

Religion and Tourism in Trinidad

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Abstract

This paper will examine the way in which religions, and particularly religious festivals, are marketed as part of cultural tourism in Trinidad. The island of Trinidad is one half of a two-island state where, as the national anthem states "every creed and race find an equal place". The primary religions evident in Trinidad are Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Spiritual Baptist, and Orisha. However, it is clear that certain religions and religious activities are considered more marketable and significant and therefore receive higher promotion, exposure and funding than others from bodies such as the Ministry of Tourism. Within a framework of content and discourse analysis and post-colonial and globalization theory, both official (state driven) and unofficial (private local and international tour operators and religious communities themselves) will be examined. The impacts of neocolonialism, political/ethnic tensions, and globalization on religious tourism will then be assessed.

Keywords: Tourism; Globalization; Creolization; Pilgrimage; Diaspora

Introduction

Religious tourism is increasingly becoming an area of noteworthy study in the field of tourism studies. Although visitors have frequented religious sites for centuries, in what would be termed pilgrimages, the area of religious studies attempts to incorporate not only these visitors, but others who fall within the realm of the "new" cultural tourist: one who is seeking an enlightening, educating and enriching experience in a setting quite outside of their everyday existence. The Caribbean as a tourist destination has not been typically associated with religious tourism, but this is beginning to change (especially in the realm of Cuban tourism). This paper looks at the inception of a religious tourism thrust on the island of Trinidad (one half of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago).

Setting

The two-island republic of Trinidad and Tobago has an economy primarily based on petroleum and natural gas products which are produced in Trinidad, the larger of the two islands. Tobago, significantly smaller, relies predominantly on beach/resort tourism and ecotourism. Overall, the nation has not had to rely as heavily on tourism as many of its Caribbean neighbors. However, repeated fears of a finite supply of petrochemical products have urged consecutive governments to invest in alternative forms of tourism. According to the 2010 National Tourism Policy report "The unique selling proposition for Trinidad is its cultural diversity..." [1]. Therefore, cultural tourism has been touted as a necessary and important endeavor for economic sustainability. As Jordan and Duval [2] observe: "...sun, sand and sea are no longer the only reasons for visiting [the Caribbean] when various heritage sites and experiences enjoy success in the wider tourism sector. Thus, it is imperative that marketing efforts continue to focus on what are no longer 'alternative' experiences: the cultural, natural, and built heritage of the region". Throughout the Caribbean, "tourism developers are now seeking to cross further boundaries in the areas of moral, cultural and religious tourism. In the quest to bring wider experiences to tourists, some are arguing for tourism to include the faith practices found in the region [3]. This paper focuses on the development of religious tourism solely in Trinidad. As a very diverse and culturally-rich locale, Trinidad certainly has a lot to offer, but how and why religious tourism is being marketed raises some interesting concerns. Which religions are being marketed (and which are not), and to whom this marketing

is being directed will be discussed; this will include the influences of neocolonialism, political/ethnic tensions, and globalization as key factors in the course of religious tourism development in Trinidad.

Tourism in Trinidad

According to 2010 statistics, the vast majority of tourists to the nation (as opposed to returnees/ diasporic Trinbagonians¹) go to Tobago for what is termed "Leisure/Beach Vacation" [4]. The second largest group of arrivals is those "Visiting Friends and Relatives" (VFR); these are primarily Trinbagonians who live abroad. Those who come for "Business/Convention" the third largest group, primarily stay in Trinidad. Some of this tertiary group may engage in tourist activities during their stay. Table 1 provides an exhaustive list of this information [4].

In Table 1, we see that only fifteen visitors indicated that they had come specifically for a festival, and of these fifteen we do not know whether or not the festival was religious. It is also possible that visitors who fall into a number of other categories ("Not Stated" "Other" and "Visiting Friends & Relatives") may also participate in and/or witness religious events, rituals, and celebrations. Therefore at present it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many tourists coming to Trinidad engage in cultural touristic pursuits, and furthermore how many of these participate in religious tourism.

It is important to note, however, that the category of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) has been flagged by a number of scholars in terms of its importance for tourism, and this is especially true in the case of diasporic Caribbean visitors [5-8]. Jordan and Duval [2] argues that the category of VFR does not fully explain the complexity of what is

¹"Trinbagonians" refers to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; it is a composite of both names.

