these examples, and then induced the socio-

cultural patterns of other tribes.[5] In the same way, I collected a representative sample of houses for

each particular class, in each particular period, studied them for socio-cultural patterns and used these

findings to induce the socio-cultural pattern for the greater whole.   Due to Trinidad's lack of

preservation laws, much of the historical fabric has been erased, left to deterioration, or improperly

restored or altered. Thus, to piece together a visual account of residential projects as they existed in

their contemporary setting, I relied on the use of archival data, historical written and photographic

accounts, and first person verbal accounts obtained through participant interviews. Where preserved,

or in the contemporary situation, houses were analyzed through direct observation and recorded

through photographs and drawings. As a native of Trinidad and Tobago, the contemporary readings of

Trinidad were especially delicate. It called for me to negotiate subjective, pre-conceived notions of

place and culture with a new, arguably equally subjective, but more critical analysis of place and culture.

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samuel/what-social-history.html.
[5] Linda Groat, and David Wang, *Architectural Research Methods* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 318-320.

Chapter Outline

The thesis is divided into five main chapters, each of which is marked by a major socio-political shift. .

The first chapter briefly introduces Trinidad and discusses the establishment of Colonialism. It maps the

emergence of a complex class system and the institutionalization of European architecture therefore

establishing the framework for the evolution of residential architecture throughout Trinidad's modern

history. The subsequent chapters reference specific architectural examples of the elite class and discuss

them in terms of the socio-political context at the time.   Each chapter analyzes class issues and their

influence on architecture at the time; physical context; form of the r representative example; and the

influence of the architectural details of the elite on other classes of society. Chapter Two looks at the

rise of the cocoa industry at the beginning of the twentieth century and how it facilitated social mobility.

As a result of the capital gained through cocoa, French Creole[6] coloreds became the nouveau bourgeois

and built grand mansions around Trinidad's Grand Savannah to declare their status. This chapter

focuses on the Boissière house produced during this period and the effect elite works had on the

middle-class. Chapter Three examines Trinidad in the post-World War I period as residential

architecture among the middle-class transitioned as a result of the rise of a new leading group, the Afro-

Saxon elite and a shift in reaction towards European rule. Chapter Four looks at Trinidad in the post-

Independence period and investigates the effect the thirst for a new collective identity, free from

European association, had on residential architecture. The fifth and final chapter looks at the

emergence of a new creative, capital holding group, in contemporary society: the East Indians.[7] It

discusses the evolution of this group in Trinidad and the effect they have on the design of the house in

the present environment.

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[6] For the purpose of this thesis,' Creole' is taken to mean a person or thing born in Trinidad.
[7] 'East Indian' is the term give to Trinidadian of Indian descent. 'East Indian' and 'Indo-Trinidadian' will be used interchangeably.'

Chapter One: Colonialism and Social Stratification

In 1498, during his third voyage to the Lesser Antilles, Christopher Columbus and his crew sighted and landed on the island of Trinidad. The island had already been inhabited for approximately 7,000 years by various distinct communities of people that migrated to Trinidad from the South American continent. Difference among these people was ignored, and they were classified as one group generally referred to as the Amerindians. It is not certain if any means of social hierarchy truly existed among the Amerindian people.[8]

Trinidad lacked gold or other mineral wealth so there was no attempt to formally colonize the island and few Spaniards actually settled there. The Spaniards who did settle were not Imperial officers or any men of importance but, instead, were people who did not have much life possessions elsewhere. The island was used as a source for supplies for voyagers and a source for Amerindian slaves to be sold to other islands where more formal colonies had been established.[9] When the Spanish arrived to the island, they observed the tropical architecture of the indigenous people. However varied in form they were was consistently constructed with walls of saplings and roofs made of palm leaves.   The structure was termed the *Ajoupa*.   At this time in Spain, the Spanish Renaissance was occurring with its Moorish influences leading to the development of a style of building called *Plateresque*. They used the term *Plateresque* because the extremely decorated facades that were associated with this style were reminiscent of the decorative motifs of the detailed work of the *Plateros* (silversmiths).[10] Although this was the contemporary style of the Spaniards, early Spanish settlers did not implement *Planteresque* and

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[8] D.B.R. Kerrigan, "The Accumulation of Capital and the Shifting Construction of Difference: Examining the Relationships of Colonialism, Post-Colonialism and Neo- Colonialism in Trinidad" (PhD diss., University of American, 2010), 43.

[9] Kerrigan,"The Accumulation of Capital", 45.

[10] J.N. Lewis, *Ajoupa* (New York: AIA Service Corporation, 1983), 35.

chose instead to build their dwellings in the same *Ajoupa* style of the Amerindians, adding a mixture of clay, water and grass called tapia, to the walls if necessary.[11] It is said the Spaniards were enchanted by the relaxed culture of the Amerindians with their hammocks and *Ajoupa* and were thus drawn to the style.[12] However, the Spanish adoption of the *Ajoupa* was more likely based on its environmental suitability and its socio-cultural suitability. With the small population and the lack of capital flowing through the island, there was only a rudimentary class system based on race. As a result, the use of other status symbols (a European based adorned architecture) as a means of differentiation was not necessary.

The failures of Spanish Colonialism

Not until the sixteenth century did the Spanish make attempts to set up a formal colony in Trinidad but failed due to resistance by the Amerindians. There was not much improvement in their built fabric either. In 1594 a small group of enslaved Africans were brought in to construct a settlement at St. Joseph, the first capital of Trinidad. The settlement, however, was described as small and unimpressive as the rest of the Spanish construction. They continued to build biodegradable *Ajoupa* towns, which explains why Trinidad does not speak of a strong Spanish architectural heritage today, despite approximately three hundred years of Spanish rule.

Throughout the years after Spanish occupation, the Amerindian population continued to decline due to disease, battles with the Spanish, and enslavement for use as labor on other islands. During the seventeenth century there was a major hit to the Amerindian population with the numbers dropping

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[11]Lewis, *Ajoupa*, 4.
[12]Father Anthony De Verteuil, "Isle of Immigrants –Confrontation to Cooperation," in *Trinidad and Tobago 50 Years of Independence,* ed. Dr. Hamid Ghany, (London: First, 2012), 24.

from in the fifteen thousands to four thousand.[13] This drop in population correlated with the decision of

the Spanish government to cultivate the land in Trinidad, to provide produce to support the Spanish

Empire in the new world. They used the Amerindians as laborers on the plantations, and the harsh

conditions proved detrimental to this group. Parallel to this, the Spaniards enlarged the size of the

Catholic missions used to convert the island's Amerindians. These missionaries called *encomiendas* were

actually a brutal form of slavery. The Amerindians were forced to grow tobacco and plantain in exchange

for protection by the Spanish and conversion to Christianity.   Amerindians that rejected conversion were

severely punished.[14] This work system and severe punishment caused the deterioration of the

Amerindian population.

Meanwhile, Trinidad did not have much of an African slave population. In fact, the island was removed

from the transatlantic slave trade until the end of the eighteenth century due to an attack on Dutch ships

carrying slaves, which were docked in Trinidad's Port of Spain harbor.[15] The lack of African slave labor,

the decline of Amerindian numbers, and general lack of investment in the island resulted in little

development of the island under Spanish rule. In 1690, a French Naval commander in describing Port-

of-Spain, one of Trinidad's two towns at the time (and its capital city today), spoke of the town having a

small number of fisherman's huts, a small military post, and six houses with several others houses being

built.[16]   There were no grand Imperial buildings. The island and its architecture remained mostly

underdeveloped with few structures built in masonry. By the early seventeenth century the population

was still very small and regulated by a strict social hierarchy based on race with Europeans at the top,

mestizos (people of mixed European and Amerindian ethnicity) in the middle, and Amerindians and a

small group of Africans at the bottom.

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[13]. Kerrigan,"The Accumulation of Capital", 50.
[14] Ibid, 49.
[15] Kerrigan, "The Accumulation of Capital", 51.
[16] Ibid., 53.

The Cedula of 1783

The significant turning point for the island came at the end of the eighteenth century. At this time, Trinidad remained underdeveloped and without an established plantation economy. As a result of this precarious position, the Spanish government devised a strategic plan to attract wealthy planters. To encourage population and economic growth in Trinidad, the *Real Cedula* was introduced. The *Cedula* was a proclamation issued by the King of Spain from 1778 to 1790 that granted lands and favorable trading conditions to white Roman Catholics as well as free colored Catholics, who were citizens of nations that were at peace with Spain.[17] The planters were granted thirty acres of free land for each member of his family and a claim to fifteen acres more for every slave he possessed.[18] Free coloreds or free black settlers who were property-owners and slave-holders were entitled to half the amount granted to white planters. The majority of the new immigrants came from the French West Indian islands such as Grenada, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Haiti because only the French planters could fulfill the requirements of Roman Catholicism and alliance with Spain. These French planters were prepared to immigrate to Trinidad, with its promise of limitless extents of virgin soils because they were facing various hardships in their own islands. In the formerly French islands that were ceded to Britain, French planters were encountering severe social and political discrimination. In the French islands, especially Martinique, planters were struggling with problems such as exhausted soils and plagues of ants. These French planters were eager to migrate to Trinidad and, in a short time, the population of Trinidad increased and the island now had thriving estates. The immigration of the French marked a major shift in society in which hierarchy was no longer just determined by difference in race, but capital was now used as an important indicator of difference. This was the beginning of the establishment of a class system due to the accumulation of capital. This radical change in social structure would be the most resilient one that still has an impact on contemporary Trinidadian society.

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[17] Father Anthony De Verteuil, "Isle of Immigrants –Confrontation to Cooperation", 24.
[18] Kerrigan, "The Accumulation of Capital", 58

The French settlers that came to the Caribbean, unlike most of the other European settlers came to

establish permanent roots. Unlike their British or Spanish counterparts, they were not indentured

laborers, criminals or paupers but, instead, many were of noble background. Thus the French settlers

that came to Trinidad brought with them their French culture and ideas of aristocracy. Whether real or

fabricated, they coveted their family connections and propagated stories of their aristocratic descent.

They were a wealthy plantation and slave-owning group whose intense consciousness of their elite

position, their control of the slave labor, and their establishment of a rudimentary plantation economy

enabled them to dominate the new Trinidadian society. French culture became the marker of high

society: French food and drinks were consumed; French dress was worn at public balls; and French

dances and music were very popular.[19] Most importantly the French settlers- unlike the Spanish settlers-

brought with them a French creole architectural style.[20] French settlers, upon their arrival in the region,

imported their nation's architectural influences and adapted them to the Caribbean. Thus, by the time

these influences were brought to Trinidad it was a refined system that had an immediate effect on

Trinidad's built fabric.[21] Port of Spain's downtown became marked by buildings adorned with quoins,

dormer windows, fretwork and mansard roofs. Unlike the materials used in the Ajoupa architecture,

these settlers used both timber and masonry. Even though Trinidad was never French owned, the

French planters with their accumulated capital were at the top of the social hierarchy by the end of the

eighteenth century. As a result the French planters introduced the first large-scale European stamp on

the appearance of Trinidad.

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[19] Father Anthony De Verteuil "Isle of Immigrants –Confrontation to Cooperation", 24.
[20] Creole here refers to something or someone native to the Caribbean
[21]Lewis, *Ajoupa*, 69.

Figure 2: Overhead view of St. Vincent Street Port of Spain taken in the 19th century

This image illustrates the French style of building. Focal buildings in the photo possess mansard roofs, dormer windows and quoins.

Source: Besson, *A Photographic Album of Trinidad*, 51
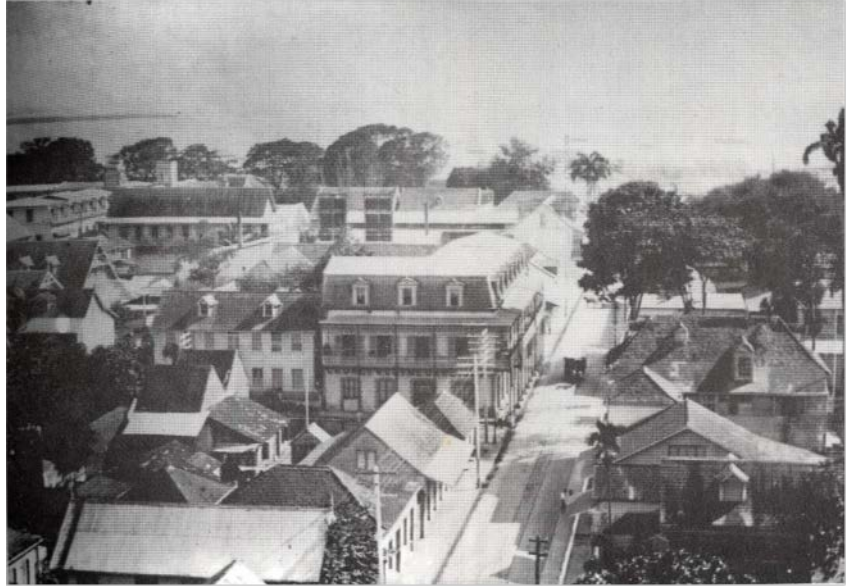
Figure 3: The port used by Spain taken in 1897

It was not until the late 18th century, after the Cedula, that commerce began to flourish and the port expanded

Source: Besson, *A Photographic Album of Trinidad*, 4

Figure 4: A view of the Plaza de la Marina of Port of Spain taken in 1888

This photo further illustrates the French stamp on Port of Spain.

Source: Besson, *A Photographic Album of Trinidad*, 3
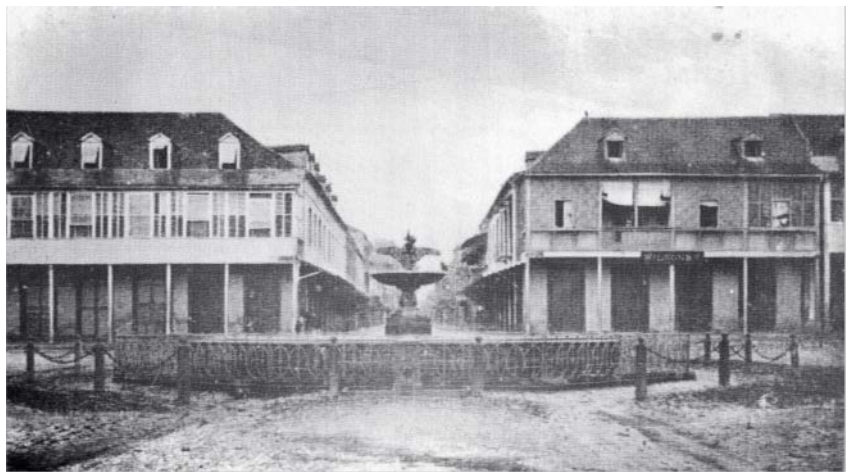
Development of a Complex Class Structure

Trinidad's economic and population growth attracted the attention of the British, and in 1797 Sir Ralph Abercromby, invaded Trinidad. The hostile takeover forced the Spanish Governor Don Jose Maria Chacon to cede Trinidad to Britain. In 1802, the island was formally handed over to the British. The transition from Spanish to British rule marked an evolutionary period for the established institution of social hierarchy.   Overwhelmingly, this was due to Trinidad's acquisition of new social groups.[22] After the British took over, they institutionalized the rudimentary plantation economy started by the French planters. Hence, the black population exploded with the importation of slaves from Africa and slaves from other Caribbean islands. In addition freed African-Americans emigrated in the mid-nineteenth century. Starting in 1806, indentured laborers were brought from China. However few actually worked on the plantation and most went into commerce thereby assimilating into the middle class.   By the late 1830's, poor whites from France, Portugal and Germany arrived seeking a better life in the burgeoning society.   Post-emancipation East Indian indentureship was employed starting in 1845. The system ended in 1917 but during the indentureship period there was a huge influx of Indians.

 Undeniably, the British system of social stratification was more complex than the Spanish system due to diversity in terms of ethnicity, capital and status. By the end of the nineteenth century, stratification was determined by national origin, culture, language, religion, class and race. Indentured Indians were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and mixed persons, coloreds and land-owning blacks were at the middle class.   It has been established that the emphasis on "difference" was an important part of the Colonial system. However what has yet to be discussed is how an ideology of "difference" could be clearly communicated by the colonizer across such a variety of ethnic groups with varying culture, language and economic status. Even though the class system in its early phase perpetuated difference based on

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[22] Kerrigan, "The Accumulation of Capital and the Shifting Construction of Difference",64.

ethnicity, the population had become too variegated and complex to use skin color alone as an indicator

of rank. To universally communicate the existence of this hierarchy, (an "us" as opposed to "them"),

across such a variegated composition of ethnic groups with different cultures, language and ways of

seeing the world, visual symbols would pose to be the most effective method to deliver the message of

class status.   Though dress and material possessions became important visual indicator of status,

architecture and more specifically the house was indubitably the strongest symbol of social standing.

European architecture became the marker of cultural supremacy.

However by the late nineteenth century in Trinidad there was no particular dominant European style.

Different styles emerging from the various European territories were equally employed, each referencing

the heritage of its commissioner. A direct transference of the architecture that existed in Europe, to the

Caribbean was not possible. Subject to the cultural influences of the milieu of disparate ethnic groups,

and a necessity to adapt to a now tropical climate, imported European styles had to transform in its new

setting.   Thus to accommodate the necessity to create a visual link to Europe, with the environmental

and cultural context of Trinidad, the architectural marker of supremacy became: a hybridized artifact

that most referenced European precedents among other different cultural influences; with size and

degree of ornamentation being two important characteristics of visual symbols.

Now that the necessary framework has been developed by discussing who came; why they came; the

influence they had on the development of a class system; and why the use of architecture as a means of

differentiation became not only desirable but necessary, I will begin the investigation of the persistence

of colonial ideologies, as they relate to class and identity, through the modern history of Trinidad.

Through the use of specific architectural examples, I will illustrate how the class system established

during Colonialism developed a drive for status among different social groups in Trinidad. It is this thirst

for status that still continues to shape the design of residential architecture in contemporary Trinidadian society, long after the eradication of the institution of Colonialism.

Chapter Two: Opulence in the Era of Cocoa

In the north-west of Port-of –Spain, around the Queen's park Savannah, are located some of the island's most magnificent and ostentatious mansions. These early twentieth-century houses are exemplars of the peak of aristocracy in Trinidad. Each mansion draws from European precedents, combining them in distinctly different ways to create an artifact that is an expression of the identity of its commissioner. The most unique of these houses, carrying the greatest signature of owner is the Boissière House. The Boissière House, like others of the grand mansions around the Savannah, is a physical manifestation of the social story of the fluctuating class position of French creole free coloreds in Trinidad, through changing political and economic climate, at the turn of the twentieth century.

Arrival of the French

Trinidad, in its early years under Spanish rule, remained underdeveloped because there was no established plantation economy and the population remained miniscule. The Spanish government introduced the 1783 *Cedula* of Population in an attempt to attract wealthy, white, French planters. Evidently, the *Cedula* was successful as an influx of white French planters arrived along with their slave labor.[23] The French immigrants, as the greatest land-owners and slave holders, had the largest accumulation of capital and rose above the Spaniards to the top of the social hierarchy. They remained the upper class despite British conquest in 1797. With British rule, new groups of whites migrated to Trinidad, such as British and Irish whites, but they could no longer rise to the top of society and join the aristocracy based solely on their skin color. To be a member of the aristocracy one had to be white, catholic, land-owning, of legitimate descent, preferably with an aristocratic family tradition and French creole in culture. English, Irish, Spanish and other whites with those criteria could, through marriage, be

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[23] Bridget Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1962* (London: Heinemann), 14.

assimilated into the aristocracy.[24] Members of the aristocracy in addition to being land owners became senior civil servants, or professionals in medicine, law and land surveying. Later, as the British became more involved in the sugar industry and gained their fortunes, they formed their own upper-class group.

