

## Whiteness and the Great Houses as “symbols of slavery”

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### Abstract

The Great Houses, which were residential mansions for the colonial white elites, were regarded as by-products of slavery as they were built with the enormous funds acquired from forced labour in the former British colony of Trinidad. This paper seeks to show what these colonial buildings mean to the modern-day whites who are labelled as abusers and oppressors by the non-white members of society. According to the interviews conducted with the white citizens in Trinidad, although the Magnificent Seven does not hold much significance for them, the Country Club sits at the core of whiteness in Trinidad. The prestigious membership club still works to strengthen the ties amongst the white society in 21<sup>st</sup> century Trinidad.

### 1. Introduction

The Great Houses in the Caribbean were luxurious mansions for wealthy families in the colonial era. The white citizens in Trinidad, who were one of the most prosperous colonies in the British Caribbean in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are often blanketed as descendants of plantation owners. As such, the standing great houses are claimed to have some sort of family connection to the white citizens in modern day Trinidad. This claim implies that “slavery money” made the whites rich, that is, the whites became prosperous and continue to enjoy their wealth and privilege because of the finances acquired from the cruel, forced labour of African slaves.

Oftentimes those Great Houses are regarded as the symbols of notorious slave holdings, thus an unfavourable historical legacy of the island. At the same time, highlighted with their delicate and fine artwork and craftsmanship, the Great Houses have become popular tourist destinations. In somewhat romanticised colonial history lectures by tour guides, their architectural styles are described with a reference to Europe, for example, “Ambard’s House was built in French style” (Fig. 1), which is successful in implying forced cultural “authenticity” and “maturity” of the island<sup>[1]</sup>.

Those mansions were built, undoubtedly, with flourishing finances from the colonial plantation economy, supported by a labour force of African slaves, before the end of slavery. With the full emancipation of slaves in 1838, followed by the 5 years of apprenticeship from official British abolition, technically, none from among the current white population of Trinidad was a slaveholder. In other words, even though 183 years have passed since the abolition of slavery, the white citizens of present-day Trinidad are still considered accountable for the slavery, in which they themselves have never engaged. This paper therefore explores what the so-called symbols of slaveholders, namely the Great Houses, mean to the white citizens of Trinidad, in a postcolonial society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Fig. 1 Ambard’s House, one of the Magnificent Seven,

photographed in Port of Spain, Trinidad by Hideyo Morimoto Craigwell in September 2015.

## 2. Trinidad's unique colonial history

The island of Trinidad was “discovered” and claimed by the Spaniards in 1498. The island was ignored until 1783, when the Spanish Crown proclaimed the Cedula of Population, and started giving incentives to lure Roman Catholic immigrants to the island, targeting mainly the neighbouring French islands first, then mainland France. This Cedula was the beginning of the development of plantations. That immigration flow continued even after the island was handed over to Britain in 1798.

These facts resulted in distinct differences in colonial society buildings between other British colonies in the Caribbean, such as Jamaica and Barbados. Firstly, by the time Trinidad became a plantation colony, Jamaica and Barbados had already established lucrative plantation economies, which were financially influential to Britain's society [2]. Secondly, to prevent Trinidad from becoming another competitive sugar colony, Jamaica and Barbados eagerly supported the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which officially prohibited the trading of slaves within the British Empire [3]. Thus, Trinidad, as British colony, ended up having less than 10 years of importing slaves as free labour, in order to develop its sugar plantation economy, compared to Jamaica and Barbados, who participated in the importation of slaves for hundreds of years.

Thirdly, the sizes of most of the plantations in Trinidad were relatively small, under 100 acres, due to the limited amount of labourers, compared to the sizes of the plantations in Jamaica which boasted an abundance of slaves [4]. Lastly, in Trinidad, a distinctive large Roman Catholic, French-speaking, free-coloured, slave-owning, land-owning class was established. Technically a free-coloured, slave-owning class was entitled to engage in making a profit from plantation activities; however, no matter how successful they were, their access to the upper class of society, namely the elite class, was still limited until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [5]. Therefore, the whites were the only segment of the colonial society who

enjoyed the advancement of wealth and the social privilege of whiteness.