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Arrivals to Trinidad and Tobago by Purpose of Visit	
Purpose Of Visit	Total
Borough Day	56
Business/Convention	69,997
Carnival	739
Cruise	4
Diplomats- T&T Dependents	3
Diplomats-Foreign	14
Diplomats-T & T	3
Ecotourist	38
Festival	15
Incentive Vacation	94
Leisure/ Beach Vacation	176,271
Medical	881
Not Applicable	6
Not Stated	2,189
Other	23,476
Other Non-Visitor	7
Returning Residents	597
Scuba Diving	54
Sports	4,591
Study	3,939
Temporary Immigrants<1yr	2,170
Temporary Immigrants>1yr	38
Visiting Friends & Relatives	97,750
Wedding/Honeymoon	5,366
Yachting	12
Total	388,310

Table 1: Arrivals to Trinidad and Tobago by Purpose of Visit [4].

occurring with diasporic Caribbean peoples: he prefers the term “return visit” as these returnees have non-tourist past experience with the destination, and also “have extensive social and cultural foundations at a destination”. Conway et al. [6] stated that “...for Trinidad and Tobago the extent of return visiting is considerable, with the patterns of VFR flows being a mirror of intra - and extra- regional migration flows”. The return visit is an important social practice of Caribbean people; it is repeated, sequential and meant to maintain ties back home. For example, many Caribbean parents consider it important to bring their children on return visits as a means of imparting cultural heritage to them. Certainly, maintaining one’s religious and spiritual practices and networks would be an important part of these return visits.

Religious diversity in Trinidad

Trinidad has a long history of diverse migrations, starting with the migration of the original Indigenous inhabitants thousands of years ago who came from the South American mainland. From the 15th to 20th centuries migrations included European colonizers, enslaved Africans, indentured Indians, Chinese and Portuguese, and Middle Eastern, African-American and Venezuelan immigrants. The great variety of cultural influences resulted in both cultural retentions and creolization (blending) of cultures. Today, religious diversity is recognized officially, but only certain religious events are enshrined as official holidays (i.e. Christmas, Diwali, Eid- ul- Fitr), while others operate unofficially (Phagwah, Hosay). The 2011 census of Trinidad and Tobago reveals how diverse the nation is in terms of religion. Below are two charts showing the religious composition of the nation, including significant

changes in the last decade (Table 2) (Figure 1) [9].

Religious festivals in Trinidad follow a specific calendar, although some are flexible and itinerant in dates while others are fixed.

Religious tourism

The study of religious tourism is relatively recent and the scholarship minimal, yet “religiously motivated travel, including pilgrimage, has grown tremendously during the past fifty years” [10]. Religious tourism can encompass the following: journeying to sacred sites, observing ritual as performance, participating as a worshipper/devotee in religious events (pilgrimage), and/or seeking an “authentic” spiritual experience. Mulligan [3] states that: Destination managers are tapping into a niche market of New Age faith tourists seeking new types of pilgrimage. In the Caribbean, more spiritual connections for ‘disconnected’ Westerners are creating a proliferation of arguably ‘constructed ethnic’ displays (and) transplanted faith experiences...” (p.113).

Further, Shackley (2001, 2002) posits that “Tourists also visit sacred sites seeking authentic experiences, whether through watching religious leaders and pilgrims perform rituals or by experiencing a site’s ‘sense of place’ or sacred atmosphere” [10]. As Duval notes “Cultural holdovers are irresistible to today’s modern cultural tourists” [11]. Trinidad, with its “exotic” and diverse mix of religions and spiritualities, both imported/retained, and homegrown, could certainly appeal to such tourists. Retentions, or “holdovers” are particularly evident in

Religion	2011	2000	Change
Anglican	74994	6792	-13.6
Baptist	90953	79899	13.8
Hinduism	240100	250760	-4.3
Islam	65705	64648	1.6
Jehovah’s Witness	19450	17948	8.4
Methodist	8648	10396	-16.8
Pentecostal/ Evangelical/ Full Gospel	159033	76327	108.4
Presbyterian/ Congregational	32972	36710	-10.2
Roman Catholic	285671	289711	-1.4
Seventh Day Adventist	54156	44147	22.7
Other	115225	120666	-4.5
None	28842	21598	33.5
Not Stated	146798	15170	867.7

Table 2: Religious Composition 2011 Census [9].

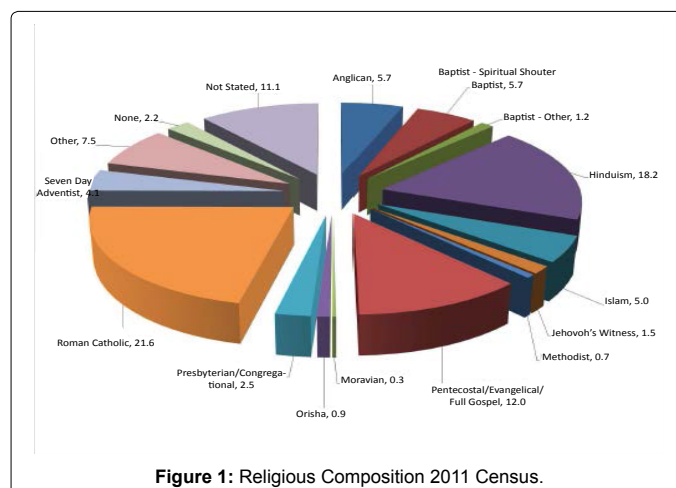


Figure 1: Religious Composition 2011 Census.