Although the *Cedula* was important for the introduction of various European groups, it was arguably more revolutionary for the rights given to the free blacks and free coloreds. Articles four and five of the Cedula offered land grants and civil rights to free coloreds and free blacks that were planters and slave holders.[25] Concurrent to the issuing of this decree, free coloreds were being severely mistreated in the British and French territories of the Caribbean. In these islands, a system of apartheid was reaching its climax; free coloreds and blacks were subject to increasingly severe restrictions on economic activity, and humiliating regulations. No matter how educated or wealthy they were, the legislation enforced in the British and French territories ensured that free coloreds knew their place as inferior to whites. Considering the time period and social condition of free coloreds and free blacks in the other islands the peculiarity of this decree is undeniable. Not only did it promote the influx of free coloreds and blacks to Trinidad but it promised a better life of increased economic security and social status for this group. By 1797, the free colored and free black population in Trinidad totaled 4476; it had almost doubled the white population of 2151 members.[26]

In 1784, Don Jose Maria Chacon arrived in Trinidad to assume his place as the Spanish governor to the island. Chacon was described as being well-educated, enlightened, reform-minded, fluent in French and

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[24] Gerard Besson, *A Photographic Album of Trinidad at the Turn of the 19th Century* (Port of Spain: Paria, 1985), 50.
[25] Free coloreds and blacks were granted 15 acres of land for each member of his family and half as much for each slave he introduced. This land allotment was half the amount of that offered to white planters. (Brereton 1981, 13)
[26] By 1797, 2151 whites migrated to Trinidad as compared to the 4476 free colored and blacks. (Brereton 1981, 16)

English and sympathetic to French immigrants.[27] Spanish colonies were already known for having a

milder position towards harsh laws against free coloreds, but Chacon was even more liberal in his

treatment. Chacon chose to ignore laws crafted against the coloreds and spared them from any public

humiliation or marginalization. He also appointed free coloreds and free black land-owners to officers'

commissions in the militia. These milder conditions offered to free blacks and coloreds were powerful

because of the psychological effect it had on this group, especially with regard to the free coloreds. The

free coloreds were a social group in which the members, despite the fact that they were theoretically

deemed as free; had white lineage; and aligned themselves with white European culture, were still

considered as lesser beings by the larger society because of their African lineage. As such, they were

accustomed to being dominated and dehumanized with no apparent escape from the situation. Neither

education nor accumulation of assets could alter the opinion of white planters in British and French

colonies of where free coloreds belonged in the social hierarchy. Suddenly, after relocating to Trinidad

they were immersed in a social climate where they were granted rights and treated with courtesy and

dignity. In this new society, they could gain social standing if they were prosperous. This improved

condition was symbolically important to the free coloreds; they now formed a powerful upper-middle

with promise of rising even higher in society.

The spokesmen for the free colored community regarded the actions of Chacon as tangible proof that

their community enjoyed equal rights with whites in this new society.[28] Jean- Baptiste Philip, a free

colored doctor and activist in the 1820's, in writing about the situation of free coloreds under Spanish

rule in Trinidad stated, "The coloreds of Trinidad have always possessed grounds for pretensions, to

which no other colored colonists could aspire. During the whole period of Spanish administration, they

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[27] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 15
[28] Ibid, 24.

were as impartially treated as the whites…"[29] Even though in reality coloreds could never be

considered on equal footing, and treated the same as whites, the statement shows that the free

coloreds felt symbolically equal. In Trinidad during Spanish rule, free colored land-owners enjoyed a

more secure legal and social status, undeniably leading to a greater sense of empowerment and social

mobility that would resonate with this group into the future and continue to inspire entrepreneurship,

not only within the exclusive community of the free coloreds but also the black community of Trinidad.

The Oppression of French, Free Coloreds

With the change in Trinidad's political climate, the French colored planters were not as fortunate as the

white French planters in maintaining their rank in society, and met a sordid fate. After the capture of

Trinidad by the British, the privileged position the free coloreds enjoyed under Chacon soon dissipated.

Sir Ralph Abercromby captured Trinidad for Britain in 1797. Before leaving Trinidad to return to Britain,

he named Thomas Picton, an officer on his staff, the military governor and commander-in-chief of the

island. Abusing his power, Picton was given free reign over Trinidad to instate a regime of tyranny and

terror. The worst treatment was inflicted on the slaves and the free coloreds. Picton perpetuated the

stereotype that the French free coloreds were dangerous revolutionaries and used this to justify his

atrocities against them. He referred to them as, "A dangerous class which must gradually be got rid

of."[30] Picton practiced the worst prejudices against free coloreds subjecting them to legal discrimination

as well as social humiliation. He tortured, imprisoned and executed coloreds without reason or trial.

However, Picton's actions were deemed harsh even by nineteenth -century, British Imperial standards

and soon became the subject of British indictment.

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[29] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 24-25.
[30] Ibid, 37.

 William Fullerton, a commissioner sent to Trinidad by the British government to investigate Picton, was

shocked by the treatment of slaves and free coloreds. As a result, he launched a campaign against

Picton. Fullerton lobbied for a fair judicial process when prosecuting slaves and free coloreds, but he

was seen by the white elite as liberal and undermining the established system of order. Whites now

aligned with Picton's regime feared that if they gave coloreds even the most minimal rights it would

thwart the structure of racial supremacy. A French white planter summed up the feelings of the general

white population towards Fullerton's compassion for coloreds when he complained that Fullerton's

actions would, "Undermine the basis of the colonial system of Government in a country where the

Colored People are numerous and the least relaxation of subordination would produce the most serious

consequences."[31] The whole tone of the colony had changed in terms of how the free colored

community was treated. All coloreds- no matter their rank or education -were treated with contempt,

causing a crippling blow to the entire group. Gone were the days of empowerment where they could

feel like they had the ability to climb the ranks to be seen as a meaningful, respectable class in society.

This reprehensible and oppressive situation would not change until the post-emancipation period.

The Renaissance of the French Free Coloreds

The momentous end of the slave system in Trinidad also marked an important milestone for the island:

the beginning of a formal economy for Trinidad. Two events marked this formal economy: the

establishment of paid labor and the Colonial Bank. Many blacks invested their newly acquired in the

new agricultural economy: the cocoa economy that was being developed parallel to the sugar economy.

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[31] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 40.

A sugar economy was virtually non-existent in Trinidad under the Spanish rule. The French introduced the industry, but it did not really flourish until the arrival of the British.   The sugarcane economy remained an exclusive, rich, British, white man's market. The sugarcane estates that were established by the French colored planters before British capitalization of the market gradually died out as British planters bought them. The cocoa industry, however, was not on the radar of British colonialist and thus provided an opportunity for investment to both white and colored French Creoles. There French coloreds used the cocoa economy to form an aristocratic upper middle-class after their years of subjugation.

Undoubtedly, the quality of Trinidad's cocoa is one of the richest found in the world and contributed to the economic development of the nation. There had always been small cocoa farmers in Trinidad, usually of French or Spanish descent, but before the 1860s, they did not have a substantial market for the cocoa in either Spain or Britain.   As a result, there was no formal cocoa economy in the island. In the 1860's, there were technological advances in cocoa processing, causing the drink to become an item of mass consumption in Europe and the USA. Then in 1866 Cadbury began producing eating chocolate in Britain.[32] This tremendous expansion in the British market led to a boom in cocoa production in Trinidad. Additionally, the extension of roads, building of railways, and the opening up of undeveloped Crown lands for sale also helped boost cocoa production. A depression in the sugar industry after 1884 allowed the release of labor, capital, and land that could be used towards the production of cocoa. Hence, the cocoa industry enjoyed a significant boom period from 1866-1920 thereby surpassing sugar as the island's leading export.

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[32] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad* , 91.

The trickle down structure of the cocoa industry provided opportunities for various different social groups.   Though the industry was controlled at the top by French creole whites and coloreds, the Trinidad cocoa industry was pioneered and developed by peasants. At the time of emancipation there were millions of acres of Crown lands that were uncultivated or under-cultivated, and this land was used to develop the cocoa industry. There were two ways in which these cocoa estates were established. The first method for the establishment of a cocoa plantation entailed a peasant, usually an ex-slave, buying a small portion of these Crown land with his labor wages. The peasant then cleared the land and planted cocoa trees on it. After the trees began to bear, the peasant sold the bearing trees and the land to a cocoa planter, usually a French creole, who then turned the already producing land into a large estate. The peasants then used the proceeds to buy another area of land and repeated the process.[33] The second method was a contract system. A French creole, with more disposable capital than the typical peasant farmer, bought a large block of Crown lands, cleared it, and entered into an agreement with different contractors whereby each contractor was given three and a fifth acres to plant cocoa on. When the trees were bearing, the capitalist reclaimed the land and paid the contractor an agreed sum for each tree. This method was beneficial for both parties. The capitalist was able to build up an estate cheaply and easily and the contractor could gain wages without an initial output. As a result of their privileged status as plantation owners, the merchants and distributors of cocoa, the French creoles dominated the plantation as well as the commercial side of the cocoa industry.

The rise of the Cocoa industry was inextricably connected to the economic Renaissance of the colored French creoles. With the abolition of slavery and growing acknowledgement of civil rights around the

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[33] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad* , 91-93.

world, the colored creoles were no longer prepared to accept the oppression of the past. After years

of domination and marginalization, the colored French creoles had the economic and socio-political

opportunity to climb their way back up the social ladder and they were determined to obtain and

maintain an elevated position. With their capital gained from the cocoa industry, and their recovered or

newly gained social status, coloreds enjoyed a renewed period of prosperity, and they began living lavish

lifestyles that were a testimony to their wealth. With this regained affluence, after years of prosecution,

coloreds needed to affirm their status in society. Consequentially, they invested in the asset that was

most representative of their identity and would reach the greatest audience: their houses.

 Pre-cocoa, boom the houses of the elite -though large in scale- were simple in design. They possessed

European features such as the mansard roof, dormer windows and loggias but lacked ornament or any

distinguishing features. However, the emergence of this new elite group of cocoa planters and

merchants brought a profound and long-lasting change to the residential fabric. They visually declared

themselves as a new elite group in this complexly stratified society. With their newly acquired capital,

they built mansions of a level of extravagance that had never before graced the island. French creole

colored planters and merchants now had the capital to live the life of a French aristocrat with "all the

pretensions of a count."[34] In the country, they built lavish estate houses such as the La Chance estate

built in 1880 by Gaston de Gannes, one of the pioneers of the rebirth of the cocoa industry in the

1860's. At two stories, La Chance was a timber affair equipped with a marble stair entrance and porte-

cochère.[35] However, the truly extravagant display of the cocoa planters and merchants were their town

houses constructed around the Queen's Park Savannah, in Port of Spain.

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[34] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 93.
[35] Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa*, 131

What the Nouveau Bourgeoisie Built

Concurrent to the events occurring in Trinidad, private homes in nineteenth-century France began to manifest the idea that architecture was not only a medium for collective expression of social status and function but a true artistic expression. The nineteenth- century French suburban villas exemplified this school of thought because they were less restrictive than their urban counterparts. Villas were not constrained by strict urban regulations such as: lot size, massing, ceiling heights or building projections. This left the architect's imaginations uninhibited, and they could draw upon a repertoire of styles to realize their dreams. As a result, Neoclassical, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Renaissance and vernacular elements were combined together to create a unique architectural language in these French seaside villas. These villas were the works of newly wealthy tradesmen that were both a sign of their economic success as well as a unique, imaginative, projection of the individuality of the owner. Together, these houses formed communities that were cohesive, yet simultaneously varied.[36] A similar phenomenon resulted in Trinidad as the nouveau bourgeois class tried to showcase their acquired wealth according to their own unique identity. This resulted in the emergence of disparate mansions drawing from a variety of styles, that when juxtaposed, formed an eccentric yet cohesive picture.

  Trinidad had the perfect socio-cultural environment by the mid-nineteenth century for this eclecticism. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Trinidad was populated with Creoles; local-borns descending

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[36] Bertrand Lemoine, *Architecture in France 1800-1900,*trans. Alexandra Bonfante-Warren (New York: Abrams, 1998), 36-41.

Figure 5: La Chance Estate: One of the elaborate plantation houses of the late 19th century.

Source: Gerard Besson, "Our Built Heritage," last modified Feb 16, 2008,
http://caribbeanhistoryarchives.blogspot.com/2008/02/our-built-heritage.html.

Figure 6: Eclectic late nineteenth- century French Villas:
 From left to right is : A villa in Forges-les-Eaux, Villa Belza in Biarritz,1985, Les Dunes in Chatelallon-Plage and La Tunisienne in Hyeres.

Source: Bertrand Lemoine, *Architecture in France 1800-1900,*trans. Alexandra Bonfante-Warren (New York: Abrams, 1998), 36-41.

from immigrants of Venezuela, Scotland, England, Ireland, France, Spain, parts of Africa and many other

countries. With this mélange of ethnicities, Trinidadians found their new home:

> A place conducive to a diversity of culture and expression. Indeed, the arts in Trinidad including
> its architecture, confirm a propensity toward the bringing together of numerous influences. It is
> a collagist expression bringing together multiple parts, reconciled in a cohesive "whole". This is
> the nature of its people and the inclination of its artistic production. (Cazabon 2011, 12)

It is from this collagist culture that the mansions around the 'Grand Savannah' were born.

'Trinidad's Grand Savannah' or 'The Queen's Park Savannah', as it is now called, has been a hub of

cultural activity since about 1828. The approximately 260 acres of formerly agriculture land was sold to

the *Cabildo*, the colony's governing body, in 1817 by the Peschier family. For many years, the site

remained the grazing ground of cattle for the citizens of Port-of-Spain. However, by 1828 the Grand

Savannah hosted of horse races and brought an equestrian nature to the city. In 1854, the Grand Stand

was erected and, in addition to the annually held horse races, it hosted local as well as inter-colonial

cricket, polo, football, hockey and other sports. It also provided residents of the town with their first

golf course. In addition to sports activities, the Savannah was also the home of leisure activities in the

city: in 1899 a man parachuted into the Savannah, and another man, John Denier, walked on a tightrope

stretched from the Prince's building across to the Savannah. In 1902, there was even an electric

tramway that started pleasure rides around the inside railings of the Savannah for two cents.[37] On

Sunday afternoons, riding around the Savannah while the police music band played in front of the

Governor's residence, became exceptionally popular. The Grand Savannah was the veritable playground

for ladies and gentlemen and the place to be seen. Thus, it became the perfect location to site a grand

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[37] Gerard Besson, "The Queen's Park Savannah," last modified August 23, 2011,
http://caribbeanhistoryarchives.blogspot.com/2011/08/queens-park-savannah.html.

mansion that proclaimed an individuals' success to the world. The land around the Grand Savannah was

coveted because it was a relief in the densely growing city. The elite clamored to a bedroom window

that would overlook the socially active park and have their houses cooled by its cherished, Savannah

breezes. It is then of no surprise that by the turn of the twentieth century, some of the islands most

successful cocoa planters and merchants built their magnificent residences along the Western side of

the Savannah.
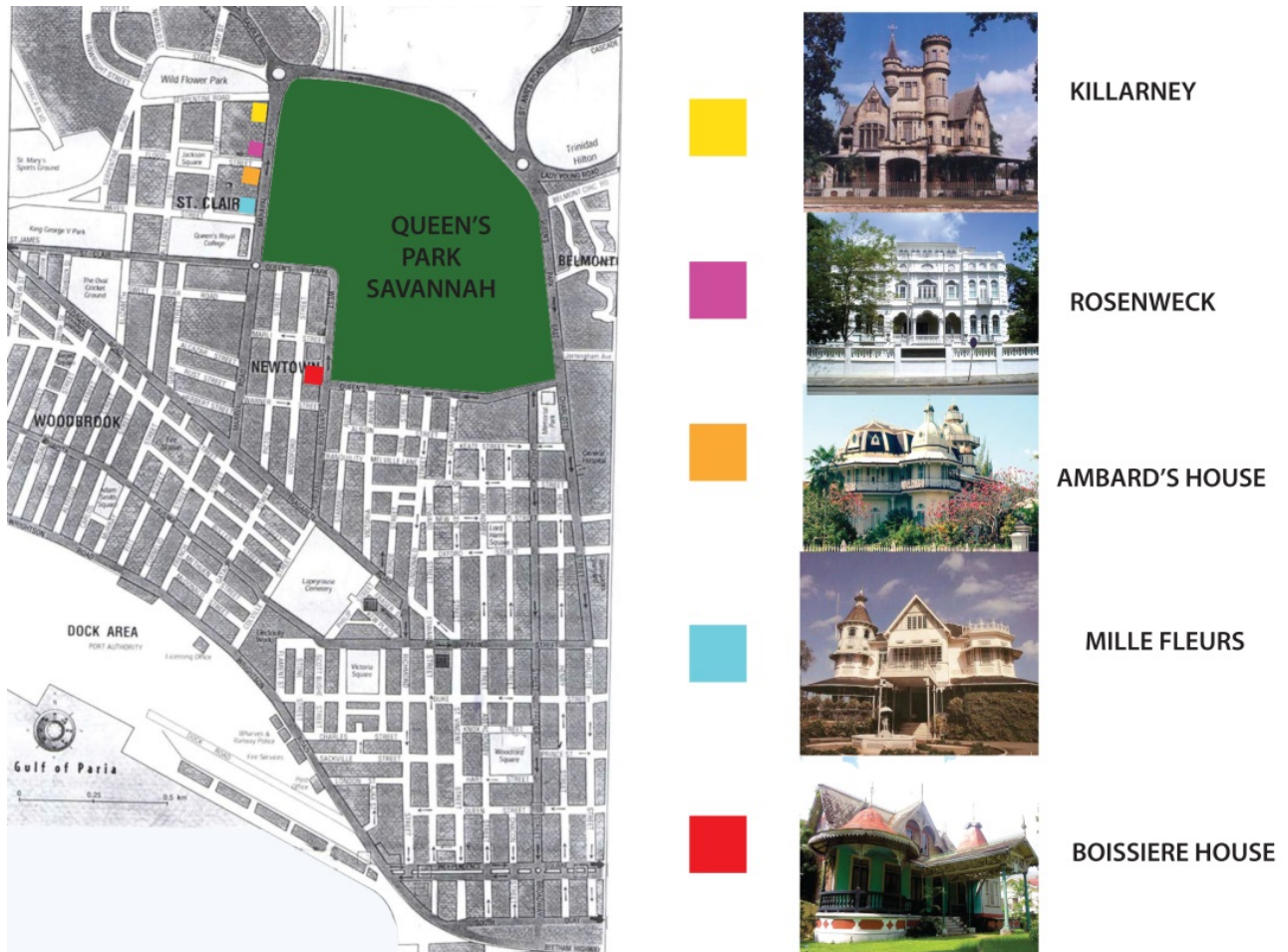
Figure 7: Map of Port of Spain showing the location of mansion of the elite along the Savannah

Source: Composition by author.
 Pictures used - Geoffrey Maclean, "Residential," last modified Nov 15, 2011,
 http://citizensforconservationtt.org/main/index.php/builtherit/bhresidential.

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By 1904 the land to the West of the Savannah along Maraval road was decorated by a series of mansions of randomly assorted European styles. To design these luxurious homes, architects looked to European precedence (mainly British and French but Italian, Dutch and Moorish architecture also influenced design) and married it with indigenous peasant building.   Each house had its own distinct style that strove to out-stage its grand neighbor. Killarney, or Stollmeyer's Castle, commissioned by Charles Fourier Stollmeyer, was the first house to be built bordering the Savannah. Designed in 1904 by a Scottish architect, Robert Gillies, this turreted residence, reminiscent of the German Romantic style, was fashioned after a wing of the Balmoral Castle built by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1856 in the Highlands of Scotland.[38] The design employed elements such as a tower and a diagonal wing projecting from the corner of the house with a steep roof and a crowstep gable. It was constructed using a combination of imported, pale- yellow brick and blue-gray dressed stone.   Modeled after true royalty, this mansion set the prestige bar for all houses to follow.

 In 1904, Joseph Leon Agostini built the Rosenweck house (known as Whitehall today) of white coral limestone from Barbados. Agostini made his fortune as a cocoa planter and built the largest private residence on the Maraval road in the Port-of-Spain area. He designed the house himself in a style reminiscent of the Moorish Mediterranean architecture of Corsica, a French island in the Mediterranean Sea from which the Agostini family originated.[39] The basic shape of the house was rectangular, with the occasional slight projections and horizontal accents. Unlike most of the surrounding houses, the roof was not exaggerated but instead concealed by a balustrade. The front elevation was accented with engaged columns and ornate windows with trefoil-arches.

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[38]Gerald G. Watterson, *This Old House: A Collection of drawings of Trinidadian Homes*, (Port of Spain: Paria, 1992), 41.
[39] Watterson, *This Old House,* 37.

Figure 8: Killarney (left) and Balmoral Castle (right)
Killarney was designed in 1904 and the first of the mansions around the Grand Savannah. Balmoral Castle in Scotland was the inspiration for Killarney.
Source : Geofferey Maclean, "Residential," last modified Nov 15, 2011,
http://citizensforconservationtt.org/main/index.php/builtherit/bhresidential
http://catswhiskerstours.com/2009/06/balmoral-castlescottish-highlands/html.

Figure 9: Rosenweck (left) and La Tunisienne (right).

La Tunisienne, was a villa in Hyeres (a seaside French town) influenced by Moorish architecture. Architectural works like La Tunisienne influenced Rosenweck.
Source: Geoffrey Maclean, "Residential," last modified Nov 15, 2011,
http://citizensforconservationtt.org/main/index.php/builtherit/bhresidential
Bertrand Lemoine, Architecture in France 1800-1900,trans. Alexandra Bonfante-Warren (New York: Abrams, 1998), 36-41.

The Ambard's house (or Roomor as it is now called) was designed in 1904 by a French architect for Lucien F. Ambard, a rich merchant.[40] The flamboyant house was inspired by the French Baroque style with most of the materials imported. The marble and the cast iron were imported from Italy and Scotland respectively.   A continuous balcony with an ornate cast-iron railing, which projected from the second floor, decorated the exterior. As the most outstanding feature, the roof erupted into a series of towers, domes, pediments, dormers and crestings.