## 3. The whites in Trinidad

### 3.1. Heterogeneous white society

This paper primarily focuses on the whites in Trinidad whose families migrated from Europe and have lived in the Caribbean for more than three generations. The whites in Trinidad were not homogeneous. Those who emigrated in the colonial era were from Spain, France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Corsica, Germany, Venezuela, and from the neighbouring islands. Persons of Portuguese background are now mostly considered as whites, but immigrants from Portugal were not considered “full” whites in the stratified colonial society [6]. This was mostly because they came to the island and worked at first as agricultural labourers. The small in amount, yet culturally and economically impactful migration of Syrian/Lebanese came to Trinidad to avoid religious oppression from the Osman Empire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The migration of Venezuelans who fled from their native land in the recent political turmoil, began and rapidly escalated after 2010. These persons were sometimes considered whites by non-whites, because of their physical features, such as fair skin and straight hair. Yet, the European whites in Trinidad acutely differentiate themselves from those fair newcomers, by describing the newcomers as “looking fair, but still ‘rough’” [7], which implies they are not sophisticated enough to belong to “the whites” and positions those newcomers “lower” in the stratified class structure in Trinidad. Nevertheless, this does not limit the Syrian/Lebanese and Venezuelans from considering themselves as whites, or the non-whites from treating them as whites. However, the whites' identification as authentic Trinidadian whites will never be allowed to be shared by the newer members of society, Syrian/Lebanese and Venezuelans. Thus, due to the fact that the newcomers' experience in Trinidad is not the same as the European whites experience, this paper excludes the new “whiter” citizens as research samples.

Besides their origins, the backgrounds of the colonial whites were diverse in their languages,

religions, professions, capital and assets, and reasons for emigrating to the island. There were aristocratic royal families who fled from the French Revolution, and there were former Irish indentured labourers from Barbados who migrated after the completion of their bondage years. There were merchants from England who exported agricultural products from the islands and imported goods from Europe to support the lavish European life styles of the elites on the island; and there were adventurers from Scotland who landed to secure management positions on plantations.

These differences resulted in classifications among the colonial whites in residential areas, churches, schools, and social gatherings, which was distinctive at least to some degree until the number of the whites started decreasing rapidly in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, the schools for the white elite children were limited in number and in principle though, St. Mary's College and St. Joseph's Convent were for the most part attended by upper class wealthy elite Catholics<sup>[8]</sup>, and Queens Royal College and Bishop Anstey High School were attended by Protestants<sup>[9]</sup>. The Catholic schools were established much earlier than the Protestant ones, initially to fulfil the needs of the elite families to provide religious instruction for their children<sup>[10]</sup>, and the curriculum was taught in French. On contrary, the Protestant schools were initiated by the fact that the social advantages were dominated by the Catholic whites; therefore, the purposes of those schools were to provide educational opportunities to anyone regardless of racial, religious and socio-economic background<sup>[11]</sup>. These schools now accept any qualified students regardless of their religious affiliation, but their characteristics developed in the colonial social context remain distinctively, even today.

### 3.2. The Whites as a minority in the postcolonial society

Discrimination against the whites in contemporary Trinidad has not yet been studied widely, or removed from the narrative, even in the overall Caribbean Studies scholarship. Yet many studies on race-ethnic relations in Trinidad portray the whites as the oppressor, who takes advantage of their superior

position over the non-whites<sup>[12]</sup>. Many studies have been done on racial and ethnic conflicts in the societies of the Anglophone Caribbean, though those are not about the whites versus Africans or East Indians, but about Africans versus East Indians<sup>[13]</sup>. The whites have never been an active agent of the racial/ethnic conflict scholarship. This is mostly because the whites do not experience rivalry with non-white others, because the unquestionably superior whites are powerful. At the same time, this is also because the whites are "unmarked" as seen in the whiteness scholarships especially in the context of the North America and Europe<sup>[14]</sup>, or they are placed aside as unrelated and irrelevant to the racial conflict happening in the society they live in.