Trinidad in terms of Indian (Hindu and Muslim) and African (Yoruban, Dahomean) religious traditions. However, it appears that the majority of religious tourism marketing is currently aimed at the Trinidadian diaspora, a point which will be elaborated on further.

Methodology

Between 2012-2013, I attended various religious festivals in Trinidad, and analyzed texts (newspapers, television ads, billboards, government publications, flyers, websites), observing if and how religious festivals (both official and unofficial) were being marketed as part of cultural tourism. I used content and discourse analysis of images, information and key phrases related to specific festivals. Foucault's work on discourse and Gramsci's notion of hegemony were both useful to my reading of these texts: how certain festivals were framed, in whose interest, what kind of language was used in copy, and what sorts of images were selected [12]. In some cases, I engaged in participant observation, in which I was fulfilling dual roles as both a religious participant/observer as well as a researcher. In other instances, my participation was minimal to non-existent. Even if I did not directly attend a festival, however, as a resident of Trinidad, I often "participated" in many of these festivals in my daily interactions with fellow Trinidadians e.g. by wishing people, and receiving, religiously-based greetings, observing specific protocols for that day, engaging in concomitant cultural activities (e.g. cooking special foods associated with said festival, playing certain radio stations that were selecting music pertinent to the festival) etc. In other instances, especially if religious observances were not official holidays, were taking place far from my residence, were very small in size, or unless I made a deliberate attempt to participate, there was little to no reminder in my daily life that a religious event was taking place. In addition to participant/observation, I videotaped all the festivals I attended; this was an important part of my methodology for the same reasons summarized by: Visual techniques such as researcher-created video facilitate deeper and richer understanding of the phenomena under study [13]. Given that cultural tourism research projects are, by definition concerned with cultural aspects of tourism, interpretive approaches and visual techniques are particularly relevant for this type of research.

In our increasingly visual culture, visually-based research can have a much more immediate impact than the written word, and images often has the ability to re-create emotion as well as evoke ambience in ways that written observation is unable to. In researching religious festivals, video can be a particularly useful tool as color, sound, movement and speech are all recorded simultaneously, allowing the researcher to re-invoke not just thoughts but feelings of their own participation in the event.

The research questions addressed here are: do certain religious festivals get marketed more than others? If yes, why is that so? Is there a link between which government is in power and which religious festivals are being marketed? What are the differences between official and unofficial marketing practices? Furthermore, what kinds of tourists are being marketed to? Does this influence which festivals will be highlighted?

Sites of marketing - official and unofficial

Sites for marketing can be divided into two areas: the official (state driven i.e. Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Development Company Limited, Caribbean Airlines) and the unofficial (private local and international tour operators, religious communities themselves). On

occasion these may overlap; for example, when government funds a religious group and they in turn promote their own religious events.

Official marketing: The main bodies of the government which deal with tourism are the Ministry of Tourism, the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC, a state enterprise), and Caribbean Airlines (CAL). In 2010, the government released its National Policy on Tourism. The "Socio-Cultural Goals" of the Policy include:

To develop tourism with dignity - encouraging mutual respect for all cultures and eliminating all forms of discrimination on the basis of language, religion, culture, race, sex, age, wealth, ability, or other. To utilize the cultural, historical and recreational assets of Trinidad and Tobago as anchors for the development of a highly differentiated and competitive tourism product [1].

Clearly this aspires to be ethical tourism at its best. The question is: does the actual marketing of tourism in Trinidad live up to these ideals? One of the Key Success Factors of the Policy is listed as: "An authentic tourism product: Trinidad and Tobago must emphasize the talent of its people, diversity of its culture and rich resource base for tourism" [1].

One must therefore ask: who determines what authenticity is? Similarly, who determines which aspects of which cultures will become "tourist products"? Mac Cannell notes the caveat attached to cultural tourism and perhaps especially with religious tourism: "...tourism is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is also an ideological framing of history, nature and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs" [14]. Culture in Trinidad is being "reshaped", packaged and marketed, but by whom and for what purposes?

The website for the Ministry of Tourism has no mention of festivals, religious or otherwise. A video posted on the website "Trinidad and Tobago - the True Caribbean" briefly showcases Hosay, Diwali, Phagwa, and the Santa Rosa Festival [15]. On the government e-info page *ttconnect* under "Festivals and Holidays" there is different information posted for Residents and Non-Residents; the latter are assured that if they choose to attend a festival they will be welcomed e.g. "Phagwa celebrations are easy to find throughout Trinidad and the happy participants will be sure to invite you to join them!"; (and on Easter) "as with all things Trinbagonian you are always welcome to join in!" [16,17]. The emphasis here is that outsiders are welcome, regardless, and that Trinidadians are inherently friendly people. However, no specific information is provided as to how and where to attend; neither is contact information provided for communities who may be staging these festivals. Strangely, Christmas is missing from the list of Festivals and Holidays - one wonders if this is because it is not considered a tourist attraction, and/or because it is assumed everyone knows what Christmas is, and therefore it does not require description as is provided for non-Christian festivals? This latter hypothesis reflects the ongoing dominance of Christianity in the Trinidad and the Caribbean as a whole, demonstrated quantitatively in Table 2 and Figure 1, and qualitatively by the preeminence of Christian institutions in the society, including the official recognition of Christian holidays.