In 1904 Mrs. Prada commissioned 'Mille Fleurs' as a gift for her husband, Dr. Enrique Prada.[41] The house was designed by local architect George Brown under the guidance of Dr. Prada who took a special interest in the design. The house, designed like an English country house, was very conservative compared to its neighbors. Though Mille Fleurs was less ostentatious than its neighbors, the quality of its detailing was far higher allowing it to still be a rival showpiece with its intricately carved balustrades, marble staircase and elaborate cast-iron columns.

The Boissière House

This agglomeration of ornate Euro-inspired mansions along Maraval road was certainly a grand affair and it was here, in 1904 that colored cocoa merchant Charles E.H. Boissière decided to commission his statement piece: the Boissière House.[42] Charles Boissière descended from an African slave and a rich French Creole planter who settled in Trinidad in the late eighteenth century. After acquiring wealth in the cocoa industry, C.E.H. Boissière traveled to England in the 1890's and saw the Grand Exposition in

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[40] Watterson, *This Old House*, 57.
[41] Ibid, 67.
[42] Ibid, 61.

Figure 10: Ambard's House (left) and The Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte (right).
The Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte is a baroque French chateau located in Maincy, French. Architectural works like this influence Ambard's house.

Source : Geofferey Maclean, "Residential," last modified Nov 15, 2011, http://citizensforconservationtt.org/main/index.php/builtherit/bhresidential

http://www.senepartclan.be/reizen.html.
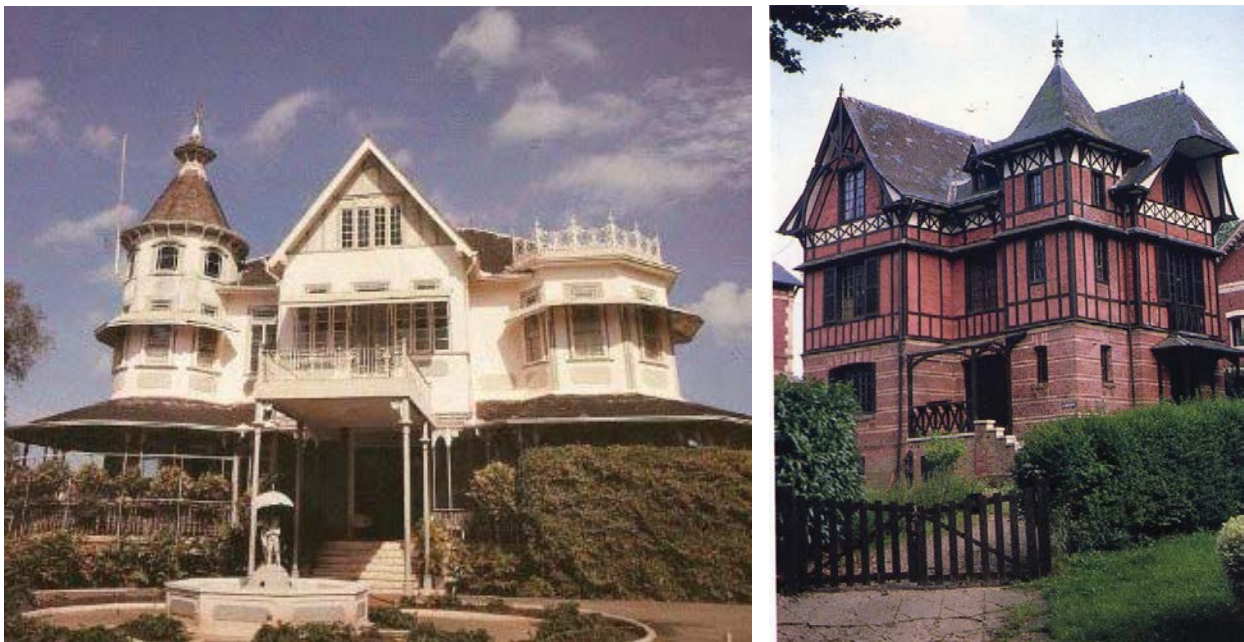
Figure11: Milles Fleurs (left) and A villa in Forges-les-Eaux (right).

The villa in Forges-les-Eaux, is designed in the French country house style that influenced Mille Fleurs

Source: Geofferey Maclean, "Residential," last modified Nov 15, 2011, http://citizensforconservationtt.org/main/index.php/builtherit/bhresidential
Bertrand Lemoine, Architecture in France 1800-1900,trans. Alexandra Bonfante-Warren (New York: Abrams, 1998), 36-41.

Britain. One of the features of the exhibition was the fashionable *Chinoiserie* artwork.[43] *Chinoiserie* is a

French term signifying "Chinese-esque," and it referred to the Chinese influence on European art and

architectural designs at the time. C.E.H Boissière saw the Chinoiserie exhibition and recorded what he

saw in drawings and returned to Trinidad with this inspiration. Along with his friend, the builder,

Edward Bowen, he designed the Boissière house that was to be a surprise for his wife, Alice.[44] As a

summary of his life, this house was an opportunity for C.E.H Boissière to relate his personal history,

aspirations, local roots and travel abroad.

The house at No. 12 Queen's Park West, located at the southwest corner of the Savannah in New-Town

Port-of-Spain was modern for its time. Like other homes of the 1900s, the Boissière House had intricate

fretwork, steep gables, complex roof forms with slate roofing, a central veranda and cast iron fencing.

However, the Boissière House combined these elements in a more picturesque and playful way than the

others. It was built using a technique called nogging, whereby a timber-studded frame was built, then

in-filled with lime-cement and rubble, and finished off with a lime plaster. On the side facades of the

house, the plasterwork was textured with aggregate and fashioned to resemble natural, cave-like, stone

textures. Courses were scratched in to the plasterwork to imitate a historical and authentic look. This

façade treatment that imitated stone was not simply a fashionable addition. By imitating a more

exclusive and expensive material counterpart, the status of the concrete- and its owner- became

elevated. On the front façade, the concrete plaster was not altered to imitate stone but is instead left

smooth and painted in colors that were meant to catch the eye and give a magical appeal to the house.

The basic form of the house was a rectangle with the street façade along one of the shorter sides of the

rectangle. From the street façade, a study projected on the right side and a rotunda on the left side.

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[43] Gerard Besson, interview with author, 4 Jan. 2013.
[44] Ibid.

Figure 12: The Boissière House
Source: Photo taken by the author, Jan 2010

Figure 13: Side façade of the Boissière House: In this photo some of the plasterwork is removed to show the use of nogging below
Source: Photo taken by the author, Jan 2010
Source: Photo taken by the author, Jan 2010
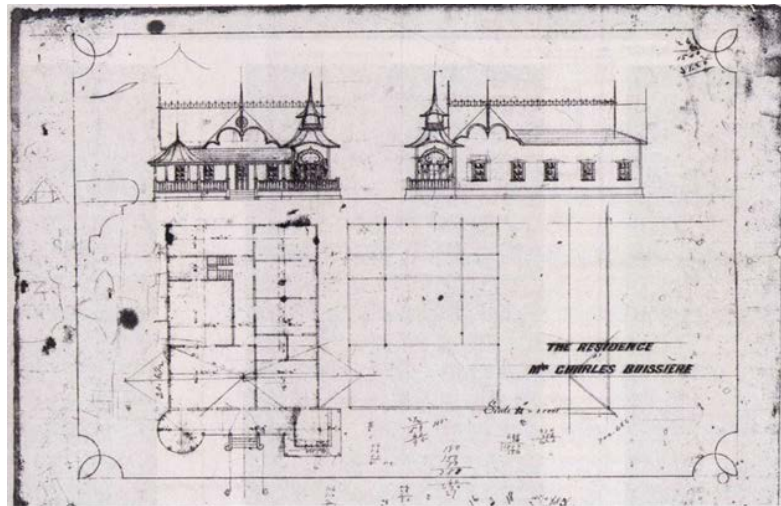
Figure 14: The original drawings of the Boissière House
Source: Yvan-pièr, Cazabon and André Ottley, *A Tale of Two Houses Vol. 1: An Historical Record of the Boissière and Piccadilly House* (Lulu.com. 2011), 16.

LEGEND

1 Veranda
2 Rotunda
3 Rear Porch
4 Study
5 Living Room
6 Dining Room
7 Bedroom
8 Bathroom
9 Front steps and porte-cochère
10 Main Stair
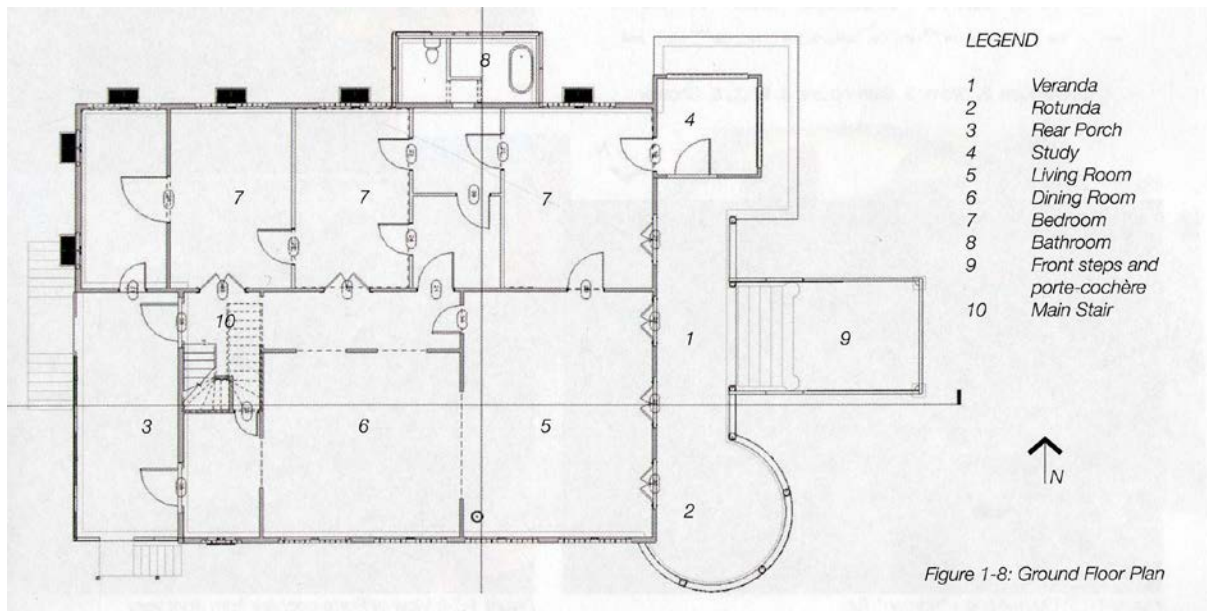
Figure 1-8: Ground Floor Plan

Figure 15: The plan of the Boissière House
Source: Yvan-pièr, Cazabon and André Ottley, *A Tale of Two Houses Vol. 1: An Historical Record of the Boissière and Piccadilly House* (Lulu.com.,2011), 18.

The Rotunda | The Dormer Window | The Study
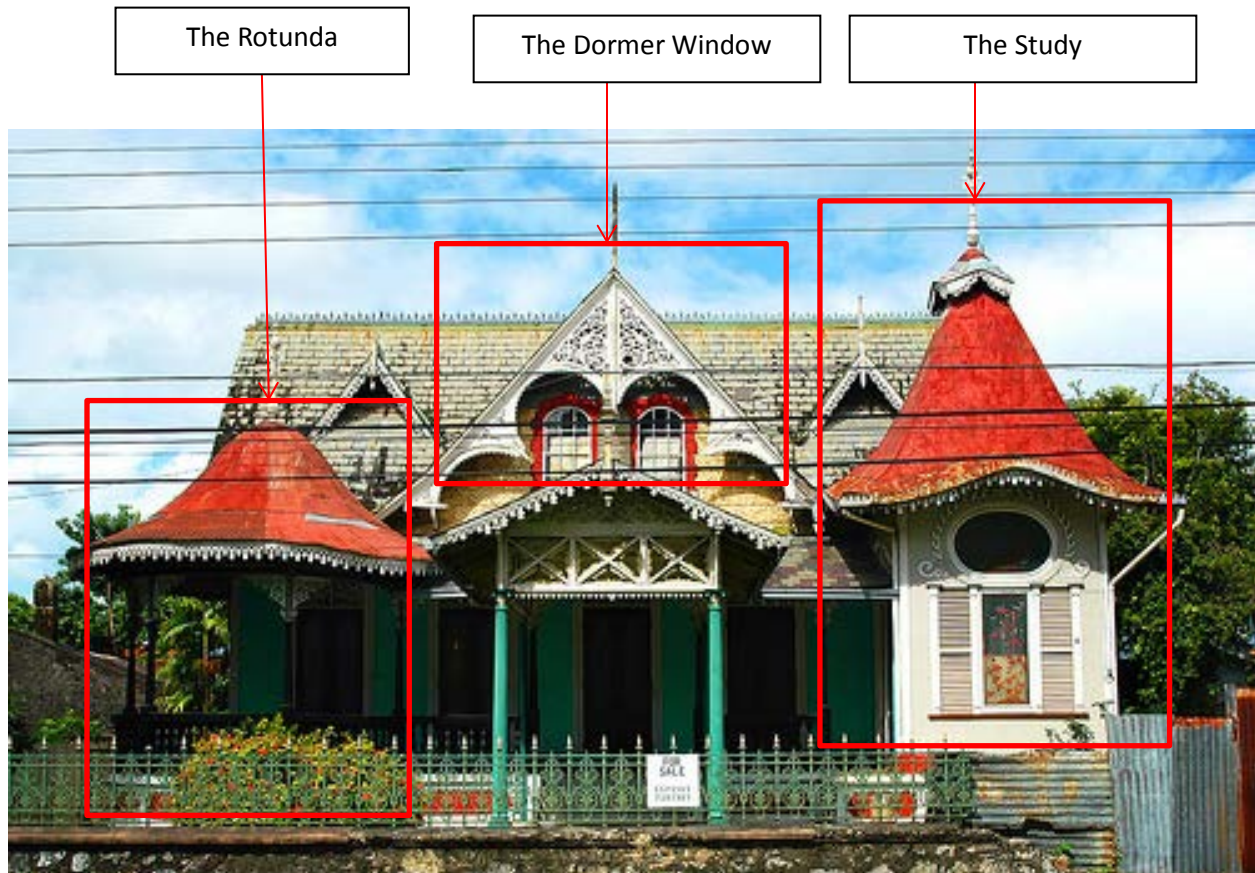
Figure 16: Front view of the Boissière House
Source: Geofferey Maclean, "Residential," last modified Nov 15, 2011,
http://citizensforconservationtt.org/main/index.php/builtherit/bhresidential

Between the rotunda and the protruding study was a porte-cochère.   Above the porte-cochère loomed an exaggerated gabled dormer-window, which took on a life of its own as one of the most defined components of this exterior image. These projecting volumes of varying shape, height and size brought great depth to the façade, giving it a sense of animation. All these features were meant to draw an audience for admiration, for like a king that puts his body on display for the reverence of his subjects, the true essence of power is held in the acknowledgement by others of one's greatness.

The main roof that capped the house was a steeply pitched gable form with wooden ridges running east to west covered with green slate. The steep pitch of the roof accommodated an additional floor. Cast-iron decorative crestings were used to cap the ridge of the roof.   Intersecting the main roof was a large dormer window whose rafters run north to south, perpendicular to the main roof. The large dormer window was flanked by smaller, non-functional, gabled roof projections on each side that added visual interest to the roof. The large dormer gable was decorated with fretwork; a decorative feature formed from intricately carving wood, using a jigsaw, to form a lacy pattern. The smaller dormer windows were also capped by this lacy wood-work. The fretwork was not only a decorative motif but had practical functions; it served as a filter to harsh sunlight allowing a cooler interior with a soft glow. The fretwork also created a magical lighting effect at night as it diffused the light of the lantern on the interior, creating a visual experience of twinkling lights on the exterior. The use of this fretwork was meant to directly reference a European heritage as it was popularized in Europe during the Victorian era and could be seen in works such as 'Les Dunes', a villa in Chatelallon-Plage, France.[45]

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[45] Lemoine, *Architecture in France 1800-1900,* 36.

Beneath the larger dormer was a porte-cochère; a feature of many late eighteenth and nineteenth-century European mansions. The fourteen foot wide porte-cochère had a functional aspect to protect one from the elements as one disembarked from a carriage ride and proceeded to enter the house. The porte-cochère was a symbol of class, implying the need for protection of the prestigious from the elements, a luxury that was not afforded to the servants. In the Boissière House the porte-cochère was reinterpreted to give it a lighter and daintier effect than those of traditional European houses. Heavy columns were replaced by thin fluted cast-iron posts. What would have been a dense architrave was instead a series of intricately carved, thin wood panels. The rafters that made-up the roof of the porte-cochère were exposed on the underside, and again, the rafters were capped by decorative wooden fretwork. All the features together contributed to a light and airy feel.

Despite the light and airy feeling of the porte-cochère, the house was evidently conceived of as permanent. The house was raised off the ground on a platform of continuously poured concrete. Uniquely, the concrete platform indicated permanence. During this time, most of the land was owned by the Crown Colony. With the uncertainty of the time period of which they would have possession of the land, a resident would build their house supported off the ground on concrete blocks. The house did not touch the land and, subsequently, could be transported off the land as necessary. The use of a concrete foundation, with its implications of longevity, meant that one owned one's land, and, by extension, it indicated that one had a certain economic level to afford the land. Therefore, the concrete base of the Boissière House was a status symbol. This message was further reinforced by the exaggeration of the depth of the base and the red decorative detailing placed against a white backdrop. The meticulous detailing of the base attracted attention and alerted the viewer that the ornate jewel which was the Boissière House, was a permanent fixture in its landscape.

Figure 17: Porte-cochère in a European context
Source:http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/471059/porte-cochere

Frieze
Architrave
Columns

Porte-cochère in a Trinidadian context
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

Reinterpreted frieze

Thin fluted cast-iron columns

Decorative detailing on base

Figure 18: Base of the Boissière House
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

Figure 19: Veranda with geometric floor tiles
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

Figure 20: Main entry door with Art Nouveau detailing
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

Figure 21: Study door with Chinoiserie artwork
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

The veranda was placed at the front of the house, reflecting Trinidad's Spanish and French heritage. The French and the Spanish had a preference for verandas located in the front, facing the street because of their preference for public interaction. The stairs leading up to the veranda were made of large single slabs of marble imported from Italy. The floor was decorated with multi-colored, ceramic, tiles from England with an ornate, geometric pattern. The importation of fine, foreign materials from Europe was yet another way to set oneself apart from the average person. For covering the veranda, a shed roof supported by thin cast-iron columns, was used. These columns were topped with decorative, floral, fretwork capitals, made of wood, which were a reinterpretation of Classical language. The veranda and the rotunda located at its west side were enclosed by a concrete balustrade, painted black, of Classical influence. The rotunda and the projecting study were capped with pagoda like roofs of sheet metal inspired by the *Chinoiserie* exhibits C.E.H Boissière visited to in Europe. The apex of the roof was covered with a cast-iron finial reminiscent of art-nouveau finials. Overlapping the oversized dormer, these unique pagoda-like rooflines, flanked by mini gables, all back-dropped by the main east-west running gable, came together to create a complex and dynamic roof silhouette.

The doors and windows of the Boissière house presented another opportunity to add more decorative flare. At the front of the house there were four sets of double doors each of same height and width (9'6"x4'). Each door had an inset, arched, frosted, glass panel engraved with art-nouveau inspired, decorative floral patterns. Around the doors were six inch wide wooden moldings painted white to stand out against the natural wood palette of the doors. Above the doors were ventilation panels called 'fanlights' constructed with intricately carved wooden panels. There was a single, side-door that led to the protruding study. Inset in this side door was a stained-glass panel painted with a floral motif also inspired by *Chinoiserie* artwork.

The typical windows of the house were central double hung windows with frosted glass in a wooden sash. The glass was surrounded on both sides by jalousies (louvers). The glass and the jalousies were separated by wooden trim, painted red and fashioned to look like stone coursing. Below the sill was a wooden molding painted white. The window of the over-sized dormer was an inversed composition of the typical window of the house. In this window, the arched louvered panel was placed in the center, with arched glass window panels at its sides. Again, the wood trimming was painted red and imitated stone coursing.

On the front elevation, the study also had two signature windows. The first window, like the others, consisted of three vertical sections: a central stained glass panel with a similar Chinese inspired, floral motif, painted on it to match the motif on the door, and louvered panels on either side. The vertical panels were separated by wooden moldings painted white and carved to look like engaged pilasters. Above this window was an oval shaped window of stained glass also decorated with a floral motif. The window was framed by a white molding above which were offset wooden, decorative eye-lash details. The curve of the eave of the pagoda-like roof that capped the study, framed the oval window. The pagoda roof of the study and the oval window provided an interesting visual juxtaposition. The eave of the roof resembled the brim of a hat, and this metaphor was reinforced by the eyelash detailing added to the top of the oval window connoting an eye, that gave an anthropomorphous quality to the protruding study volume. The hat was another status reinforcing symbol of the era. Diana Crane, discusses the theory that until the 1960s, hats were the most important article of clothing for indicating social distinction among men in Europe and North America.[46] According to Crane, hats were less expensive than other clothing articles of distinction so it provided the ideal opportunity for visually blurring traditional class boundaries. Certain hats became associated with specific social strata, thereby

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[46] Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing,* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 82-87.