Studies on "creolisation" in the Anglophone Caribbean focus on the racial and cultural mixing between the whites and Africans, but East Indians at lesser extent<sup>[15]</sup>. The "pure" whites, or "white looking whites" do not take part in the creolisation discourse, unless they are mixed with Africans or East Indians. Indeed, those studies left the unmixed form of whites marginalised, although "the whiter", those tinted a bit with non-white blood, were included as active creole agents<sup>[16]</sup>. The untinted whites, or the "pure" whites could be creolised and viewed as creoles too, so as defined in Trinidad, that a creole person is a product of the island<sup>[17]</sup>. Therefore, they could be "pure" whites as creoles born to the "pure" white parents who were also born in the island.

Yet, judging from the amount of literature on the Caribbean creoles/creolization and identity, the discussion of cultural and biological process of creolisation does not include "pure" whites in the Caribbean<sup>[18]</sup>. This is misleading if one is to forge an unbalanced view of the postcolonial society. The important point to note is that the whites are left minimised in the postcolonial creolisation narrative, although they play an important role as agents in the creolisation process of anyone in the society. Specifically, the whites are culturally influential and always looked up to with admiration, if not jealousy, for their access to the wealth, power, privilege, and superior standards<sup>[19]</sup>. The reality in 21<sup>st</sup> century postcolonial Trinidad, is that the whites are idolised as

the ideal standard for the other components of the society. To ignore this fact is to miss the actual dynamics of the creolisation process in Trinidad, the most heterogenous island in the Caribbean.

It follows from what has been said that the whites have been absent in the creolisation processes and creole racial power struggles. Additionally, although biological “pure” whiteness, untainted/unmixed European whiteness, if available in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Trinidad, is very rare, leaving the white “masters” untouched and unstudied creates a target for the non-whites, to lay blame on the whites for whatever the inequalities and unfairness they may encounter in the postcolonial society [20].

#### 4. The Great Houses

##### 4.1. When the Great Houses were built

Most of the existing Great Houses in Trinidad were built from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, around the time when the revenue from cacao production was the highest. This is the significant difference in the cases of Jamaica and Barbados, where their bigger Great Houses were built in the era when sugar was king, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Of course, the investment for cacao production in Trinidad was made with and supported by the accumulated funds from trading sugar with Europe, when the sugar price was at its peak. As sugar prices dropped, the cacao trade flourished for the local planters and traders. Many of those who owned cacao plantations did not live on the plantations. Instead, they chose to stay in the town and enjoy the luxurious life style, and left the plantations to be watched over by the overseers, most of whom were also white [21].

The newspaper at that time gave an idea of the extravagant lives of the white elites who occupied the Great Houses. The wealthy white elites, especially the relatively new upper class of Corsicans, Germans, Venezuelans, Irish, and French merchants, who migrated to settle in Trinidad, unlike the English Government officials who came to the island for a short sojourn, were eager to spend enormous amounts of money on their Great Houses, as hobbies to be seen and to show off their wealth, which sometimes led them to bankruptcy [22].

The Great Houses built around that era mirrored the characteristics and personalities of their owners: vulgar, gay, bold, and daring, all mixed with a dash of nostalgia for England, France, Scotland, Spain, Holland, Ireland and Corsica [23], together with suitability to the local climate. Imported items, white coral from Barbados, marble from Italy, and cast iron elements from Scotland were also used; however, the main materials used were from their family estates. For example, the rafters of Ambard’s House were from the Ambard’s estate at Erin, lies on the south coast of the island, and the limestone walls of Stollmeyer’s Castle (Fig. 2) were from the Laventille quarries, which are on the hills adjoining the town [24].