The Tourism Development Company(TDC) website is geared directly to tourists, yet seems to provide even less information on each festival than the Ministry's; there are standard descriptions of the various religious festivals and vague suggestions of where and how to attend them. Visitors are told that they are "sure to encounter one or more of

these diverse and exciting events, no matter when a trip is planned” [18]. There are no specific directions as to when, how and where one may see/attend these festivals; rather, it simply states that they exist and that many of them are religious. The implicit message is that a) visitors to the website will have some familiarity with Trinidad already, perhaps some friends or family in the country, and so are not in need of much direction, or b) the official bodies are not terribly concerned with ensuring tourists attend religious festivals. TDC also publishes a brochure entitled “Trinidad and Tobago Destination Handbook”, which replicates the same information found on the Ministry of Tourism’s website [19].

Among the official bodies, it seems that the pre-dominant festivals being highlighted are of Indian origin (Hindu and Muslim), specifically, Diwali, Phagwah and Hosay. Although Emancipation Day (a day commemorating the end of African slavery in the British colonies) is heralded as a tourist draw, it is not included in my analysis as it is not connected with any specifically religious element. The closest thing that Trinidad has to an African-based religious holiday is Spiritual (Figure 2) [19].

Shouter Baptist Liberation Day, which is being marketed in a very minimal sense. This, too, is not a religious festival per se, but rather a day set aside by the UNC (United National Congress) government in 1996 to recognize the tenacity and cultural significance of this religion. Figure 5 is the only touristic image I found that pertains to this theme (and since I discovered it, it appears to have vanished from the web). In the advertisement, the phrase “Rediscover your home...” is clearly aimed at diasporic tourists who may be part of the Spiritual Baptist faith, or who may have family or friends who are, or who may simply see this image and experience a sense of nostalgia for the uniqueness of Trinidad. The subtext “Trinidad & Tobago: the True Caribbean” directly markets this sense of authenticity which is an essential part of cultural, religious and heritage tourism, and which was also listed as one of the Tourism Policy’s goals. Even though Spiritual Baptist churches and congregations are found throughout the Caribbean diaspora, the idea being promoted is that one must return “home” to experience the “real thing”. In addition to this ad, I also encountered an online notice for a tour relating to Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day (held under the auspices of the National Trust, rather than the Ministry of Tourism or TDC) on the governmental website *ttconnect*. The tour was to the “home, shrine, and tomb of Dr. Elton George Griffith, Trinity Cross holder and advocate for the freedom of Shouter Baptists” [20]. This



Figure 3: Caribbean Airlines advertisement for Diwali [21].



Figure 4: Caribbean Airlines advertisement for Phagwa, 2013 [22].

tour seemed to be marketed to locals only, not diasporic tourists or other tourists in general, as it was posted March 15, and participants were asked to register by March 21 (hardly leaving time for travelers to organize a visit). Interestingly, this tour relegates Spiritual Baptists, who are strongly influenced by African traditions, to things of the past, relics, rather than as living, dynamic cultures. This is a theme that will be developed further when looking at private marketing State-owned Caribbean Airlines markets cultural tourism in a number of ways: through local television ads, print ads found in local and diasporic community presses, through its in-flight magazine *Caribbean Beat* and through its in-flight video *Caribbean Essence*. In recent times, there has been a noticeable attempt to market Hindu religious festivals such as Diwali and Phagwah specifically to diasporic Trinidadians (Figure 3 and Figure 4) [21,22].

The ads in Figures 3 and Figure 4, for Diwali and Phagwah respectively, are indicative of this kind of marketing. The emphasis on “roots” in the Diwali ad clearly denotes to whom this marketing is directed: Indo-Caribbean peoples, specifically Hindus (in truth, the ad could also be targeting Indo-Guyanese, of whom Hindus form a substantial portion). Noticeably, neither ad mentions which festival is being portrayed: this indicates “insider” knowledge of the images being presented: *deyas*– clay lanterns - floating in water (Diwali); a man and child – father and daughter? Uncle and niece? - covered in *abeer* or dye (Phagwa). Both images evoke a sense of connecting with roots, with family, with ancestral culture, that would only resonate with a very specific target market. In contrast, *Caribbean Essence*, the in-flight video that showcases the cultures of CAL’s destinations, profiles several religious events, presenting their information in a more educational way, carefully explaining the meaning of and history behind specific festivals. Profiles have included Christmas traditions throughout the region, the meanings of Hindu festivals such as Diwali and Kartik, and the ongoing tradition of Ramleela [23]. Once again, however, there seems to be a dearth of portrayals of African-based festivals, religious



Figure 2: Advertisement for Trinidad and Tobago Development Company.

or secular. This may be due to the political party in power at the time of this research, (the PP or People's Partnership) a point I will return to shortly.