Figure 22: Typical windows
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

Louvers

Wooden trim fashioned to imitate stone coursing

Wooden molding painted white to imitate stone

Figure 23: Window of the study
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

Eyelash detailing

Engaged pilaster

Chinoiserie artwork

Figure 24: The dormer window
Source: Photo Taken by author, Jan 2013

fretwork
jalousie

Wood fashioned to imitate stone coursing

making hats an important marker of class boundaries. This meant, according to Crane, that men could use hats to claim and maintain social status. The steep pagoda-like roof of the study with its hat- like image functioned in a similar way to the hat worn by men of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is a timeless indicator of class and distinction that sat on the head of the study volume.

At the front of the property was a short fence that allowed visual connectivity from the veranda to the Savannah. However, it demarcated boundary, acting as a physical and visual division between the interior elite and exterior "others." The fence was a stone-faced, three feet high wall that was two feet wide, the top of which has a beveled edge. Running the length of the wall, above the layer of stone, was a layer of ornate cast iron work approximately three feet high. The iron-work was light and transparent and contrasted with the heavy, solid stone wall. At the end of the fence were, two, six feet high plastered piers, topped with capitals that served to support the grand double cast iron gates.[47]

On examining all the disparate features of the exterior of this house, it becomes evident that this playful collage-like work cannot be tied to any specific style. There were references to the growing movements in Europe that represented renewed appreciation for the decorative arts. Two of the most influential were Arts and Crafts in Great Britain and Art Nouveau in France. The Arts and Crafts movement combined finely crafted simple forms with applied decorative details. Art Nouveau deviated from the Classical idea of ornament as an applied component. Instead, the style embedded a nature-inspired ornament within the limits of the structure so that it became an essential part of the design. There were also references to High Victorian and Oriental precedents in the Boissière House. This house is truly

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[47] The fence was removed for preservation and is temporarily replaced with corrugated metal, hinged panels. Thus the gate was not available for documentation. It is however mentioned in the research of the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism of Carleton University, Ottawa Canada.

described as elegant because it was the culmination of a marriage between local building techniques and European architectural influences. It is thus a fine exemplar of the early twentieth -century, Trinidadian house condition that sought to embody class status and recognition. Though it is one of the smallest of the houses that line the Savannah, it sought to compensate through ornamentation.   No surface of the house was left unadorned, and it married these different accents to create a fanciful showpiece, which vied for attention on the grand stage of competing mansions. Practical components were fashioned to become ornate. Simple materials such as wood and concrete were textured and transformed to imitate extravagant stone. Color was used in a strategic manner to draw the eye to specific details. All elements were combined in an intelligent way such that they complemented each other, leaving new details to be discovered with every glance.

Although these five mansions were constructed in the same year, they differ radically stylistically. John Newel Lewis, in discussing the reason for the occurrence of these diverse hybridized mansions, each grander than the next, developed the 'Queen of the Bands' theory.[48] Carnival was introduced into Trinidad in 1785 with the arrival of the French Creoles. The festivities include the parade of various bands throughout the street, consisting of costumed revelers. Each band had a Queen, a person dressed in a extravagant costume, leading the band, to dazzle spectators. The various 'Queens of the Band' sought to be more magnificent than the next as they were placed against each other in competition on a single stage.   They were judged according to craftsmanship, color and originality. According to Lewis, it is the spirit of the Queens of the Bands that is contained in the mansions around the Savannah. Each mansion competed against the other in terms of craftsmanship, décor and originality for the title of most magnifice*n*t on the Savannah stage.

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[48] Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa,* 231-233.

Influence of the Nouveau Bourgeoisie Mansions

As opposed to the isolated plantations on the outskirts, these Grand mansions allowed the elite an opportunity to flaunt their wealth to an audience. This audience did not only consist of their elite competitors but also of an emerging stratum of middle-class coloreds and blacks aspiring to obtain a similar status. People of all classes traveled everyday along the Maraval road and partook in the leisure activities that occurred in the Savannah. Also, the then working –class neighborhoods of Woodbrook and Belmont were located in close proximity to the Savannah. As this middle-class group came in contact with these ostentatious mansions, they became enthralled by their mesmerizing grandeur. As a result, their stylistic influences extended beyond the homes of the nouveau bourgeois to the homes of the humble as the middle-class emulated aspects of these mansions in their own houses.

After emancipation, the middle class expanded due to newly liberated, ambitious, coloreds and few blacks rising the social ladder through their concerned efforts to become educated.[49] They did not have the advantage of skin color like the white creoles nor did they have a legacy of wealthy slave-owning ancestors to speak of as the French creole coloreds. If these newly liberated people wanted to attain respectability, it was to be self-made. Many of these ex-slaves moved to Port-of-Spain and other urban areas where schools were more readily available so that their children could be educated. The education system developed in Trinidad after 1838 offered an escape from "the harshly restrictive world of the manual laborer."[50] By 1870, an Education Ordinance was passed that set up a dual education system of state-aided denominational schools existing side by side with government schools in every ward of Trinidad.[51] Both types of schools, at the elementary level were open to any child despite race, wealth or

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[49] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 122.
[50] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 122.
[51] Ibid, 123.
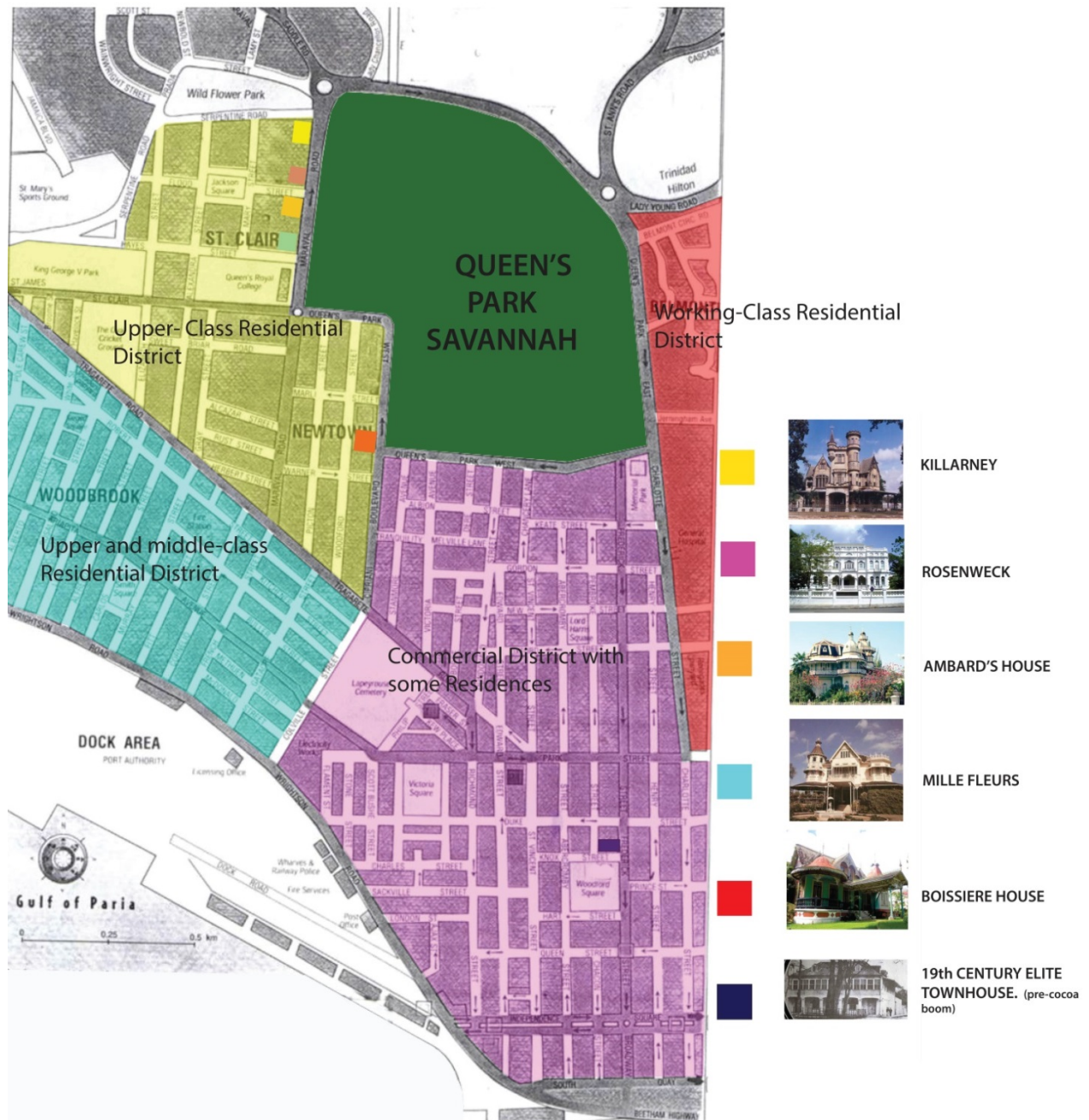
Figure 25: Map of Port of Spain showing the class distribution
Source: Diagram produced by the author

religion. Black children, especially in the urban areas, obtained an education, allowing them to rise

above wage labor jobs to become artisans, small shopkeepers, minor civil servants and store assistants,

achieving a lower middle-class status. Secondary school education remained an upper-middle class and

the elite institution. There was, however, one opportunity for those of a lower-class to attend this

institution. Every year, the secondary schools had an 'exhibition' where a scholarship was offered to a

lower-class boy from the government funded or government aided primary schools. This scholarship

system opened up secondary school to a small number of black and colored boys of poorer families.

With this education, they had the opportunity to vie for white-collared jobs such as: teaching,

journalism, the civil service, and minor positions in business such as sales clerks within commercial

cocoa stores. With these white-collar jobs they also assumed western-cultural values and norms as a

means of earning the respectability of their former masters.

With their new jobs, the middle and lower-class men acquired property upon which to build their

homes. However, they began to ask the question, what should these houses look like?   These white-

collar jobs did not afford them much disposable income to build the elaborate mansions of the elite.

However, it was no longer sufficient to live in a simple chattel house if they wanted the respect of the

socialites that lived around the Grand Savannah. These newly liberated men had to find a new aesthetic

that would speak of their new position in society.

 In analyzing the houses of the elite, these men could decipher that the things that made these houses

special, the reason they caught your attention and stood out among all others, was the attention the

designer paid to ornate details. It was the ornamentation that took the house from the realm of the

ordinary and transported it to the realm of the fanciful and grand.   These middle-class people could not

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build expansive houses of stone with turrets, but they could, on a smaller scale, emulate the ideas of class and beauty reflected in the elite mansions. To design these houses, they borrowed from architectural expression of the elite to create culturally conscious designs mimetic of grander urban houses like the Boissière House. The typical house of this urban middle-class was a one-story, wooden dwelling with a simple, thin, rectangular form within the dense urban fabric. At the front of these houses was usually a veranda and porte-cochère directly referencing those found in the grander mansions. With the simplicity in form, it was the detailed accents that brought complexity and charm to the house. Decorative wooden fretwork, whose use was promoted by architect, George Brown, became a prominent stylistic trend and one of the most commonly used forms of ornamentation of the middle-class house.

George Brown, a Scottish architect, arrived in Trinidad in 1883.[52] In 1895, a fire destroyed most of the commercial fabric on Fredrick Street (a main commercial street in the capital city, Port-of-Spain). In redesigning Port-of Spain, he did away with some of the previously existing French influences and introduced a new aesthetic. Pre-fire, the French Mansard roof was popular. The French creoles reduced the visual importance of the roof as their methods of construction blended the wall and the roof through the reduction of overhangs and the matching of materials.[53] George Brown popularized the use of gabled roofs, allowing them to have a dramatic effect through steep pitch and defined articulation between wall and roof. His embrace of standardization and the use of pre-fabricated parts contributed greatly to Trinidadian architecture. To re-design Frederick Street, he created stone parti- walls between which he inserted prefabricated cast-iron frames. The ironwork frames were picked out of a catalogue and imported from Glasgow. George Brown also carried the use of standardized prefabricated parts to

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[52] Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa*, 191
[53] Ibid, 195.

the realm of residential architecture. He standardized and mass produced: doors, windows, railings, jalousies, window units, crestings, finials, balustrades, cornices, skirtings and fretwork barge boards.[54]

These functional components were given an aesthetic quality so they would have both practical and ornamental functions. Under the direction of George Brown, many workshops opened in the Port of Spain area and, in these workshops, mass amounts of standardized building components were prefabricated. With the invention of the jigsaw in 1865, the process of making intricate fretwork out of wood was revolutionized and these workshops produced miles of fretwork.[55]

The mass production of these standardized building components meant one important thing; members of the middle class could now afford these designed components that brought an aesthetic quality to their practical needs. The decorative cresting placed over the ridge of the roof held the roofing material down to prevent weather penetration. The fretwork provided rain protection and filtered light. The finials secured the edge of the ridge. The fretwork barge boarding protected the ends of the purlins in the roof, the ridge boards, and the ring beams. The architrave, and head and sill boards around the windows hid the joints between the window and the wall. The jalousies allowed the entry of breezes into the house while preventing the entry of rain. These functional, yet decorative features, soon became essential to the composition of the typical residential house, eventually becoming institutionalized. The term 'Gingerbread house' was coined to describe these houses. The fretwork, crestings, finials, cornices and skirtings together decorated the simply designed house, transforming it, to give it the sense of respectability that its owner craved. John Newel Lewis (1983, 201), when referring to the Gingerbread house, described it as, "a unique combination of decoration and practicality." Though these houses were small in scale their intricate detailing made their stature un-mistakable.

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[54] Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa*, 201.
[55] Gerard Besson, Interview with author, Jan. 4, 2013.

Unadorned chattel house of the working-class

Pre- fabricated parts used to decorate the typical middle-class house

From top left: crestings, finial, fretwork, cornice, louvers, skirtings, balustrades, door, fanlight

Decorated middle-class house
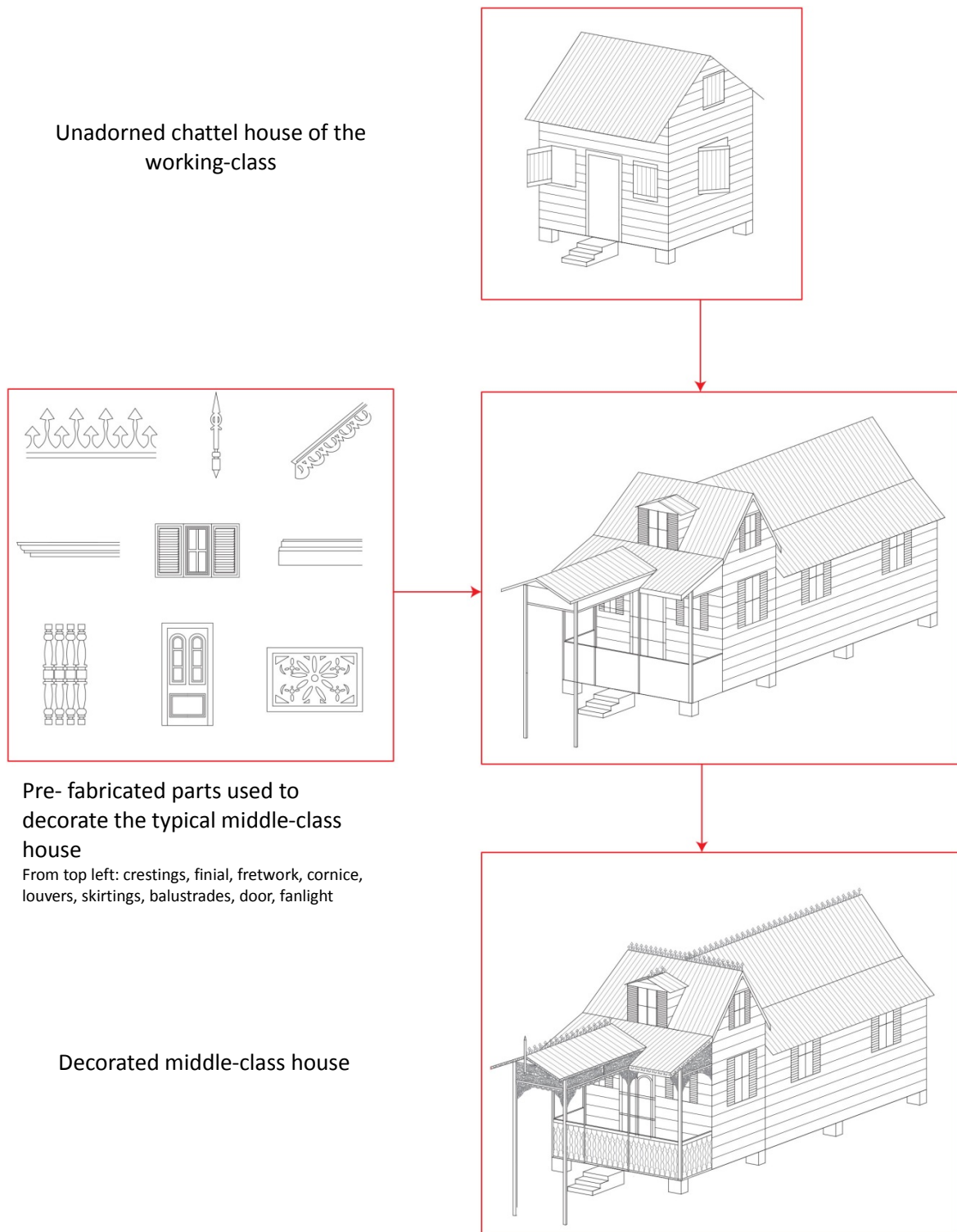
Figure 26: Diagram showing how the use of ornament transformed the middle-class house
Source: Diagram produced by the author

Although, the houses of different class levels, at the beginning of the twentieth century, were visually

different, they were of one architectural lineage. The influence was a cultural one rather than a purely

stylistic one.   The houses across class levels all borrowed from external precedents, but married it with

local traditions and ornamentation to transform them from the realm of the banal to the realm of the

respectable and enviable. Each house shared in a common goal: to create an artifact that spoke of its

owner's elevating position as they strove to differentiate themselves in the growing classist and capitalist

environment that was early twentieth- century Trinidad.

**Figure 27: Typical early twentieth-
century middle-class houses**
Source: Photo Taken by the author, Jan, 2013

Chapter Three: Traditional Architecture vs. a West Indian Identity

The beginning of the twentieth century was a prosperous time for Trinidad, with profits of the cocoa industry flowing through the hands of the people and the results of social mobility manifesting itself in the form of Grand mansions and decorated urban cottages. However, the First World War interrupted this era of prosperity and empowerment. It brought with it a climate of unrest and political upheaval in Trinidad that had a direct effect on the residential fabric, propelling it into a new era of design.

Rise of a new Elite

During the war, tensions rose in the colony between the merchant elite and the other classes. Merchants in Trinidad saw the eruption of war as reason to immediately raise the price of their commodities and did so beyond a level that was justifiable. The Colonial Office registered that between 1914 and 1919, prices in Trinidad rose by one hundred and forty-five percent, a rate of inflation far beyond that of Britain itself.[56] The inflation was especially marked in basic food goods which led to members of the middle and the lower classes demanding higher wages to be able to provide for their needs. When these demands were denied, labor protests erupted among the blacks and East Indians that constituted the middle and lower-class population.

There was also a second major factor that contributed to this state of civil unrest. During war times, many black West Indians, including ones from Trinidad, decided to help the war efforts by volunteering to serve in the military. These West Indian men left their islands for Britain, with a sense of pride and an intrepid spirit to serve their king and mother-country.   However, the environment they encountered was not the gracious host they anticipated. First, the British government refused to let the black West Indians serve. The Colonial Secretary and King George V had to intervene to make the War Office accept

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[56] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 157.

the West Indians, but the hostile treatment did not terminate there. The British government made it clear that that this black troop was not be considered equal to European troops. They named the unit 'the British West Indies Regiment' and gave them lower rates of pay and allowances than the common British soldier. To compound this, the army refused to give officers' commissions to men, "who are not of unmixed European blood" (Brereton 1981, 158). They would not even allow this British West Indies Regiment to engage in battle against European troops, instead they sent most of the battalion to Egypt to perform labor services. Others took part in combat against Turkish troops in Palestine. Some were even used as ammunition carriers and trench diggers in Europe, but they were not allowed to engage in combat on European soil. This was devastating to the British West Indian troops. It was 1914 and they had been deemed legally free for seventy-six years. They had adopted European mannerisms in terms of language, religion and dress, but yet again, they were reminded that societal opinions of black people had not changed. Despite their progress, they were still deemed inferior to whites.

In describing the degradation they endured, one soldier who was stationed in Egypt wrote home to his friend, "We are treated neither as Christians nor as British citizens, but as West Indian niggers without anybody to be interested in or look after us" (Brereton 1981, 158). In response to these hardships some of the members of the British West Indian regiment formed a secret 'Caribbean League'. Sharing a common experience, these men of different islands started discussing ideas of social and industrial reform for the islands, greater unity among colonies, and self-government. They were determined to advocate these ideas on their return to their respective homes, beginning with the demand for higher wages. The secret meetings were discovered and reported to the authorities who, in turn, notified West Indian governors to monitor these men when the returned home. However, their momentum was undeterred. These men would return home with an animosity towards the British (and by extension all white people) and with the knowledge of the emerging socialist ideas they were exposed to in Europe.