Fig. 2 Stollmeyer’s Castle, one of the Magnificent Seven, photographed in Port of Spain, Trinidad by Hideyo Morimoto Craigwell in November, 2020.

##### 4.2. The Great Houses as a reminder of cruelty

Sadly, it is not exaggerating to say that many of the Great Houses in Trinidad are not necessarily great in their present condition, unlike the Boissière House (Fig. 5). The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago stepped in, and now the enlisted historical properties are entitled to legal protection. Being protected by law not to be demolished does not guarantee immediate government funding to set up their restoration projects. The Great Houses’ conditions and roles, as well as the present owners are varied: some left abandoned, some remained just as a set of stones, some are standing but moulding, some are under never-ending refurbishing, some are well-maintained and well-made-use-of, and some became museums and serve as venues for functions, managed by the government. Even if they

are fully restored and open to the public as museums, many of the Great Houses are unlikely to generate enough revenue to sustain themselves, especially for what is most needed, the enormous cost of maintenance.

Unlike Sunbury Plantation Great House in Barbados or Rose Hall Great House in Jamaica, none of the Great Houses in Trinidad are regularly open to the public. The Great Houses in Sunbury and Rose Hall are open to visitors and offer guided tours, which allow access to almost all the rooms, which are decorated with antiques of historical value. Stollmeyer's Castle in Trinidad has been serving as a seasonal museum. Their Carnival themed exhibition during the Carnival season is well organized and open to the public, and this is one of the few opportunities to have access to each room inside the Castle. The interiors and furniture underwent thorough restoration and refurbishing which resulted in losing its antiqueness, although they are well restored. Given the fact that many Great Houses are not in the hands of the descendants of the colonial white elites, they are not easily accessible, and many of those mansions seem to have weakened their unique emotional attachment to the colonial history and the white families of Trinidad.



Fig. 3 Whitehall, one of the Magnificent Seven, photographed in Port of Spain, Trinidad by Hideyo Morimoto Craigwell in November, 2020.

## 5. The whites and the Great Houses

### 5.1. Methods and limitations

The analysis that follows is based on information gathered from focus groups and interviews conducted to 20 research participants between 2016 and 2019 in

Trinidad. All the participants are based in the North Western part of the island, mainly Port of Spain. All of them are culturally situated and self-identify as European-descended whites, have lived in the Caribbean for more than three generations. This criteria prevents the fair-skinned populations from Syria/Lebanon or South America, such as Venezuela from participating the interviews. All the participants are aged between twenty-one and seventy-eight.

The narratives from the participants are contextualised by my own experiences as an outsider to the white community in Trinidad. As a tourist, a student, an expat working in the island, and later as a visiting researcher, I spent over 15 years in a white oriented setting where I interacted with and observed the white society members, friends, and colleagues at social gatherings, salons, restaurants, fetes, and Carnival. Being an Asian visitor to the white community surely does not make me the best researcher for this topic. However, if rapport building with the participants is successful, my outsider-ness sometimes works with the whites to open up and speak more about the issues which they would rather never voice to any other members of the island. Additionally, my foreign-ness makes the whites more open to commentary on the island history and their family history as well, which provides a great opportunity to hear their interpreted versions of historical events. At the same time, my position as an outsider provides knowledge of, and experience with the white community and allows an opportunity for long-term informal observations of the behaviours of the whites.

### 5.2. The whites and the forced labourers

As seen in the previous section above, not all the whites in present-day Trinidad are the descendants of the plantation or estate owners, nor are they living in the Great Houses. However, the whites are seen monolithic, having benefited from the capital accumulated from slave owning businesses conducted by their forefathers on their estates/plantations. One of the ways in which anti-white discourse manifests itself in the lives of the participants is through interactions with non-white others, who position the whites as descendants of notorious slave owners.