Unofficial (private) marketing: Private tour operators, local and international, like the official bodies, also emphasize the cultural diversity of Trinidad as an important reason for visiting the island. The most well-known privately marketed travel guide is *Discover Trinidad and Tobago: the definitive guide to the islands*. This ubiquitous publication is found in every hotel and guesthouse, and is aimed at both foreign and local (domestic) tourists. Published every year since 1991, *Discover* has consistently provided the widest spectrum of religious festival marketing. For example, besides the usual Diwali/Hosay/Phagwa trinity, mention is made of Orisa Family Day (Orisa), the Ganga Dhaara River Festival (Hindu), and Osun River Festival (Orisa) [24]. These are all unofficial festivals, with smaller attendances, yet *Discover* does not shy away from listing the more obscure festivals, even those that are solely Afrocentric. However there are similarly vague directions given to visitors as found in the official literature, e.g. "In the nine days leading up to Diwali, Trinidadians of all ethnicities and religions visit the Diwali Nagar site in Chaguana" (*Discover*, 2013, p. 24) but no map, telephone number or contact information is provided.

Among local tour operators, there is a concerted effort to bring the independent (as opposed to group) traveler in direct contact with festivals, through tailor-made as well as pre-packaged tours with an emphasis on culture and religion. For example, on its website Banwari Tours offers an "East Indian Experience" where one can "see the architecture of temples and mosques" [25]. Similarly, Treselle Tours' website states that tourists will:

...experience a spiritual journey in Carapichaima, the heart of East Indian culture. A drive thru (sic) on the main road where you can find puja shops, village potters, the Hanuman murti at Waterloo, temple shrines and jhandes (colorful prayer flags) which eventually leads you to the famous historic Siewdass Sadhu Mandir in the sea and nearby Isaac Yankaran Cremation site. The Hanuman murti, the largest outside of India, was a gift from the Swami. It is his hope that the spirit of Hanuman will bring peace to all who visit [26].

What is interesting about this script is that, although numerous Hindi words are used ("puja" "murti" "mandir" "swami") only one ("jhandes") is translated. To whom is this tour being marketed? Locals? Diasporic tourists? Tourists from the Indian sub-continent? There is an assumption that the tourist will have some familiarity with Hinduism. In contrast, Tours by Locals, an international company that works with local representatives, offers the "Gods of the Indus" tour ("Great for cruise ship passengers") which examines "two magnificent stories about devotion, perseverance, and supernatural intervention", the "Hanuman statue" and the Temple in the Sea [27]. In this instance, we see that the tour operators have substituted the word "murti" for "statue". There is no assumption that the tourist will immediately recognize what a "murti" is. Furthermore, the addendum regarding cruise ship passengers provides a clue as to whom this particular tour is being marketed.

On an international scale, tour operator Trip Advisor ("the world's largest travel site") also markets three Trinidad festivals: Carnival, Diwali ("celebrated in October or November with food and fanfare") and Hosay ("a more solemn affair than Diwali, and certainly Carnival [alcohol is strongly discouraged] the five days of processions and public demonstrations are nevertheless colorful and captivating") [28]. One poster on the public forum of the website inquired about "Diwali pricing" for a 2013 trip from Toronto to Trinidad, stating "I thought because

Diwali is such a big event, there might be a suggestion of planning earlier than normal two month rule...". Another poster responded to him thusly: "I understand Diwali is a big thing in Trinidad but I am not sure whether it is big enough to affect the price of air fares" [29]. This comment echoes a scathing article by Raffique Shah, Trinidadian political commentator, on the bestowing of a "Best Destination 2012" tourism award on Trinidad and Tobago by a "bogus" Romanian-based organization. The organization "spoke in glowing terms about our 'festivals tourism', citing Holi (Phagwa), Hosay, Corpus Christi, Eid-ul-Fitr, Diwali and Carnival". Shah quipped dismissively: "Other than Carnival, who the hell travels to Trinidad for Phagwa, Hosay or Corpus Christi?" [30]. Shah makes an important point: although some festivals may be used as marketing tools, selling Trinidad as a culturally diverse and exotic locale, and although these festivals may be widely attended in Trinidad by their specific constituencies, this has not translated into foreign or even diasporic tourists booking flights and hotels in any great numbers to attend these festivals.