By 1919, with the return of the soldiers, it was clear that the majority was no longer prepared to remain complacent with economic and racial domination from the minority upper class. At the same time the minority was not prepared to relinquish control and concede to their demands. This led to a climate of civil unrest, and political and labor organizations began to play an important role as labor protest became rampant. There was a resurgence of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association (TWA), formed in 1897, to protect the rights of the working class. Racial issues were perpetuated by some of the local, Trinidadian media. They reported on anti-black riots in Britain and in turn promoted ideologies of 'race pride'.[57] Blacks in Trinidad were also exposed to the writings of Marcus Garvey as his publication, 'Negro World', began to circulate around the island. Black Nationalism was on the rise and these labor and political movements carried on through the 1920s and 1930s, despite measures taken by the white capitalists to suppress protest and maintain hegemony. During the 1930s the TWA renamed themselves the Trinidad Labor Party (TLP) proclaiming themselves, a political group. The 1930s were also marked with mass protest of the sugar workers and the formation of new labor and political groups such as: the National Unemployed Movement (NUM), the Negro Welfare, Cultural and Social Association (NWA) and the Trinidad Citizens League (TCL), all calling for a change in the societal structure. Ideas of 'black pride' were not solely perpetuated among lower, working-class groups but were also prevalent among the growing educated, professional, black middle-class. The 'L'Ouverture' formed by Rupert Gittens, a leader in the NWA, attested to this fact.   The group was formed to seek the interests of blacks in Trinidad and to promulgate knowledge about Africa and thus promote African pride.   Defining L'Ouverture, Brereton stated, "It was a kind of literary and debating society whose members were mostly middle-class blacks and it helped to educate urban blacks about race issues and to promote race pride."[58] The emergence of these political groups marked the beginning of a shift in the power structure of Trinidad.

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[57] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*,161.
[58] Ibid , 174

The various labor and political groups continued to garner support as the ideologies of racial pride gained momentum, but it was an international event that propelled the movement for Black Nationalism in Trinidad. In 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia and news of the invasion travelled to Trinidad. The local black population was outraged at the lack of support to Ethiopians by the countries of the west. There were reactions within the island such as the refusal of dock workers to unload Italian ships and the establishment of a 'Friends of Ethiopia committee'. This Ethiopian invasion propelled ideologies of racial pride and, as a result, Trinidad experienced a cultural renaissance among black people. At this time there was an outbreak of literary and artistic movements aimed at establishing a West Indian identity. The leaders of this movement were Albert Gomes, Alfred Mendes, R.A.C. de Boissière and C.L.R James. This movement produced the beginnings of West Indian creative writing and magazines were established to promote the idea of West Indian pride. The most important of these magazines was 'The Beacon' by Albert Gomes, one of the leaders of the movement.   Gomes wrote that the magazine was:

> the focus of a movement of enlightenment spearheaded by Trinidad's angry young men of the Thirties. It was the torpor, the smugness and the hypocrisy of the Trinidad of the period that provoked the response which produced both the magazine and the defiant bohemianism of the movement that was built around it. (Brereton 1981, 175)

 This group was fascinated by socialist and communist ideas coming out of Europe and smuggled red literature into the country. This group sought to deal with the problem of establishing a West Indian identity but they did so by publishing articles that criticized blacks for feeling a sense of inferiority and rejecting their African heritage and Africa itself. They directly equated the establishment of a West Indian identity with the establishment of an Afro- Caribbean identity. Their conception of what it meant to be West Indian left no room for the inclusion of other racial groups.[59] To this group of black

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[59] There was some interest, by the magazine, in India and the plight of the local East Indian population.. Black Trinidadians to some degree saw the   discrimination against East Indians as analogous to their sufferings. However tensions exited between the two groups and only elevated over time to what they are in the contemporary society. Thus the y were still not considered Trinidadian and by extension West Indian by the Afro-Trinidadian movement.

intellectuals, the cultural production of the black population was now the true manifestation of a local identity. Anything outside of this spectrum was now considered foreign to this West Indian idea, and instead a reference to the Colonial master which needed to be eradicated. The Beacon's ideologies were anti- Colonialist, anti-government, and anti-Catholic. The Beacon was the instrument for this activist black group to spread their political message as they attacked the Crown Colony system and launched their own political ideas of self-governance. The magazine fell apart by 1933 due to financial troubles because of advertising boycotts by Colonial businessmen who did not appreciate this radical political message. They were also constantly harassed by the police.[60] However, the demise of the magazine did not mean the end of this social movement. The foundation had already been laid for a new social, cultural and political consciousness in Trinidad and by extension the greater West Indies.

The result of this social, cultural and political movement was the establishment of a new elite group; the Afro-Saxon elite. In his dissertation, Dr. Kerrigan, a Trinidadian anthropologist, discusses the structure of the elite stratum of Trinidadian society at the beginning of the twentieth century according to the work of a previous researcher Kelvin Singh.[61] According to Kerrigan there were three interlocking groups that formed the elite system: the administrative elite (including institutions such as the governor, the judicial system and the Colonial office) [the British]; the commercial elite (the merchants, financiers and shipping agents); and the plantocratic elite (owners or managers of large family estates or company estates) [French Creoles]; and after 1920 a fourth group, the mineral-exporting elite (directors and managers of oil companies) was added. They dominated the political and economic systems of the society and it was to this elite structure the Afro- Saxon group was assimilated. Kerrigan defined this group as a representation of a new people; Trinidadians who would be responsible for the organization of

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[60] Brereton, Modern History of Trinidad,176.
[61] Kerrigan,"The Accumulation of Capital", 170.

Trinidadian politics as they laid the path to self-governance and independence.[62] They were not a traditional elite group that acquired their status by virtue of their skin color or their capital, but instead, gained status from cultural and political control. However, like any other elite group, they needed to clearly define their cultural identity to assert their dominance in the larger society, but this proved to be a difficult task for the Afro-Saxons. They had difficulty defining their identity because they found themselves in the state of ambivalence associated with any colonized people, and marked by a fragmented and perplexed identity of the colonized, caused by the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the colonizer.[63]

The definition of the term Afro-Saxon, by Trinidadian scholar Lloyd Best (2004, 13), as, "an African practicing European institutions in America," is in itself an indicator of the conflicting condition that this new black elite was undergoing. Conflict during identity formation arose because the ancestors of these black people were transplanted to Trinidad and, though they were viewed as a homogenous group, they came from different parts of Africa with different cultural conditions. In an attempt by colonist to 'civilize' these different African groups, they were stripped of many of their traditions, and the aspects of their culture each group maintained were hybridized to form one common culture among these people of a shared experience. Thus as this Afro-Saxon group tried to establish their new identity by deviating away from European culture and promoting African pride and awareness of Africa, the question that arose was: which African culture were they aligning themselves to?   The problem was that they viewed Africa as having one culture with which they could identify, an idea established because of the hybridized condition that existed in the Caribbean, but the reality is it is a continent with a conglomeration of different cultural identities. These conflicting realities were a source of mental conflict.

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[62] The term Trinidadian was a newly developing construct. Before one allied their nationality to the country of their descent or the Colonial power and it was from this alliance that they owed their cultural identity.
[63] See appendix for further discussion of the post-colonial theory of ambivalence

Best (2004, 9), described the condition of Blacks in the Caribbean most accurately when he stated, "They have no concept of Africa before they left Africa. They discovered Africa in America." Thus, they formed a Caribbean identity that they deemed was relating back to Africa but was in fact a hybridized, romanticized, constructed idea of Africa that was endemic to the Caribbean.[64] Despite the conflicts of constructing a Caribbean identity relating to Africa, the Afro-Saxons rationalized this identity, and promoted the active rejection of what they deemed as European culture.[65] Anything that had European influence was a reference to the colonizer and had no place in their West Indian identity. To them, they had adopted European mannerism, ideals, dress and architecture all in an attempt to belong, and now was the time to actively reject this imposed culture.

The resultant of this whole cultural movement was a complex situation, where the black population had a major effect on society as they spread ideas of political and cultural revolution and tried to establish a West Indian identity; an identity that was to be achieved by reconnecting to Africa, (however not actual Africa but a hybridized idea of Africa that they constructed) while simultaneously rejecting what they deemed European culture. However, at the same time, they were still speaking English, and partaking in a capitalist system and an education system based on the British model. European institutions were engrained in the society, and they could not simply discard these institutions, no matter how much they connected them to the colonial master. Thus, they needed another way to assert their rejection of the culture of the colonialist: again the house became an important medium for identity representation.

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[64] In essence, they were achieving their goal of new Caribbean identity, just not in the way they conceived it.
[65] In the same way that they did not conceive the hybridized product of the mixing of differentiated African cultures in the Caribbean setting as a new culture native to the Caribbean, they also did not view the hybridized product of the mixing of differentiated European cultures, in a Caribbean setting, as part of the Caribbean culture they were searching for. See appendix for further discussion of hybridization.

The Woodbrook area

The area of Woodbrook, a residential suburb of Port of Spain area, is most appropriate to study the transitional condition that the design of residences underwent in Trinidad as a direct result of this cultural movement of the Afro- Saxon elite. By the 1940s, Woodbrook had a unique social structure because it housed a mixed composition of classes and had a richly layered built fabric that attested to its transitioning structure.

Woodbrook began as a working class residential area for low-income persons of various ethnicities. The rates for houses and land were much lower than the surrounding area.   With the boom of the cocoa economy and changing economic situation of the island the economic composition of Woodbrook changed. This land was located in close proximity to the commercial area of the capital city and the major ports; thus, it was desired by the elite and the newly-wealthy middle-class. The Town Board accelerated the economic transformation of Woodbrook by putting a "minimum value requirement" on the houses erected there that was much higher than what most working- class families could afford.[66] Many of the lower economic inhabitants were displaced as this new class stratum furnished with capital from the cocoa economy migrated into Woodbrook. With the immigration of this wealthy middle-class the residential fabric of Woodbrook transformed. They brought with them their ornate style of building and constructed miniature Gingerbread mansions equipped with gabled roofs, delicate wooden fretwork, finials, crestings, jalousies, verandas, porte-cochère and intricate wrought-iron work. A professional, skilled middle-class also moved into the Woodbrook area, and, by 1920, Woodbrook had a mixed composition of a minority French Creole elite class, a majority middle class with aspirations of upward mobility to elite status, and the remnants of the once dominating lower class who remained in the area due to their middle-class aspirations. In short, Woodbrook was the home of the upwardly

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[66] Kerrigan, "The Accumulation of Capital", 164.

mobile at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Post 1920, the character of Woodbrook transformed again as the island was undergoing a socio-cultural revolution. Woodbrook continued to be the home of an upwardly mobile middle-class, but the middle-class itself was changing. The middle-class was expanding with professional black and colored intellectuals with Afro-Saxon ideals and many of these Afro-Saxons moved into the Woodbrook area. A resident of Woodbrook in describing the class structure of Woodbrook post 1930s stated, "What Woodbrook was in the 1940s and the 1950s, was really the juncture where the lower middle class entered the professional class" (Kerrigan 2010, 197). The growing nationalistic ideologies of the middle class had an effect on the built fabric of Woodbrook. Institutions of local cultural production entered the area such as the Invaders' Pan Yard and the Little Carib Theatre. Before, the steelpan (a local instrument) was seen as a vulgar production of the uncouth lower-class members of society. However, the introduction of a pan yard in a respectable middle-class neighborhood was proof that local production had gained respectability, and European high-class culture had lost its prominence. For these Afro-Saxons, the flamboyant symbols of the bourgeoisie associated with capitalist desires were no longer covetable. There was now a desire for a reserved aesthetic associated with the image of the intellectual, and the new, Trinidadian intellectuals and celebrators of local production, used their houses to reflect this change in ideology.

What the Intellectual Class Built

The first major change in the houses of the Woodbrook area by the 1940s was a transition of the major building material from timber to concrete and clay products. The use of concrete had been around since the end of the nineteenth century, but it was not popularly used in residences, especially among the middle and lower classes. Concrete and clay blocks had the advantages of durability (unlike wood it is

not susceptible to termites and rotting) and was now used as a sign of advancement among the middle-class. Concrete symbolized that one had achieved the economic status to own one's land and one's house was now a fixed part of the neighborhood fabric.

The light, delicate, dynamic nature of the Gingerbread house disappeared as the form of the typical house of the area became that of the rigid concrete box. Although its appearance changed, the front veranda remained an important part of the composition. It became unadorned and monolithic. The wooden or cast-iron posts decorated with fretwork capitals that once held up the roof of the veranda were replaced by a subdued concrete cast-in place, post and lintel system. The classically inspired balustrades that enclosed the veranda of the house of the early 1900s were now replaced by a short, uninterrupted and planar concrete wall. The use of complex forms and intricate filigree was discontinued, and the planar surface was now celebrated.

The animated gable roofscape made up of perpendicular, intersecting rafters, and dormer windows, of the typical early twentieth-century house, gradually disappeared. It was replaced by gently sloping gable roofs and hipped roofs. The pitch of roofs decreased until the gently sloping one-way pitch roof became the standard. There are practical explanations for the abandonment of the steeply-sloping, gabled roof that suggested an association between the suspension of its use and the prevalence of the use of concrete. It is suggested that it would have been awkward and expensive to fill gables with concrete or brick.[67] However, practical explanations like this are not sufficient. It does not explain why they did not find another way to adorn the roof or why in present day Trinidadian society many concrete houses

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[67]John Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa*, 293.

1920s

Decrease in ornament
Reduction of the roof pitch
Reduction in complexity of form

1940s
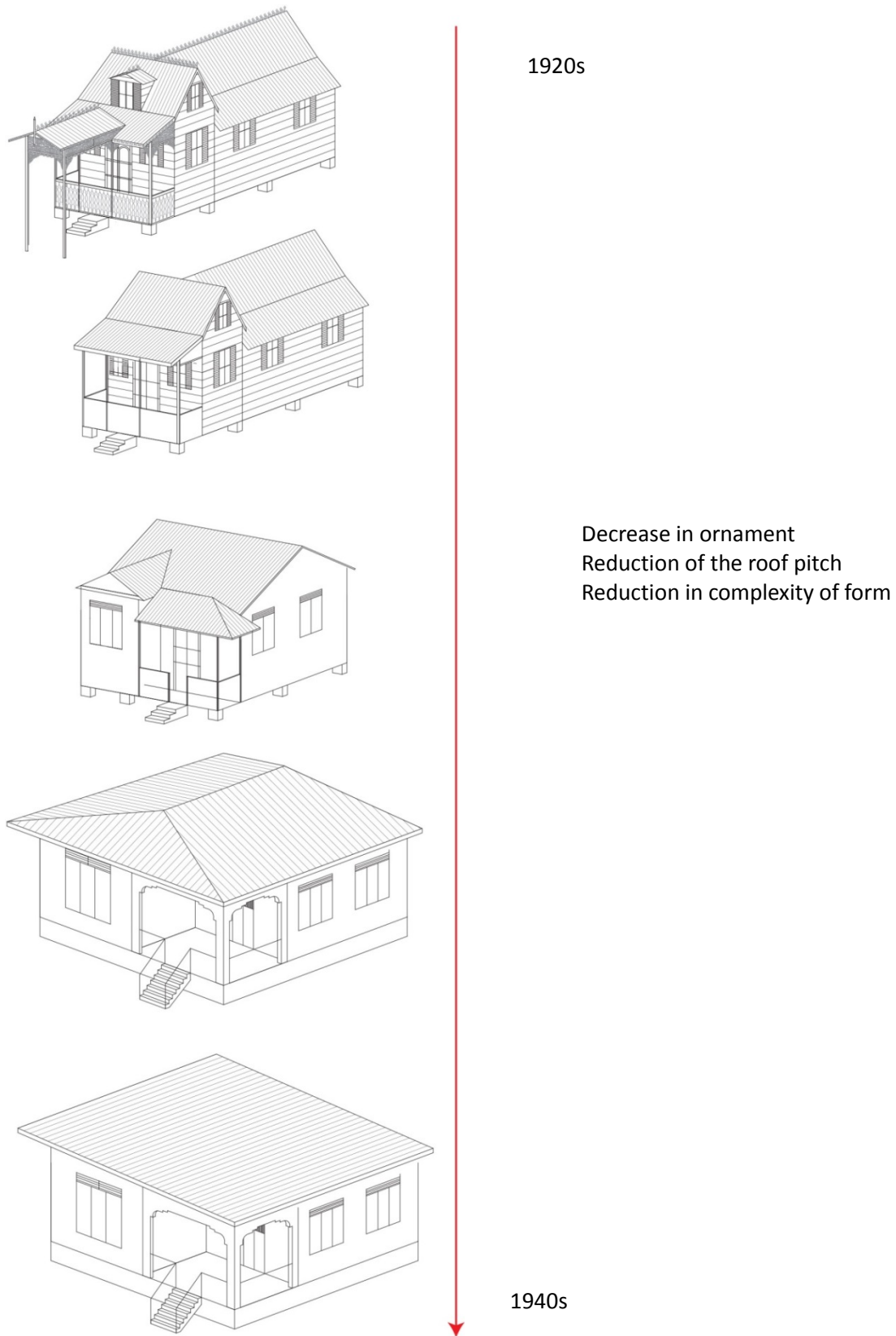
Figure 28: Transformation of the decorated middle-class house to the austere middle-class house
Source: Diagram produced by author

have steep gable roofs. There had to be another reason why the roof gradually reduced in pitch and complexity. The roofs were de-emphasized because there was no longer a desire for extravagance and it no longer had to make a statement like the roofs of the bourgeois. The quiet, simple roof was the new preferred aesthetic.

Together with the dynamic overall form, elements of ornamentation were abandoned. Despite their functional characteristics crestings, finials, cornices, skirtings and most importantly the signature fretwork, were no longer used. Building components also lost their decorative detailing. Sash windows were no longer the typical windows used. Instead, simple casement windows became prevalent. The window frames were still made of timber and often painted white, but they were no longer pre-fabricated, but instead constructed on-site. Also the previously used intricate fretwork fanlights, that allowed the movement of air, were transformed into simple concrete ventilation blocks. Though functionality maintained, building components were stripped of their decorative qualities. The anti-capitalist and classist factions' rejection of ornamentation during this period reinforces the theory that ornamentation had a definite symbolic connection to the idea of wealth, and class status in the island. It speaks to the power of the use of the artifact as an identity forming mechanism.

Then transitioning ideologies are evident upon examining the 1940s fabric of the mixed income Woodbrook area. The fabric consisted primarily, of a few large-scale Gingerbread houses of the elite. This maintenance of an ornate euro-inspired building style reflected the white elite's desperation to maintain their ties to their European heritage as a means of validating their superiority. Interspersed among these ornate houses were transitional houses of the middle-class, a hybrid of the ornate and the austere reflecting a gradual adoption of an attitude that deviated from the flamboyant. Most importantly, by the end of the 1940s, the Woodbrook area was populated by these new concrete houses

stripped of ornamentation, standing in contrast to the ornate houses of the elite, as the middle-class black population attempted to distance themselves from Europe and the local white elite, and forge a new west Indian identity and a path to Independence.

Figure 29: Typical middle-class houses of the 1930s and 1940s
Source: Photographs by author, Jan 2013

Chapter Four: Tropical Modernity in Post-Colonial Trinidad

Following the Second World War, the British Empire began to dissipate as anti-colonialist movements

spread in Africa and Asia. These anti-colonialist sentiments soon spread to the Caribbean and the call for

political decolonization and self-governance that was started in the 1930s by the Afro-Saxon intellectuals

spread to the greater Trinidadian population. This led to achievements such as: the development of local

political parties such as the West Indian Independence Party, the People's Democratic Party and the

Peoples National Movement; constitutional reform leading to the establishment of a 'quasi-ministerial

system' and a General election; and the establishment of the Federation.[68] All these accomplishments

finally led to Trinidad gaining its independence in 1962.

The sixties were a prosperous time for Trinidad. Not only did Trinidad have the liberty to dictate its own

political affairs, but it also had a thriving economy. Oil was now the major economy of Trinidad and it

was a major contributor to the GDP of the country, allowing Trinidad to be in a favorable position for a

small newly independent nation. Brereton (1981, 222) stated, "When Trinidad and Tobago entered the

era of independence, the national economy was considerably stronger than that of most developing

countries…"   With this independence and prosperity all sectors of the island wanted to affirm their

cultural, economic and political independence from Britain and Europe at large. The socio-political

environment of Trinidad in the 1960s was the perfect incubator for regionalist sentiments and the ideas

of the formation of a national identity spread beyond the Afro-Saxon group to the greater population.

At this time the concept of being Trinidadian was truly established, where one no longer saw oneself

being French, British, African, Indian etc. but firstly as a native of Trinidad and a product of its socio-

cultural environment. Cultural production had to reflect this new identity, and everyone became

invested in the establishment of a visual representation of self- sufficiency and progress. A new

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[68]Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 227-249.

architectural aesthetic represented what it meant to be Trinidadian.