The Great Houses listed below are the historical buildings representing the colonial days of forced labour. Firstly, the Country Club (Fig. 4), a Great House in the former Les Champs Élysées estate, is considered as an exclusive “white man place” [25], where limited access by non-white people is speculated by the society. The Magnificent Seven, is a name for the seven colonial buildings lined up side-by-side in the centre of the capital of Trinidad. Many of these buildings were residential houses for the colonial white elites who made fortunes with the trading of agricultural commodities produced by non-white forced labour. Therefore these Great Houses represent the history of the notorious maltreatment of the non-white labourers by the whites. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Great Houses unfairly showcase the historical reality of the relations between the non-whites and the whites, and their privileges. This paper, therefore seeks to show what these colonial buildings mean to the modern whites who are labelled as abusers and oppressors by the other member of the society, the non-whites.

### 5.3. Les Champs Élysées to the Country Club

The history of Les Champs Élysées, or the Champs Élysées estate, where the Country Club now stands, dates back to 1782, when the application for the land purchase was granted to a white lady who migrated from Grenada with her 75 slaves. The estate prospered as sugar prospered, and expanded by purchasing nearby lands. The ownership of the estate had been handed over by several French families until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The size of the estate has become much smaller now, from the time when sugar and cacao production were lucrative. The estate was acquired by a Portuguese family in 1953. This family continues to operate the Country Club today as a membership social club, after a number of structural changes and additions were made to the original building. Now, the Great House in the estate is still standing, as the main building for the Country Club, though many have voiced an urgent need for its restoration and renovation.



Fig. 4 The Country Club, photographed in Port of Spain, Trinidad by Hideyo Morimoto Craigwell in December, 2020.

Literally, all of the research respondents mentioned the Country Club when asked to think of a “white only place”. The Country Club, which has been branded as racist and an example of racism in Trinidad, despite people’s perception and memories, insists that its door is opened to everyone to join upon full payment of the membership fee. Having said that, with that perception, and with the actual number of whites who have been members for generations, the Country Club may have sent an unintended “white only” message to people. Undoubtedly, the Country Club has continued to operate as the most prestigious and exclusive club in Trinidad.

Many of my research participants themselves did not experience the most influential era of the Country Club when French was spoken, and English was considered an inferior language at the club. Yet, as if they actually experienced it, many of them talked about the very French and European tasteful events and spoke very highly of those events: Sunday afternoon teas, dance nights, and Carnival fetes, attended by “decent” and “good” people, to clarify, the white elites. Many of them described the fun time they spent at the Country Club, using these terms “very French” and “everybody in the white society” were there.

Not sure if “everybody” in the white society was a member or a family member of the Country Club though, being a member of the Country Club or having an access to the Country Club seemed to have been a very important requirement to prove that you are “good enough” to belong to the white elite society of Trinidad. One of the respondents in his 60s says his father tried

very hard to make ends meet to raise money for the Country Club membership fee, and for the purchase of a private vehicle to drive up to the Country Club, even when his family had nothing on the table to eat. The other respondent in her 60s says that her family was not well-off, but her uncle paid the membership fee on behalf of her father so that “we were able to belong to the proper society” and “be friends with good people”, and that for her uncle, “not being a member of the club was a disgrace for the family”.

The respondents aged over 60 remember they “grew up in the Country Club” [26]; they made friends and played together there while their parents were socialising and networking. They vividly remember they made friends only with white children at their age or similar, and they do not remember or they “doubt” any non-white children were there. Those they made friends with were the daughters, sons, nieces and nephews of the white persons their parents knew of, and their extended families. Indeed, the Country Club was the place for the whites to expand their white circle, to use the white connection to their advantage, and to strengthen the bond among the white society, especially as the white population already started decreasing rapidly after the end of the World War II and before the independence in 1962.

Many of the respondents aged below 60 indicated that they have never paid their membership fees to the Country Club, though they do have access. They say they are family members, meaning their parents are the full members. Family members are also able to bring their small children to the club, and this enables their children to share a similar experience to their parents: making friends with others, who are most likely white. As such, an exclusive white society is reproduced and its white connection is enforced at the Country Club, thus the Country Club sits at the core of white people’s lives in Trinidad.