In almost every example encountered in this research, the only marketing of religious tourism seemed to be either Hindu or Muslim. Christian festivals and African-based religions are not present. One can only speculate as to the reasons why. Marketing of Orisa seems to have been more evident in years past (e.g. the Heritage Tours series) but apparently is no longer foregrounded. One local website, Island Experiences, advertised a "tour in preparation" entitled "A Day in the Life of a Rastaman": "We visit a Rastafarian (sic) in the secluded rainforest of the Northern Range and spend the day with him - cooking 'ital' on an open fire, swinging in a hammock and 'reasoning' and enjoying the view of the mountains..." [31]. The subtext of this Afrocentric cultural tour is rife with colonial stereotypes: the African as closer to nature and therefore animalistic/primitive, and the African male as lazy and unproductive [32]. Orisa and Spiritual Baptist religions are being marketed on a much more informal or private basis. One Orisa ile, or shrine, in 2006 privately marketed its annual Rain Festival through flyers and invitations, albeit this was minimally done and aimed at a local audience [33]. In interviews conducted with Orisa practitioners in Trinidad in 2011, it was gleaned that international students of religion and culture will occasionally be taken by a local scholar or professor to visit an Orisa shrine or Spiritual Baptist church. This was happening on a very small scale. As previously mentioned, African religious traditions seem to be marketed more as historic/heritage tours rather than as living, persisting traditions. For example, the Freetown Foundation, a nongovernmental organization, offers a heritage tour of the Belmont neighborhood, home of the "historic Rada compound - a 19th century community of free Africans reputed for resistance and cultural retention" [34]. Ostensibly the tour includes discussion of the religious traditions (Dahomean and Yoruban) of the Rada people.

Some observations: Neocolonialism, political/ethnic tensions, and globalization

The question as to why certain religious festivals are being marketed more than others needs addressing. My observations are based on data collection in Trinidad as well as my knowledge and understanding as a Caribbean Studies professor of the impacts of colonialism, neocolonialism and globalization on the Caribbean as a whole.

Neocolonialism: During the colonial era in the Caribbean, Europeans placed themselves at the apex of a social hierarchy that was based on a colour/phenotype/class trinity. Christianity was normalized in this social structure; all other religious and spiritual practices were othered, dismissed and even outlawed for being primitive, heathen, Satanic and barbaric [35-37]. Enslaved Africans in particular were

either strongly encouraged or forced to convert to Christianity. Indentured Indians, who arrived after the end of African Emancipation, were deliberately segregated from the rest of the general population (a result of the divide-and-rule strategy of the colonizer) and therefore maintained much of their religious traditions relatively intact [37,38]. The aftermath of this is seen in today's populations in the Caribbean. In Trinidad, the majority of the population on the whole, and the majority of Afro-Trinidadians specifically, are Christian. The majority of Indians, however, are Hindu. Although Trinidad recognizes a number of religions as legitimate, it is clear that Christianity is still considered the dominant religion and is still the religion of the elites. Examples of this are the prestigious secondary schools on the island, which are still run by Christian churches.

Although Christianity is predominant in Trinidad, Christian religious festivals are not highlighted within the marketing of cultural tourism. Many diasporic Trinidadians (of all religious persuasions) "come home" to Trinidad during Christmastime. However, these visits may have more to do with vacation time coinciding with the closure of businesses and educational institutions in the diaspora during December, rather than visitors especially wanting a Trinidadian Christmas (although the latter is certainly true for some). Easter, a very popular time for Trinidadians to vacation, is also not marketed as a touristic time. Other Christian festivals such as Corpus Christi (an official holiday), the Santa Rosa Festival, and La Divina Pastora festival may be mentioned in guidebooks, but are not seen as tourist draws. What are the reasons for this?

Christianity is normalized in all Western societies, it is the subject, while Hinduism, Islam and Orisa, for example, are objectified as the other [35]. Therefore, one does not necessarily market what is considered "normal" and "everyday". Instead, what is packaged is that which is considered "different" "unusual" and "exotic". However, a further distinction, based on colonial reasoning, is made between what is considered "exotic" and what is considered "barbaric". Many African religious traditions – both during colonial times and up until the present day – have been associated with "devil worship" [37,39]. In particular, the common practice of spirit possession and, in Orisa tradition, animal sacrifice, is still seen as "black magic" and satanic by many Trinidadians today. Particularly for middle-class Christian Afro-Trinidadians, these African retentions are considered shameful, and not something one wants to showcase to foreign visitors. Hindu festivals, although at one time also seen as barbaric and heathen by the colonizer, are now marketed as "colourful and captivating", "clean" "unique" "heady" "gleeful" and "breathtaking" [28,40,41,18]. Unlike their African counterparts, the Indian Hindu middle class in Trinidad are exceedingly proud of their Indian heritage; rather than hiding or denying it, they are instead proudly showcasing it. Although European colonizers used to look upon Hindu practices as much as African ones with disdain, Hinduism has now been elevated to a more respectable status in Trinidad, largely due to the influence of a powerful Hindu middle class comprised of politicians, spokespersons, educators, and cultural, business and religious leaders.