A New Modernist Outlook to Architecture

With Globalization, ideas of Modernism made its way to the Caribbean through the U.S. soldiers that

came to occupy the naval base at Chaguaramas during WWII, foreign literature, movement of people

between continents and the return of U.S. educated local architects to practice in Trinidad. Modernism

was attractive to Trinidadians and seemed applicable to the Trinidadian socio-political environment in

the 1960s because its socialist underpinnings, anti-historicist sentiments, and tenets of universality

allowed it to transcend economic groups. Thus, to establish a new Trinidadian architectural aesthetic,

Trinidad looked to Modernism.

In discussing the development of modernism in Trinidad, in his essay, *Modern Trinidad Outlined: The*

works of Colin Laird and Anthony Lewis, architect Mark Raymond (2005, 65) stated, "The cultural

evolution of independent Trinidadian society represents an archetypal post-colonial search for identity

and authenticity." Trinidad, like other post-colonial territories, in an attempt to establish itself as an

independent entity, sought to eradicate ties to its cultural past of the Colonial period to forge a truly

Trinidadian cultural identity. However, the same complications that existed with the establishment of a

cultural identity by the Afro-Saxons still existed in this period: what would this new cultural identity be in

a land of ethnically diverse immigrants with no cultural past before that of colonialism to look to? By this

time the indigenous population and their culture, for the most part, had been eradicated and now had

its presence confined to historical record away from active society. Thus, no one considered a 'back to

origins' vernacular approach to the formation of a new cultural identity.

Raymond discussed how Trinidad, a country with no pre-colonial past to look to, negotiated its break

from colonialism:

> In the 1950s, as in many British colonies, British colonial domination of Trinidad was emphatically rejected. The British political, social and cultural structure that had been maintained was an integral part of the formation of the society and thus in the absence of any indigenous culture or clearly identifiable cultural past, whilst the political presence was expelled, the cultural framework was unavoidably retained, modified substantially by the burgeoning influence of North American culture…. The social, economic, political and cultural initiatives that informed the physical reconstruction of the post war European and North American landscape were thus mirrored in the gradual reconfiguration of the nineteenth century city of the Port of Spain underscored by a quintessentially modern and universal agenda. This scenario was subtly informed by the cosmopolitan influences of the racially diverse populace. (Raymond 2005, 65)

This statement discusses the paradoxical situation where the Trinidadian people felt the need to disassociate themselves with their European past and, by extension, what they deemed Euro-inspired architecture. However, European constructs were so deeply engrained in the society that they could not escape it. As Trinidadians searched for an architectural language that would be expressive of their new identity they turned to high- modernist ideas imported from North America. They justified Modernism's suitability because of its socialist underpinnings but even though they were now looking to America for inspiration, they were following a school of thought that came out of Europe and justifying its use by socialist ideas also developed in Europe in the post-war period. Despite some of the conflicts that existed in using modernist architecture to escape colonialism, it was adopted as a new nationalistic architectural expression.

Contextual Caribbean Syncretism

 Local architects, however, did not simply use modernism as a stylistic trend, replicating what was coming out of North America. Instead, they developed an architectural response which was referred to as a 'Contextual Caribbean syncretism.'[69] The term Contextual Caribbean Syncretism used by Robert

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[69] Roberto Segre," Architecture and City in the Caribbean: The Reinvention of Paradise," in *Tropical architecture:*

Segre in his essay, *Architecture and City in the Caribbean: The Reinvention of Paradise,* evolved from the

theory of Critical Regionalism*.* The term Critical Regionalism, as defined by Kenneth Frampton (1996,

472) is, "A dialectical expression. It self-consciously seeks to deconstruct universal modernism in terms

of values and images which are locally cultivated, while at the same time adulterating these

autochthonous elements with paradigms drawn from alien sources." Though it seemed applicable for

the description of the architectural situation of the Caribbean in the second half of the twentieth

century, it was severely questioned in Latin America by architects such as Ramon Gutierrez and Alberto

Petrina during the Seminarios de Arquitectura Latin Americana. They critiqued the theory for its

restrictive nature, as it was used mainly to identify the architecture outside of the economic and cultural

mainstreams and was therefore associated with the periphery and an exclusionary nationalism. This did

not adequately reflect the quest for a more holistic national identity associated with Post –colonial

societies. The term Contextual Caribbean syncretism was used to describe the architectural production

in the unique Caribbean setting where a history marked by the superposition of races and social groups

left its inhabitants in the late twentieth century at a crossroads trying to rationalize the adoption of a

universal avant- gardes with the formation of their own identity. It did not impose any formal

restrictions or stylistic trends but instead involved:

 … the combination, interaction, articulation and innovation inherent in the multifaceted and
multinational Caribbean kaleidoscope that generated an urban and architectural system suited to the
natural and geographical conditions of the tropics , to the idiosyncrasy of its population in constant
mutation- marked from the beginning by the asymmetric relationship between masters and slaves;
between subjugation and the yearning for liberty- to the values of a culture caught between the popular
culture and professional Modernity that defines its identity. (Segre 2001 ,115)

Essentially it involved the creation of a Caribbean architectural discourse that took into consideration the

particularities of the tropical site, and married them with multiple facets of social culture and customs of

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Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalism, ed. Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre and Bruno Stagno (Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, *2001*), 143.

the inhabitants, and local materials and building techniques, while at the same time relating multiple tenets of universal architecture.

Emergence of the Trinidadian architect

In this period of Contextual Caribbean Syncretism, local architects became the main designers as opposed to the previous condition where expatriates, working in the country for a few years before returning abroad, were the main hire. This meant that the architect of this period had a true grasp of the environmental and cultural condition of the island being a native, and was thus most adept at filtering the concepts of modernism through a local lens. Anthony Clyde Lewis was one of the famous architects that emerged out of this period.   Lewis was born in San Fernando in 1918 to a family of assumed British descent.[70] As a teenager, Lewis decided he wanted to become an architect and his father encouraged his dreams by exposing him to the works of Frank Lloyd Wright.[71] Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wrights' work, Lewis became determined to become a pioneer of Trinidadian architecture and become the "first Caribbean architect."[72] After attending secondary school in Trinidad, Lewis went to the London Polytechnic School of Architecture. In his free time, he continued to read books on the works of Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier.[73] After only two years at the school, WWII erupted and, Lewis was not able to return to the London Polytechnic School. He continued to study books on architecture and worked with local firms. He also worked as an assistant architect for an American firm on the design for the Naval Base at Chaguaramas. After this Lewis went to McGill University in Montreal. His success at McGill won him a scholarship to further his studies, and he decided to attend Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago under Mies van der Rohe, one of the pioneers of Modernism.

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[70]A nthony C. Lewis, Geoffrey Maclean, Brian Lewis and Gerry Lewis, *Manikin: The Art and Architecture of Anthony C. Lewis*, (Port of Spain acla:works, 2009), 18.

[71] Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) was a famous American architect that pioneered the theory of organic architecture and the development of the Prairie School movement.

[72] Lewis, Maclean, Lewis and Lewis, *Manikin,* 30.

[73] Le Corbusier (1887-1965) another pioneer of Modernism in Europe.

After graduating with his Masters, Lewis worked in Montreal for a short period before returning to the

Caribbean in 1943. He worked in different islands of the Caribbean, and, in 1950, opened his own

practice in Trinidad. According to Lewis, it was an excellent time to start his own practice with the

country's new found wealth and search for a unique local identity.[74] Lewis also stood to benefit from the

elite building new and grand homes in this wealthy environment. Lewis had designed a home for his

parents at Wainright Street, in the heart of St. Clair, an affluent suburb of Port of Spain, and this served

as the best advertisement to establish his reputation as a designer among the upper-class of Trinidad.[75]

Lewis used his commissions among the rich as an avenue for the exploration of a unique West Indian

style but he also worked on designs for the middle and lower-middle sector of society. In his work he

was influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's response to the natural environment and use of natural

materials. His residential works also emulated the aesthetic of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier.   An

exemplar of Lewis' aesthetic and houses among the upper tier of society in the 1960s was the Bungalow

House.

The Bungalow House

The treatment of the ground plane and the roof plane of the Bungalow House show obvious Miesian

influence with precedence in the Farnsworth House. The thin, rectangular ground slab was raised

slightly off the ground, concealing the supports in shadow to give a hovering effect mimetic of the

ground plane of the Farnsworth house. The roof plane was thin, long and very gently sloping so that it

would appear flat but still shed water in the tropical climate. The roof also extended beyond the

conditioned space, over the ground slab to form an outdoor veranda space similar to that of the

Farnsworth House. The roof, however, varies from the design of the Farnsworth House in terms of

materiality and its reaction to the environment. The roof plane of the Farnsworth house conceals its

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[74] Lewis, Maclean, Lewis and Lewis, *Manikin,* 30.
[75] Ibid,51

structure allowing it to appear as a planar white surface that carries the eye, giving the illusion that it could extend into eternity.   In the roof of Lewis' bungalow, the thin joists were concealed by wooden ceiling panels to create a rectangular box of shallow depth emphasizing the planarity of the roof. The roof beams, however, were revealed and celebrated structure and hinting to the construction of the roof. The roof framing was then covered by corrugated metal sheets moving away from the traditional roofing material of slate. Slate had a problem of absorbing heat and made houses warmer than they should have been. Thus, the use of corrugated metal sheets was seen as a technological advancement.

The materiality of the Bungalow House shows Lewis' deviation from universal ideas in his design in order to develop a Caribbean aesthetic as a manifestation of Contextual Caribbean syncretism. The conditioned space of the Farnsworth House is a completely glazed volume blurring the distinction between interior and exterior reflecting Modernist ideas of 'universal space.' This concept of 'universal space' is further emphasized by the openness of the interior. There are no partitions on the interior; the only thing that sub-divides space is the free standing service-core that contains the bathrooms, kitchen and a fire-place. This extent of glazing and openness would have been unsuitable in the tropical climate of Trinidad, and Lewis, attentive to environmental controlling factors, chose a different composition for his bungalow. The main walls of the house were made of concrete and the glazed surfaces are typically kept the size of standard windows for climatic control. The interior space was not left open like the Farnsworth House but is instead divided by a regular rhythm of partition walls that are pulled beyond the interior to act as large sun fins on the elevation where there are large areas of glazing. The vertical structure is accentuated by the use of large piers of river stone. This articulation of local material is reminiscent of the aesthetic of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Figure 30: (top photos) Comparison of the Bungalow House (left) and the Farnsworth House (right)
Source: Anthony C. Lewis, Geoffrey Maclean, Brian Lewis and Gerry Lewis, *Manikin: The Art and Architecture of Anthony C. Lewis*, (Port of Spain acla:works, 2009), 85.
http://gunnerarchitect.wordpress.com/architecture/ludwig-mies-van-der-rohe-farnsworth-house/
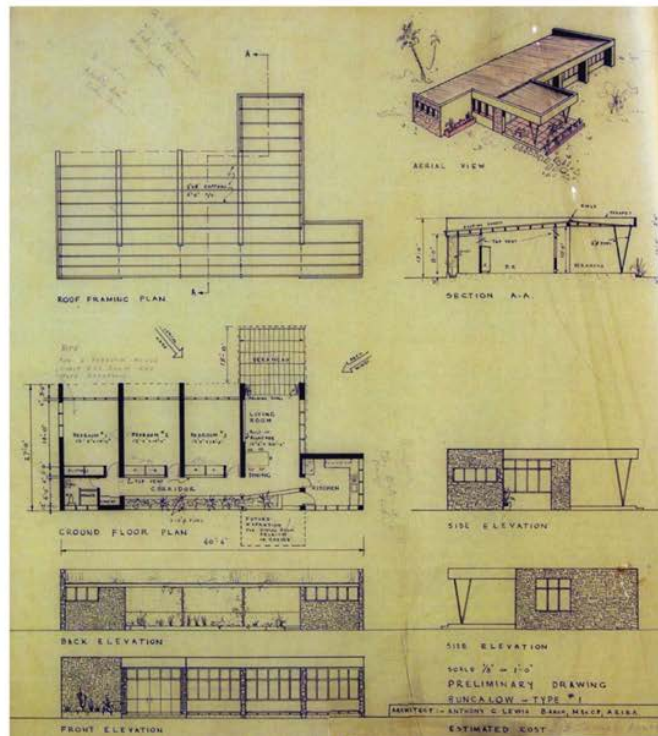
Figure 31: Original drawings of the Bungalow House
Source: Anthony C. Lewis, Geoffrey Maclean, Brian Lewis and Gerry Lewis, *Manikin: The Art and Architecture of Anthony C. Lewis*, (Port of Spain acla:works, 2009), 84.

Lewis abandoned the use of fretwork and other ornate traditional residential architectural components because of its colonialist references. However, these historical components kept the rain and harsh sunlight out while letting the breeze in. Lewis had to find imaginative and contemporary ways to provide the environmental protection of the historicizing features he removed. The flat shed roof was extended beyond the enclosure of the house to provide a large overhang for sun shading. Thin, planar wood veneers were used to cap rafters, or they were left exposed as fretwork barge boards were no longer used. To replace the use of fanlights, small ventilation holes were placed in the wall just below the roof. One of the most interesting features of the house was the way Lewis reinterpreted the traditional use of louvers, replacing them with vertical, floor to ceiling wall panels. The angle of the panels allowed the capture of prevailing winds to cool the house but was also at a suitable angle for blocking sun angles and the entry of rain. These vertical louvers were similar to the *brise soleil* used by Le Corbusier in tropical climates.

The bungalow house was not meant to be a replication of the Modern houses of the United States or an expression of a romanticized idea of the vernacular. Instead, it was the manifestation of the Independent morale of 1960s Trinidad. It was the vision of progress that the island was longing to portray; a spirit of its time; an anti-historicist propellant into the future for this newly independent island; a peaceful marriage between divergent tendencies of universal tenets with an acute awareness of place and culture. The Bungalow House was the new Caribbean identity, in built form, that Trinidadians wished to achieve, and the ethos of its design spread to the larger Trinidadian society.

Residences of the Middle-Class

As discussed in the previous chapter, it was among the middle-class in the 1930s that the seeds of

Independence and its associated stripped; anti- historicist architectural expression emerged.   Thus, they continued to refrain from the use of any ornamental features that referenced their colonial past along with the elite of society. However the middle-class house for the most part remained traditional- spatial and formally- and features of the upper-class houses which truly reflected the ideas of Contextual Caribbean syncretism got filtered down into mere stylistic trends. This was most likely due to the middle-class' restricted access at the time to architects that were working with these revolutionary ideas. They had the desire for revolutionary change but not the adequate means to achieve it so they executed their vision in the best way they could.

The spatial layout of the middle-class house remained rather conventional with a clear front façade with veranda, living space at the front with the kitchen space to the back, and the bedrooms to the sides. They also continued compartmentalization of the interior space (ideologies of 'universal space did not trickle down to the middle-class). One new addition to the spatial composition of the house was the garage. By the 1960s, the car was becoming an essential symbol of advancement and for those fortunate enough to acquire one, the garage placed at the front of the house became a status showcase. There were minor form changes, such as the progressive decrease in pitch of the gabled roof until the one-way pitch shed roof became popular. With the change of the roof, the house also lost its symmetrical layout. The strict rectangular form that the gabled roof dictated was no longer necessary and different room sizes could now be accommodated and exploited by architects.

 The popular window among the middle-class became the glass louvered window in an aluminum frame. Though, the middle-class acknowledged and maintained the functionality that a louvered window provided, it still had an association with the colonial past, and a connection to Colonialism was unacceptable. To reconcile this dilemma, the middle-class abandoned the use of the wooden lover
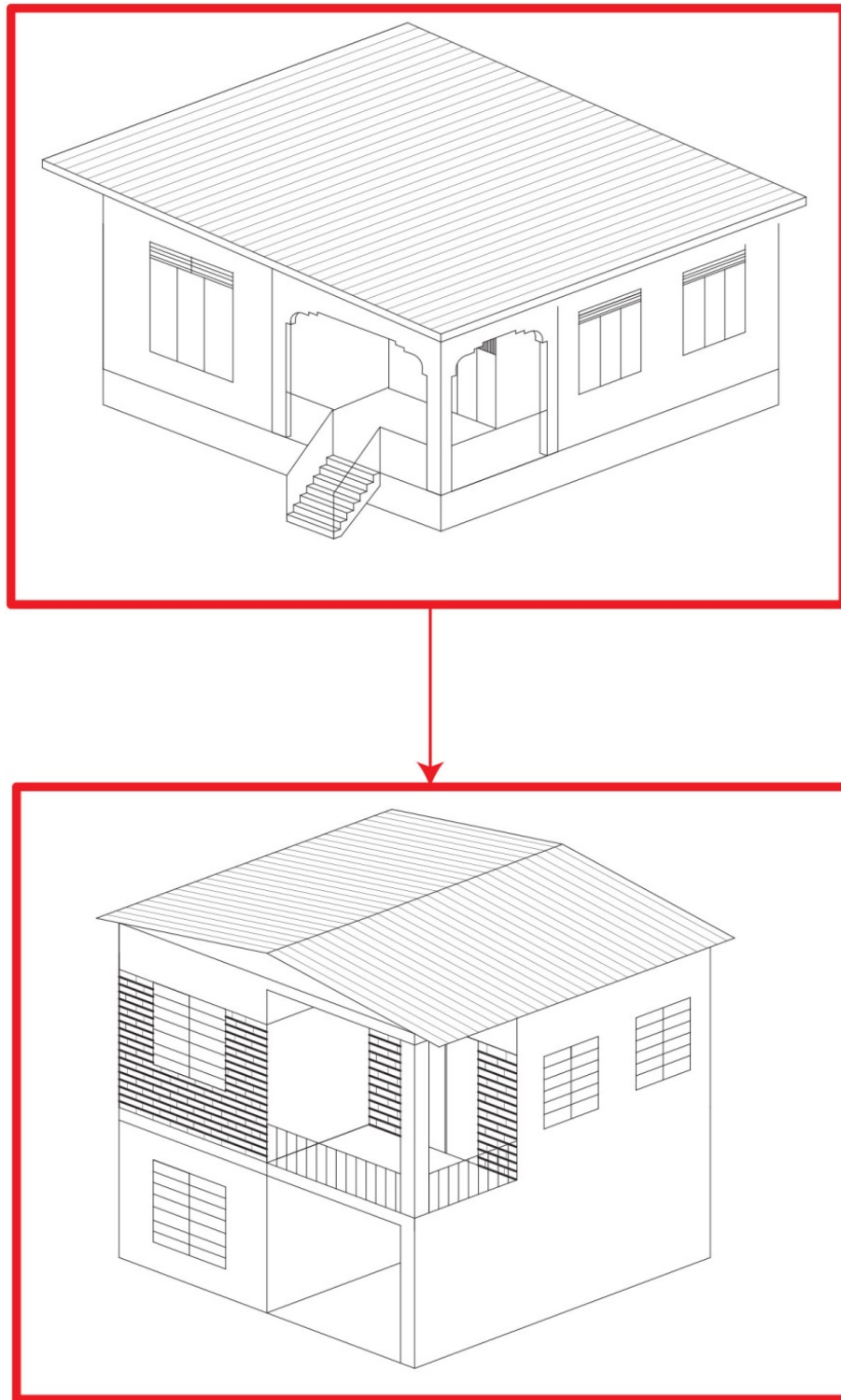
| Stone veneer | Glass louvers | Geometric patterning on the fence |

Figure 32: The post-Independence middle-class house
Source: Photos taken by author Jan 2013

**Figure 33: The transformation of the 1940s middle-class house to the 1970s
middle-class house**
Source: Diagram produced by author

which was seen as traditional, and a reminder of the Gingerbread House, which itself was a colonial construct. In its place they adopted the use of glass and aluminum to produce the louvers, as these materials were seen as progressive.

Another important feature of the middle-class house during that period was the use of blue stone and other stone veneers on the exterior of the house. Just as the fretwork used by the upper-class became institutionalized as the symbol of success and filtered down to the middle and the lower class, the stone material palette became the symbol of advancement that the middle-class adopted and used in the design of their homes. It was the new form of ornament for a period of reserved aesthetic.

Development of Social Housing

Despite the country's economic growth based on the success of the oil industry, there still remained large disparities between economic groups of the country because the oil industry was not labor intensive. Although by 1962 revenue from oil accounted for thirty percent of the country's GDP, the responsibility of providing employment to a large percentage of the economy still fell on the weaker industry: agriculture.[76] This meant that a large sector of the population was not experiencing economic prosperity, but, with the socialist ideologies spreading through the country there was a call for equity and an improved standard of living.   To address this problem, the Housing Act of 1962 created the National Housing Authority. The National Housing Authority was responsible for the creation of several socialist housing projects around Trinidad for the low- income sector of society. Among these projects was the Diego Martin housing project developed in the 1970s.

The Diamond Vale, Diego Martin housing project was the projection of an idealized lifestyle for the post-

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[76] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 222.