#### 5.4. The Magnificent Seven and other Great Houses around the Savannah

In the colonial days, apart from owning country houses in their estates scattered all over in Trinidad, the most successful white elites were eager to purchase lands and build Great Houses around the Queen’s Park

Savannah, a 260-acre large recreational ground. The Savannah has been the centre of, and has shaped the character of the local community in the city of Port of Spain [27]. Once associated with yellow fever and malaria, due to the large swamps and mosquitos in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Savannah became a sporting mecca: horse racing, polo, kite flying, cricket, hockey, rugby, football, bicycling (more so recent), and even golfing. The Savannah has also gradually become the stage for many open-air political, religious, cultural ceremonies, parades and celebrations, among which is the most popular Trinidad Carnival. Socially and geographically centred in the city, the prestigious residential houses were built around the Savannah to enjoy the view, breeze and its closeness to social events.

Many of those houses have been destroyed now, but a few remain standing gracefully around the Savannah. The most popular among those are the Magnificent Seven, registered as national heritage sites in Trinidad, the seven colonial buildings: Queen’s Royal College, Hayes Court, Mille Fleurs, Ambard’s House, Archbishop’s House, Whitehall and Stollmeyer’s Castle. Now, all these seven prestigious buildings have completed thorough restoration and refurbishment, and have been occupied and actively used as a secondary school, the official residence of the Archbishop of Port of Spain, the National Trust, a private home, the official residence of the Anglican Bishop to Trinidad, the Office of the Prime Minister, a seasonal museum and function venue, respectively. Four of these were the residential homes of white elites: Mille Fleurs, Ambard’s House, Whitehall (Fig. 3) and the Stollmeyer’s Castle, and Ambard’s House remains as the best-maintained private residence. The fact needs to be emphasized here, is that none of the seven are presently owned by “pure” white families anymore.



Fig. 5 The Boissière House, photographed in Port of Spain, Trinidad by Hideyo Morimoto Craigwell in November, 2020.

Recently, one of the Great Houses around the Savannah, “the Boissière House” (Fig. 5) underwent a complete conservation and refurbishment. This building was built in 1904 as a residence for the illegitimate biracial son of one of the white prominent elite families, the Boissières. Since then, the house had been occupied by the mixed-race branch of the Boissière family for almost 100 years. After the Boissière House was left languishing on the international real estate market for more than five years, the Sammy family, who made their fortune in the booming construction industry, and now are the biggest contractors in the island, bought the house at US\$3.15 million as a birthday present to the family patriarch in 2013, to fulfil his childhood dream, which was to own a house around the Savannah. Accordingly, the present ownership belongs to the Sammy family, who are not the descendants of the colonial white elites, but of the East Indian indentured labourers.

The Sammys spent millions again for restoration of the house. As reported, their aim was to restore the original magnificence of the colonial house, not breaking anything, not changing anything, and most importantly, not to offend anyone with their decisions [28]. Their restoration work was praised by many, including those who expressed their “discomfort” and “disagreement” at first, for the non-white’s ownership of the symbol of white hegemony. The point to observe here is that the whites are not necessarily the richest in the island anymore, who can spend their finances on

expensive real estate. In this case of the Boissière House, what the whites did was to call for the government assistance to save and restore the building.

On contrary to the previously mentioned the case of the Country Club, few of the white research participants mentioned the Great Houses around the Savannah in their interviews when asked of their attachment to or the memories of them. Most of those are the ones who knew the exact family linkage to the former owners of those Great Houses, especially Stollmeyer’s Castle (Fig. 6).