Political/ethnic tensions: It appears that within the realm of official tourism marketing, which religious festivals are marketed to tourists depends on which government is in power. From Independence in 1962, the People's National Movement (PNM), largely viewed as representing the interests of Afro-Trinidadians, (as well as many Muslim and Christian Indians), held power for almost 30 years in the country. In the 1960's and 1970's the PNM focused primarily on elevating Afro-Trinidadian Carnival culture (steel band, calypso, masquerade) to the

status of national culture, and marketed this heavily to tourists, thereby largely ignoring Indian and particularly Hindu cultures. In the 1980s and 1990s, the expansion of Afrocentric festivals came to include Emancipation Day and Orisa Family Day [39]. However, in 1995 the predominantly Hindu party, the United National Congress (UNC) took political power in Trinidad and Tobago for the first time; and again in 2010 a coalition government formed by the People's Partnership (PP, of which the most significant segment was UNC) won the elections. At the time of this writing, the Partnership has largely fragmented, with the UNC taking over the reins. It appears that this has resulted in a particular thrust of cultural tourism development in the country, in which Indo-Trinidadian culture is fore grounded. This hegemonic basis of cultural tourism development – dependent on who is in power - is evident in a multitude of ways.

The PNM's marketing of religious cultural tourism focused mostly on heritage tourism; one example of this is a booklet entitled *Trinidad and Tobago Heritage Tours*. No publication information is indicated within the booklet, but judging by other information, I surmised that this publication appeared circa 2009-2010 (under PNM rule). On the final page is the contact information for the Ministry of Tourism, TDC, and Trinidad and Tobago Incoming Tour Operators Association. The Heritage Tours are primarily Afrocentric, for example "The Arts and Tradition Tour":

A warm welcome will be extended as we arrive at the sacred grounds of the Lesom (sic) Garden of the Shrines, where Chief Priestess Sangowunmi Olakiitan Osunfunmilayo will impart insights about the plight of African traditions and culture, which were induced into dormancy during the long periods of enslavement and which we are steadily beginning to embrace again [42].

Despite its focus on Afrocentric culture, the PNM did also market Diwali [41]; for example, in 2006, North American media were invited by the TDC to witness the celebration. Hosay was also marketed starting in the 1970s; this however had some unwelcome repercussions for the community involved in that it was advertised as a Carnival-type event (with drums, street procession, and floats), rather than represented as the somber ritual of mourning that it is truly meant to be. In both cases, the PNM did not focus on promoting Indo-Trinidadian festivals to the level that the current PP/UNC government has.

Since 2010 the People's Partnership has actively promoted Hindu festivals such as Diwali, Ramleela and Phagwa. Within months of election, Prime Minister Kamla Persad- Bissessar stated that she would be marketing Diwali celebration internationally [43]. A seminar was held in September 2010 by the Diwali Ramleela Phagwa Tourism Council and the Tourism Development Company to "explore the potential of local and foreign tourism in Ramleela, Diwali and Phagwa festivals, and to implement measures to nurture and develop this potential..." [44]. Dr Kumar Mahabir, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Heritage Tourism to the Minister of Tourism Director, stated that "Diwali is a welcomed alternative to the rambunctious indulgence in meat, alcohol, party and "wine" and...is an event that the Ministry of Tourism can market as a major attraction in the fastest-growing world-wide trend of spiritual tourism" [40]. Mahabir is making a clear comparison of Diwali with Carnival (the PNM's jewel-in-the-crown of tourism), emphasizing the "pure" (as opposed to carnal) nature of the former, indeed, and invoking the Diwali message of the "triumph of light over darkness". What is problematic here is that Mahabir is also invoking colonial stereotypes of good/light/moral/pure (in this case, Hindu rather than Christian) over bad/dark/sinful/carnal (African). This binarism is

also reflective of the two-party political rivalries – and racial-ethnic stereotypes - that continue to persist in Trinidad and that are based in colonial stereotypes of African and Indian inherited from the colonizer. Some of these stereotypes are invoked as part of tourism marketing campaigns, especially ones that can be marketed globally.

Globalization: The impact of globalized movements of people, the mass globalization of culture, and globalized (and cheap) travel is also a factor in the development of religious tourism in Trinidad. The tourism market is highly competitive and tourist tastes are finicky – what can Trinidad offer that is different from elsewhere? To be competitive with other Caribbean destinations that offer cultural tourism may be the reason why Indo-Caribbean religious festivals are especially marketed as, outside of Guyana, there are no other nations in the Caribbean that celebrate them on a similar scale. Every Caribbean nation celebrates Christmas (minus Cuba) and most have a Carnival celebration, but it is the Indo-Caribbean presence in Trinidad and the persistence of Hindu and Muslim festivals that makes Trinidad unique.