1900s

Increase in scale
Change in main material from wood to concrete
Decrease in pitch of roof
Inclusion of a garage

1970s
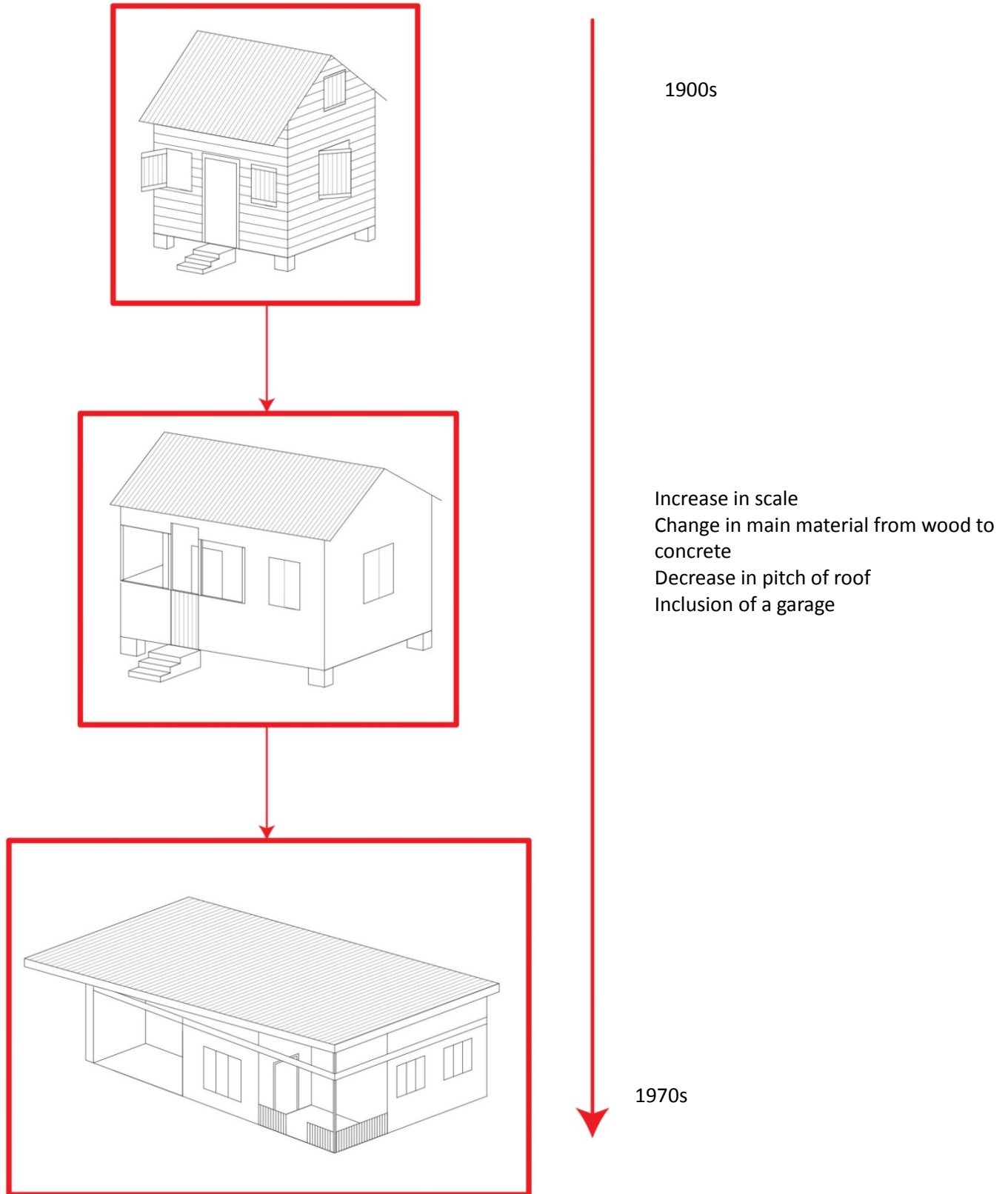
Figure 34: Evolution of the lower-class house
Source: Diagram produced by the author

independence Trinidadian. The layout of the district was rather suburban in nature and tailored to the car.[77] The houses were small in nature and fashioned after functional style houses being featured at the time in American magazines and brochures. Like the houses of the higher classes that were their contemporaries, they abandoned the use of wood as the major construction material and, instead, embraced the use of concrete and clay blocks plastered with concrete. However, wood was still used in the construction of the roof that was either a very shallow gable or a flat shed roof. The thin beams of the roof were allowed to project beyond the interior and the eaves of the roof to self-consciously declare themselves. This bold feature was also seen in the work of Anthony C. Lewis on the upper-class houses. The windows, like those of the middle-class houses, were glass louvers fixed in aluminum frames that replaced the wooden louvered system of the past lower-class. The stone aesthetic that made its way from the upper-class to the middle- class also filtered its way down to the design of these lower-income houses and manifested itself in the form of terrazzo floors that covered the exterior ground surfaces of the house. With all the positive evolutions of the society, also came a major negative: an increase in crime. This increase in crime resulted in the incorporation a new feature on the windows and doors called burglar-proofing, which entailed the placing of iron bars over the openings, to prevent the entry of criminals.

The design of the low-income housing by this government body institutionalized the design ideology of Trinidad in the post- emancipation society.   It reinforced the celebration of reservation and functionality and the abandonment of historical ornament due to its connection with a historical past. In contrast to the past, where ornament was seen as the symbol of advancement and class, to a refined owner, it was the absence of ornament in this period that represented progress and affluence.

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[77] Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa*, 301.

Figure 35: The Diamond Vale, Diego Martin house
Source: Photo taken by author, Jan 2013

Chapter Five: Renewed Architectural Exuberance in Contemporary Trinidad

Despite the prevalence of the popular stripped aesthetic during the latter half of the twentieth century, the contemporary residential fabric of Trinidad has a renewed interest in ornamentation. As previously seen, this shift in design ideology is linked to an evolution in class structure. As a result of a change in class structure, the newly elevated social group declared their status, through artifacts which symbolize their identity. The appearance of erratically designed, ostentatious houses, in contemporary Trinidad, is indubitably connected to the rise of the East Indians as a nouveau bourgeois group. The discussion of East Indians' role in the evolution of Trinidadian design was held until this point because it was not until about the 1970s that they began to have a design influence on the greater population. Initially isolated from the rest of the general population into centralized rural communities after leaving indentureship and the plantation, the East Indians developed their houses parallel to, but not in accordance with, the rest of the general population; the development of their houses were influenced by different social factors from the rest of the population.   Only with the later integration of the East Indian population into urban areas and mainstream culture did the evolution of their houses begin to overlap with that of the general populous, and not until the 1970s did the East Indians begin to enter the elite tier of society and have a significant influence on residential design.   The typical house of the East Indian community continues to be a major influence on the contemporary house condition of Trinidad and a major contributor to the resurgence of a heavily ornamental aesthetic after a period of reservation in design.

Emergence of the East Indian population of Trinidad

After complete emancipation in 1838 there was a shortage of labor to work on the plantation.[78] Most of the former slave population was not interested in continuing to work for their former masters even if they were promised pay and civil treatment. Planters decided that the perfect solution to this labor

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[78] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 96.

shortage was the importation of labor as immigrants would provide direct labor as well as create competition for the ex-slaves forcing wages down and even driving some of the ex-slaves back to the estate. The first source of imported labor was the islands of the Eastern Caribbean. However, this did not last because planters found them unsatisfactory. These laborers would not sign contracts, were not easily manageable, and would not remain on the estate as they were usually educated or skilled enough to get jobs in the town. After the Eastern Caribbean workers, planters tried immigrants from the United States of America, Sierra Leone, France, Germany, Madeira and China.[79] However, they were unwilling to remain on the estate or unsuitable for the hot tropical climate. Finally, planters found a successful source of labor in India.

India proved to be a suitable source of labor for a variety of reasons: it had a large population of people accustomed to agricultural labor in a tropical climate, conditions of extreme poverty, there was a simple legislation process for migration because much of India was under British rule, and there was a relatively low cost of immigration. In May 1845, the first group of Indian immigrants came from Calcutta with 225 immigrants.[80] Between 1845 and 1848, approximately 5162 immigrants came from India.[81] Immigration was then suspended until 1852, and then reinstated and continued until 1917. During negotiations, the British Indian government agreed on a free return passage for all Indians after they had served their indentureship period. This return passage made the Indians in the West Indies seem impermanent. As a result, the long-term impact on Trinidadian society of importing a large number of immigrants of different race, religion and culture was not considered. As time passed, planters increased the tasks of laborers and reduced wages. These hardships encouraged Indian laborers to leave the sugar estates once their indentureship period was over. They could have returned to India with their free return

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[79] Brereton, *History of Modern* Trinidad, 98-100.
[80] Ibid,101.
[81] Gerard Besson, *A photographic Album of Trinidad*, 34.

passage, but most of the East Indians had chosen to migrate to Trinidad to leave behind conditions of intense economic hardships such as: low wages, famines, drought, and repression. Thus, at the end of the indentureship period most of the East Indians chose to continue living in Trinidad.

The Indian Ajoupa

After serving their term, indentured Indian laborers left the barracks and continue life elsewhere in villages in newly-opened districts of the island. They became peasant proprietors and carried out small-scale cultivation for personal consumption and for the local market. They pioneered the local production of paddy rice, they worked as cocoa contractors and freeholders, and also worked as sugarcane farmers. Near to the land they cultivated, the East Indians erected their houses.[82] The barracks on the Estate were miserable, unsanitary and overcrowded housing. Thus, their new houses, though they could be nothing more than humble shacks, were a much improved condition and a signifier of independence and a slowly elevating lifestyle.

They built houses that were similar to their traditional style of building in India. This type of house was termed the "Indian Ajoupa" due to its resemblance to the Ajoupa of the indigenous Amerindians.[83] However, it differed in terms of layout and primary materials. Later, the Indian Ajoupa evolved in form as the Indians were able to further express their culture. They built the structural skeleton of the house using round poles and bamboo and in-filled the space between the structure with any suitable material such as twigs, crocus bags or bagasse.[84] The frame and infill was then covered with a layer of tapia made of a mixture of clay, grass, cow dung and water. The structure of the roof was made with wood framing and covered with thatched carat leaves or palm leaves, bound together with string or wire. The floor

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[82] Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa*,171.
[83] Ibid, 171.
[84] Bagasse is the dry pulpy residue left after the extraction of juice from sugarcane. A crocus bag is a burlap bag.

Figure 36: The East Indian Ajoupa
Source: http://themusingsofmonkey.blogspot.com/2011/06/trinidad-tobago-aprilmay-2011.html

inside the house was made of packed clay reaching approximately six inches off the floor. Around the

house a depression was formed so the house would appear taller than it was. The open space around

the house was left clear of vegetation except for some tree trunks. It was covered with clay and kept

smooth and clean. However humble, these houses reflected the pride of its owner. Clearing the land

surrounding the house, and keeping it smooth and swept clean was analogous to placing a château on a

vast expanse of perfectly manicured lawn. The quiescent ground surface provided a plain backdrop

against which the house became the focal point with no other visual distractions. Giving this house a

monumental positioning in its landscape gave the house some sense of grandeur. The depression

around the house to make it appear taller added to this grandiose effect. Height is directly associated

with stature so it was a desirable feature of the house. Although they could not physically build their

houses larger, East Indians achieved the effect of status through visual compensation.

Development of an East Indian Community

An increasing number of Indians settled in new Indian villages, which provided the basis for the

development of Indian communities.[85] The strict divisions due to the caste system and region of origin

evaporated, and Indians were regarded as a single group differentiated only by religion. They regarded

Trinidad as their permanent home and identified themselves as locals. At the same time, they began to

object to discriminatory treatment and voiced their objections in local newspapers. In 1897, they

formed the East Indian National Association (EINA) to combat laws which infringed upon the rights of

East Indians.[86] The formation of the group did not lead to any important amendments to legislation, but

it was significant according to Brereton because of the awareness it brought to the government and

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[85] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 108.
[86] Free East Indians that had finished their period of indentureship were still subjected to legal restrictions of movement and labor that the rest of the population were not subjected to. Brereton (1981, 109) stated: "One clause authorized the arrest of free Indians if found on a public highway without their certificate of exemption from labor; another required an employer to demand to see this certificate before employing a free Indian."

society of the existence of the East Indian community as a force to be reckoned with.[87] However, for Trinidadian society at large, the rising vocality of the East Indian population was hard to accept. They became even more unsympathetic to the East Indian population as they realized that this new group had no intention of returning to India. A hostile environment was created towards Indians in Trinidad, and they were assigned to the lowest level of the socio-economic and cultural ladder.

Despite discrimination, the East Indians held strong to their culture and their religion. They continued to practice Hinduism and Islam even though it was regarded as heathenism in an overwhelmingly Christian society. They rejected western clothing and Hindu women continued to adorn themselves in bangles and ornate saris though this was seen as uncivilized, and they continued saving their wages derailing present gratifications for future goals of success despite being stereotyped as misers.[88] Overcoming all hardships, East Indians maintained a strong cultural identity and, through their ambitious nature, continued to improve their conditions.

The Urban East Indian

At the beginning of the twentieth century, ninety-seven percent of the East Indian population that was born in India was illiterate.[89] The refusal of East Indian parents to send their offspring to the government schools or to the denominational assisted schools impeded increased literacy.[90] They feared their children would be ill-treated or pressured to convert to western culture and Christianity as the schools were an important westernizing agency. Some sent their children to school but rejected Christianity. This low enrollment of East Indian children meant t they did not adopt a command of 'the Queen's

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[87] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 110.
[88] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 111.
[89] Ibid, 112.
[90] At the time there were no Hindu or Muslim schools. The denominational schools were Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian. The Presbyterian schools especially encouraged the attendance of Indians.

English' which was a necessity to acquire respectability. The hindrance of their children from entering formal education proved to be a disadvantage to East Indians because it caused their late entry into the high –prestige occupations and slow rate of social mobility.

By the 1940s, however, a transformation occurred in the East Indian community and the urban educated East Indian started to emerge. Before this time, being mostly associated with agriculture, East Indians were restricted to the rural areas of Trinidad. By the 1940s, the population of East Indians living in the major areas of San Fernando and Port of Spain increased. The enrollment of East Indian children in schools also increased. Later, the establishment of Islamic and Hindu denominational primary and secondary schools meant East Indians could attend without fear of discrimination or conversion. At the same time, the East Indian economic condition also continued to progress. They were known for their entrepreneurship; they opened small shops, hardwares and other small businesses which continued to grow. The frugality of the group associated with their traditional culture contributed to the accumulation of wealth among its members. These businesses usually remained family owned and flourished into some of the largest businesses in Trinidad by the later generations (and still remain some of the biggest businesses today in contemporary Trinidadian society).

The House on Stilts

As East Indians elevated their status in society, the Ajoupa transformed and the house on stilts became the characteristic aesthetic of the East Indian community.[91] Besides the stilts, the features of the house resembled those of other local houses. The houses were made of wood and, later, transitioned to concrete. They were rectangular with the short side facing the road and a veranda at the front. The roof was a gable with a shallow pitch, covered with galvanized sheets. Typical louver windows and ventilation
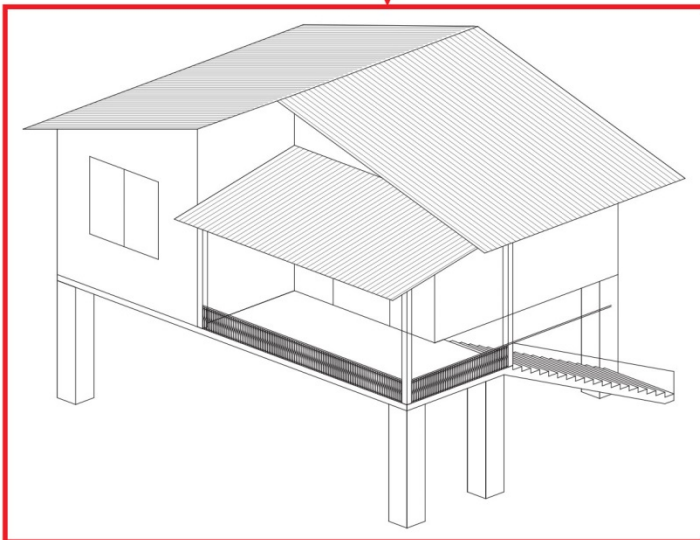
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[91] Newel Lewis, *Ajoupa*,180.
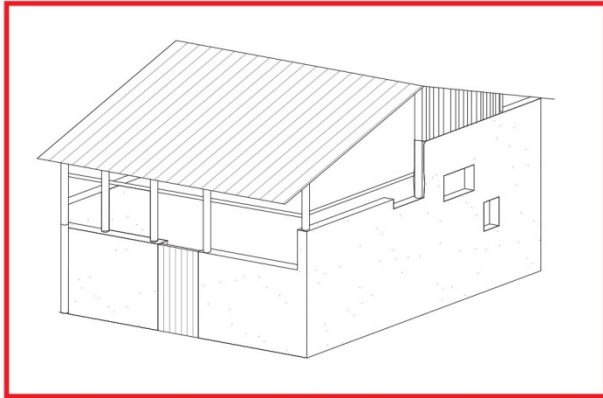
Figure 37: The transformation of the East Indian Ajoupa to the house on stilts
Source: Diagram by author

Figure 38: The East Indian house on stilts
Source: Photo taken by author, Jan2013

blocks were also used.   There were two sets of conspicuous steps that led to the house, one placed at

the back and another at the front. The railings for the stairs were typically made of cast iron fashioned in

an ornamental pattern.   This transition from the Indian Ajoupa to this stilted house with otherwise

typical local features suggests a changing attitude of East Indians towards society. First, the use of a

more typical local designed showed the beginning of acceptance of mainstream culture. In India, houses

built near the water are threatened by monsoon rain floods. Farmers who could afford built their

houses on stilts high enough to protect the house from flood waters. Similarly, East Indians began to

build their houses on concrete stilts. The central area of Trinidad where many East Indians settled was

prone to flooding. However, it was not to the extent of monsoon flooding. Hence, there was no strong

functional explanation for such high stilts. Moreover, this aesthetic was even used in areas not prone to

flooding. This further alluded to an explanation beyond a functional one. The East Indian community's,

strong expression of a reference unique to their native land showed a strengthening of their self-identity

due to growing affirmation of their rising place in society.

Assimilation of the East Indian Community

With Independence and the decentralization of the East Indian community, there was a major shift in

their relationship with the rest of the Trinidadian population. Up to this point, other Trinidadians saw

themselves as Creole and East Indians as outsiders. With a desire for a national identity and cohesion,

the antagonism towards the East Indian sector of society had to be addressed because by this time they

were obviously a fixed entity in society. Social scientists of the 1960s were fascinated with the

polymorphic culture of Trinidad and how such a society could be made into a nation after Independence

and the one cohesive thread, Britain, was removed.   In 1968, after Independence, an American social

scientist, Ivar Oxal, investigated post-independence Trinidadian society and described two simultaneous

societal processes to account for the pluralistic society managing to form a cohesive nation, with the

integration of East Indians into this idea of a nation. First, he believed that there existed in Trinidad a

social process called 'plural acculturation'.[92] Plural acculturation explained how the conglomeration of

racial and cultural mixtures learned to appreciate the way of life of the several other groups to create a

fluid, yet stable, system of inter-group relations. For this 'plural acculturation' to occur, he believed that

a slow, but inevitable, 'creolization' of the population was necessary. This creolization of society

involved the expanding of the general reserve of values to accommodate the values of all groups, and

serve all members of society regardless of race or religion. It is a process that has a shared theme of

tolerance and peaceful coexistence between all members of society.[93] Oxaal also described a

simultaneous and equally important process of 'plural disassociation.' This was defined as a pervasive

state of mind which is characterized by an attitude that each should attend to his own affairs and not go

interfering in the business of other groups.[94] These two processes, taken together, accounted for a

degree of assimilation and level of cohesion that underscored Trinidadian society after Independence

and allowed East Indian culture to become part of the mainstream popular.

With increasing acceptance of their culture, East Indian self-pride and assurance of their identity

continued to grow. Simultaneously, a major sector of the group also continued to accumulate capital.

Not only did their businesses continue growing, but, with the incorporation of subsequent generations

into the formal education system, many of the younger generation of East Indians were now obtaining

high-prestige occupations such as doctors and lawyers. What further helped this group to elevate the

social hierarchy was retention of their educated population within the country, contributing to and

participating in the local economy. At the time of Independence there was a major 'brain-drain' with the

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[92]Dr. Anthony Maingot, "Foreign Social Scientists Look at Trinidad at Independence," in Trinidad and Tobago 50 Years of Independence, ed. Dr. Hamid Ghany, (London: First, 2012), 22-23.

[93] Maingot, "Foreign Social Scientists Look at Trinidad at Independence", 22.
[94] Ibid,23.

movement of the educated population of other ethnic groups especially the Afro-Trinidadian population out of the country. With a burgeoning educated and capital-holding population the East Indians continued to flourish throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, promoting their culture and, eventually, entering the political arena. In 1987, Noor Hassanali, the first Indo-Trinidadian and Muslim President was appointed, and, in 1995, Basdeo Panday, the first Indo-Trinidadian and Hindu Prime Minister, was elected.