Stollmeyer’s Castle has its German name from the Stollmeyer family of Trinidad, though they did not emigrate directly from Germany, but from the United States, where they immigrated to before coming to Trinidad. Even in the colonial days, the family had hardly identified themselves as Germans, or had minimal contact socially or in business with the Germans in Trinidad [29]. To add more of the counter-Germanness, the Stollmeyer’s Castle does not have much of German characteristics at all, but has more of Scottish ones. The family resided in the castle until 1972, when they sold it to someone of East Indian descent, who later sold the property to the government at an increased price [30]. In the words of some of the Stollmeyer’s, they do feel connected to the Stollmeyer’s Castle, because it has their name and they know exactly who in their family owned and lived in that castle. However, they say they feel a deeper connection with, and ownership to, the Great Houses in their then cacao estate, where they spent their childhood.

As seen above, the Magnificent Seven and the other Great Houses around the Savannah do not represent the whites’ identity, interest, or appreciation, enough to preserve them as national heritage. Although even one of the professors at the Queen’s Royal College described the Whitehall, one of the Magnificent Seven, as “built by one of the sugar barons – those fabulously rich people who had made their money out of sugar at the beginning of the century. The house might have belonged to the Park Lane in London of yesterday” [31], the whites in the contemporary Trinidad do not associate themselves with those Great Houses, with special nostalgia.





Fig. 6 Stollmeyer's estate house, photographed in Santa Cruz, Trinidad by Hideyo Morimoto Craigwell in November, 2020.

It is ironic that those buildings were referred to by the majority of the non-white people of Trinidad with both negative and boastful connotations. Firstly they are the products of sugar money. Put it in another way, those Great Houses were built with the finances accumulated from agricultural trade revenue, firstly sugar, then cacao, of which production was done through forced labour, namely slaves and indentured plantation workers. In this way, those Great Houses are a reminder of hardships and maltreatment experienced by the forefathers of the non-whites, and therefore something to be ashamed of.

Secondly these Great Houses are seen as proof of Trinidad's cultural "maturity" and "authenticity" in European values in the colonial days. Therefore, for some people of Trinidad, they are something to be proud of, especially to tourists and expatriates who have just landed and have little historical knowledge about the island, as a sign that Trinidad is not savage. Of course, this is one of the reasons why the Magnificent Seven, the seven Great Houses sitting in the centre of the town are the major tourist destinations of the island of Trinidad.

## 6. Conclusion

Claimed to be built with accumulated funds from sugar production based on forced labour, the Great Houses in Trinidad still stand as preserved national heritage sites and tourist destinations. This paper seeks to explain what those Great Houses, labelled as symbols of slaveholders mean to the white citizens of

Trinidad in a postcolonial society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The perceived exclusively white-only Country Club still works as the place for social gatherings for the whites. As a result, the club strengthens the ties among the white population, and sits at the core of their narratives as being white in Trinidad. On contrary, the Magnificent Seven does not hold of the whites' full interests. Despite the enormous cost of restoration works for the Great Houses, conservation of those historical buildings will preserve Trinidad's unique past which is fundamental to how Trinidad was constructed.

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### Abstract (Japanese)

かつての英国植民地トリニダードにおいて、白人エリートたちの邸宅であったグレートハウスは、奴隷制度の副産物とみなされている。なぜならアフリカ人奴隷などの労働力を搾取し続けたことによって築いた巨富を元手に建設されたものだからである。本稿は、そのようなグレートハウスの代表格であるマグニフィセント・セブンとカントリー・クラブが、現在のヨーロッパ系白人トリニダード人にとって、どのような意味を持つのかを探る。非白人を支配し酷使してきたとレッテルを貼られたヨーロッパ系白人トリニダード人に対して行った聞き取りから、マグニフィセント・セブンは大した意味を持たない一方、カントリー・クラブは白人としての意識の核心としての役割を担っていることが明らかになった。権威ある会員制クラブであるカントリー・クラブは、21世紀のトリニダードにおける白人社会においても、植民地時代から変わることなく白人同士の絆を強固にする役割を果たしている。

Key words : 白人性, トリニダード, カリブ, グレートハウス

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