A strong and influential Hindu community in Trinidad and the Indo-Caribbean diaspora is a ready tourist market. In addition, the nation of India is a huge tourist market emerging on a global scale. Indian tourists are actively being wooed by the People's Partnership government [45]. The popularity of Bollywood among people from all backgrounds, races, creeds and nationalities has also helped to market Indo-Caribbean culture, and is also influencing the Trinidadian construction of "Indian culture" such as is found at Diwali Nagar, an exhibition grounds built specifically to be the epicenter of Diwali cultural performances. Cultural critic Raymond Ramcharitar described his visit to the Divai Nagar thusly: Much of the Diwali Nagar seemed devoted to commerce, music and religious display- spectacle, in the theatrical sense. Given this, the Nagar and Diwali being "justified" as tourist attractions was inevitable...The Nagar is a snapshot of 19th-century Hindu religious practices and Bollywood visual culture, proffered in a decidedly dogmatic way...The lack of creativity is important because the establishment signifiers of the Nagar's costumes, showy religiosity, and food, have become embedded in the popular imagination: Doubles, dhotis and dharma, against a Bollywood backdrop [46].

As critical as Ramcharitar's commentary is towards the commodification of Diwali, it needs to be stated that, in comparison, there are no corresponding popular globalized images of African culture, especially religious traditions, except for highly negative ones. African spirituality is still associated in the globalized cultural sphere with voodoo, obeah and black magic: in short, evil and danger. Hinduism, meanwhile, has been represented as mystical, meditative, philosophically evolved and enlightening. The current Western popularity of yoga is one indication of this.

Alongside Diwali, Hosay is another festival that has consistently been marketed as representative of the cultural diversity of Trinidad. A Shiite Muslim event, images of tassa drumming and the large and ornate tadjahs have repeatedly appeared in official and non-official tourist literature (Figure 5) [47].

In 1971, PNM Prime Minister Eric Williams made a concerted effort to engage the Hosay yards in a tourist venture, and marketed the festival to tourists [48]. The results were found offensive to the Muslim communities who commemorate Hosay, as it is a somber, sacred festival where alcohol consumption is discouraged, and creolization of the event was turning street drumming into a Carnival-type party [49]. As well, PNM funding of Hosay yards led to competition between them, breaking down communal support and destroying many long-standing



Figure 5: Hosay showing tassa drums and a tadjah in the background [47].

traditional practices [50]. At present, there is no direct marketing of Hosay to tourists in that there are no Hosay tours and no central site (such as a Diwali Nagar) with Hosay "shows". In reality, it can be quite difficult for tourists to experience or even know about how, when and where Hosay takes place each year. The dates of Hosay change annually, and cannot be relegated to even a few specific months (e.g. in 2012 Hosay was in November; in 2004 it was in March). My experience of Hosay in 2012 was also one of difficulty pinning down the exact times, dates and locations of Hosay, and I was resident in Trinidad, living within walking distance of St. James (the epicenter). I had to read the local newspapers very carefully to gather information, and even these at times were erroneous. The procession along Western Main Road in St. James was sparsely attended in comparison to the throngs of people I had seen in Bishop and Korom's 1998 documentary *Hosay Trinidad* [51]. Raffique Shah also commented on the shift: "As someone who used to attend Hosay in St. James annually, I can tell you not even people in the district patronize the parade of tadjahs nowadays". This may have something to do with the fact that the popular and noisy bars along Western Main Road have now been forced to shut off their music to accommodate Hosay; this in turn, has discouraged a "party" atmosphere and the crowd this attracted. Officially and unofficially, images of Hosay continue to appear in tourist advertisements, yet direct attempts to link tourists with the festival are not present. Once again, we see evidence of the use of specific imagery to entice tourists to Trinidad, to represent the island as very diverse, while lacking the requisite infrastructure to truly engage tourists in either observance or participation.

Conclusion

Although Trinidad officially markets specific religious festivals to authenticate its cultural and ethnic diversity, marketing seems to be particularly geared to diasporic tourists who have some familiarity with these festivals. Foreign visitors to Trinidad, unless they know specifically where and when these events are taking place, or unless they enlist the assistance of a tour operator, friends or family members, will be hard pressed to engage, observe and perhaps participate in events such as Diwali, Hosay or Phagwa (or even more obscure festivals). On a more informal level (whether through independent tour operators or through religious communities themselves) the possibility for real

engagement with Trinidad's religious diversity is very possible. It is in these unofficial spaces that the potential for religious tourism really lies. However, many religious communities (especially less institutionalized ones such as Orisa) do not have the infrastructure to accommodate visitors. In other instances, they may not actually welcome outsiders as this may corrupt or denigrate a sacred event and space (such as happened with Hosay). Because Trinidad does not presently rely on a tourist product, Trinidadians – including religious communities - are not actively chasing after the tourist dollar. It appears that, if Trinidad truly wants to attract religious tourists, both foreign and diasporic, then further research is needed to determine the best way to accomplish this, a way that takes both religious communities and visitors into consideration.

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