As of the 2000 census, with forty percent of the population, Indo-Trinidadians have become the majority ethnic group of the Trinidadian population.[95] They continue to be a dynamic force in the current social, economic and political environment of Trinidad with the current Prime Minister being Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the second Indo-Trinidadian and first female Prime Minister. Despite social tensions which still exist, and the lingering reluctance by certain sects of society to acknowledge Indo-Trinidadian as being "truly" Trinidadian, their successes and contribution to Trinidadian society make their 'creole' status undeniable. [96] Just as the French free coloreds of the early 1900s and the Afro- Saxon elites of the 1930s, they are aware of their contribution and elevated status after years of subjugation. Due to continuous conflicts, they are also acutely aware of hesitation to acknowledge their status. At the same time, Indo-Trinidadians are trying to shed past identities, and, just as Trinidadians at the time of Independence, find themselves trying to forge a new identity. However, they chose not to do this not through the active abandonment of their past, but through the adaptation of a traditional culture in its transnational setting to accommodate change. To declare their status and contemporary identity, in accordance with the methodology of past nouveau bourgeois groups, Indo-Trinidadians have transformed the design of their house to make it a visual affirmation of their place in the social hierarchy.

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[95] The ethnicity demographic for Trinidad and Tobago in 2000 was Indian 40%, African 37.5%, mixed 20.5%, other 1.2% unspecified 0.8%

[96] Up until this point the term creole was only defined as a local-born Trinidadian of European or African descent it did not account for people of East Indian descent.

The Contemporary Upper-Class House

Profuse levels of rich, layered ornamentation have always been an endemic part of traditional East

Indian culture. Hindu women are known for adorning their bodies with bangles and embellished saris.

Intricate ancient Hindu temples, conceived of as the house of their deities, are layered in ornamental

features. For instance, the Konark Sun Temple in Orissa, India designed in 1250 AD and dedicated to the

sun god Surya, had its entire structure covered with layers of intricately carved stone structures

depicting a wide variety of subjects.[97] Unsurprisingly, the contemporary Indo-Trinidadian community

continues the use of ornament to design their personal houses as declaration of their identity and

societal success. In describing the Indian house condition, John Newel Lewis (1984,10) stated, "One

definition of Indian architecture is that it is merely a skeleton covered, obscured and overwhelmed by a

mass of ornament, sensuous sculpture and decoration." Examining a residence of the Gulf View area, an

upper-class suburb of the San-Fernando area, it displays the condition described by Newel Lewis. The

basic form of the house is un-revolutionary; it is merely a back-drop for the application of ornament.

Unlike the eclectically designed houses of the early twentieth century, the ornamental features are, for

the most part, purely stylistic. They do not have a practical function; instead, they incite in the audience

the cognitive association of these symbols with status.

The grand scale of the house dominates the surroundings and captures attention through both its area

and vast height. This volumetrically expansive house is capped by a dynamic roof-scape marked by the

return of the gable and abandonment of the flat roof of the previous generation. To further capture

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[97] "Sun Temple, Konârak," *UNESCO World Heritage Sites*. accessed April 2, 2013,.
http://whc.unesco.org/id_site.

Intricate iron-work of the gate

Moldings fashioned to imitate marble

Quoins and engaged pilasters

Figure 39: The Gulf View House, representative of a typical contemporary upper-class house
Source: Photo taken by author, Jan2013

attention, the corners of the house are adorned with applied ornamental quoins thereby referencing the functional quoins introduced to Trinidad by the French elites at the turn of the eighteenth century. However, the typical veranda on the ground floor, at the front of the house, is completely abandoned in a refutation of history. Through Trinidad's history, the presence of a veranda remained a prominent feature, transcending time, class levels and ethnic groups, to reflect the continuous and shared social value of communal interaction. The absence of the veranda marks yet another shift as the society becomes more individualistic and fundamentally, capitalist.

Windows and doors, as an opportunity for ornamentation, are not overlooked. The arched windows, surrounded by moldings made of concrete, are fashioned to resemble engaged columns and painted white to imitate stone. This peculiar window treatment is reminiscent of that of the façade of the study at the Boissière House, varying only in material, with the use of concrete instead of wood to imitate stone. As another reinterpreted source of ornament, the iron bars of burglar proofing have been transformed into intricate floral patterns and painted a bright hue. Its treatment is in the spirit of the design mentality of the early twentieth century, and it is the only ornamental feature that has a practical function. The concrete moldings of the second story balcony, together with the decorative columns of the entrance, are also treated with an early twentieth- century mentality. The concrete is treated to imitate a marble palette. Like the Boissière House in the early twentieth century, cheaper materials are fashioned to be mimetic of a fine material thus elevating its splendor and status. The main doors of the house are wooden with inset glass panels with gold engraved floral fenestration, also reminiscent of the early twentieth-century Trinidadian aesthetic.

As primary boundary, the fence plays an important- if ambiguous- role of differentiation. The short and transparent fence, like the Boissière House's fence allow visual connectivity but still emphatically demarcates the property, acting as a physical boundary between the elite within and the "others" without. The fence consists of a short concrete wall, which has a beveled edge painted white. Running the length of the wall, above the concrete, is a layer of ornate cast iron work four feet high. The physical and ideological connection between the ornamental work of the contemporary fence and the fence of the elite of Trinidad's historical past is undeniable.

The impetus for the design of this house is irrefutable: it uses associative logics and self-consciously draws inspiration for its ornament from Trinidad's aristocratic past and marries it with contemporary symbols of progress to evoke sentiments of class and stature in the viewer. Like its predecessors, it uses the house as a symbolic representation of its owner's achievements, aspirations and identity in a complexly stratified, dynamic society.

Influence on Low-Income Houses

In a similar manner as the lower classes of the three previously discussed periods in Trinidad's history, the contemporary Trinidadian lower-class has acknowledged the success of the methodology used by the elite class to display their wealth and status and thus has resulted in a resurgence of ornamentation among this class. They have identified certain features of the upper-class houses and incorporate them into their houses as they aspire for an elevated status. The National Housing Authority (now called the Housing development Co-operation or HDC), developed post-independence and responsible for the Diamond Vale housing area previously discussed, continues to develop social housing in Trinidad today. In the early 2000s, the HDC built the Toruba Housing community. The houses were standardized, all

Figure 40: Transformation of the lower-class house
Source: Diagram produced by the author

1970s

Return of gabled roof
Box form no longer celebrated
Use of ornament

Present
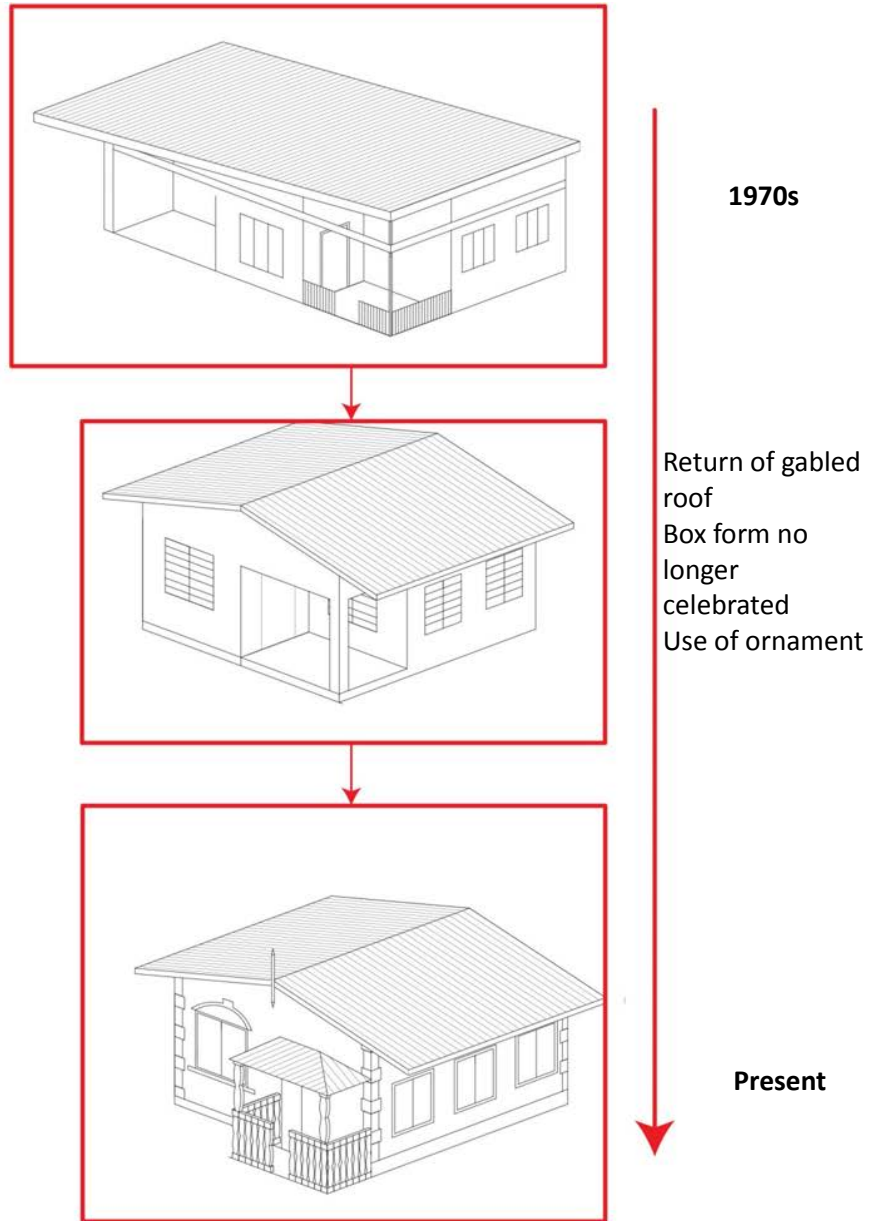
Figure 41: Decoration of the contemporary lower-class house
The house on the left and the house on the right began as the same design
Source: Photo taken by author, Jan2013

rectangular in form, one-story with a simple gabled roof and an area demarcated by a single square

column that could be used as a veranda. The houses were designed with louvered glass windows in an

aluminum frame, like the ones in the 1970s development, and no ornamental features. The houses are,

however, not left in their original state as the need for differentiation and prestige incites their

transformation. As time progresses houses not only increase in scale but their level of ornament also

increases mimetic of the houses of the upper-class sector.   Despite their more appropriate functional

qualities, the louvered windows are replaced with casement windows because their popularity among

the upper-class has made them a status symbol. Moldings are added to the windows and decorative

quoins added to the corners of the house. The simple wooden doors are replaced by elaborate wooden

doors with decorative glass panels. Columns, balustrades and finials are also often added to the exterior

of the house. The austere house in contemporary society is seen as a symbol of poverty, and, for this

reason, the low-income house mutates into mini follies as the owner seeks to escape their lower-class

status.

Conclusion

Felipe Hernandez stated, "According to psychoanalysis, identities (individual and collective) are always in

the process of being formed and that process is neither linear nor cohesive. For that reason, identities

are understood as being both plural and dynamic, always changing" (Hernandez 2010, 12). Identity

formation is a complex and cyclical process. As either individuals or the collective, we are caught in a

constant struggle of trying to define identity and then reaffirm this definition with the very things

through which we reproduce our existence. Since approximately 1797, Trinidad has been a poly-ethnic

society with a complex system of stratification. It is precisely this polymorphic culture that makes the

negotiation of both an individual and a collective identity a difficult battle. A battle, which throughout

the history of modern Trinidad (1783-present) has used the house as one of its main weapons. The

house is most suitable for the exploration of identity while allowing the simultaneous proclamation of

said identity to the world. Trinidadians, from the colonial setting to contemporary times, have used the

house to reflect their identity, especially with regards to: class status, aspirations of social mobility and

cultural supremacy. Although the composition of the nouveau bourgeois changed throughout Trinidad's

history, their methodology for affirming their identity and social position remained the same. The design

of the house was altered to reflect changing ideologies in society, of the aesthetic associated with

supremacy.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the French Creole coloreds, after years of oppression,

declared their new status in society as elite, capitalist, cocoa planters. They reaffirmed their European

heritage, a coveted part of their identity, through the design of their urban mansions.   They built highly

ornamented houses with deep symbolism of wealth that influenced the newly expanding, aspirational

middle-class resulting in the gingerbread typology among the urban middle-class. During the post-

World War I period a new elite group emerged, the Afro-Saxon Intellectuals. Their houses declared their

position as new intellectual as opposed to capital holding elite and embrace their Identity as descendants of a powerful 'Mother Africa'. They shattered European associations and stripped their houses of ornament for a more austere aesthetic. By the 1960s in the post-emancipation period, the general population united to forge a new autonomous identity free of the constraints of British rule. Here again the design of the house changed to reflect modernist ideals and explored the theory of Contextual Caribbean Syncretism. In contemporary times, houses have been marked by a resurgence of ostentatiousness. This reflects the desire of the new, contemporary elite class, the East Indians, to declare their elevated status in society after years of subjugation and reaffirm their East Indian cultural identity.

The dynamic design of the house speaks of the complex struggle with issues of class status and identity that societies such as Trinidad endure in the colonial setting. A struggle that is only amplified in the post-colonial situation as the country finds itself in a liminal stage. With the eradication of British rule, Trinidad is not the colonial state it once was, but with a struggle to define what is truly Trinidadian in such a variegated society it is not yet at a new, stable state. Thus, Trinidad finds itself in a constant negotiation between past and present, in an attempt to rationalize its future, and this negotiation is externalized in the way the house, one of our most personal artifacts, is designed.

<u>Afterword</u>

I began this project with a negative outlook on contemporary Trinidadian residences, seeing it as a

bastardization of true architecture and simply gaudy. However, through the process of this study, I have

been able to see past the picture at the surface, to the complex, social story of my people, which each

house encapsulates. It is my hope that readers, and fellow scholars will grow to recognize the

Trinidadian house as a manifestation of Trinidad's cultural production, and also read the house in a new

and different way. It is also my hope that, as a people, Trinidadians will learn the importance of

preservation of great works of architecture as it is so endemic to whom we are as Trinidadians.

This study was simply a scratch at the surface. There is far more to explore and discuss. The resurgence

of ornament in the contemporary society is further exemplified by the two emerging phenomena: the

renovation of houses designed in the 1940s to 1970, when an austere aesthetic was valued, to now

include ornament in the contemporary situation; and the now use of decorative features in the original

design of social housing by the Housing development Co-operation, in new low-income housing

developments. This refurbishing of the house with ornaments shows a renewed appreciation for it and

its regained condition as status symbol. The provision of ornament in the initial phase of social housing

illustrates recognition of the necessity for these symbols among the lower class, as a means of

identifying themselves with the greater capital holding sector of society and thus, through architecture,

elevating their social status. These phenomena were too early in their stages to make conclusions about

them in the thesis, but they present opportunities for further scholarship. There is also the matter of

Tobago. Though Trinidad and Tobago is one state, Tobago was left out of this thesis because it presents

itself as a different case study, with a varied history, and different social tensions to Trinidad. I hope to

conduct a study on Tobago in the future, as it would be equally fascinating to this study of Trinidad.

I thoroughly enjoyed this research and it is so close to my heart as I am a proud native of Trinidad and

Tobago and I hope other scholars of Architecture will also invest in research of the islands.

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Appendix

Definition of Key Terms: LEXICON OF POST-COLONIAL THEORY

To enable the investigation of the presence or deliberate negation of ornamentation in the design of the facade of the typical, Trinidadian, single- family house throughout the Colonial and post-colonial period, as a construct of societal aspirations, it is important to identify and define the framework in which these aspirations were germinated and the reasons for their sustenance. For the purpose of this study I will define the following key terms (as they apply to this research) that are necessary for understanding the ideas presented in this thesis: Colonialism, post -colonialism, ambivalence, hybridization and transculturation and creolization.

Colonialism

In his Dissertation Dr. Dylan Kerrigan defines Colonialism as "the practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. A mechanism of difference making throughout Western colonialism and its representation of historical actualities to divide populations into groups. And most specifically good and bad."[98] This thesis seeks to understand the role Colonialism plays in the development of architecture. Historically the antithesis has always been acknowledged, that is the role architecture has played as a medium in the Colonization process. Homi Bhabha states "Architecture was one of the principal means used by colonizers to impose a new social and political order and, also, to maintain control over colonized subjects." [99] However buildings are not inert, they are always reacting to their cultural environments, thus it is inevitable that the Colonial process had and is still having an effect on the production of the built environment. The Colonizer brought with them the logics and style of building of their mother country. However the host country had its own language for building and it is vacuous to think in this overlapping of cultures in an environment of tension that they would not react

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[98] Kerrigan, "The Accumulation of Capital ", 12.
[99] Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 16.

to each other and bring about metamorphosis. Concerning buildings Homi Bhabha states, "...they

express those narratives of conflict between peoples (users), power, technology and social change."[100]

Architecture can encapsulate the story of place and maker.

Post- Colonialism

Post-Colonialism is not a single idea but instead is a term that encompasses varying ideas and practices.

For the purpose of the study I will use the definition of Post -colonialism that refers to an economic and

cultural movement that involves the socio- economic assimilation and class consolidation of indigenous

colonial elites and local masses in the successful expansion of global capitalism. It is the era before and

after Independence in which foreign elites are replaced by local ones. [101]It should be noted that the

system of class stratification established in the colonial era persists into the post-colonialism era with the

difference being a change in the subjects that hold the position at the top of the hierarchy.   The term

post- colonial may be somewhat misleading as it alludes to the after, to the end of a period but Colonial

ideas are still active in contemporary society as cultures mix, harmonize and conflict.   Post- colonial

theory studies these relations of harmony and conflict among different peoples and their culture.

Ambivalence – Zimbabwean novelist Tsitsi Dangarembga developed the term 'native's nervous

condition'. He defined the term as the condition of a person's existence being strung out between

incompatible layers of different cultures due to the superimposition of a colonial or dominant culture on

an original culture producing a nervous condition of ambivalence, uncertainty, a blurring of cultural

boundaries, an inside and outside and an otherness within.[102] Homi Bhabha spoke about colonialism in

terms of ambivalence concerning the way it constructs colonized subjects through an ambivalent process

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[100] Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects*, 21.
[101] Kerrigan, "The Accumulation of capital", 13.
[102] Robert J.C. Young, *Post colonialism: A very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23.

of simultaneously inclusion and exclusion that places subjects in an intermediate position between the colonized and the colonizer. [103] Though the imperial power, the group being dominated and the geographical location may change throughout history but the formula for domination has remained fairly constant. An imperial power moves into a new territory and confronted by the native "savages" of the land make it their mission, alongside the acquisition of resources, to civilize the sector of the population that they believe hold this potential.   To civilize the natives they are taught the superiority of the foreign culture and educated to read, write, dress and most important to this study, build according to said culture. In summation, they are taught to aspire to an image of the colonials. The conflict arises because the colonials never actually want the colonized to become them because that would lead to empowerment interfering with subjugation techniques and dismantling the colonial system. Thus, the colonized are always kept at bay by the colonizer resulting in a people who no longer identify themselves as what they once were but are not and will not be what they aspire to be leading to this deep sense of ambivalence.

Hybridization

As defined by Homi Bhabha hybridization refers to, "the site of cultural productivity that emerges on the margins of culture, between cultures. As such, it is a space where cultural elements are continually rearticulated and reconstituted."[104] Hybrid cultures are resultants of the interaction between varying cultures. It is important not to over simplify the term and see the resultant hybrid as a straightforward mixture of two homogeneous cultures. Hybrid cultures arise out of colonialism due to the implantation of foreign cultures into a previously established cultural system. Colonialism is considered a complex intersection of multiple subject positions and historical temporalities.[105] Thus the hybrid is ever-changing

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[103] Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects*, 5.
[104] Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects*, 58.
[105] Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects*, 61.

and cannot be classified as belonging to the colonized or the colonizer but as a third culture that simultaneously merges and perpetuates difference. Architecture as an artifact of culture can express this cultural hybridity.

Transculturation

Fernando Ortiz originated the term transculturation and defined it as, "a set of ongoing transmutations; it is full of creativity and never ceases: it is irreversible. It is always a process in which we give something in exchange for what we receive: the two parts of the equation end up being modified. From this process springs out a new reality, which is not a patchwork of features, but a new phenomenon, original and independent."[106] The terms transculturation and hybridization are related terms. They both describe a process where a new and pluralistic culture is generated from the interaction between varying cultures.

Creolization

To address the processes of hybridization and Transculturation, the Caribbean has developed its own term "creolization". Creolization views the translation of culture as a two-way process. It describes a condition in which a dominant, transplanted culture is transformed into new identities that take on material elements from the culture of their new location. At the same time, the culture of the location is also transformed as a result of the exchange.[107]

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[106] "Transculturation and Cultural Hybridity," last modified July 15, 2012, http://www.gira.info/en/about-us/research-questions-and-key-notions/transculturation-and-cultural-hybridity.
[107] Young, *Post colonialism*, 142.